

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Registered Charity Number 1177624



Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts 2023-2024

OUR REFLECTIONS

This year was one of growth for us, with a settled team and an increase to five staff roles, we had the opportunity to promote welcome and inclusion across Swindon.

The support of our incredible volunteers and Trustees, dedicating over 750+ hours of volunteering, was invaluable and meant that we continued to expand our work.

We welcomed back our Sectors and Awards Co-ordinator, who led the way in working widely across different sectors in Swindon to promote our values. In the latter part of the year, we welcomed our Schools' Co-ordinator, who continued to generate opportunities for Swindon schools to grow, learn and provide welcome to all. With a newly expanded team, we were able to increase our capacity and develop our work with greater focus. This meant more events in the community where we continued working to educate and raise awareness around the experiences of people seeking sanctuary in Swindon. Our work in schools grew, contacting more than 26 schools in different contexts, with the pinnacle being Lawn Manor Academy becoming Swindon's second School of Sanctuary, and first secondary school to achieve the award. *We're Open* social evenings continued to offer a welcoming space, with 365 individual visits, all with the aim of bringing our community together through conversation and coffee. We saw a need for spaces for families with young children, so launched *We're Open Families* which grew from strength to strength with 544 visits in ten months.

The increase in negative media rhetoric, harmful policies and legislation fed into a more hostile environment for people seeking sanctuary and became a barrier to our vision of fostering welcome. We increased our campaigning, focusing on local issues with MPs and Councillors, and nationally, the Bibby Stockholm, joining the voices calling for fair and safer accommodation for those in need. While the asylum system remains unfair and isolating, we saw a continued positive response from the people of Swindon wanting to support people fleeing from war and persecution, alongside an increase in schools, organisations and businesses wanting to work with us and to champion our values.

"Welcome" remained our word of the year. This year, like every year, welcome remained the thread that weaves throughout all our work; we focused on supporting other organisations to embed this within their work too.

As we navigated the challenges of the year, we found solace in all those who unfalteringly supported and embraced our purpose. To all those who work to create welcome, make space for all and speak up for sanctuary, we thank you for being a part of this journey.

OUR IMPACT – THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

- 1 School of Sanctuary Award
- 365 visits to *We're Open*
- 30 volunteers supporting our work
- 6 schools directly connected with our work
- 120+ events in the community
- 2 creative collaborations with Swindon organisations
- 750+ hours of volunteering
- 544 visits to *We're Open Families*
- 3 campaigns promoting the rights of people seeking sanctuary
- 7 CPD sessions in schools

- 2 additional languages regularly used for translating materials, making them accessible to the community
- 2 volunteers with lived experience of seeking sanctuary
- 10 volunteers with lived experience of migration

TRUSTEES' NOTE

It's been another year of change and as we remain hugely grateful to our funders who enable us to undertake our work, and to the wonderful people of our local community in Swindon who encourage and support our work, it's quite clear that what we do is now more necessary than ever. Instability and war are ever present across the globe and the mass displacement of people due to conflict does not look as though it will subside for the foreseeable.

We have taken huge strides this year to expand our impact. A focal point has been creating spaces where the community feels welcomed – with the launch of *We're Open Families* we are providing opportunities for families to meet, build a support network and work to decrease isolation and increase community links. This year our Sectors of Sanctuary works expanded into multiple sectors and it has been fantastic to see the involvement from different organisations to promote change within their work.

We would like to thank the National Lottery Community Fund for their ongoing support and guidance, as well as Wiltshire Community Foundation, South Swindon Parish Council, Co-op Communities Fund, Respond & Adapt, Postcode Local Trust, Nationwide and Magic Little Grants for their invaluable funding contributions.

This year, the political narrative around seeking sanctuary and migration has become ever more polarised. We will continue to speak to and work with all in our local community, including local MPs and Councillors from all political parties, as we endeavour to make our community safe, welcoming, and inclusive for all.

CHARITABLE OBJECTS

Swindon City of Sanctuary is a registered charity (with CIO status) in Swindon, we seek to build a culture of welcome, inclusion and support for everyone in Swindon, with a focus on people who are seeking sanctuary from war and persecution.

Our work focuses on celebrating our diverse town. We do this by bringing people and organisations together, raising awareness and campaigning for fairness and inclusivity.

Our Charitable Objects are:

- To advance the education of the public in general, especially in Swindon, about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.
- To provide, or assist in the provision of, facilities and activities for recreation or other leisure time occupations, in the interests of social welfare, with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities

- The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit, by promoting activities to foster understanding and engagement between people from diverse backgrounds
- The prevention and relief of poverty

OUR VALUES

Trust: We understand that those we support and collaborate with deserve and expect our trustworthiness in the ways we work and the decisions we take. We are open and approachable and take safeguarding seriously in personal and confidential matters.

Inclusive: Being inclusive is essential in our work and for us this means we begin with consideration and care in each individual encounter. We support each person with lived experience of seeking sanctuary in a consultative, empowering and respectful way, showing encouragement and patience. We actively and equally value the contribution that all of our staff, volunteers, trustees and those who benefit make and involve them meaningfully in decisions about our work.

Objective: Our kindness is not lessened by our objectivity and clarity, which are important in the way that we conduct our work internally and externally. We are non-judgmental, fair and focused. We ensure to work ethically in all we do and who we work with, as well as considering our environmental impact as a charity.

Informed: Across our organisation we stay informed and knowledgeable of the circumstances and laws affecting people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary, and the issues around hate crime locally. We use our knowledge and awareness proactively to challenge preconceptions, to share knowledge across Swindon and to help create better understanding between us all.

Inspirational: We use our creativity and innovation to make our expressions, our connections and our outreach work as educational and inspirational as they can be. We hope to inspire others to actively help make Swindon a welcoming place for all who live here. We believe in generous leadership and that the best work relies on different experiences and perspectives. We seek out the best ideas, wherever they come from.

Positive & Committed: We are strongly committed to work, educate and campaign in a responsible, coordinated and strategic way. We aim to focus on the positive, overcoming challenges and hostility by finding common ground. We respond with activities that bring our community together and enable us to listen and learn from each other, in order to break down stereotypes and resentment driven by fear.

SECTORS AND AWARDS

People seeking sanctuary experience high levels of hate crime, racism and prejudice which can lead to people feeling isolated within their communities. To combat this, we work to bring people and organisations together to raise awareness and increase understanding about seeking sanctuary and migration. One of the ways we do this is through our Sanctuary Awards programme, where we collaborate with organisations to promote welcome and

sanctuary within their contexts. The Sectors of Sanctuary Awards are awareness raising programmes that give a platform to the voices of people seeking sanctuary so that they can be heard by those who might otherwise never hear them.

The awards are grounded in three core principles: Learn, Embed, and Share.

- **LEARN:** we encourage individuals and organisations to learn about the experiences and challenges faced by those seeking sanctuary. This involves deepening understanding, dismantling stereotypes, and fostering empathy.
- **EMBED:** we work to embed practices that support people seeking sanctuary in every aspect of our community, from housing and education to health and employment.
- **SHARE:** we aim to share positive stories of sanctuary, celebrating contributions made by people seeking sanctuary and amplifying their voices.

This year, we worked in three sectors:

BOROUGH OF SANCTUARY

In September, the Swindon Borough Council Cabinet voted to start the process of becoming a Borough of Sanctuary. What does this mean in practice?

- It's a formal awards process that recognises and rewards good practice and progress in promoting welcome.
- It recognises a borough-wide commitment, signalling to people seeking sanctuary that Swindon is a place where they will find safety, opportunity, and community.
- It promotes a whole council approach to embedding 'welcome' and 'sanctuary' in the services they offer.
- It's also an opportunity to work in partnership with other councils and boroughs across the UK who share similar values.

Since the full Council motion in September, Swindon Borough Council has been working towards gaining their award by forming a Steering Group to choose the direction of the work. This work has included working with local groups, charities and people with lived experience. This award will take up to 18 months to achieve, we welcome and commend Swindon Borough Council's commitment to promoting welcome and setting an example for other communities to follow.

LIBRARY OF SANCTUARY

Public libraries play an important role in welcoming people seeking sanctuary in our communities. The Library of Sanctuary award recognises and celebrates the libraries that go above and beyond to show solidarity and welcome. Throughout the years, Swindon Central Library has supported our work, and we were delighted when we began discussions about gaining Library of Sanctuary status. This year, initial work began to identify what was already happening that could contribute to the award and consider and outline areas where welcome and inclusion could be embedded.

ARTS OF SANCTUARY

The Arts play a vital role in creating a culture of welcome, challenging the status quo and shaping the kind of society we hope to live in. Art and creativity can inspire new ways of thinking and feeling, helping ordinary people understand the realities for those making

difficult journeys. Arts Stream of Sanctuary is all about celebrating the arts organisations working with refugees, telling stories of migration and bringing communities together. Our Pilot programme sees Create Studios pave the way for the first Swindon Arts organisation to work towards their award. This year, Create Studios signed the pledge to show their affiliation as a City of Sanctuary Supporting Organisation and work began on curating their application.

Our Sectors work has been made possible by an award from National Lottery Community Fund.

WE'RE OPEN FAMILIES

This year, in Refugee Week we launched *We're Open Families* - a space for families in Swindon to come together, make connections and celebrate the languages and rich culture of the town. Swindon has a large population of families who have migrated here and are looking to make connections and build a community. *We're Open Families* was developed with this in mind, to create a space where families could meet with a focus on literacy and play. Each session focuses on a different theme – nature, food, countries of the world – and features a crafting activity, story time and singing circle. The themes spark conversations about what makes us different and what brings us together. The fortnightly sessions provide an opportunity for families to learn more about other families in our community and make bonds with others. Families are actively encouraged to participate in the sessions – sharing stories and songs from their home countries in their home languages is especially successful and enjoyable. Our *We're Open Families* library events are also an opportunity to collaborate with organisations wanting to meet with families to hear their thoughts, offer signposts to services and make connections with communities in Swindon. This year we collaborated with two organisations. In the first year, we ran 21 sessions, with over 15 languages spoken, building a community who regularly attend each session.

“I absolutely enjoyed each session. It was great to see parents and children enjoying the process of creating, and working together to create”

21 sessions

544 total visits

295 children

249 parents and carers

15 + languages spoken

WE'RE OPEN COMMUNITY EVENINGS

We're Open community evenings celebrated running for seven years in the community, with 365 individual visits. *We're Open's* purpose is for those who attend to feel welcomed, to decrease the isolation and loneliness felt by many and create a community where those who are new to Swindon feel able to build a life here.

As a Home Office dispersal town, Swindon has a large community of people seeking sanctuary with many living in hotels and it is more important than ever to provide spaces where people feel safe, valued and included. The current asylum system is not a fair one. It builds barriers which seek to create an “*us versus them*” narrative. We work to create spaces where local residents and people seeking sanctuary can meet and make connections,

with the aim of breaking down barriers and celebrating our differences in the essence of cultural diversity.

We ran 50 sessions over the course of the year, with seven local musicians providing wonderful entertainment throughout the year. A highlight was our Refugee Week BBQ with 35 visitors sharing food, music and conversation. We could not do what we do at *We're Open* without the support of our brilliant, dedicated volunteers who gave 378 hours of volunteering to the project.

"I feel happy when I come and meet people. We like playing games and beating the volunteers at chess!"

50 evening sessions

365 visits to *We're Open*

378 hours of volunteering

FAMILY ACTIVITY BOXES (FABs)

One way we support welcome and inclusion in the community is through our *FAB Fusion* boxes. They are specially designed to support teaching staff in their spoken and written literacy work with children from multilingual families, who are proficient in their home languages but new to English. The children may have recently arrived in the UK having fled danger in their home countries; some may be caught in the complexities of the asylum system. The purpose of the boxes is for children to feel supported and nurtured. The resources in each *FAB Fusion* box invite children to play, read and learn together.

Fusion means realising that embracing and celebrating our differences can connect us and bring us together without losing our individual identities. FABs are loaned out to schools at no cost; schools can borrow up to three boxes for at least one term. They help embrace and celebrate cultural diversity and to build partnerships with parents, families and carers. This year, our FABs Co-ordinator developed six themes using her lived experience of seeking sanctuary to create powerful resources with a story. The six themes are:

- Cultural Diversity
- Emotions
- Environment
- Journeys
- Welcome
- Home

"The resources are beautiful and so well organised, I can see much time and effort, plus love, has been put into it all."

This work has been made possible by an award from Postcode Local Trust, a grant giving charity funded entirely by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

SPEAK UP FOR SANCTUARY

As a campaigning and awareness raising organisation, education of the community remained at the forefront of our work. With the rise in negative and divisive rhetoric surrounding the experiences of people seeking sanctuary, it was more important than ever

to speak up for sanctuary and to call others to do the same. We used email and social media campaigns to keep the community updated on current events and legislation including campaigning for the closure of the Bibby Stockholm.

Together With Refugees

One again this year, *Together With Refugees* was our main campaigning focus. *Fill the Skies with Hope* campaign involved sending to Members of Parliament, orange heart-shaped paper planes, filled with messages of love, welcome and hope for a fairer system. It presented a great way to engage the community with the issues facing people seeking sanctuary, to listen to others' opinions and to challenge misinformation. We worked with local schools, held events in the community, promoted via social media and encouraged as many people as possible to join in writing messages of welcome and understand the importance of showing welcome to people who are new to Swindon.

SANCTUARY IN THE COMMUNITY

Before the local council elections in May 2023, we called on all parties to publicly pledge their commitment to Swindon becoming a Borough of Sanctuary. In September 2023, the new Cabinet voted to start the process of becoming a Borough of Sanctuary. This will see Swindon Borough Council join a movement of local authorities, around the country, working to create a culture of welcome, inclusion and empowerment for people seeking sanctuary. This is a welcomed and positive move towards embedding welcome widely throughout services in Swindon.

In the lead up to the 2024 national elections, we wrote to all prospective candidates to meet and discuss their position on migration, seeking sanctuary and welcome. We met with Sir Robert Buckland in November and Heidi Alexander in February, both were positive meetings where we asked what they are doing to counter negative public and media perceptions and increase welcome. We discussed Bibby Stockholm, with increased concerns that some people seeking sanctuary in Swindon would be moved there. Bibby Stockholm is Home Office accommodation with documented outbreaks of disease, mistreatment and increased poor mental health for those housed there. A friend of SCoS with lived experience of seeking sanctuary put it best, *"People forced to move there are looking for two things: community and safety. The residents want to meet other residents which will be difficult in the cramped conditions as the barge approaches capacity. They want to meet local people and to become part of a community. This will be almost impossible."* We continue to call for safe, fair accommodation.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Our work focuses on awareness raising and education of the community around the experience of people seeking sanctuary in Swindon. Throughout the year, we met with members of the community in different settings to promote welcome and foster discussions about why diversity is so important.

Refugee Week 2023

Refugee Week is an important moment for us to celebrate the contribution of people seeking sanctuary in the UK and promote better understanding of why people seek sanctuary. It's an opportunity to create a programme of arts, cultural and educational events and activities that embody that year's theme. With Compassion as this year's theme, we led a series of events, open to all who wanted to join. The first, Compassion in Action

Exhibition at Swindon HUB which showcased art by people with lived experience of seeking sanctuary, and contributions from the local community including poems from students at Lawn Manor Academy and art from the community.

“I greatly enjoyed contributing 3 pieces of art called Compassion Entwined. The twine used in these pieces represents the strength of working together. Each piece shows how compassion towards others builds stronger communities.”

The rest of the celebrations included opportunities for the public to get creative and participate. The launch of *We're Open Families* at Swindon Central Library had arts, crafts and stalls, recipe exchanges and Arabic dual-language story time, while the BBQ at *We're Open* focused on music and shared conversations. It was a fantastic week filled with celebration, awareness raising and joy. “Compassion is inclusion”

Celebration of Welcomes– Lawn Manor Academy

For a third year running, Lawn Manor Academy hosted Swindon's *Celebration of Welcomes* evening in Refugee Week. Following an introduction about their role by some of the school's Welcome Ambassadors, the audience of invited VIPs in the community, family, friends and staff were treated to brilliant dance, music and poetry performances from Lawn Manor Academy students. There was a delicious array of world food tasters too, representing the exciting cultural diversity of Lawn Manor Academy. A small exhibition introducing Swindon City of Sanctuary and featuring School of Sanctuary work at Peatmoor Primary School, was also on display.

SCHOOLS

Our work in schools continued to be one of our greatest successes and has grown from strength to strength - it's been a busy year for our Swindon schools!

School of Sanctuary Awards

School of Sanctuary awards are grounded in three core principles: Learn, Embed, and Share and make up a large portion of our Awards work. We are delighted to share that Lawn Manor Academy became Swindon's first secondary school to achieve their School of Sanctuary Award in July 2023. As part of the progress our Schools' Volunteer Lead trained a small group to be the formal Appraisal Panel to consider the application including Councillor Adorabelle Shaikh, Swindon Borough Council Cabinet Member: Education and SEND. We thank all Panel members for their support and commitment. Head of PSHE and School of Sanctuary Lead Staff Member commented, “*Now that the school has been officially recognised as a School of Sanctuary ... the staff and Welcome Ambassadors would like to see Lawn Manor Academy work towards being recognised as a Centre of Best Practice for Welcome and Inclusion in Swindon.*”

Sharing of cultural diversity is very much in the ethos at Lawn Manor. Their *Celebration of Welcomes* evening, now in its third year, is a more formal event bringing people together from beyond the immediate school community. Lawn Manor key staff have developed a programme of welcome in their school calendar. Culture Days are part of this calendar. These days feature students and staff wearing traditional dress from their home countries, which provides an opportunity to share languages, stories, food, music and culture. Having

appointed 50+ Welcome Ambassadors with some taking on lead roles, the school shows its continued commitment to the greater responsibility of promoting the values of a School of Sanctuary both in the school and in our community.

Throughout the year, work began and continued, with two more secondary schools and one primary school preparing to put together formal applications for their School of Sanctuary Award in 2024-2025.

In October we led Swindon Schools of Sanctuary Pilot Scheme Review with Peatmoor Primary School, looking at how the process could be adapted to make gaining a School of Sanctuary Award as simple and accessible as possible.

While we worked closely with six Swindon schools, 26 schools received our Swindon Schools of Sanctuary Network News Updates throughout the year. We welcome schools to work with us in many different capacities, not just through our Schools of Sanctuary Awards programme.

CONNECTIONS IN EDUCATION

We spent the year welcoming new and well-embedded connections within the education sector in Swindon. We welcome working with any place of education wanting to find ways to embed and promote welcome and inclusion into their work.

Swindon New College

In September, we attended Swindon New College Freshers' Fair, where we shared with the students our campaigns and highlighted ways in which they could be empowered to use their voices and speak up for sanctuary. We had a good response from the young people, signing up to learn more about our work.

Supporting Teaching Colleagues through CPD

Our Schools' team ran 7 CPD sessions (Workshops and Meetings) over the course of the year. In June and July, we provided two whole staff CPD sessions at Peatmoor School. These Workshops and Meetings enabled colleagues attending to disseminate the information gained to the wider school community.

Primary and Secondary Schools PSHE Network

Our Schools of Sanctuary Team was invited to present at both the Primary and Secondary Schools PSHE Network Meetings, in January and February 2024. Engaging directly with a wider range of schools was an opportunity to expand our small network of schools committed to promoting welcome and belonging in their settings.

SEND Leaders' Conference

Volunteer Schools of Sanctuary Lead and FAB Fusion Co-ordinator ran a stall at this event, where the theme was *Resilience and Beyond*. Broadening Swindon City of Sanctuary's reach and visibility was a key priority of the day. Our stall invited conference delegates to learn about our work with a particular focus on the new development of Phase 3 of the FABs: *FAB Fusion*. The Conference was attended by 100+ delegates; throughout the day,

approximately 50% of delegates stopped to talk with us. More than 10 delegates signed up to be kept in touch with our work.

Refugee Week 2023

In 2023, we connected with four schools leading up to, and during, Refugee Week 20th-26th June. Following a workshop of ideas led by Volunteer Schools of Sanctuary Lead in March 2023, each of the schools followed their own projects around the RW theme of *Compassion in Action*. These included, poetry and art competitions, assemblies and PSHE lessons. Some of this work was shared at the successful and moving *Celebration of Welcomes* event hosted by Lawn Manor Academy and attended by over 100 guests.

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

This year, we worked in coproduction with some of Swindon's great creative and community organisations.

Voices of Welcome – a Conference for Young Campaigners and Changemakers aged 10-18 years. This Conference emerged from a fertile seed of an idea as a result of both Swindon's nationally accredited Schools of Sanctuary having successfully created groups of young people, Welcome Ambassadors, keen to be advocates, allies, campaigners and changemakers for promoting and developing the culture of welcome, inclusion and belonging already clearly established in their school settings. In collaboration with *Create Studios* the conference led to two inspirational campaigning sessions for the Welcome Ambassadors, which focused on how to use digital media for maximum impact, and offering to follow-up with film-making support for the Welcome campaigns that emerged from the Conference. Other campaigning support at the Conference came from the *Send My Friend* Campaigning Lead, Rebekah Lucking, who inspired the Welcome Ambassadors in her sessions to think big and campaign with passion. 18 young people attended, creating powerful and passionate campaign ideas. Thank you to Create Studios for their in kind support making the conference happen.

Stitch Your Story

We were delighted to collaborate with local Artist Jo Beal and Create Studios on the opportunity to reflect on our personal histories within the context of Swindon and our place within our home town. We were one of eight community groups creating a large-scale banner that visually represented elements of each of our Swindon stories, which were further explored through short filmed interviews collated by the Create Studios' team. It was an opportunity for us to discuss what Swindon means to us, and the positive impact of migration in Swindon. Over fifteen Swindon City of Sanctuary staff, volunteers, friends and visitors contributed to the banner, leading to a wonderful piece of art that celebrates the rich diversity and stories of Swindon. The event was open to the public as part of the Heritage Open Days trail.

WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Our volunteers are at the heart of the charity, we simply could not do what we do without them. Our team of 30 volunteers support at our community events, with Sectors of Sanctuary work and with fundraising events. All new volunteers meet with our Volunteer

Coordinator and take part in training before attending sessions. Our training provides a safe space to talk about language, rights and the politics of migration. Volunteers are given advice on how to approach negative narratives and conversations about migration and seeking sanctuary. We ensure we have the highest standards of safeguarding, health and safety, and hygiene.

This year, volunteers worked on a variety of projects: supporting our community events; organising BBQs; exploring opportunities to collaborate with other organisations. We cannot thank our wonderful volunteers enough – their compassion, empathy and desire to promote welcome inspires us every day!

"I have been a volunteer for Swindon City of Sanctuary since it began seven years ago. The ethos of welcome and inclusion within the local community and celebrating its diversity is at the heart of what we do. Working on projects that encourage this generosity of spirit is, for me, very rewarding."

Volunteer figures

- Volunteers – 30
- Volunteer hours – 750+
- Volunteers with lived experience of seeking sanctuary – 3
- Volunteers with lived experience of migration – 8

IN THE NEWS

It was a busy year for us in the local and national media. We are grateful that the majority of coverage we received, was positive and in support of our work. Not only has this coverage aided in highlighting our work and promoting welcome, but it has also contributed to increasing awareness around the issues faced by people seeking sanctuary in Swindon.

BBC - <https://www.statewatch.org/news/2023/may/uk-joint-civil-society-solidarity-statement-on-the-illegal-migration-bill/>

Swindon Link - <https://swindonlink.com/news/sanctuary-welcome/>

Swindon Link - <https://swindonlink.com/news/city-sanctuary/>

Swindon Link - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-66877977>

Swindon Advertiser - <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/23796763.swindon-council-cabinet-set-approve-refugee-sanctuary-network/>

Swindon Advertiser - <https://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/news/23818450.refugees-know-safe-see-dmj-tower/>

While we have been lucky to experience overwhelmingly positive support for our work, negative comments and opinions shared online show that we still have a substantial journey ahead in order to ensure that all feel welcome. We do not let a small minority of negative voices impact our work or sway our vision, but these instances highlight the need for our work to continue in the current divisive political landscape. We will continue to bridge divides and continue to encourage the community to support people seeking sanctuary.

THANK YOU

Our work relies on the generous support from donors and grants. We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all who help us plan for the future through monthly direct debits.

We are continually grateful that the funding from the National Lottery Community Fund grant, now in its third year, allows us to carry on with our work.

A special thank you to the charitable funds and trusts outlined in the financial statement - without your support, we simply would not be able to achieve all the incredible things listed in our report.

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1177624

Report of the Trustees and
Unaudited Financial Statements For The Year Ended 30 April 2024
for
Swindon City of Sanctuary

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Contents of the Financial Statements
For year ended 30 April 2024

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Swindon City of Sanctuary
Report of the Trustees
For year ended 30 April 2024

The Trustees are pleased to present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 30 April 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out on page nine of the attached financial statements and comply with the charity's trust deed, the Charities Act 2011, regulations applicable to that Act, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), effective from accounting periods commencing 1st January 2015 or later.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Charity number

1177624

Principal address

Voluntary Action Swindon
1 John Street
Swindon
Wiltshire
SN1 1RT

Trustees

J Vertannes (Chair) – appointed Apr 2024

I Howard

S Juul (Treasurer)

B Mannu

M Lubanda

C Bennett

R Newman – resigned May 2024

K Hudson – resigned Feb 2024

B Jackson (Chair)- resigned Feb 2024

Bankers

Metro
One Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA

Coop Plc
PO Box 250
Skelmersdale
WN8 6WT

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Report of the Trustees
For year ended 30 April 2024

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The charity is controlled by its governing document dated 6th March 2018 and constitutes a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

Trustees are generally volunteers although some are contacted and recruited through other charitable organisations.

New trustees are requested to provide details of their key skills and competencies, which are used to complete a skills matrix for the entire board; this serves to inform training plans and to identify how best to deploy their skills in the service of the charity, and to identify skills gaps across the board. The charity holds strategy days and various workshops to inform trustees in respect of their roles.

Organisational structure

The trustees are ultimately responsible for the policies, activities and assets of the charity. They meet regularly to review developments with regards to the charity, its activities and to make any important decisions. When necessary, the trustees seek advice and support from the charity's professional advisers.

Risk management

In line with the requirement for trustees to undertake a risk assessment exercise and report on the same in their annual report, the trustees have looked at the risks. The trustees have identified five main areas where risks may occur and considered how they might mitigate against them:

Governance and management risk looks at the risk the charity might suffer from the lack of direction, the skills and training of the trustees and the good use of its funds.

- **Operational risk** looks at the risk inherent in the charity's activities including continuity of staff, lack of a disaster recovery policy, etc.
- **Financial risk** includes those arising as a result of poor budgetary control, inappropriate spending, poor accounting, etc.
- **Reputational risk** looks at the possible damage to the charity's reputation, through association with unsuitable charities, or with inappropriate activity.
- **Laws, regulations, external and environmental risk** looks at the effects of government policies and the consequences of non-compliance with the laws and regulations.

Having assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular to its finances, the trustees believe that by monitoring reserve levels, by ensuring that controls exist over the key financial systems, and by examining the operational and business risks faced by the charity, they have established effective systems to mitigate those risks.

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Report of the Trustees
For year ended 30 April 2024

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

- To advance the education of the public in general, especially in Swindon, about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum;
- To provide or assist in the provision of facilities and activities for recreation or other leisure time occupations in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities;
- The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit by promoting activities to foster understanding and engagement between people from diverse backgrounds; and
- The prevention and relief of poverty amongst those granted refugee status and those seeking asylum in Swindon.
- Public benefit;
- The charity promotes activities to foster understanding and engagement between people from diverse backgrounds in order to fulfil its public benefit obligations.

Public Benefit

In setting the charity's objectives and planning its activities the trustees have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

The trustees will maintain adequate reserves to cover grant commitments and budgeted costs for the current financial year and maintain an appropriate budget for future years to cover longer term grant commitments.

Financial Summary

Income for the year was £63,479 (2023 £49,191). Expenditure amounted to £97,194 (2023 £37,999). As a result, for the year ended 30th April 2024 there was a deficit of £33,715 (2023 surplus £11,192).

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Report of the Trustees
For year ended 30 April 2024

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES


The trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the income and expenditure of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable United Kingdom Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts; and
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, applicable Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations and the provisions of the charity's trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD:


Howard on behalf of the Trustees

Date: 20/02/25

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Statement of Financial Activities
For year ended 30 April 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund	2024 Total Fund	2023 Total Fund
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies		3,809	59,670	63,479	49,191
Total		3,809	59,670	63,479	49,191
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable Activities					
Support for Sanctuary seekers		12,994	84,199	97,194	37,998
NET INCOME		(9,185)	(24,530)	(33,715)	11,193
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total Funds brought forward		10,942	57,283	68,225	57,032
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		1,757	32,753	34,510	68,225

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Balance Sheet
As at 30 April 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund	2024 Total Fund	2023 Total Fund
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets:		-	-	-	-
TOTAL FIXED ASSETS		-	-	-	-
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors:		-	-	-	-
Cash at bank:		1,757	32,753	34,510	68,225
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		1,757	32,753	34,510	68,225
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year:		-	-	-	-
NET CURRENT ASSETS		1,757	32,753	34,510	68,225
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year:		-	-	-	-
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		-	-	-	-
FUNDS	6 & 7				
Unrestricted Funds				1,757	10,942
Restricted Funds				32,753	57,283
TOTAL FUNDS				34,510	68,225

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 14/01/2025 and were signed on its behalf by:


I Howard (on behalf of the Trustees)

20/02/25

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Notes to the Accounts
For year ended 30 April 2024

1. Accounting policies

Basis of preparation

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objectives of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Income & Expense Account on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Notes to the Accounts
For year ended 30 April 2024

2. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no Trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 30 April 2024 nor for the year ended 30 April 2023.

Trustees' expenses

There were no Trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 30 April 2024 nor for the year ended 31 April 2023.

3. STAFF

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
Administration	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>

No employees received emoluments in excess of £60,000

4. LOANS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Bank overdraft	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Notes to the Accounts
For year ended 30 April 2024

5. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	O/Balance Total Fund	Incoming resources	Resources expensed	C/Balance Total Fund
UNRESTRICTED				
General Fund	10,942	3,809	(12,994)	1,757
	<u>10,942</u>	<u>3,809</u>	<u>(12,994)</u>	<u>1,757</u>
RESTRICTED FUNDS				
We're Open	2,439	0	(1,597)	842
Postcode National Trust	0	22,152	(9,238)	12,914
Refugee Week	1,649	0	0	1,649
Wiltshire Community	0	0	0	0
NLCF	44,110	33,898	(65,878)	12,130
School of Sanctuary	188	0	0	188
Swindon Parish Council	668	0	0	668
Coop Community Fund	582	0	(298)	284
Respond & Adapt	3,890	0	(3,890)	0
People Neighbourhood Trust	3,143	0	(3,143)	0
Local Giving Grant	115	0	0	115
Magic Little Grant	500	0	(79)	421
Nationwide	0	3,620	(76)	3,544
	<u>57,283</u>	<u>59,670</u>	<u>(84,199)</u>	<u>32,753</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>68,225</u>	<u>63,479</u>	<u>(97,194)</u>	<u>34,510</u>

n.b. NLCF income includes £19,683 received early May 2024 / Unrestricted income includes £2,903 as an estimate of the Co-op local giving (bank now accessed)

6. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The charity operates the following restricted funds;

- a) **National Lottery Community Funding** – NLCF Funds provided to cover core costs of the charity's employees, the executive officer, Stream Co-ordinator, Schools Co-ordinator and Volunteer Co-ordinator
- b) **Refugee week** - Funds relating to a week of activities celebrating sanctuary seekers in Swindon
- c) **School of sanctuary** - Funds utilised for work in schools.
- d) **Swindon Parish Council** - Funds for publicity purposes only including short films
- e) **People Neighbourhood Trust** – Fab Extension and School Co-ordinator role
- f) **We're open** - Funds to cover rent and drinks for a weekly social evening
- g) **Postcode National Trust** – Fab Project Co-ordinator and resources
- h) **Nationwide** -additional funds to cover rent, refreshment for our We're Open events including We're open families

Swindon City of Sanctuary
Detailed Income & Expense Account
For year ended 30 April 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM		
Gifts	-	-
Donations	63,479	49,191
	<u>63,479</u>	<u>49,191</u>
EXPENDITURE ON		
Charitable Activities:		
Wages	81,535	28,574
Office Expenses	393	-
Office Rent & Room Hire	7,443	3,895
Insurance	379	396
Telephone	1,122	862
Computers & software	469	-
Postage and Stationery	-	-
Travelling	-	-
Sundry expenses	5,073	3,551
	<u>96,414</u>	<u>37,278</u>
Legal and professional costs:		
Accountancy fees	780	720
	<u>780</u>	<u>720</u>
	<u>(33,715)</u>	<u>11,193</u>

INDEPENDENT REVIEW

An Independent review of these financial statements has taken place. The associated report is attached.

To the Trustee of Swindon City of Sanctuary

As requested by the Trustees of SCOS I have conducted a review of the financial statements for year ending 30th April 2024. As noted in previous reviews this process is intended to identify any possible financial irregularities or misrepresentation, rather than being a formal audit in accordance with the UK Auditing Standards.

Governance and Policy

I have reviewed the minutes of the Board meetings that were held every two months over the year and have had discussions with Serena regarding the operational process of the charity.

During this financial year the Charity had 4 employees: the Charity Manager, the Streams Co-ordinator and the Volunteer Co-ordinator as in the previous year, but with the addition of the Fab (Family Activity Boxes) Co-ordinator. During the last month a further role as Schools Co-ordinator was added. Serena mentioned that the safeguarding and training policies have been reviewed and updated accordingly.

Financial safeguards are also in place with the requirement of two signatories on bank transactions and monthly monitoring of expenditure. Expenses are approved by a trustee and large amounts of expenditure are agreed by the Board. Due to a conflict of interest, Serena does not have access to the bank account. Serena has confirmed that, as mentioned in the minutes, there has been a full review of the financial policy and procedures.

Financial Report

I have received the Financial Statements for 2024, along with the Transactions Analysis spreadsheet and all relevant bank statements. The expenditure receipts are kept in the Charities Office and difficult for Serena to access, but she was able to provide me with some receipts and invoices.

Using this information I have verified that the bank transactions were accurately recorded onto the spreadsheet and, as far as I could tell, allocated to the correct project and accounts category. I also checked that the year-end bank balance reconciled with the financial statements and were properly reflected in the report of financial activities. This is the case with the bank transactions from the Metro Bank but, due to ongoing access issues, the Co-op Bank transactions have not been included in the transaction analysis. Hence the year-end balance was taken from the previous year. This issue is now resolved and the transactions were fully reconciled in July 2024 with a year-end figure of £792.51.

Conclusion

Following a discussion with Serena about my findings, I am pleased to report that my review did not reveal any evidence of financial misrepresentation or fraudulent activity. The financial statements accurately reflect the Charity's financial position, and I found no issues for concern regarding the governance of the Charity.



Signed: Elizabeth Hesketh

Tel: 07720 885388

Email: lizkhesketh@gmail.com

Dated: 25/02/2025

I would like to thank the Trustees of SCOS for inviting me to review the financial statements, and to Serena for her support and guidance. If you have any queries regarding this review, please feel free to contact me using the details above.

My experience with bookkeeping and accounts began when my husband started his own consultancy business, which then led to my involvement in treasury work for my children's primary and secondary school PTAs. Since retiring I have volunteered as trustee and treasurer for two charities, Vision 4 Youth and The Yateley Society.