



Midlands Migrant Support Annual Report 2023

*Annual Report and Financial Statements
for the year ending 31st December 2023*

Registered Charity no: 1174056

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1. A brief history of Midlands Migrant Support

Midlands Migrant Support (MMS) - formerly Morton Hall Visitor's Group - has provided crucial friendship and practical support to people in immigration detention across the East Midlands for the last 12 years.

Being in immigration detention almost always has a detrimental impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing. But through our network of volunteer visitors, MMS aims to:

- ease the isolation and anxiety experienced by people in detention by providing emotional and practical support;
- signpost to services that offer specialist advice and guidance;
- act as unofficial human rights monitors by observing the conditions in immigration detention and highlighting these realities to the public.

At the same time, we advocate for the rights of detained people and raise public awareness about their plight, as well as the broader legal situation for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. By raising awareness of these issues, we aim to promote more tolerance and understanding in our local communities.

MMS was first formed in 2011 following the conversion of Morton Hall prison in Swinderby, Lincolnshire, to an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). Our visits continued - supporting hundreds of people at a deeply distressing time in their lives - until Morton Hall closed its doors in August 2021.

Following Morton Hall's closure, its grounds were repurposed into the Swinderby residential short-term holding facility (RSTHF) and HMP Morton Hall, a prison exclusively for 'foreign nationals.'

Swinderby can hold up to 37 men at a time, for a maximum of seven days each. People are normally held in RSTHF facilities for two main reasons: for screening, or as a staging post before removal from the UK. Both of these situations are often extremely stressful for the detained person. The quick turnaround in the facility also marks a departure from the type of befriending services we provided at the IRC, where volunteers built relationships with their clients over a sustained period of time.

We first began offering drop-in sessions at the Swinderby RSTHF shortly after its October 2022 opening. Since then, we have supported more than 160 clients as they navigate these challenging circumstances.

In the near future, we hope to begin offering our services at HMP Morton Hall. And we are exploring how we might be able to support residents at the local RAF Scampton base, which is due to be repurposed as a quasi-detention site for asylum seekers at any time now.

Of course, these developments meant that our group's remit has expanded beyond Morton Hall. It is the new phase that prompted us to relaunch with a new name - one that accurately summarises our work, while giving us room to grow and expand our services. All while avoiding being too much of a mouthful!

After much deliberation, we proudly relaunched as 'Midlands Migrant Support' in November 2023.

Although much has changed in recent years, our group's mission remains constant. We will keep doing everything we can to support migrants experiencing detention in the East Midlands, whatever form that might take.

2. Chair's Report

2023 has been another year of change for us here at Midlands Migrant Support.

First and foremost, that meant continuing to adjust to the evolving needs of our local community. Our focus remained on Swinderby RSTHF, where our visiting presence has steadily increased. I'm proud that we have expanded to offer weekly drop-in sessions at Swinderby, where we have supported more than 160 clients throughout the year.

Not to mention we're now on the cusp of being able to offer our services at HMP Morton Hall.

However, we received the disturbing news last Spring that Scampton, a local RAF base, was set to be repurposed as a quasi-detention centre for asylum seekers. At the time of writing, there has been no indication of when exactly this might happen. But alongside other community groups in the area, we are exploring how we can be of use, if and when the time comes.

This has all happened against a wider and deeply horrifying political backdrop. We are witnessing a government that seems increasingly intent on demonising migrants. From the use of dehumanising language and treating asylum seekers with distrust, to the awful Illegal Migration Act which attacks the fundamental right to claim asylum.

I have never been more sure of the need for groups like ours. So we will press on - doing what we can to provide friendship, support and solidarity to those who need it the most.

As always, the Trustees are grateful to those who keep MMS running. None of this would be possible without our brilliant Project Coordinator, Gemma Goodwin. Gemma joined us at the beginning of the year and it's been a joy to watch her blossom in the role. We are equally thankful to our bookkeeper Cassie, and our examiner of accounts, Carly Bell.

Of course, our volunteer visitors are the heart and soul of MMS. We couldn't operate without them, and I would like to say a huge thank you each and every one of you.

Sadly, we have said some difficult goodbyes this year, too. Long-time group stalwarts of the group Camille Herreman and Dave Hewitt have both moved onto pastures anew, along with trustee Chris Leaman. Their passion, dedication and expertise are so dearly missed.

Despite all the change, I am confident that MMS has the tools it needs to keep moving from strength to strength. I hope our Annual Report will clearly make that case.

Carey Roach
Chair, Midlands Migrant Support

3. Coordinator's Report

A Period of Change and Growth

We began this year as *Morton Hall Visitors' Group* and finished as *Midlands Migrant Support*, a huge change for our charity, but only one of many...

We kicked off the year with a new member of staff and a renewed vision, following the many challenges brought by the pandemic and changes in the region.

In April 2023, after a long period of waiting to work with those men being held in Swinderby RSTHF, visiting finally commenced. Volunteers were naturally thin on the ground following the restrictions around COVID and also the waiting period during the repurposing of the IRC. Over the course of the year, a couple have retired but many have joined us through our various efforts to recruit, whether through coffee mornings, presentations in key groups, online listings etc. and we now have eleven active volunteers. All have received extensive training and or refresher training, as well as access to regular volunteer meetings, support from staff and also peer support, while some have also been available to take up other forms of training provided by outside agencies such as BiD, AVID and Clinks.

Over the last eight months, our relationship with management and staff at Swinderby RSTHF continues to strengthen and we have now held two quarterly review meetings to assess how things are going and what we can each put in place to improve our service. Visits usually take place at least twice weekly depending on the availability of our volunteers and the numbers of men held at any one time in the centre. Since April, we have supported 166 men over the course of 31 visits.

We remain the only befriending service to specialise in supporting detained people directly impacted by the immigration system in Lincolnshire, and look forward to 2024 where we will establish our visiting service in HMP Morton Hall, supporting people on more of a long-term basis.

Thank you to all of our funders, volunteers and the networks we engage with for supporting us during all the many changes to our organisation and its continued growth. We continue to build strong and supportive relationships with members of AVID and other NGOs operating in the local area and beyond.

We will continue to work alongside like-minded groups to support the many people affected by the UK immigration system in both Swinderby RSTHF, HMP Morton Hall, showing solidarity, listening and signposting.

Gemma Goodwin
Project Coordinator, Midlands Migrant Support

4. Activities, Achievement and Performance

Responding to Change

This year, MMS continued with the strategy agreed by Trustees in 2022 to focus on delivering our services at two centres: the Swinderby RSTHF and HMP Morton Hall.

Our presence at the Swinderby RSTHF has grown significantly. We have grown from offering fortnightly drop-in sessions for Swinderby residents to visiting up to twice weekly. We have also continued to build good working relationships with management and staff.

At the same time, we have pressed on with negotiating a service agreement at HMP Morton Hall to begin offering our services there as soon as possible.

In the second half of the year, we have also been busy responding to an unexpected change - the planned repurposing of RAF Scampton. Government communications suggested this would open imminently, but there was still no sign of an official move-in date at the end of 2023.

Technically, residents at Scampton will be free to visit the local community. However, given its remote location and the fact it will be designed to “reduce the need to leave the site”, we expect the conditions to be similar to the ‘quasi-detention’ regime that is becoming increasingly common at asylum reception sites across the country.

In response to this disturbing news, we have been busy collaborating with other community organisations in the area through a new initiative called The Scampton Alliance to see how we can best pool resources and expertise to support residents when the facility opens.

While focusing on these three strains of work, MMS has continued to respond effectively to this ever-changing climate - laying the necessary foundations to expand to address the realities of quasi-detention, while continuing to effectively offer our services to people experiencing immigration detention in the region.

To support these objectives, MMS has undertaken several actions in the last 12 months. These include:

- Continuing to build positive working relationships with staff at Swinderby RSTHF, including through termly reviews with Mitie management and informal conversations about our services with staff who are visible in the communal areas;
- Successfully negotiating a service agreement with management at HMP Morton Hall to begin offering visit services, subject to our volunteers receiving the proper security checks;
- Continuing to attend meetings through the AVID network to share information and best practice with other visitor groups across the UK;
- Regularly meeting with members of The Scampton Alliance; and

- Maintaining our membership of Clinks, an organisation that promotes and represents the voluntary sector working with people in the criminal justice system and their families.

Volunteers

Volunteers - visitors, trustees and people who support with essential administrative activities - remain the heart and soul of MMS.

In 2023, we had a dedicated network of 11 active volunteer visitors who regularly facilitated our visiting sessions at Swinderby.

With visiting up and running regularly for the first time since the pandemic, volunteer recruitment and engagement was a major priority this year. We began the year with a kick-off event in January, which brought together volunteers and trustees for a day of sharing ideas, learning, and spending social time together in-person for the first time since the pandemic.

Once that event was delivered and our existing volunteers were engaged, we moved towards an intense recruitment drive. Steps to do this included:

- Presenting at local community meetings such as the Quakers Regional Conference and the Lincoln Rotary Club;
- Presentations to local churches and meetings with leaders in the local area;
- Advertising our volunteering opportunities through online platforms, such as Voluntary Centre Services
- Conducting leaflet drops to 250 households in local neighbourhoods;
- Operating a stall at Bishop Grosseteste University's Freshers Fayre; and
- Attending the Nottingham Green Festival.

As a result, MMS recruited 8 new volunteer visitors throughout 2023.

Volunteers are kept engaged by our Project Coordinator, who runs regular volunteer meetings to share best practice and provide peer support to visitors. 7 volunteer meetings were conducted this year.

Our trustee board remains strong, with 5 active trustees who help out with day-to-day activities alongside their strategic responsibilities.

Visits

MMS ran 31 drop-in sessions at Swinderby RSTHF this year. These began in earnest in March, after many of our offers to come earlier in the year were turned down due to the centre being empty. By the end of the year, our drop-ins were usually happening twice weekly.

At each visit, we sought to offer our services to every individual currently detained at the

centre. Given the transient nature of a short-term holding facility, this varied significantly depending on the day. The number of individuals detained at Swinderby in a single day ranged from 22 men to just one.

Throughout the year, we supported 166 men from a range of nationalities. This support took a variety of forms, ranging from a friendly chat to providing money for phone use, contacting legal support, referrals to other charities for support to action planning.

Training

Alongside volunteer recruitment and retention, training to ensure that our visitors were equipped to deal with the particularities of working in a short-term context was critical this year.

All of our new volunteers received training delivered by the Project Coordinator, who delivered three training sessions this year.

Support continues as our volunteers adapt to visiting in a RSTHF. Each new volunteer shadows our Project Coordinator for a first visit, while remaining in regular contact with the Project Coordinator and peer visitors, who share advice and best practice.

We also appointed a Safeguarding Lead amongst our trustee team, who took a specialised external training course on safeguarding practices and has ensured that our safeguarding policy is up-to-date.

Organisational Profile

MMS has continued to raise the profile of the organisation and its mission, particularly as we adjust to this next chapter of our work.

In regards to our profile, the most significant project we undertook this year was a rebrand. Our previous name, Morton Hall Visitors Group, was beginning to cause confusion amongst clients and staff as we offered our services at the Swinderby RSTHF. Following consultation with members and trustees, we relaunched in October as Midlands Migrant Support with the aim of accurately summarising our work, while still giving room to grow and expand our services.

The new name was coupled with a new website, engineered by our Project Coordinator, which can be found at midsmigrantsupport.org. We similarly relaunched on Twitter.

Partnership Work

Much of our partnership work has occurred throughout the AVID network. We continue to

enjoy good relations with AVID, who act as a consortium for visitor groups across the immigration detention NGO community in the UK. Highlights of this work include:

- Attending a 2 day conference with an opportunity to network, identifying ways of working in solidarity with people in immigration detention, and how to approach some of the challenges we face.
- Joining monthly member calls with other immigration detention visiting groups across the country;
- Receiving peer support from other groups as we prepare to offer our services in a prison environment; and
- Taking advantage of training opportunities offered by AVID.

Beyond AVID, we have continued membership of Clinks.

A significant new piece of partnership work this year was joining The Scampton Alliance. In response to news that the local Scampton RAF base was being repurposed to house asylum seekers, The Scampton Alliance brings together local community groups from across the region whose services might benefit Scampton's residents. Our involvement includes attending regular meetings and feeding into an exercise to set the group's Charter and terms of reference. We hope to build on these foundations in 2024.

Organisation Development

Our organisation development work continued in the background this year. This included further efforts to professionalise the charity's operations, including drafting a risk register.

We also drafted and adopted more operation policies, from a whistleblowing policy to a privacy notice.

Fundraising

Grants received in 2023 comprised £5,000 from the Evan Cornish Foundation, £550 from The Marsh Charitable Trust and £9,998 from the National Lottery Fund.

5. Trustees' report

The trustees for the year ending 31st December 2023 and up to and including the date the report was approved were:

Name	Position	Dates
Carey Roach	Chair	Appointed March 2022
Cassandra Taylor	Treasurer	Co-Opted September 2022
Christopher Leaman	Trustee	Appointed March 2021 Resigned March 2023
Bethan Godley	Trustee	Co-Opted July 2022
Clara Della Croce	Trustee	Co-Opted August 2022
Erika Loggin	Trustee	Co-Opted October 2022

Charity number

Charity number 1174056. The charity was registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 1 August 2017.

Registered and principal address

Transform Lincoln
Bridge Central, Portland Street
Lincoln
LN5 7NN

Our registered and principal address was updated with The Charity Commission in January 2024. Our previous address, used throughout 2023, was:

The Sycamore Centre
33A Hungerhill Road
Nottingham
NG3 4NB

Bankers

CAF Bank Ltd
25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling

Kent
ME19 4JQ

Structure, governance and management

MMS is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation that is governed by a constitution adopted on the 1 August 2017

Method of recruitment and appointment of trustees

The trustees of the charity are appointed by the members at the AGM.

Our objectives

For the public benefit, to relieve the needs of people in detention in the East Midlands who are suffering financial hardship, distress or are otherwise in need by providing emotional support, advocacy and practical support, particularly through - but not limited to - the provision of a trained visiting network.

Our main activities

1. Through a network of trained volunteers, we visit and support people in detention in the Midlands, whether held indefinitely under immigration powers or non-British nationals who are serving custodial sentences.
2. We advocate for the rights of detained people and raise public awareness about their plight, as well as the broader legal situation for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

Public Benefit Statement

Our main activities and who we aim to help are described above. All our charitable activities are focused on supporting people in detention and are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the public benefit.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities, our Trustees have given serious consideration to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit and in particular the prevention and relief of need.

Achievements and performance

Please see Section 4 for a summary of our achievements and performance in 2022.

Financial Review

We started the year with £6,229 in the bank. The net receipts for the year were £15,569.47 and the net payments were £17,040.64, including £1,127.78 in liabilities, which were payments due following the end of the 2023 calendar year that have now all been made. Grants received in 2023 comprised £5,000 from the Evan Cornish Foundation, £550 from The Marsh Charitable Trust and £9,998 from the National Lottery Fund. We also received £21.47 in interest from our bank account. At the end of the year, our closing balance was £4,758.20,

with a further £112 in petty cash.

The main item of expenditure was staff wages, which totalled £11,303.32. For most of the year, we employed two part-time members of staff, but dropped down to just one in September.

Other significant items of expenditure were travel and expenses for both staff and volunteers, which came to £1,859.50. We continued to employ a bookkeeper to handle our accounts and pay for a monthly payroll service, totalling £1,020.40 in professional fees.

Reserves Policy

Last year, we adopted a 'reserves policy' which sought to ensure sufficient reserves are maintained to cover the winding up costs should it be desirable or necessary to cease activity. These will be sufficient to cover staff redundancies, rent and utility costs and any professional fees likely to be incurred. The reserves target has been met for 2023.

Signed on behalf of the trustees:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carey Roach', written in a cursive style.

Carey Roach

Chair

Signed: 25th April 2024

6. Independent Examiner's Report

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of:

Morton Hall Visitors Group/Midlands Migrant Support, Registered Charity number 1174056

The Sycamore Centre, 33A Hungerhill Road, St Anns, Nottingham NG3 4NB

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of Morton Hall Visitors Group (also known as Midlands Migrant Support), for the year ended 31 December 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible but not required, to be subject to an independent examination, it is my responsibility to examine the accounts 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 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 giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts did not accord with those records; or
3. 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:

Carly Bell
XEMPL0000019288
Simpson Accounting and Payroll Services
Antrim Road
Lincoln
LN5 8TF

7. Receipts and Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2023

				2023			2022
Receipts							
	Donations			0			0
	Grants			15,548			7,000
		Evan Cornish Foundation	5,000		ICS	5,000	
		National Lottery Fund	9,998		Allen Lane Foundation	2,000	
		Marsh Charitable Trust	550				
	Interest received			21.47			7
Total receipts				15,569.47			7,007
Payments							
	Wages, NI, Pensions & Payroll		11,303.32			6,662.58	
	Bank charges		60			81	
	Insurance		409.37			396.93	
	Office/Phones/Website		78.25			158.27	
	Visitors Travel/Expenses		321.29			190.02	
	Staff Travel/Expenses		1,538.21			268.2	
	Membership/Subscriptions		104.39			36	
	Publicity		1,077.63			100	
	Equipment		0			0	
	Events		0			35	
	Professional fees		1,020.40			285	
	Liabilities		1,127.78				

Total payments				17,040.64			8,213
Surplus				-1,471.17			-1,206
Statement of Assets and Liabilities				2023			2022
	Cash in bank			4,758.20			6,229
	Cash in hand			112			112
Total				4,870.20			6,341
	Represented by bank balance b/f			6,229.37			7,435
	Cash in hand b/f			112			112
	Surplus income over expenditure			-1,471.17			-1,206
Total				4,870.20			6,341

Notes

Publicity payments

In line with international reporting standards, this section also includes £182 spent on booking venues for events. The rest of the payments recorded in this section were to print posters and leaflets to distribute at the centres we operate in, to advertise our services.

Basis of accounting

The trustees have taken advantage of section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 and have prepared the accounts on a receipts and payments basis.

Taxation

As a registered charity the organisation benefits from rates relief and is generally exempt from income tax and capital gains tax but not from VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is included in the cost of those items to which it relates.