



TONBRIDGE WELCOMES REFUGEES

Trustees' Annual Report  
for the Financial Year  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024



## TONBRIDGE WELCOMES REFUGEES

### **Trustees' Annual Report for the Financial Year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024**

#### **Reference and administration details**

Tonbridge Welcomes Refugees  
c/o Burns & Co  
2a Bank Street  
Tonbridge TN9 1BL

Registered charity number: 1173758

#### **Trustees:**

Jane Blessley (Chair)

Ruth Connelly

Nicky McGregor

Lee Mead (Treasurer)

Fiona O'Brien

Sarah Pratten

Maggie Piazza

#### **Term(s) of office:**

January 2019 -January 2022 and  
January 2022 -

July 2017- July 2020, July 2020 – July  
2023, July 2023 -

December 2018 – December 2021 and  
January 2022 -

August 2020 – August 2023, August  
2023 -

July 2017 – July 2020, July 2020 – July  
2023, July 2023 -

July 2022 –

March 2024 -

#### **Structure, governance and management**

Tonbridge Welcomes Refugees was registered with the Charity Commission as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) on 11 July 2017. Our governing document is our constitution (foundation model).

#### **Appointment of trustees**

Trustees are appointed by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity's trustees, for a term of three years. In selecting individuals for appointment as trustees, the Trustees have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the charity.

In February 2024, Jan Lloyd resigned as a trustee. In March 2024, Maggie Piazza was appointed a trustee.

There are currently seven trustees.

## **Objectives and Activities**

Our charity's objects, as set out in our constitution, are as follows:

1. For the relief of those granted refugee status and their dependants, or those seeking asylum living (temporarily or permanently) in Kent.
  - The relief of financial hardship;
  - The preservation and protection of their physical and mental health;
  - The advancement of their education and training so as to advance them in life and assist them to adapt within a new community.
2. To advance the education of the public in general about the rights and needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

### **Overview – TWR's objective 1 to provide relief for refugees.**

Most of the refugees supported by the charity have reached the UK under one of the Government's Resettlement Schemes. At 31st March 2024, Tonbridge Welcomes Refugees was supporting:

- six families living in Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone who had arrived under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) and its replacement, the UK Resettlement Scheme 2021 (UKRS). Five families were from Syria and a further one from Sudan. The charity also supported two Syrian families who had claimed asylum and a further four Syrian families who had reached the end of the five-year period under the SVPRS and had indefinite leave to remain.
- five Afghan families who arrived in Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone who had been evacuated from Afghanistan under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy 2021 (ARAP).
- A family from El Salvador who were granted asylum and moved into temporary accommodation in the area. They have since become permanently located in Maidstone
- Homes for Ukraine Scheme, under this Scheme the charity supports approximately 200 individuals. Because of the role of hosts, the model of support differs for Ukrainian refugees and they are dealt with separately below.

The total number of individuals supported on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 is approximately 280.

TWR works with Kent County Council (KCC) and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and staff from KCC's appointed social care provider, Clarion, to support refugees resettled under the SVPRS, the UKRS and the ARAP in our area of Kent. As Maidstone does not have a Welcomes Refugees Group, we have a group of volunteers working to support families within the Maidstone Borough Council area. Our Maidstone volunteers also work with some of our SVPRS families in TMBC, as sometimes their location is closer to Maidstone. The Maidstone team of volunteers complete their DBS with us. TWR also liaises with sister charities, Tunbridge Wells Welcomes Refugees (TWWR) and Sevenoaks Welcomes Refugees (SWR).



● **Befriending.** Each refugee family arriving under the Resettlement Schemes or ARAP has normally been assigned a small team of volunteers to assist them on arrival. Whilst the Clarion Support Officers manage applications to schools, to GP registers, to the Home Office and to the DWP for benefits and deal with housing matters, the volunteer teams make welcoming and befriending visits. The support is tailor-made to the family, but often includes such matters as explaining the transport services locally, explaining how the NHS operates or the refuse and recycling system. Families may be taken out to visit local attractions or to be shown the shopping facilities. Befriending volunteers can appeal by means of WhatsApp groups for household items needed by the families or apply to the trustees for funding for an item, if a suitable donation cannot be found.

● **English teaching.** In addition to befriending support, there is an experienced and dedicated team of teachers who supplement the English lessons provided under the various Resettlement Schemes by local adult education providers. Often the small group teaching or individual coaching TWR provides is more successful, especially with those who have limited experience of education or who are not literate in their first language.

TWR runs classes in Tonbridge School premises on Monday and Friday during school terms. There are classes at Advanced, Intermediate and Beginner 1 and Beginner 2 levels. TWR provides the learning resources and Tonbridge School allows TWR to use their premises free of charge. 5 teachers deliver the classes. In addition, a small number of adults receive tuition at home or through Zoom if they cannot travel through ill health or the distance to Tonbridge. Further teachers are involved in this work.

In addition to the classes provided for adults, there is a very active team of teachers who volunteer in local schools to support refugee children. Five children of primary age currently receive this support – three Ukrainians, an Afghan and a Syrian. The support normally takes the form of three lessons per week, carefully planned and delivered by a small teaching team at school. At secondary level, a further six Ukrainians, an Afghan, a Sudanese and two Syrian students receive support in school and sometimes also online. Further Afghan and Syrian students receive online teaching.

In 2023, KCC undertook a review of the provision of ESOL under the various Schemes and TWR volunteers participated in this review in the hopes of improving the formal, funded provision. They also attend a steering group led by the new ESOL Coordinator at KCC which is instating improvements by standardising levelling assessments of students and providing funded training for volunteer teachers in areas such as digital teaching and the overlap between EAL and ESOL. KCC acknowledges that volunteers will continue to be needed if refugees are to receive the minimum level of 8 hours per week of English that the Government expects.

● **Transport.** It is often difficult for the charity's beneficiaries to get to medical or dental appointments by using public transport. TWR maintains a WhatsApp group of volunteers who are willing to provide lifts for these appointments. The charity also provides bicycles and related safety equipment for beneficiaries where this is needed and, for some beneficiaries, the trustees have



agreed to provide some assistance to fund driving lessons. This is so expensive that it has been limited to cases where the beneficiary needs to drive in order to work or where the beneficiary is already a driver and only needs a few refresher classes to enable a UK driving test to be taken. In suitable cases, young person's or family railcards are provided.

## ● Social Support.

Following on from the grant awarded by the London Foundation of Clifford Chance in 2022 to 2023, TWR was grateful to receive funding from Paul Stepto's Member KCC Grant of £1000 and of £7500 from the London Gatwick Community Fund in the autumn of 2023 to finance the charity's activities and courses programme for children for the year to August 2024. Under this Scheme, TWR pays for, or subsidises, after school activities and clubs during term time and activity or educational courses in the school holidays. The current subsidy level is of up to £150 per school age child for each of the school holidays at Easter and in the summer.

These courses aid social integration and provide children with a chance to escape for a while from the anxieties of their position as refugees. The courses have been of all types – trampolining, gymnastics, climbing, drumming, Arts and crafts, football and badminton.

In 2022 to 2023, TWR initiated a swimming programme under which twenty children attended swimming lessons at Tonbridge Town Pool under their TM Active school. The funding received this year has enabled TWR to extend the programme to further children. 26 children between the ages of 5 and 18 have benefited from the programme in 2023 to 2024– 15 Ukrainian students, 6 Syrian, 3 Afghan and 2 Sudanese.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023, TWR held a picnic to celebrate Eid al Fitr at the end of Ramadan at St Philip's Church Hall in north Tonbridge. All Muslim refugees from Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling were invited and Syrian, Afghan and Sudanese families attended with volunteers from Maidstone offering transport. Each family brought a dish to share and volunteers also contributed vegetarian and sweet items.

In July 2023, Tonbridge Lions organised and funded a day out for 30 refugees at Bedgebury Pinetum. Every participant could take part in Go Ape or hire a bike and lunch was provided by the Lions. Transport was provided by Compaid. TWR provided volunteers as escorts on the day.

In September 2023, Tonbridge Fire Station held an Open Day to which refugees were invited and great fun was had with the equipment. Again, volunteers escorted the families who attended.

## **Support provided for Ukrainian refugees under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme**



Refugees arriving under this Scheme are placed with British hosts and they perform many of the befriending activities which would otherwise be provided by TWR befriending teams or by support workers from Clarion.

Shortly after the Scheme started, Tonbridge School decided to support refugees by offering a space for refugees to meet each other every Tuesday evening for two hours. TWR has acted as a partner providing information to Tonbridge School. In the early part of the year, two volunteers attended at each of the Tonbridge School gatherings to gather information about the support needs of arriving families or families leaving hosts to live independently. Latterly, Tonbridge School has hosted the gatherings without TWR support.

The new initiative of having conversation buddies started in 2022 to 2023 with newly arrived Ukrainians who were on a waiting list for English classes. This entailed a refugee being matched with a volunteer with the intention that they should meet so as to give an added opportunity for practice in English. This proved very successful and those volunteers often became friends with the refugees and have extended support when the refugees have moved into homes independent of the original host. The scheme is still open and has been extended to refugees of other nationalities too.

### **Overview – objective 2 to advance the education of the public about the position and needs of refugees and asylum seekers**

TWR took part in various public events where volunteers had stalls with activities for children, and explained TWR's role in caring for families arriving in our area, raising public awareness by handing out our newly redrafted information leaflets and having a large display with key information at a glance to engage passers-by. These were:

1. To coincide with Refugee Week in June 2023, Heather Evernden delivered two assemblies at Tonbridge Grammar School and worked with their community action group to decide how they might best try to support refugees
2. Tonbridge Calling on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 at which £168 was raised and, perhaps more important, volunteers met the public and awareness was raised
3. Dragon Boat Race on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023. This was very successful and raised £4002 for funds. The stall was busy with a variety of games being run and baked goods sold. There was information at hand regarding TWR's work. Many useful conversations happened to educate those locally as to our purposes and aims
4. Recorded Assemblies were provided by Ruth Connelly for use at Hillview School in the autumn term.
5. Nicky McGregor gave an assembly at Hilden Grange School explaining the charity's work and the school selected TWR as its annual charity. Volunteers attended a subsequent fair and gave further information to the pupils.

### **Management and day to day running of the charity**

The Trustees normally hold a monthly trustees' meeting and in this financial year these were mostly online. Several times a year, there is an Open Meeting for the charity's supporters. Reports of the charity's activities are given and supporters invited to ask questions. In months where there is an Open meeting, a trustees' meeting is not always held. The AGM was held on 14th June 2023.



In October 2023, a coffee morning for volunteers was held at Tonbridge Old Fire Station. Its aim was to allow volunteers to share best practice and to meet volunteers they might have worked with before, but never met in person. Several trustees attended and were able to make introductions, answer questions and appeal for help for various matters.

On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023, a social evening was held at Tonbridge Old Fire Station. The trustees offered a brief presentation on current developments and then encouraged volunteers and supporters to mix.

There are no employees and all the support given to beneficiaries and the administration of the charity is carried out by volunteers. Volunteers can reclaim expenses and a mileage allowance, but many volunteers simply carry those expenses themselves.

There were seven trustees at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. In addition, there were approximately 70 active volunteers working directly with refugee families including trustees and in addition, further supporters and donors of household items. Any volunteer who has direct contact with refugee families through befriending, teaching or giving lifts follows a recruitment process involving an application form, an interview with two trustees and the taking up of two references. They must also have an enhanced DBS certificate to cover both vulnerable adults and children and agree to the confidentiality, data protection and safeguarding policies.

Family teams deal directly with the beneficiary families, but report regularly to the trustees on what is needed. The two teaching coordinators also report back to the trustees on a regular basis. This is made easier because many of the trustees are themselves on family teams or are teachers.

In December 2023, TWR held a training afternoon at which befriending and teaching volunteers took part in a workshop led by a Bereavement Professional. She explained how the grief caused to refugees by bereavement or trauma manifested itself in children as well as adults and gave volunteers reassurance that simply by listening to a grieving person and adopting simple strategies they could be of assistance. Volunteers were provided with information about useful groups to contact for help and given advice as to how to respond to the traumatic information they sometimes receive in a way that protects their own mental health as well.

### **Financial Review for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.**

The Accounts are attached and show income of £22,247. Of this, £ 13,868 was received in the form of donations from individuals and institutions. £8500 was received in the form of two grants.

Total expenditure for the year was £23,054.

The Charity's running costs amounted to £1,545. Insurance, safeguarding training and travel costs accounted for 80% of the Charity's running costs.

A total of £8637 was paid direct to, or for the benefit of, refugees as resettlement costs. Other resettlement expenditure included payments for IT equipment, driving lessons, assistance for paying household bills, clothes, furniture, hardship payments and travel costs for such things as Family or Young Person Railcards.



£12,465 was paid for clubs and activities for school children and £407 for educational resources, as part of the English teaching programme.

Payments made from the bank account are usually input by the Treasurer, but can be input by one of three other Trustees appointed to this task. Once input, payments must then be authorised by one of the appointed Trustees other than the inputter.

Expenditure up to £50 can be pre-approved by one (or more) Trustee(s). Expenditure between £50 and £150 can be approved by two (or more) Trustee(s). Expenditure over £150 will be discussed and pre-approved by a majority of Trustees on WhatsApp, email or at a Trustees meeting. A "blanket" approval may be agreed for some categories of expenditure (e.g. holiday courses or swimming).

TWR does not have any outstanding guarantees to any other person or organisation. It does not have any debts secured by a charge on property. None of the trustees or persons related to them receive remuneration in any form and there are no transactions with any trustee or related parties.

The reserving policy is to retain a reserve of six months' committed expenditure in the bank. Committed expenditure means running costs plus any other expenditure to which we are committed.

This policy was adhered to in the financial year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

### **Achievements and Performance**

1. TWR's very successful teaching programmes for adults and children have continued. 19 school children and 25 adults benefit.
2. In response to the increase in numbers of adult students, the charity introduced a new conversation buddy scheme for Ukrainians, but this has now expanded to refugees from other nationalities.
3. The charity managed to obtain grant funding for activity courses in the school holidays. This enabled children to have fun and integrate with other children on the courses and to improve children's mental health.
4. The swimming programme was extended to 26 children in the course of the year.
5. The Syrian pharmacist, whose course was funded through TWR, mostly through donations from London lawyers, completed her UK qualification successfully and is now practising.
6. TWR has continued to run WhatsApp groups to find household items for refugees and to offer donations to them. Over 450 items were provided by donors and moved to the recipient, including
  - 74 furniture items including 10 tables, 6 beds, 5 mattresses, wardrobes,
  - 32 electrical items including vacuum cleaners, TVs, printers, mobile phones
  - 82 household items
  - 135 items of baby equipment and clothing for children and babies
  - 90 toys
  - 4 adult bikes, a child's bike and an exercise bike
  - Miscellaneous other items



7. The drivers' WhatsApp group continues to provide lifts for appointments and to deliver items from donors to recipients.
8. Despite the cost-of-living crisis, TWR has managed to attract sufficient funds to offer support for its beneficiaries through hardship payments, funding IT items and activities.

### Future Challenges

Despite the many achievements of the last financial year, there are also challenges which should not be ignored. These are:

1. Housing. It is very difficult to attract new private landlords to the Schemes. This is due to a number of factors:
  - The severe shortage of rental properties means commercial rents outstrip housing allowances for those on benefits
  - The number of rental properties has plummeted because of higher mortgage interest rates and new regulations for landlords
  - Many of the families arriving on the Schemes are larger than the UK average so there are fewer properties which can house them
  - Families arriving under the Schemes grow with the birth of children. As children become teenagers, children of different genders need separate bedrooms and older children marry and need homes of their own so the demand for housing outstrips what is available
2. As the cost-of-living crisis affects more and more people and businesses, TWR may find it more difficult to raise funds
3. Many of our retired volunteers, who joined as the charity started, are facing health issues personally or in their families and our younger volunteers have to manage full time jobs with the demands of family life so that many volunteers have had to reduce the hours they offer to TWR. New volunteers are also able to offer fewer hours volunteering. The resulting extra workload on some volunteers is becoming unsustainable and a review is under way to address this.

### Strategic Aims at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

1. To continue welcoming refugee families, including through befriending and English programmes, but with modifications to ensure these programmes remain sustainable
2. To support refugees with educational and vocational courses
3. To continue the activity and swimming programmes for school-age children
4. To maintain a hardship fund for families struggling financially
5. To encourage families to set and achieve their own goals, encouraging families to develop self-sufficiency more quickly
6. To raise sufficient funds to continue to meet these aims

This Report was approved by the Trustees on 2nd May 2024 and signed on their behalf by Chair of Trustees, Jane Blessley.

*J. M. Blessley*



## Section A

## Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the  
trustees/members ofCharity Name  
Tonbridge Welcomes RefugeesOn accounts for the year  
ended31<sup>st</sup> March 2024Charity no  
(if any)

1173758

Set out on pages

to  
~~10~~ and 11

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2024.

Responsibilities and  
basis of report

As the charity trustees, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent  
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

10 JULY 24

Name:

Matthew Sellen

Relevant professional  
qualification(s) or body  
(if any):

Fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants

Address:





CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

TONBRIDGE WELCOMES REFUGEES

## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period  
from

01/04/2023

To

31/03/2024

### Section A Receipts and payments

	funds to the nearest £	funds to the nearest £	funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
One off donations (inc fundraising)	7,666	-	-	7,666	23,175
Regular giving	6,202	-	-	6,202	4,716
Grants	-	8,500	-	8,500	4,068
Interest	59	-	-	59	49
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>13,927</b>	<b>8,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>22,427</b>	<b>32,008</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>13,927</b>	<b>8,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>22,427</b>	<b>32,008</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Running costs	1,545	-	-	1,545	1,099
Refugee support	8,637	-	-	8,637	22,419
Activity fund	5,253	7,212	-	12,465	10,158
Teaching resources	407	-	-	407	1,720
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>15,842</b>	<b>7,212</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>23,054</b>	<b>35,396</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>15,842</b>	<b>7,212</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>23,054</b>	<b>35,396</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>- 1,915</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>3,388</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>31,424</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>31,424</b>	<b>34,812</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>29,509</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>30,797</b>	<b>31,424</b>

## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	funds to nearest £	funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Cash at Bank	29,509	1,288	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	29,509	1,288	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))			

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
L. P. Mead	Lee Mead	2.5.24
J. M. Blessley	J. M. Blessley	2.5.24