HOSTNATION

England & Wales · Charity number 1180004

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	CIO
Registered	2018-09-20
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	5 Brayford Square London E1 0SG
Phone	07711130818
Email	info@hostnation.org.uk
Website	www.hostnation.org.uk

Downloaded from opencharities.uk/ew/1180004

Activities

Objects: THE OBJECTS OF THE CIO ARE:1. THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT AMONG THOSE WHO ARE REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS OR MIGRANTS WHO ARE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED ON THE GROUNDS OF THEIR IMMIGRATION STATUS AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POSITION BY PROVIDING:I) A LOCAL 1:1 BEFRIENDING SERVICE THAT OFFERS FRIENDSHIP, SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES, COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND SUPPORT IN ORDER TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISOLATION AMONGST ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS.II) A SERVICE THAT FACILITATES INTER-CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP PREVENT THE SELF-EXCLUSION OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES FROM THE WIDER COMMUNITY.III) INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO ENABLE ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS TO POSITIVELY PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY.IV) INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTISE AND IMPROVE THE ENGLISH SKILLS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN COMMUNITIES IN THE UK THROUGH FRIENDSHIP WITH NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS IN ORDER TO PROMOTE GREATER SOCIAL INTEGRATION.V) OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE ACTION BY CITIZENS TO CHANGE THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HAVE LED TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION AMONGST ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS.2. THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT AMONG THOSE WHO ARE ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS WITH A VIEW TO TACKLING DISCRIMINATION, INEQUALITY AND SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE BY PROVIDING:I) CONNECTION AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH UK CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS WHO CAN TREAT THEM EQUALLY, IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM AND HELP BUILD THEIR SENSE OF SELF-WORTH.II) MEANINGFUL SOCIAL INTERACTION AND INTER-CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BRITISH CITIZENS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE GREATER SOCIAL COHESION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN COMMUNITIES IN THE UKIII) A MEANS BY WHICH THE PUBLIC CAN ENGAGE WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AS INDIVIDUALS AND PEOPLE WITH NEEDS, NOT SIMPLY STATISTICS.

Activities: Bespoke 1:1 befriending service for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services
- **What:** The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Other Defined Groups

Geography

- Throughout London

Downloaded from opencharities.uk/ew/1180004

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-09-30	£172,431	£164,696	-	-
2024-09-30	£153,267	£153,229	-	-
2023-09-30	£152,288	£124,861	-	-
2022-09-30	£117,821	£99,086	-	-
2021-09-30	£94,813	£74,529	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Anni Heinrich		2025-05-14
Aoise Keogan-Nooshabadi		2025-05-14
Daniel Silverstone		2018-09-18
Dostyar Dost		2024-04-01
Gulsom Gohar		2024-04-01
Lucy Vidal		2021-12-18
Olivia Alice Petie		2020-12-16

Downloaded from opencharities.uk/ew/1180004

HOSTNATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1180004

Accounts

HOST NATION

Connecting refugees with host communities

Trustees' Report and Receipts & Payments Accounts

for the year ended 30 September 2025







Welcoming refugees through friendship

HostNation Annual Report 2024-25

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the period ended 30 September 2025.

Contents

PAGE

Letter from our Chair 3

Letter from our Director 4

The power of friendship 5

Strategic report 6

Vision, mission & objectives 6
Outcomes & impact 7
Regional highlights 13
Financial review 16
Risk management 17

Structure, governance and management 19

Organisational structure
Public benefit
Safeguarding
Independent examiners

Report of the independent examiner 20

Receipts & payments account 21

Receipts & payments account 21
Statement of assets & liabilities 22
Notes to the financial statements 23

Reference & administrative details 24

Letter from our Chair

I am pleased to present the Trustees' report on the work of HostNation in the year to September 2025.

HostNation is a place for refugees to find friends, not an advocacy organisation. Yet the connections that are made across cultural boundaries are truly opening hearts and minds at a community level and I believe this can bring real change.

Many of our befrienders have never met a refugee before, and the experience can be profound. I think of my own friendship with Abdullah*, which first brought me to HostNation. He is a doctor who fled from Kabul to London in fear of his life. I'm culturally Jewish, and he's a devout Muslim, but coming from very different backgrounds has never stood between us.

I've learned a huge amount from him – it's certainly not a one-way street. We're genuinely friends, and I'll always value this relationship. I am so heartened each year to watch as other HostNation matches forge their own strong bonds.

Our society urgently needs these positive stories, since hostility towards asylum seekers dominates news and politics. The government pursued a strong deterrence agenda over the last year, limiting the rights and human dignity of asylum seekers and refugees. Family reunion applications were suspended as of September 2025. There was a sharp fall in the number of refugees settled via safe routes. HostNation protested against these measures as part of the coalition Together With Refugees.

Despite sporadic anti-refugee riots, the majority of the British public (71%) still believe people escaping war and persecution should be given refuge. Nearly half (47%) feel that refugees can make a positive contribution to the country (Ipsos, June 2025).

These numbers are falling, but as a HostNation board, we continue to witness wonderful acts of kindness. As one of our refugee friends, Nasir, told us: "Despite all the things we are hearing from the news, there are still people who are willing to help and give support... Therefore, I do feel more welcome here."

So we continue our work with hope, and with gratitude towards supporters and friends. My personal thanks go to the HostNation team and Board of Trustees, for their vision and determination.



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair



Danny (left) & Abdullah at their favourite cafe

*Name changed

Letter from our Director

Friendship is an essential human need. As Gulsom, one of our trustees who is a refugee, puts it, "I see HostNation as a first responder. When you arrive in a strange land, a trusted friend who shows you the way can change your life."

To reflect this, we have changed our strapline to 'Welcoming refugees through friendship'. The joy of our work is to see the positive impact of this welcome on the lives of refugees. Take Abdul. We matched him with John, a star volunteer who introduced Abdul to London's cultural life.

Just a few months on, Abdul landed an internship at the International Rescue Committee. He says his experience with HostNation helped give him the confidence he needed. John, he tells us, has been a mentor and befriender: "John listens deeply and makes our conversations meaningful and uplifting."

I am proud that this year we have made 199 friendship matches for asylum seekers and refugees from 44 countries. Of these, 83% told us they feel more welcome and included in British culture thanks to their friend. I am immensely encouraged that the hostile political environment around refugees does not stop volunteers coming to us, full of goodwill.

Our northern hubs have brought our values of welcome and warmth to our communities in Greater Manchester and the North East, not only making matches but organising fun socials (see updates on pp. 14 & 15).

To reflect on eight years of HostNation, staff and trustees gathered to assess our impact and set future directions. Key results include setting up a new advisory board of refugees to help guide our work. We are also strengthening wider friendship communities through group activities, alongside our core delivery of one-to-one matches.



HostNation awayday

We know that we face a very difficult year ahead, with significant challenges in raising sufficient funding to continue our work. Several of our major grants have come to an end, and previous funders have changed their priorities.

Yet our work is more urgent than ever, so we must not be deterred. Whilst friendship does not make headlines, it has the power to transform lives and build communities. It bridges the divides between us. We believe it makes our society a better and happier place.



ANNEKE ELWES
Director, HostNation

"John is someone with great patience, compassion, and wisdom."
ABDUL (RIGHT) & JOHN



HostNation **London**

THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP

"Greg brought back the joy I lost years ago."
CINIAGA

When Ciniaga first met Greg, he was in a dark place. Convinced his whole family had died in conflict, he was alone in the UK. But friendship with Greg and his wife Maggie was to turn his life around.

"I was just thinking about my lost family 24 hours a day," says Ciniaga. "I'd see other families in the street and it would remind me that I was all alone."

Ciniaga, an IT engineer who speaks four languages, fled his home in the Democratic Republic of Congo in fear of his life: "We did not have a choice over leaving our home, we were forced to flee." In the chaos, he was split up from his wife and children, and thought they had died.

Distraught, he sought asylum in the UK. But like so many refugees separated from their families, he could not find peace: "To an outsider, you may look free, but in your mind you're in prison. If you could look into the heart of a refugee, you might see that the person isn't there anymore – it's as if they died a long time ago."

A SPECIAL PICNIC

Then we stepped in and introduced Ciniaga to Greg, a volunteer befriender. He and his wife Maggie took Ciniaga out for a picnic. Ciniaga instantly felt he had found people he could trust. "It made such a big difference to tell them my story. So I started to believe there was another life for me beyond this crisis, and there my hope started. Greg brought back the joy that I lost years ago."



Greg and his wife Maggie have welcomed Ciniaga (centre) into their family

WONDERFUL NEWS

Ciniaga had clung to a scrap of hope and now applied to the Red Cross to try and discover his family's fate. One day he got the life-changing news that they were still alive.

"He was beside himself!" exclaims Greg. "He had gone through an enormously difficult six years and suddenly something he didn't dare hope for turned out to be true."

Although the whole family is not yet reunited, Ciniaga is smiling a lot more these days, says Greg.

"The most positive thing has been helping somebody who has faced extreme challenges, and seeing him turn his life around."
GREG

As for Ciniaga, he can't say enough about how Greg and Maggie have helped him. "When you are surrounded by good people, then good things happen. I have been so lucky."

Strategic report

Our vision

HostNation believes every refugee deserves a friend.

Our mission

We wish to improve the lived experience of refugees and asylum seekers in our cities through friendship with local residents, in order to promote integration, tackle social exclusion and transform social relations in our communities.

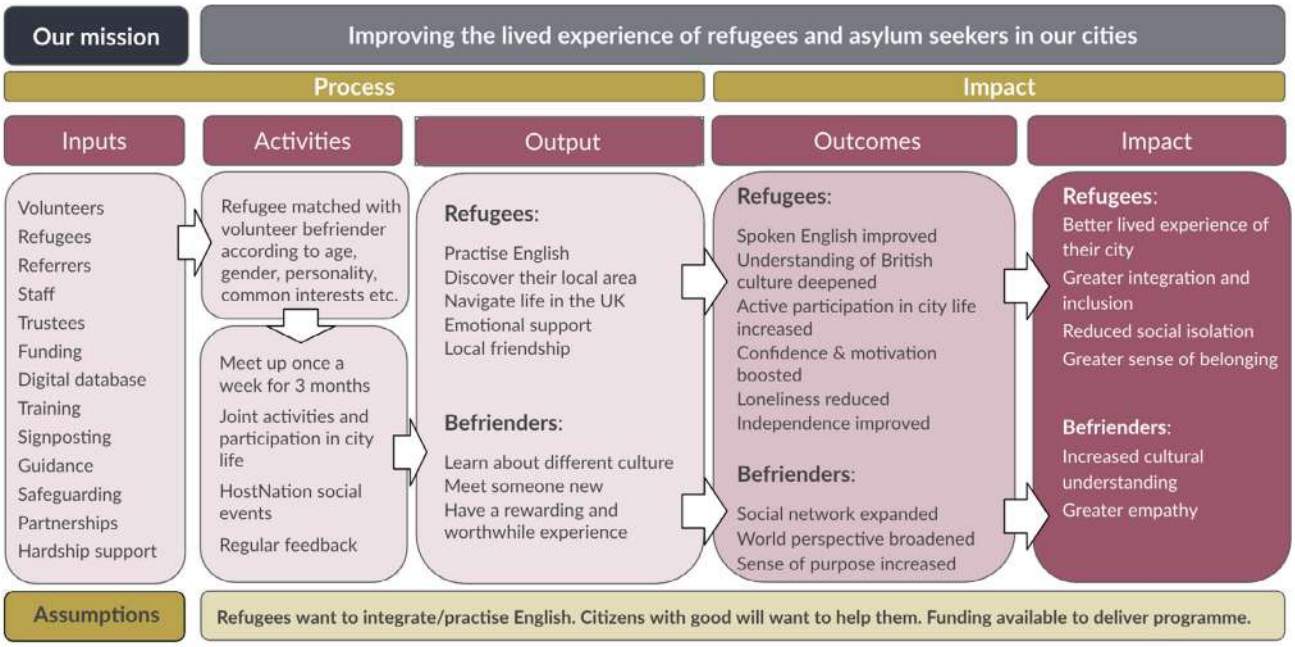
Our objectives

Our objectives as defined in our constitution are:

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among those who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants through:
   - Facilitating positive intercultural relationships that provide friendship, social opportunity, community connection and support.
   - Providing increased opportunities for social integration and positive participation in the local community.
   - Increasing opportunities to practise English skills through friendship with proficient English speakers in order to promote greater social integration.
2. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit amongst those who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, with a view to tackling discrimination, inequality and social disadvantage by providing:
   - Connection and support on the basis of equality, helping to identify and access opportunities.
   - Meaningful social interaction in order to encourage greater social cohesion in communities in the UK.
   - A means by which the public can engage with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants as individuals and potential friends.

To achieve these objectives, we recruit volunteers via an online database, then screen and train them before making careful matches with refugees, referred to us by refugee service providers, the NHS and other agencies (we also introduced a self-referral pathway in 2025). We aim for meaningful matches based on geography, gender, age and interests. We then introduce the new friends and provide guidance, safeguarding and relationship support.

HOSTNATION THEORY OF CHANGE



Outcomes and impact

1. STEPPING UP TO WELCOME REFUGEES

Over the past year, we have seen a steady inflow of new befrienders signing up:

- **66 in Greater London**
- **36 in Greater Manchester**
- **36 in the North East.**

While the total number of new volunteers was lower than in some previous years, this was partly due to our active management of registrations. In London we periodically closed intake in certain boroughs and in Manchester we paused registrations altogether at specific times. We do this to balance the number of volunteers against the number of incoming refugee referrals. We also have a high retention rate of volunteers who are happy to befriend again. We ended the year with a healthy pool of available volunteers in each of our hubs.

Nearly 70% of our volunteers are female, and around seven in ten are in their 20s and 30s. Volunteers in the London hub tend to be slightly younger on average than those in Manchester and the North East. Overall, the age profile of our befrienders is well matched to that of our refugee friends. We always have more female than male volunteers across all our hubs, which means we often find female friends for male refugees. We do not match female refugees with male befrienders.

Training and support

As our befrienders may have no prior experience with asylum seekers and refugees, we provide a solid foundation of support services.

Our interactive training is mandatory. Volunteers learn about the hardships that refugees face in the UK, and explore how traumatic events may impact their ability to develop relationships. We discuss how to create a safe and empowering environment to allow friendship to flourish. We outline the potential challenges of befriending a refugee, with a strong focus on safeguarding and boundaries.

Befrienders are given written resources to guide them. Our bi-monthly newsletter lists ideas for free activities and refugee opportunities in each of our three hubs. We have extensive lists of refugee support resources which we provide to our befrienders and share with other organisations.

We have also developed guides to effective befriending and safeguarding, and set out sensitive cultural guidelines to help avoid any misunderstandings between male refugees matched with female befrienders.

2. REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKER REFERRALS

We are proud to have made 199 friendship matches across our three regions this year. Of these, 181 were new referrals of refugees and asylum seekers who we welcomed in 2024-25:

- **90 in London**
- **45 in Newcastle**
- **46 in Manchester.**

Now in our eighth year, we are a well-established and trusted refugee befriending organisation operating across London, Newcastle and Manchester, supported by a growing network of referral partners who send us their clients.



HostNation **London**

"Our relationship is just chatting about life, improving Merve's English, drinking tea. It's about the shared everyday-ness of life."

EMMANUELLE (RIGHT)

We received refugee referrals from more than 60 organisations, with 24 referring to us for the first time. We are grateful for all these partnerships.

Across all three hubs, the organisations who referred their clients most frequently included Breaking Barriers, Freedom from Torture and Hestia, alongside GP practices, NHS therapy services and local councils. In London we had fewer referrals than the year before, while both northern hubs saw an increase.

Of people referred to us, 59% had refugee status or humanitarian protection. More than a third were based in hotels and temporary accommodation, an increase on last year. Two thirds arrived in the UK less than three years ago, but even those who have been here for longer may still feel isolated.

CHALLENGES WITH REFUGEE REFERRALS

Around a third of all referrals did not meet our criteria, so we were unable to match them with a befriender. The reasons included an insufficient level of English, high mental health needs or a housing crisis. These clients require specialist support services that we cannot ask our befrienders to provide. Where possible we signpost them to alternative and more appropriate sources of support.

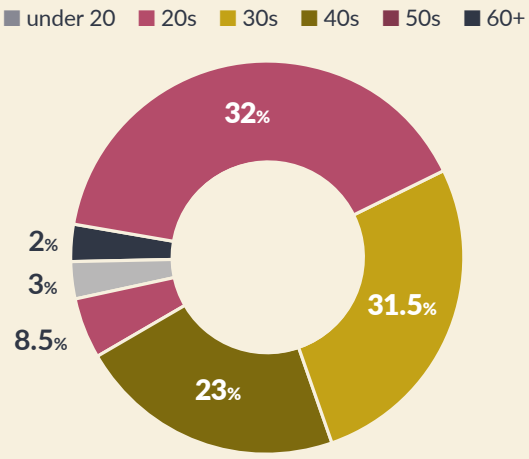
We are seeing an increasing number of asylum seekers in London struggling with their mental health. Refugee services can feel fragmented and difficult to navigate, and individuals often face prolonged uncertainty. These pressures are intensified by the continuous hostility of government policies.

NEW SELF-REFERRAL PATHWAY

In summer 2025 we decided to open an online pathway for refugees in London to refer themselves to us. By setting stricter referral criteria around English language proficiency, and requiring that applicants already have their 'leave to remain' status, we hope to target refugees who will be in a somewhat better and more stable position to engage in a befriending relationship.

A number of self-referrals have signed up since we opened this pathway and indeed have proved to be engaged and connected with their befrienders. We are trialling this approach in London, with a view to rolling it out to the northern hubs in 2026.

Age profile of our refugee friends



> **"As ever, I am HostNation's biggest fan! It really helps our clients with their integration journey in the UK."**
>
> COCO CLAXTON
> Refugee Integration and Housing Lead,
> Brent Council

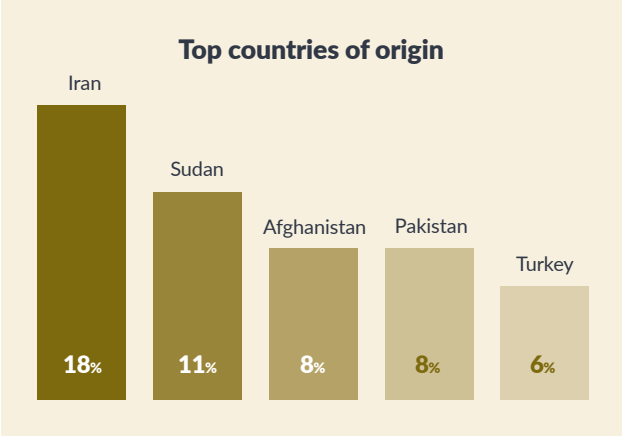
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

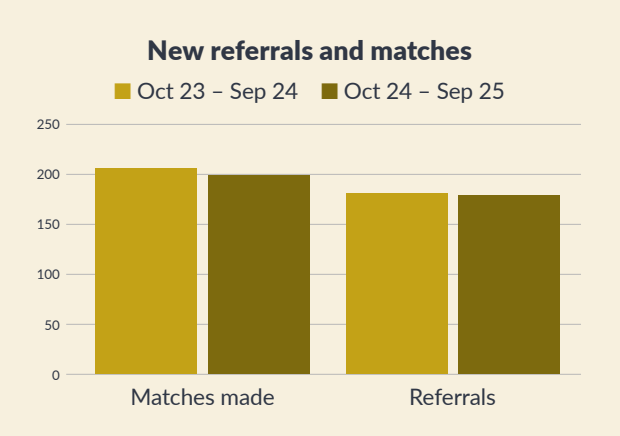
Our refugee friends came from 44 different countries this year. Iran stays at the top of the list with 18% of total referrals. Referrals from Sudan made up 11%, while Afghanistan and Pakistan each accounted for 8%. We saw a significant drop in referrals from Turkey, alongside a slight increase in referrals from Eritrea and Hong Kong. All referrals from Hong Kong were based in Manchester, linked to the local employment support scheme.

3. FRIENDSHIP MATCH OUTCOMES

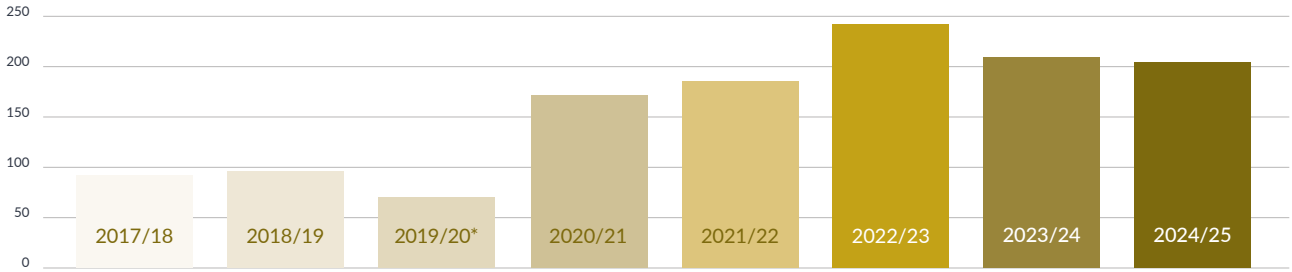
Across the year we made 199 friendship matches, a similar level to the previous year. Half of these matches were in London, with the remaining 50% split evenly between our two northern hubs. Referral numbers also remained stable year on year.

We prioritise building meaningful and lasting relationships between befrienders and their refugee friends over the quantity of matches.





Matches year-on-year



**Reduced matches due to Covid.*



"Lauren is really an authentic person, very kind, very supportive. I felt lonely before, but not now."

LAUREN (LEFT) & ZEINAB
AT A MUSIC FESTIVAL IN MANCHESTER

HostNation **Manchester**

POSITIVE IMPACT ON REFUGEES

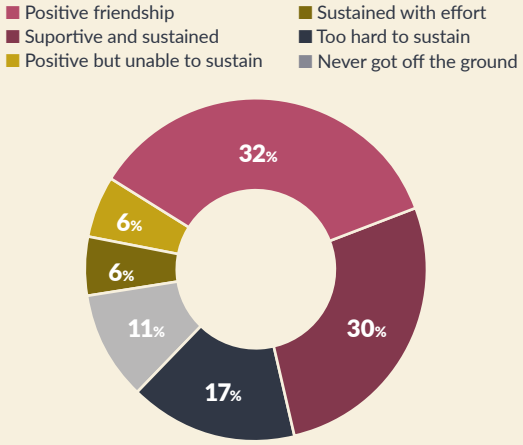
For most of our refugee friends, meaningful engagement in a befriending relationship led to improved wellbeing and a noticeable reduction in loneliness.

Eight out of ten refugee friends said they felt better and less lonely as a result of meeting their befriender, with nearly 50% feeling a lot better.

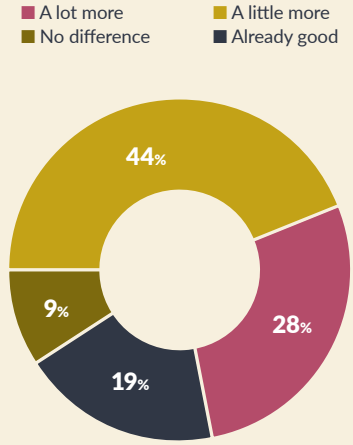
Having a befriender not only supports the wellbeing of our refugee friends and reduces feelings of loneliness, but also helps them to feel more welcome and gain a better understanding of British culture.

This is reflected in 83% of our refugee friends telling us that they felt more welcome and more included after three months of knowing their befriender.

Match outcomes all hubs (Oct 2024–Sep 2025)



English improved thanks to having a befriender



Improved well-being

A lot better	**47%**
A little better	**36%**
No difference	**17%**

Feeling less lonely

A lot less	**37%**
A little less	**40%**
No difference	**23%**

Feeling more welcome

A lot more	**41%**
A little more	**41%**
No difference	**18%**

BENEFITS FOR BEFRIENDERS

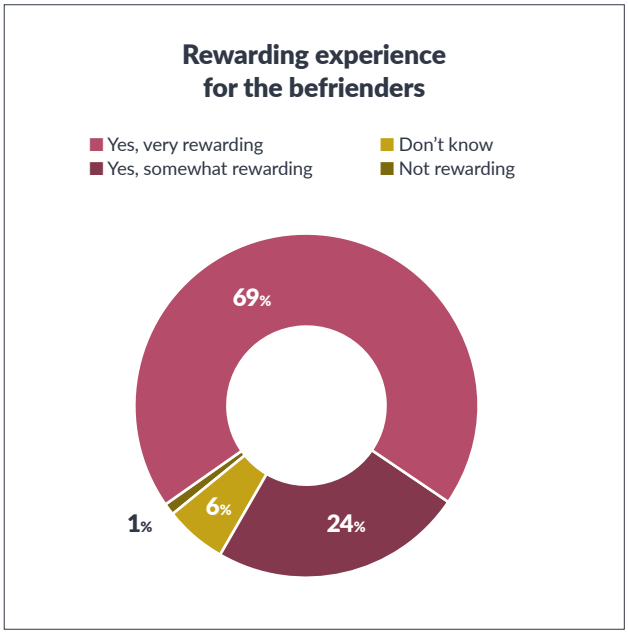
Befriending is a shared experience, and its impact extends beyond the positive outcomes experienced by our refugee friends. As our Chair testifies in his introduction, befriending brings powerful benefits for both sides. We often hear his words echoed by our volunteers: "It's definitely not a one-way street."

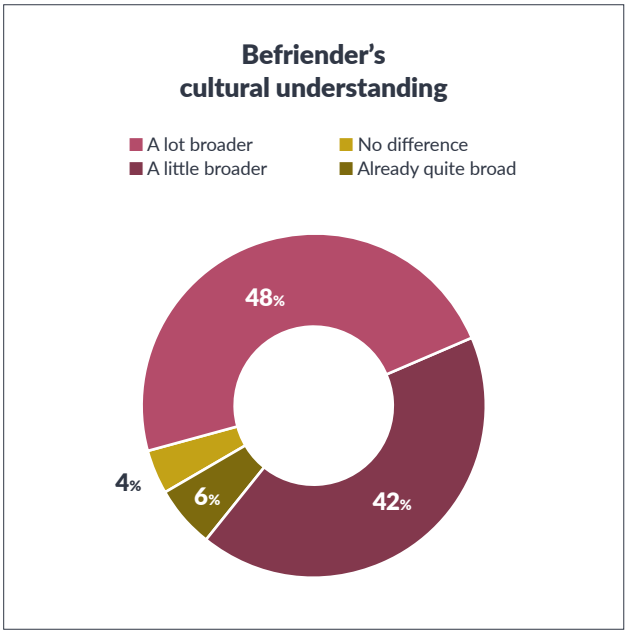
For us, the benefit to the befriender is an essential part of the community integration that we aim to foster. Our ambition is to bridge divides within our communities, one transformative friendship at a time. Each match is based on equality, understanding and human dignity on both sides.

As volunteer Andrew told us: "The simplicity of heartfelt conversation between two people has a profound healing power."

The vast majority of our volunteers share how meaningful the experience is for them with 94% reporting that it was rewarding and nine out of ten telling us that their cultural understanding has broadened as a result.

Our high retention rate is testament to this, with many volunteers returning to make a second or third refugee friendship.





"It's just really nice getting to know someone from another culture and spending time together."

HELEN (LEFT) & BITA



HostNation **North West**

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

All too often, asylum seekers and refugees are misnamed as 'illegal migrants', grouped together indiscriminately in statistics, and denigrated with inflammatory language.

We want to tell their real stories. Each person who comes to us to find a friend has followed a unique path to safety and a new life in the UK. As they get to know their befrienders and relax, narratives are exchanged and bonds are formed.

Our website and social media set out to celebrate these wonderful friendships. There is Yogi, the refugee who was once sleeping rough and is now a successful chef; he credits his befrienders Sabine and Geoff for saving his life (photo below).

Or Nisar, who was alone and distressed before we introduced him to Sarah; now, after spending time with Sarah and her family, Nisar says, "My life has taken on a new and positive meaning. Knowing Sarah has made me very happy." (See photo on p24.)

We hope these positive examples of social integration create new awareness. We also support our referral partners in their pro-refugee campaigns during events such as Refugee Week and Volunteers Week, through the Together With Refugees group.

We used our platforms to protest against the cruel suspension of family reunion visas; we joined with 213 organisations to promote messages of compassion during the anti-refugee riots; we called on supporters to tell their MPs we need an asylum system that treats people with dignity.





Geoff, Sabine and Chef Yogi

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HOSTNATION LONDON

A THANKSGIVING TO REMEMBER

We were deeply honoured to be chosen as the official charity for the 2024 Thanksgiving Service of the American community in London at St Paul's Cathedral.

This was thanks to our close relationship with the American International Church (AIC), with whom we hold joint, secular Supper Clubs for refugees.

The warm welcome we received from the American community and the US Embassy was humbling. Little did we think when we started our partnership with the AIC in 2023, that our small charity would one day be celebrated in the nation's cathedral.

In a powerful appeal for refugees, the Rev. Jared Jaggers spoke movingly of those who are alone on feast days, having left their homes behind. He invited all present to "make our city a welcoming place and to work together through organisations like HostNation to create connections and set a place at the table." An astonishing £6,000 was raised for our work, far exceeding our expectations.



St Paul's Cathedral

It is heartening to see people of all faiths and none mix freely at our joint Supper Clubs, to which the AIC bring in social food enterprises, musicians and enthusiastic volunteers. We are so grateful for this enduring collaboration.

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

Our community membership of **Kew Gardens** allows our friends the chance to visit this botanical marvel and its beautiful galleries at no cost. It is a real boost to their wellbeing. They can also benefit from our membership of **London Zoo**, by which we are able to purchase low-cost tickets and give our friends a free day out.

We referred some of our friends to the **Bike Project** who provided them with a free bicycle. We also provide asylum seekers who cannot afford London's transport system with Oystercards topped up from our hardship fund, so they can easily meet up with their befrienders.



"It warms my heart to be part of this loving community. I am so glad to have found you and all the wonderful friends, new and familiar, that I see at each HostNation event."

LAUREN (left) & USMAN

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HOSTNATION NORTH EAST



Here on Tyneside it has been an especially good year for making friendships that last, and that have made a real impact on refugees' lives.

"Helena is truly one of the best people I have ever met." RO

When Ro first came to us, he was struggling with low mood and finding it hard to concentrate at college. He needed a friend. After we introduced him to Helena, an occupational therapist, things began to change for Ro.

As Helena showed him around the Toon, with walks and coffee, yoga classes and sports events, his confidence rebounded.

"My language skills have improved a lot with Helena," Ro tells us. "I know a lot more about the history and culture of England. I don't feel lonely that much now. I have someone to talk to." A year on, they have a strong, trusting relationship.

"Ro's got a friend for life." HELENA

With 45 friendships made this year, a strong list of volunteer befrienders and a growing number of referral partners, we feel well placed to continue our impact in the North East.

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF TYNESIDE

Tynesiders consider themselves the friendliest people in the UK, and they certainly stepped up during our social events. These occasions are an important focus for us, as they help to bind our existing friendships, strengthen integration and enhance everyone's wellbeing. We welcomed more than 40 guests to a year-end party at the Magic Hat café, where a tasty meal was prepared entirely using surplus food. Also highly popular was a picnic in Jesmond Dene in August, with perfect weather for a scavenger hunt around the park.



Plenty of dancing, chaos and laughter ensued as our refugee friends learned to reel at a ceilidh to celebrate Refugee Week in the summer, organised with West End Refugee Service.

The success of these events shows us the power of social connection to help heal trauma and build new lives.

Lots of fun at the Refugee Week ceilidh

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HOSTNATION MANCHESTER

It was a good year for HostNation in Manchester, as we increased the number of friendships made, whilst maintaining very positive outcomes.

Despite sporadic flare-ups of hostility towards asylum seekers in the area, we still have willing volunteers signing up online.

A great feature of our HostNation life in Manchester is our partnerships with local organisations who believe in supporting refugees as an integral part of the local community.

Many of our refugee friends are cooped up in cramped accommodation. That makes our group visits to the RHS Bridgewater gardens in Salford much more than just an outing – they really lift everyone's spirits. A mid-summer visit saw our team of friends gardening, relaxing and connecting as part of the RHS wellbeing programme, while our Christmas visit included a light show and fun clay-making activities. Waseem, a refugee from Libya, said it was one of the best days of his life.



A wonderful day out in the gardens of RHS Bridgewater

Our annual party in Manchester was a hit again, with 40 refugees and their befrienders enjoying delicious Greek food at the House of Books and Friends – a heritage venue, bookshop and cafe with a mission to prevent social isolation. Many of the friends who came along have been together for several years.

"It was a really fun time. I truly enjoyed myself and met some wonderful and kind friends."
AHMED

FRIENDS ON TRACK

Amongst many flourishing Manchester friendship stories, one of our favourites is that of Abdo and Priya.

When Abdo, who is from Sudan, modestly told us he quite liked running, we matched him with Priya, who has set up her own running club.

Abdo couldn't wait to lace up his running shoes and it turns out that despite all the hardship he has been through, he is an amazing athlete.

"Abdo came first in the 10k run!" Priya told us with delight, just two weeks after they met. Since then Abdo has smashed many more runs and has been a real part of the local running community.



Priya & Abdo get set to run

Financial review

In the year to 30th September 2025, income of £172,431 was received and expenditure of £164,696 was incurred, resulting in a year-end surplus of £7,735.

In-year income exceeded budget due to additional grant funding from Garfield Weston, an increased grant award from Mila and individual giving income that doubled, boosted by a donor appeal and Thanksgiving donations from the American International Church (see feature p.13) in November.

Grants accounted for 80% of total income for the year, with donations, Gift Aid and interest payments making up the rest. Major donor income is variable and 2024-25 saw fewer corporate or major donations than the previous year.

Expenditure showed an increase in staff costs as freelancers moved onto payroll and included a 5% pay increase for all PAYE staff. Staff costs were at 91% with core running costs at 9%, lower than previous years. The full budget for community events of nearly £5,000 was utilised within the year, reflecting the increased prioritisation of social events across all our hubs. Expenditure on digital costs and professional services were much lower than the previous year when we invested in new computer hardware as well as a new website and three years website hosting.

London continued to account for 56% of hub expenditure, with Manchester at 24% and the North East at 20%, reflecting each hub's proportion of total matches.

HostNation's reserves increased to £95,565, from a brought forward position of £87,830. We had budgeted for a planned deficit with the intention of spending down reserves in the 2024-25 financial year. However, with several multi-year grants coming to an end and the difficult funding landscape, our higher reserves figure will help ensure stability for HostNation while we work to secure the future funding we require.

FUNDING PARTNERS

City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation is a London grant giver that provides support to London communities. They have a funding stream for rebuilding the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in London.

After an initial three years of funding (£96,000), we were granted a further two years of continuation funding in 2023. This year we received the final grant of £39,750 in four payments of £9,937 which was spent on project delivery through our London hub.

Mila Charitable Trust

Mila is a small family charitable trust that supports projects in the North East. This year we received a three year grant of £15,000 p.a. – up from £10,000. This funding is restricted to project delivery in the North East.

The Henry Smith Foundation

The Henry Smith Foundation helps people and communities at a time of need, to bring about positive change. They fund us through their Improving Lives programme. We were granted three years of funding (£135,000) in April 2023. This year we received £47,500 to support project delivery across all three hubs. It is restricted to achieving the outcomes we set and within their priorities of 'support networks and family' and 'help at a critical time'. There are no specific regional or expenditure restrictions.

Garfield Weston

The Garfield Weston Foundation gave us a one year grant of £20,000 in February 2025 for project delivery and core funding with no restrictions.

Other funding

This year we increased individual donations from £18,589 in our last financial year, to £30,900, in part thanks to being the recipient of the American community's Thanksgiving service at St. Paul's Cathedral (see p.13). Major donors, Gift Aid and bank interest contributed a further £3,000.

CASH RESERVES

Our trustees agreed to minimum cash reserves of £30,000, which covers three months' predicted running costs. Given the uncertainty around future funding, we will be carrying forward a higher level of reserves to offer stability should there be any discontinuities in funding in 2025-26.

COSTS AND BUDGETING

We are governed by the Charity Commission's financial regulations. Expenditure was on budget with £164,696 incurred. The majority of this expenditure (91%) relates to staffing (£149,562) of which £7,824 was freelance cost and £141,923 was payroll cost.

Staff costs relate to direct project delivery – staff time spent sourcing referrals; recruiting, screening, checking and training befrienders; making matches; liaising with referrers; safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation; communications and reporting.

This year 2024-25 saw several changes in staff structure. We also welcomed two new volunteer trustees to our board from fundraising backgrounds.

Non-staff in-year spend (9%) relates to hardship payments to our refugee friends, travel and hospitality expenses, community events and other direct costs.

Of non staff-related costs, 30% were for refugee social events – supper clubs, days out, ceilidhs, nature walks, picnics – demonstrating our commitment to bringing the HostNation community together.

Digital and professional fees including IT systems, social media, software, maintenance, web hosting, insurance, payroll, design and accountancy accounted for the remainder.

Risk management

In 2019, our trustees devised a register of risks. A three-stage traffic light system was adopted:
RED High risk (business critical)
AMBER Low risk (potentially constraining)
GREEN Negligible/low risk (no action)

We set out four risks we would review regularly:

Risk	Definition	Mitigation actions
Insufficient resources	Lacking the staffing and/or finances to achieve our stated aims.	• Regular review of budget, funding strategy, staffing levels and ability to meet demand for services. • Maintain close relations with existing funders.
Reputational damage	Acting unprofessionally and/or attracting negative publicity or scrutiny that potentially undermines our principles and ethos.	• Regular review of our training procedures, financial and safeguarding policies.
Governance risks	Trustees who are disengaged with our work and/or fail to ensure that we are in compliance with our charitable purposes & charity law.	• Regular review of our Board to ensure we have a balance of the skills required for effective governance and financial oversight.
Public policy and external environment risks	Is the external environment conducive to or potentially a threat to achieving our stated aims?	• Close monitoring of the changing environment in which we operate.

Finances
A small group of staff and trustees regularly review the external funding landscape. We have built a fundraising target database and have put in many new applications. However, competition for funding has been intense. Many institutional funders have changed their funding priorities.

Whilst we had the income to achieve our stated aims in 2024-2025 and are carrying forward substantial funds to 2025-26, we did not succeed in bringing in the major new grants or major donors we need to secure our longer-term future. At the end of the 2024-25 year, trustees therefore placed "insufficient resources" on amber.

Reputational risk
We have robust and transparent systems and are mindful to safeguard our ethos and principles in our work, decision-making and strategic planning.

Governance
We have strengthened our trustee board and remain confident that our trustees are fully engaged with our work. On a very productive away day, staff and trustees worked together on new initiatives for increasing our impact. A strong team ethos connects trustees and our staff team.

Public policy
We are acutely aware of the threatening national and international environment on refugee and asylum issues. One of our trustees brought summary reports on this external environment to the board at each quarterly meeting, enabling us continuously to assess any risk in our programmes and plan accordingly. We have retained an amber rating for public policy.

Nationwide protests outside asylum hotels and anti-immigrant riots in summer 2025 added to the risk level. The refugee sector found itself targeted and so, for reasons of safety, HostNation has changed the charity's registered address, improved security regarding personal details and no longer holds befriender or refugee addresses.

Further challenges from the Home Office to limit refugees' ability to integrate or gain UK citizenship increases the risk to our purpose. We may need to raise the risk level to red in future, but it currently remains on amber, where it has been since 2021. We pay especial attention to reviewing this risk factor at every meeting of the trustees.



Kaat was so shocked by anti-refugee riots that she reached out to make a refugee friend.

"I'm in awe of how quickly Abdul's thrown himself into the community!"
KAAT

HostNation **North East**

Structure, governance & management

Organisational structure

HostNation incorporated as a charity (CIO) and registered with the Charity Commission in September 2018.

Our board

As of 30 September 2025, we have seven voluntary trustees. After a skills audit we decided the board would be strengthened with the addition of more fundraising expertise and corporate connections. We therefore welcomed two new trustees in May 2025, with backgrounds in social enterprise and charity fundraising respectively.

The board unanimously agreed to a four-year trustee appointment period, renewable to a maximum of 12 years. The board continues to meet quarterly, chaired by Daniel Silverstone, who was CEO at both the Commission for Racial Equality and Interights.

Our team

We have a lean operational team and no business premises, so overheads are low. The majority of staff work on a part-time contractual basis with full employment benefits and pension contributions.

Public benefit

The trustees are aware of the Charity Commission's guidelines on public benefit and consider these measures when carrying out the charitable objectives of this charity.

Safeguarding

Our safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed annually. All staff, our Chair and our trustee safeguarding lead have attended safeguarding training for those working with asylum seekers, refugees and people who have been trafficked. Our staff and trustee safeguarding leads ensure that they are up to speed on best practice and refresh their training.

We have a full safeguarding policy with reporting processes, safeguarding guidelines for befrienders and a screening and checks policy (all available on our website), which we review annually. We also regularly update the safeguarding training delivered to new befrienders.

Independent examiners

Godfrey Wilson Limited were appointed as independent examiners to the charity in 2023 and have expressed their willingness to continue in that capacity.

Approved by the trustees on 2 March 2026 and signed on their behalf by:



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees

2 March 2026

Report of the independent examiner to the HostNation trustees

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of HostNation (the charity) for the year ended 30 September 2025, which are set out on pages 21 to 23.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

I report in respect of my examination of the charity'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

Godfrey Wilson Limited also provided payroll services to the charity. I confirm that as a member of the ICAEW I am subject to the FRC's Revised Ethical Standard 2016, which I have applied with respect to this engagement.

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 charity as required by section 130 of the Act;

or

(2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.

Dougal Howard

Date: 2 March 2026

DOUGAL HOWARD ACA
Member of the ICAEW

Godfrey Wilson Limited
Chartered accountants and statutory auditors
5th Floor Mariner House,
62 Prince Street,
Bristol BS1 4QD

Receipts & payments account

Receipts & payments account

For the year ended 30 September 2025

RECEIPTS	Note	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	**2025 Total £**	2024 Total £
Grants		102,250	35,000	**137,250**	103,800
Individual giving (including Gift Aid)		–	32,947	**32,947**	18,260
Interest		–	1,684	**1,684**	488
Major donors		–	550	**550**	30,719
Total receipts		102,250	70,181	**172,431**	153,267
Payments	1	102,250	62,446	**164,696**	153,229
Net receipts / (payments)		–	7,735	**7,735**	38
Cash funds at 1 October 2024		–	87,830	**87,830**	87,792
Cash funds at 30 September 2025	2	–	95,565	**95,565**	87,830

Statement of assets and liabilities

As at 30 September 2025

CASH FUNDS	2025 £	2024 £
Cash at bank and in hand	**95,565**	**87,830**
Total cash funds	**95,565**	**87,830**
Restricted funds	–	–
Unrestricted funds		
General funds	**95,565**	**87,830**
Total cash funds	**95,565**	**87,830**

Approved by the trustees on 2 March 2026 and signed on their behalf by:



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees

Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 September 2023

1. TOTAL PAYMENTS	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
Staff costs	**141,923**	99,331
Freelance fees	**7,824**	33,980
Travel and subsistence	**2,670**	2,641
Social events and workshops	**4,437**	2,887
Hardship fund	**2,977**	3,609
Digital and other direct costs	**3,052**	6,498
Professional fees	**1,813**	4,283
Total payments	**164,696**	153,229

2. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	At 1 October 2024 £	Receipts £	Payments £	At 30 September 2025
Restricted funds				
The Henry Smith Charity	-	47,500	(47,500)	-
City Bridge Fund	-	39,750	(39,750)	-
Mila Charitable Trust	-	15,000	(15,000)	-
Total restricted funds	-	102,250	(102,250)	
General funds	**87,830**	70,181	(62,446)	**95,565**
Total funds	**87,830**	172,431	(164,696)	**95,565**

Purposes of restricted funds

Income and expenditure are restricted by geographical location. HostNation manages three hubs across the UK: Manchester, Newcastle/North East, and London. The donors listed below provide funding restricted to use within specific hubs.

The Henry Smith Foundation provides support to HostNation through their 'Improving Lives' programme. The grant was provided to support running costs of an organisation providing a befriending service for refugees for three years. Income received this year has been divided proportionately between all three hubs.

Newcastle/North East

Mila Charitable Trust is a family trust that supports HostNation in the North East.

London

The City Bridge Foundation have been supporting HostNation's London Programme since 2020. The final grant payment was received in 2025.

Reference and administrative details

For the year ended 30 September 2025

Charity number

1180004

Registered office

5 Brayford Square
London
E1 0SG

Trustees

Dostyar Dost
Gulsom Gohar
Annika Heinrich
appointed 14 May 2025
Aoise Keoghan Nooshabadi
appointed 14 May 2025
Mohamed Massoud
resigned 15 January 2025
Olivia Petie
Daniel Silverstone
Lucy Vidal

Bankers

Metro Bank
One Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA

Virgin Money
7 Gold Street
Northampton
NN1 1EN

Independent examiners

Godfrey Wilson Limited
Chartered accountants and statutory auditors
5th Floor Mariner House
62 Prince Street
Bristol
BS1 4QD



Sarah & Nisar at the beach

"After getting to know Sarah, I no longer feel lonely. Before, I often felt very alone and emotionally distressed, but now my life has taken on a new and positive meaning."

NISAR

HostNation **North East**

HOSTNATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1180004

Accounts

HOST NATION

Connecting refugees with host communities

Trustees' Report and Receipts & Payments Accounts

for the year ended 30th September 2024



HostNation is a registered charity no. 1180004

HostNation Annual Report 2023-24

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the period ended 30 September 2024.

Contents

PAGE

Letter from the Chair 3

Letter from the Director 4

Strategic report 6
Vision, mission & objectives
Outcomes & impact
Financial review
Strategic review
Risk management

Structure, governance and management 18
Organisational structure
Public benefit
Safeguarding
Independent examiners

Report of the independent examiner 20

Receipts & payments account 21
Receipts & payments account
Statement of assets & liabilities
Notes to the financial statements

Reference & administrative details 25

Letter from the Chair

It is a poignant time for me to reflect on the work of HostNation, whose purpose is to make refugees feel welcome. It is 85 years since the extraordinary story of the Kindertransport and the 669 refugee children rescued from Czechoslovakia by a young stockbroker named Nicolas Winton. My mother Liesl was one of those children.

Aged 11, she came alone to Britain on the very last Kindertransport train out of Prague. Apart from her mother, her whole family died under Nazi rule. But in Britain she found welcome, and a full life. She was very proud to be British, the country that gave her refuge.

The reception for refugees is now very different, and it has been a turbulent year for our HostNation asylum seeker friends. At the time of the UK general election in June 2024, asylum decision-making was virtually paralysed following the Illegal Migration Act of June 2023. Of those who had crossed the Channel in the previous year, 96% of claims remained unprocessed. We saw what a toll this took on people's mental health.

The action of the incoming Labour government to scrap the unworkable Rwanda Plan and expedite asylum claims now means up to half those in the backlog are likely to be granted refugee status. This is welcome progress, but we still want a complete repeal of the Illegal Migration Act. We need safe, legal routes for people seeking asylum. Stepping into a flimsy dinghy across the Channel is a last-chance act by people left with no other choices.

Our compassionate befrienders show us that many citizens do welcome refugees. The disturbing anti-immigrant riots in the summer of 2024 were quickly faced down by many thousands of counter-protestors. Our refugee friends, at first feeling threatened by disturbances across many urban areas, tell us they were heartened at the displays of solidarity by those defending their rights.

On internal news, we welcome two new trustees from a refugee background. Dostyar is an Afghan doctor who now works in public health. Gulsom was a public prosecutor in Afghanistan who works here as a paralegal (see page 19). They both bring a distinctive perspective to the work of our charity. We are grateful to them and all our trustees for their generosity, commitment and creativity.

I am proud to chair HostNation, and urge you to follow and support us through the year ahead.





DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of the Trustees

"You gave me the most expensive diamond in the universe – in the form of a friend."

WASAL (LEFT) WITH SEB



HostNation **Manchester**

Letter from the Director

I'm delighted that we have reached 1,000 friendship matches! Our wonderful volunteer befrienders are helping refugees feel welcomed, connected and hopeful, all while making new friends themselves.

These pages detail our results for the year to September 2024, alongside heartwarming stories from our HostNation friends. Overleaf you can meet our first-ever match, still going strong, and our thousandth friendship.

We are so proud to have reached this milestone, something that would have been hard to imagine when we started in 2017. I'm grateful to my fellow founding team members: Rossana, Magda and Anthony. Seven years ago we were just volunteers, but we had all befriended refugees before and knew what a difference it could make.

Together we turned a simple yet powerful idea – that every refugee deserves a friend – into a flourishing network. Our team has grown and our outreach has expanded across Greater London, Greater Manchester and the North East.

This year we have found friends for 183 asylum seekers and refugees across our three regions and we have recruited 245 new volunteer befrienders to add to our existing pool. We carefully monitor the impact of our friendships and this year 92% of refugees reported improved wellbeing, while 94% of befrienders found it a rewarding experience – an amazing testimonial.

We believe this shows we are helping to create happier and friendlier communities in the UK. Our social events add to this ethos, bringing our friendship matches together to share experiences and relax in a safe and welcoming environment.

With no premises or major overheads, we channel £9 out of every £10 we raise into direct project delivery. We have increased our individual donations this year and are very grateful to these donors and our multi-year funders for their continued faith in us.

We feel more thankful than ever for all that is good and compassionate in our HostNation friendships. Every cup of tea, every gesture of friendship, is a bridge that unites us.





ANNEKE ELWES
Director



"Lois is my Angel of the North!"

ALI

HostNation **North East**



Celebrating 1000 friendships

In a joyful moment for HostNation, we have made our 1000th friendship since we started as a charity.

"This milestone is a real tribute to the wonderful befrienders who have put the HostNation ideal into practice," says our director Anneke Elwes.

When we introduced Louis and Nazar, our 1000th match, they quickly found they had lots in common. As Nazar says:

"It's so good to have this friendship. We discuss lots of things, especially music. Louis gives me information about the city, this country, the culture here. He is very helpful."

Louis feels the same connection:

"We've really bonded over our shared love of music and also history. He's a very easy going guy, and a joy to spend time with."

GIVING BACK

Welcoming people who have fled war and persecution, a thousand warmhearted people like Louis have offered acceptance and human connection to their refugee friends. Louis explains what motivated him to sign up:

"I was interested in befriending because I wanted to give back, expand my horizons and make a new friend! I have learnt so much about his culture and already feel as though we have a great friendship ahead."



STILL GOING STRONG: OUR FIRST FRIENDSHIP

Meanwhile the very first friendship we helped create seven years ago is a stronger bond than ever. Back in 2017, Yvette was an isolated asylum seeker in London, lacking the confidence to go out. "I was dying inside," she says. Meeting Dani changed all that.



"I've been to places and done things I never thought I'd go to or do. HostNation has changed my life, since I met Dani."

BOND OF TRUST

"I love having a befriender," continues Yvette. "I'm not feeling lonely anymore. It makes me feel really good to have her in my life. I trust her completely."

It was the simple yet transformative mission of HostNation that drew her friend Dani to sign up with us.

"I loved the simplicity of the idea of providing friendship and companionship for someone navigating London."

Dani describes their walks and movie outings, and the huge celebrations when Yvette got her refugee status. The two friends have spent every Christmas together (except the year of the pandemic).

Yvette gets to the core of what makes their friendship special, putting into words the very heart of what HostNation was founded to achieve:

"It's having someone to call a friend who is ready to accept me as I am. It makes me feel human again."

Strategic report

Our vision

HostNation believes every refugee deserves a friend.

Our mission

We are a befriending service connecting refugees and asylum seekers to friendly locals.

We tackle the loneliness refugees experience in our cities by creating friendship connections with residents via our digital platform.

Our aim is to transform social relations in our communities through small acts of hospitality, inclusion and friendship.

Our objectives

Our objectives as defined in our constitution are:

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among those who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants by providing:

- A befriending service that offers friendship, social opportunities and community connection in order to address social isolation.
- A befriending service that facilitates inter-cultural relationships to help prevent the self-exclusion of migrant communities.
- Increased opportunities for social integration and participation in the local community.
- Increased opportunities to practise and improve English skills through friendship with native English speakers.
- Increased opportunities for citizens to show solidarity and counter the circumstances that have led to social exclusion amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

2. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit amongst those who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with a view to tackling discrimination, inequality and social disadvantage by providing:

- Relationships with UK residents who treat them equally, can help identify opportunities, avoid discrimination and assert their rights.
- Meaningful social interaction and inter-cultural friendships that encourage social cohesion and cultural diversity.
- A means of personal engagement with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants as individuals with talents, skills, interests and needs

To achieve these objectives, we recruit volunteers via an online database, then screen and train them before matching them with refugees. The latter are referred by refugee service providers and other agencies. We aim to make meaningful matches based on geography, gender, age and interests. We then introduce the new friends and provide guidance and relationship support.



HostNation **Manchester**

“Yonas is so lovely. I’ve been really enjoying hanging out with him.”

MEG

Outcomes and impact

1. HOSTNATION HUBS

This has been a year of consolidation in our three hubs: London, Manchester and the North East. Our last financial year was our first full year of having three HostNation hubs up and running.

This year we have been building upon a successful start and establishing strong partnerships with refugee support services in Manchester and the North East.

Overall, however, the refugee sector has been in crisis, which complicates the work of support agencies still further. Closure of asylum hotels, the Illegal Migration Bill and the Rwanda Bill worsened an already hostile environment. The increase in arrivals by small boats and a lack of services to cope, fuelled anti-refugee rhetoric that culminated in major riots in early August.

Small wonder that this has negatively impacted the mental health of many of our refugee friends as well as the 'appropriateness' of referrals made to HostNation. Threats of deportation and detention and the reality of destitution have created a highly stressful reality.

Many of our friends have been referred from temporary housing, or are newly arrived with very little English or with poor mental health, increasing their instability and making long-term friendship hard to sustain. Whilst we have made many transformative friendships across the year, we have seen a small decline in the overall number of matches mostly due to this increase in inappropriate referrals across our three hubs.

2. RECRUITING FRIENDS IN DEED

This year we have welcomed many new befrienders to join our online database:

- **126 in Greater London**
- **78 in Greater Manchester**
- **41 in the North East.**

We recruit through many channels, including volunteer portals and in-person events, partnering with councils and community organisations and communicating via social media, press stories, and most powerful of all, word of mouth from existing befrienders. We aim to balance the number of available befrienders against the need in each of our hubs, and recruit accordingly.

We have a thorough screening and training process for befrienders, and they then join our existing pool of volunteers, ready to step up as refugees are referred to us.

The age profile of our volunteers is very similar in London and Manchester, with 75% and 76% of new volunteers respectively registered this year aged under 40. In the North East there is a wider age range, with 68% of befrienders aged below 40.

While the charity sector in general is still struggling with volunteer recruitment, we have seen a 36% increase in new volunteer registrations. This was likely to be linked to our award-winning short film 'Friends In Deed' launched last autumn, and the associated social media campaign to recruit volunteers. It is notable that we also saw an increase of online sign-ups in the wake of the August 2024 anti-refugee riots.

"If you've ever considered refugee befriending, look no further than HostNation. It's been one of the most positive and enriching experiences of my life. Can't recommend it enough!"

CAMERON (RIGHT) WITH AHMET



HostNation **Manchester**

Training and support

As our befrienders may have no prior experience with asylum seekers and refugees, we offer a solid foundation of support services.

Our interactive training is mandatory. Befrienders learn about the hardships that refugees face in the UK, and explore how traumatic events may impact their ability to develop relationships. We discuss how to create a safe and empowering environment to allow friendship to flourish. We outline potential challenges of befriending a refugee and take a deep dive into safeguarding and boundaries, which we update annually.

Befrienders are also given written resources to guide them in their journey. Our bi-monthly newsletter lists ideas for free activities and refugee opportunities in each of our three hubs.

We provide extensive signposting resources for refugee support agencies in all three hubs and share these with other organisations as well as with our befrienders.

We have also developed guides to effective befriending and safeguarding and, this year, cultural guidelines to help avoid misunderstandings between male refugees matched with female befrienders.

3. REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKER REFERRALS

We are proud to have found friends for 183 asylum seekers and refugees across our three regions this year:

- **115 in London**
- **30 in Newcastle**
- **38 in Manchester.**

There is growing awareness that people caught up in the UK asylum system need their social and emotional wellbeing tended to alongside practical matters of casework, housing and work. This year we saw a further 25 refugee service organisations referring to us for the first time.

Our top referral organisations across all hubs (by number of people referred) were Breaking Barriers, Freedom from Torture, United Queerdom, Hestia and Care4Calais. In London the level of refugee referrals is consistent, while our regional hubs were down year-on-year.

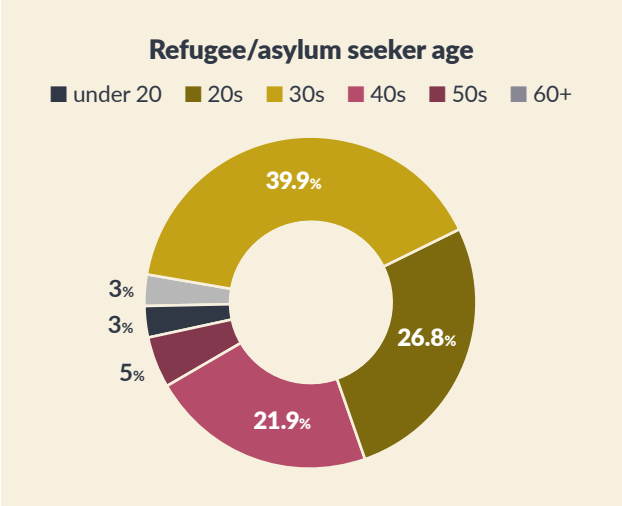
This resulted in an outreach effort to new sector partners and potential referrers, which led to a rise in referrals in both our northern hubs towards the end of the financial year.

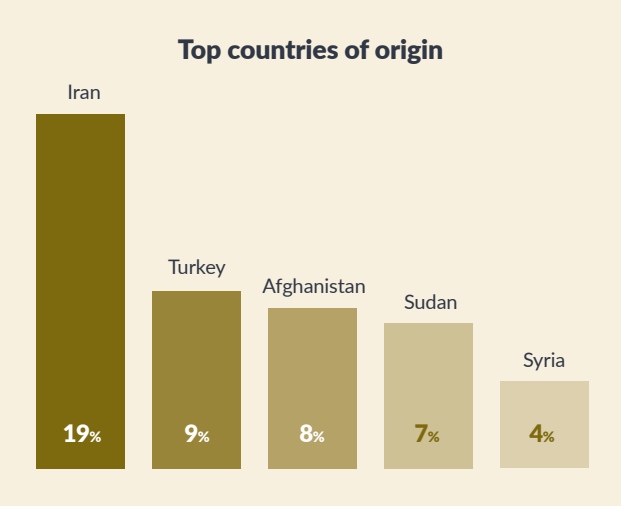
The decrease in referrals in the North East was partly due to a pause for staff changeover. We also saw an increase in referrals that did not meet our criteria. This meant we could not match individuals for various reasons such as insufficient level of English, mental health crisis, or imminent removal from their accommodation.

Of people referred to us, 58% have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. Although more than four in ten have been in the UK for three years or longer, many are still lonely and do not have friends outside the diaspora of refugees or their own nationalities. So a local befriender continues to have enormous value.

The majority of our refugee friends are young, with seven in ten aged in their 20s and 30s. The proportion of male to female referrals is a 60/40 ratio.

> **"I am genuinely so happy that your organisation exists! I hope you can take a moment to understand how many peoples' lives you are benefiting in a positive way. Thank you so much for all you do."**
>
> CHARLOTTE SEWELL
> Specialist Support Worker, The Salvation Army





We saw a drop in the number of London asylum seeker referrals based in 'temporary' accommodation (mainly Home Office hotels) compared to the previous year, down to a quarter of the total. This is partly a reflection of the fact that more people came to us with refugee status, compared to the year 2022/23, probably due to an acceleration in UK Home Office approvals (at least for certain countries).

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Our befriendees came from 48 different countries this year. Iran topped the list with 19% of total referrals, while Turkey dropped to second place. We saw fewer referrals from Ukraine and an increase in those from Syria, which entered back into our top five again. We had slightly fewer referrals from Sudan whilst referrals from Afghanistan stayed at the same level.



HostNation **London**

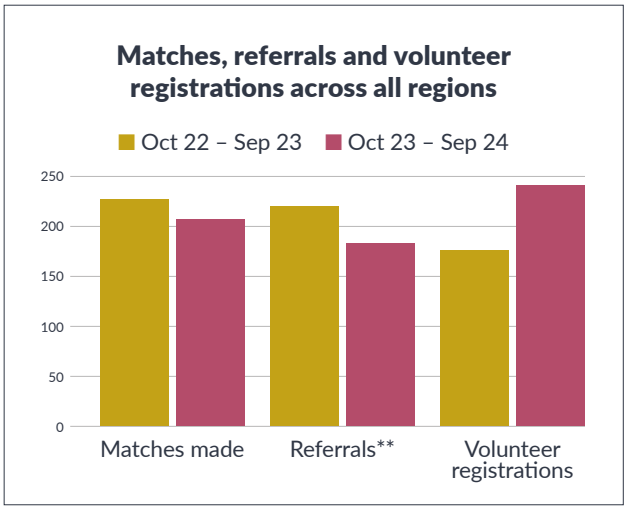
"Beth is the best person in the world."

AJMAL

Our top origin countries may differ from Home Office figures for total arrivals across the UK. This is due to the pipeline effect of people who arrived over a year ago, as well as our partnerships with refugee organisations who may support more people from a particular community.

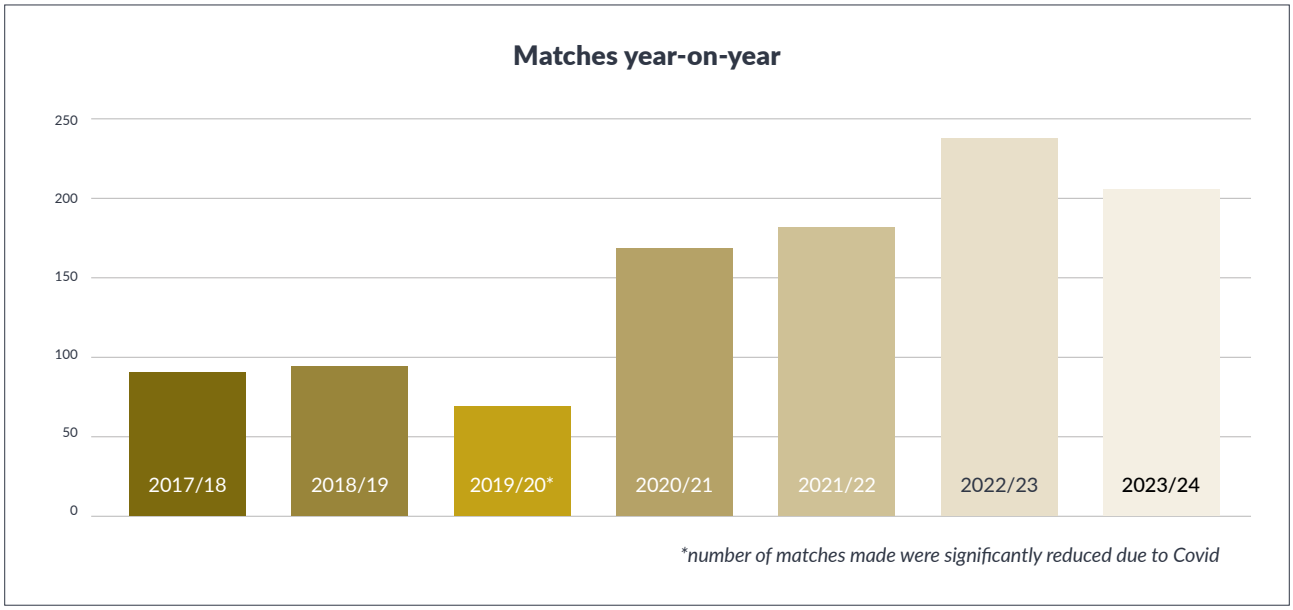
4. FRIENDSHIP MATCH OUTCOMES

Over this year we have made 206 matches*, which takes us past the milestone of 1000 connections made since we started seven years ago.



The number of matches was 12% down on the previous year, due to a drop in referrals. Positive experiences and meaningful relationships, however, remain our priority, rather than quantity, and this informs our impact assessments.

**No. of matches is higher than the no. of referrals as some refugees are matched more than once.*
***Not including archived or deleted*

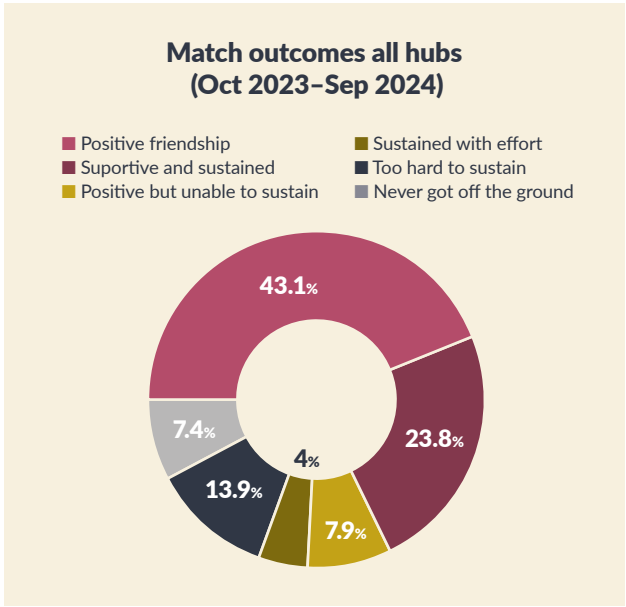


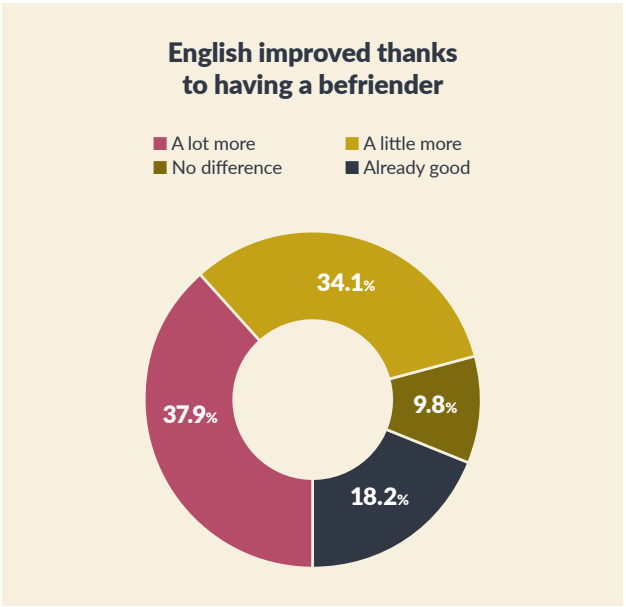
Three months after introduction, we interview both sides of our friendship matches and record qualitative outcomes.

We are pleased to say that 75% of all relationships we matched this year had positive outcomes, with 43% declaring they had a genuine friendship at the end of the initial three-month period. It is a real validation of our mission that many of our matches are still meeting up regularly years after being introduced. Our social events are frequently attended by people who are by now old friends.

Among those who we matched this year:

- **92% of refugees reported improved wellbeing**
- **94% of befrienders found it a rewarding experience**
- **72% of refugees said their English had improved.**





This is a wonderful testament to the positive impact our befrienders have on their refugee friends' lives.

Eight out of ten refugees tell us that they feel less lonely after knowing their befriender for three months and seven out of ten say it helped them improve their English (this excludes 19% whose English is already very good). We're particularly pleased that 85% told us that they feel more included thanks to their befriender, while 80% feel less lonely and 50% a lot less lonely.Of course, it is not only our refugee friends who benefit from befriending. The vast majority of our volunteers, 94%, told us that befriending a refugee was a rewarding experience, and 89% reported that it had helped them to broaden their cultural understanding.

> **"For me these friendships are always really positive. It is very humbling to be working with people who have gone through such a lot."**
>
> JOHN (LEFT), THREE-TIME BEFRIENDER, WITH SAIF



HostNation **London**

5. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

The primary purpose of our communications is to promote values of welcome and compassion for refugees and asylum seekers, celebrating all they bring to their new communities here.

Our short film "Friends In Deed", made for us in 2023 thanks to our funder City Bridge Foundation in cooperation with the Media Trust, continued to shine. It was applauded in a number of film awards, including winning Gold in the Smiley Charity Film Awards – the Oscars of the charity sector. It was also a BFI pick for their favourite charity films. This heartwarming video perfectly captures the joy of refugee befriending and has proved an excellent vehicle for raising our profile.

We use our social platforms to recruit befrienders, celebrate friendship stories and encourage refugee agencies to send their clients to us. We aim to disseminate positive messages about the refugee experience based on real facts, in contrast to an alarming amount of public disinformation about the sector.

We support the campaigning efforts of our referral partners including the Refugee Council and Care4 Calais across social media, opposing such anti-refugee policies as the Rwanda Bill, and the Illegal Migration Act. We joined the coalition Together With Refugees, to call for a fair new plan for refugees.





Finding friends for LGBT+ refugees

In March 2024 we made a friendship match between Marcus, a chemical engineer from Uzbekistan, and Mark, a senior HR professional.

Marcus had just celebrated his 42nd birthday, so Mark brought a gift to their first outing. Since then they have met regularly for walks, visits to London pubs and cultural events. As Marcus explains:

"Before, I only saw UK life on TV, but now I'm experiencing the real thing! This friendship is on a whole new level. It's an excellent match because we have so much in common."

LGBT+ REFERRALS FOR FRIENDSHIP

This year we have seen an increase in referrals of people seeking asylum after being persecuted due to their sexual preference. The gay movement United Queerdom, for example, have referred several community members to us, whom we have connected with LGBT+ befrienders ready to help them feel accepted in their host cities.

Mark has found the friendship a very positive experience and it has also deepened his understanding. "It has opened my eyes to what life is like for someone like Marcus in Uzbekistan," he says.

"I try to message him every few days to maintain that rapport and make sure he's not feeling isolated. He's really pro-active and keen to integrate here."



Marcus, who has just been granted refugee status, finds Mark's support invaluable. Not only has his English improved, but also his understanding of British culture and attitudes here towards the LGBT+ community.

"Mark has invited me to meet his friends and I'm so much more confident now. This programme is really nice, it's the perfect way to help with integration."

EMILY AND RITAH

Ritah, who studied Economics, is from Uganda, where being gay can be punishable by death. In July 2024 we introduced her to befriender Emily, who identifies as queer and loves music, dancing and Gaelic football.

Both in their 20s and both Christian, they hit it off immediately and now meet up every weekend. Emily has introduced Ritah to her family and friends, and taken her to celebrate London Pride Week, Black Pride and Brighton Pride.

Ritah is overjoyed, both by the friendship, and the new acceptance she has found here in the UK.

"Emily is a very good friend indeed. Every weekend she has something planned for us. Meeting all her friends and family showed me that there is no discrimination in the UK. You really feel welcome and not lonely anymore. I wouldn't want to lose that."

Soon after they met through HostNation, Ritah got refugee status. She now lives closer to Emily and nothing comes in the way of their friendship, as Emily says:

"I've found it great and I've made a new friend. She's a lot of fun and gets on with my friends. I've learnt a lot about Uganda and about going through the asylum process."



Partnerships – joining forces

As we are a small charity, we strive to increase our impact and outreach through a growing number of fruitful partnerships with like-minded organisations.

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

We regularly bring our HostNation matches together to share experiences and celebrate friendship. Social integration is essential to our mission, and our refugees and their befrienders tell us how much they welcome these opportunities to meet other friends in a relaxed setting.

HostNation **London**

In London we hold a bi-monthly supper club for refugees and their befrienders, thanks to our mutually rewarding partnership with the **American International Church (AIC).** We help them fulfil their refugee outreach programme in Camden, and they host our events for guests of all faiths and none.

The AIC have also linked us with social food enterprises, musicians and volunteers from their congregation as well as London Business School and ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA, the Black American Women's sorority. They also grant us central London space for our board meetings. They are great supporters of our project and we are deeply grateful to them.

"Thank you for a wonderful partnership over the last year. We are grateful for every meal shared, connection made and fun chat had at our supper clubs."
Brooke Rowan, AIC London



HostNation **Manchester**

In Manchester we enjoy an excellent relationship with **House of Books and Friends,** a cosy bookshop and cafe space with a mission to combat loneliness and social isolation.

It is a perfect fit for us and we have hosted two very joyful gatherings there this year for our local friendship matches, as well as making many introductions in their welcoming cafe.



We recently built a partnership with **RHS Bridgewater in Salford,** and took a group to a wellbeing session, with more to follow. Their team have also offered our friends the opportunity to book free self-guided visits for wellbeing.

A wonderful evening together at the House of Books and Friends

HostNation **North East**

In the North East we hold joint events with the **Comfrey Project** in Gateshead, a supportive environment where refugees and asylum seekers undertake activities in a community garden and allotments. Volunteering combines with gardening, beekeeping, language lessons and skills sharing.

A standout event this year was a barbecue to celebrate Refugee Week in June, held in their community garden. Everyone enjoyed the lovely weather and dancing to live bands!



RESOURCES FOR REFUGEES

We have community membership of **Kew Gardens,** which allows for up to 60 free visits. A trip to this wonderful outdoor space can really boost the wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees, many of whom are housed in very cramped accommodation.

In London we link with the **Bike Project** and can refer two people per month for a free, refurbished bike and the option of a Bike Buddy or city cycle training. This is a resource our refugee friends really value and we always have a waitlist.

Also highly popular is our **London Zoological Society** membership, which allows us to purchase low-cost tickets and give our friendship matches a free day out at London Zoo.

A number of our refugee friends have this year benefited from **Screen Share,** an enterprise focused on bridging the digital divide by getting refurbished laptops, smartphones and data cards to refugees in need.



HostNation friend Ajmal (right) takes delivery of a laptop from Screen Share, the day before starting college.

Financial review

Our funding position remains strong. In the year to 30th September 2024, income of £153,267 was received and expenditure of £153,229 was incurred, resulting in a net year end surplus of £38. HostNation's reserves have increased to £87,830, from a brought forward position of £87,792.

Income was in line with 2022-23, with increases in grants and individual giving but a decrease in major/corporate donors. Major donor income is subject to variation, depending on the 'one-off' donations we receive. In 2023-24 we received two, one from Campbell Tickell and another from the fund of a major individual donor.

We are also in a position to carry over substantial unrestricted funds to our next financial year, exceeding our cash reserves target and supporting project delivery and planned activities in 2024-25, such as a 5% staff pay rise, putting further freelance staff onto permanent part time contracts and conducting research and development into opening a potential new hub in Glasgow. It also gives us additional financial resilience as some of our current grants come to an end, giving us time to make multi-year funding applications in 2025 to support HostNation in the future.

FUNDING PARTNERS

We are immensely grateful to the following funders:

City Bridge Foundation

City Bridge Foundation is a grant giver that supports London communities. They have a funding stream for re-building the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. After an initial three years of funding (£96,000), we applied for a further two years of continuation funding, which will take us to 2025. This year we received £38,000, restricted to project delivery in London and core expenditure.

Mila Charitable Trust

Mila is a family charitable trust that supports projects in the North East. We received a £10,000 grant in December 2023.

The Henry Smith Charity

This charity helps people and communities at a time of need, to bring about positive change. They fund us through their Improving Lives programme. We were granted three years of funding (£135,000) in April 2023. This year we received £42,500 to support project delivery across all three hubs.

St. Catherine's Church, Didsbury

We received a donation of £1,630 in October 2023 from the Sponsorship Group of St. Catherine's Church in Didsbury specifically to support our social events in Manchester.

Other funding

We received a further £13,300 of unrestricted grants from smaller grant-givers and charitable foundations and just over £29,000 from other major donors for which we are most grateful. We have raised a further £18,589 unrestricted funding from both one-off and recurring individual donations (including Gift Aid).

CASH RESERVES

The trustees continue to take a risk-based approach to reserve targets. Since we operate as a digital platform, fixed costs and forward financial commitments are minimal. In 2023 our trustees agreed to increase our cash reserves to £30,000, which covers three months predicted running costs and gives us a bridge should there be any discontinuities in funding.

COSTS AND BUDGETING

We are governed by the Charity Commission's financial regulations. Expenditure of £153,229 was incurred. Following normal trends, the majority of expenditure (87%) relates to staffing (£133,311) of which £33,980 is freelancer cost and £99,331 is payroll cost including pension and payroll taxes. Staff costs relate to direct project delivery – staff time spent sourcing referrals; recruiting; screening, checking and training befrienders; making matches; liaising with referrers; safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation; media and reporting.

This year 2023-24 saw changes in staff structure, which explain the increase in staff costs and the reduction in freelance fees. Five members of staff chose part-time contracts and went on payroll, three remained freelance. We had two part-time staff hires – a replacement hub manager in the North East, and a new digital marketing lead.

The remainder of in-year spend (13%) relates to hardship payments to our refugee friends, travel and hospitality expenses, community events and other direct costs. Digital and professional fees including IT systems, social media, software, maintenance, web hosting, insurance, payroll, design and accountancy was just over half of this and made up 7% of total expenditure.

London continues to be the largest hub, where the majority of our matches are made. London accounted for 50% of hub expenditure, Manchester 22% and the North East 27%. We have changed strategy from growth to maintenance in the North East in order to keep the hub going at a lower overall cost.

Risk management

In 2019, our trustees devised a register of risks. A three-stage traffic light system was adopted:
RED High risk (business critical)
AMBER Low risk (potentially constraining)
GREEN Negligible/low risk (no action)
In 2020 our risks were amended to include public policy and we set out four risks we would review regularly.

Risk	Definition	Mitigation actions
Insufficient resources	Lacking the staffing and/or finances to achieve our stated aims	• Regular review of budget, funding strategy, staffing levels and ability to meet demand for services. • Maintain close relations with existing funders.
Reputational damage	Acting unprofessionally and/or attracting negative publicity or scrutiny that potentially undermines our principles and ethos.	• Regular review of our training procedures, financial and safeguarding policies.
Governance risks	Trustees who are disengaged with our work and/or fail to ensure that we are in compliance with our charitable purposes & charity law	• Regular review of our Board to ensure we have a balance of the skills required for effective governance and financial oversight.
Public policy and external environment risks	Is the external environment conducive to or potentially a threat to achieving our stated aims?	• Close monitoring of the changing environment in which we operate.

All risks have been on green for 2023-24, apart from public policy and external environment which was placed on amber in May 2021 and has remained at higher risk ever since.

On resources our medium term financial position looks robust and a small group of staff and trustees regularly review the external funding landscape. Our Treasurer presents quarterly reports on our financial position both actual and forecast. We have a settled and high performing staff team in London and Manchester and have recently recruited a new person to manage our activities in Newcastle.

On reputational risk we have robust and transparent systems and are mindful to safeguard our ethos and principles in our work, decision-making and strategic planning.

On governance we have strengthened our trustee board and remain confident that our trustees are fully engaged with our work and strategising. There is a strong team ethos connecting trustees and our staff team.

On public policy we are acutely aware of the threatening national and international environment on refugee and asylum issues. Trustees receive short reports on the external environment at each quarterly meeting. This enables us to risk assess our programmes and planning in real time.

We have retained an amber rating for public policy. Although the threat level within the UK appears to have eased since the July 2024 general election, the ramifications of the anti-immigrant disturbances in the summer of 2024 remain unclear and the wider European environment continues to cause potential concern for our work.



"What HostNation has achieved is so deeply impressive and inspiring. It is a story of refugees that fills me with hope."

PETER
long-term donor

Structure, governance & management

Organisational structure

HostNation incorporated as a charity (CIO) and registered with the Charity Commission in September 2018.

Our board

As of 30 September 2024, we have six voluntary trustees. We welcome two new trustees this year from a refugee background, Gulsom Gohar and Dostyar Dost (see box overleaf). Our Chair, Daniel Silverstone, was CEO at both the Commission for Racial Equality and Interights. The board has an equal split between women and men, and meets quarterly.

Our team

We have a lean operational team who work from home, so overheads are low. All staff and freelancers are paid an hourly rate that is more than twice the minimum wage. This year we have a change of regional hub manager in the North East and have a new digital communicator, both part-time.

Public benefit

The trustees are aware of the Charity Commission's guidelines on public benefit and consider these measures when carrying out the charitable objectives of this charity.

Safeguarding

In 2023 we fully updated our safeguarding policies and procedures, having consulted widely to make sure we are up to speed on best practice. All our staff, our Chair and our trustee safeguarding lead have attended safeguarding training for those working with asylum seekers, refugees and people who have been trafficked. This endorsed our current processes, and helped us make them even more robust. Our management and trustee safeguarding leads also attended the NCVO training for charity safeguarding leads.

As a result we have developed a full safeguarding policy with reporting processes, new safeguarding guidelines for befrienders and a screening and checks policy (all available on our website), which we review annually. We also update the safeguarding training that is delivered to new volunteer befrienders by our safeguarding lead regularly.

Independent examiners

Godfrey Wilson Limited were appointed as independent examiners to the charity in 2023 and have expressed their willingness to continue in that capacity.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Daniel Silverstone

DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees

15 January 2025

HOSTNATION

Spotlight on our trustees

We are delighted to welcome two new trustees, Gulsom Gohar and Dostyar Dost. Both their professional skills and life experiences as refugees from Afghanistan are already proving a valuable resource for our work.



GULSOM GOHAR

Gulsom and her husband caught one of the last evacuation flights out of Kabul in the chaos of the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Gulsom was a prosecutor specialising in the defence of abused women and children. She could not remain in Afghanistan.

Arriving in London, she and her husband were referred to us and we matched them with a local couple for friendship, an experience Gulsom says helped them to feel more at home.

In the Breaking Barriers documentary 'My Refugee Life', Gulsom talks eloquently about her escape from the Taliban and the pain of losing her old life. At the end, however, she speaks of seeing the light and regaining hope for the future. She now works as a paralegal.



DOSTYAR DOST

Dost was also forced to leave Kabul in 2021 in the most perilous circumstances. He is a medical doctor, who worked for the Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan, and with international NGOs including the World Health Organisation.

Like Gulsom, Dost was referred to HostNation soon after arriving in the UK and was matched with his befriender, Rodger, in what the latter calls, "A meeting of equals, a true friendship".

Dost first volunteered at Groundwork London assisting other Afghan refugees, providing psychological support and teaching English. He now works in public health and volunteers with the Aga Khan Health Board. He supports other Afghan refugees and provides technical support to two hospitals in Afghanistan.

Independent examiner's report to the HostNation trustees

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of HostNation (the charity) for the year ended 30 September 2024, which are set out on pages 21 to 24.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

I report in respect of my examination of the charity'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

Godfrey Wilson Limited also provided payroll services to the charity. I confirm that as a member of the ICAEW I am subject to the FRC's Revised Ethical Standard 2016, which I have applied with respect to this engagement.

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 charity as required by section 130 of the Act;
or
(2) the accounts do not accord with those records.

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.

Dougal Howard

Date: 15 January 2025

DOUGAL HOWARD ACA
Member of the ICAEW

For and on behalf of:
Godfrey Wilson Limited
Chartered accountants and statutory auditors
5th Floor Mariner House,
62 Prince Street,
Bristol BS1 4QD

Receipts & payments account

Receipts & payments account

For the year ended 30 September 2024

RECEIPTS	Note	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
Grants		90,500	13,300	**103,800**	96,008
Major donors		1,630	29,089	**30,719**	40,820
Individual giving		-	15,282	**15,282**	12,852
Gift Aid		-	2,978	**2,978**	2,608
Interest		-	488	**488**	-
Total receipts		92,130	61,137	**153,267**	152,288
Payments	1	92,130	61,099	**153,229**	124,861
Net receipts / (payments)		-	38	**38**	27,427
Cash funds at 1 October 2023		-	87,792	**87,792**	60,365
Cash funds at 30 September 2024	2	-	87,830	**87,830**	87,792

Statement of assets and liabilities

As at 30 September 2024

CASH FUNDS	2024 £	2023 £
Cash at bank and in hand	**87,830**	87,792
Total cash funds	**87,830**	87,792
Restricted funds	–	–
Unrestricted funds	**87,830**	87,792
Total cash funds	**87,830**	87,792

Approved by the trustees on 15 January 2025 and signed on their behalf by:

Daniel Silverstone

DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees

Notes to the financial statements

1. TOTAL PAYMENTS	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
Staff costs	**99,331**	59,201
Freelance fees	**33,980**	49,137
Travel and subsistence	**2,641**	2,975
Workshops, events and training	**2,887**	2,891
Hardship fund	**3,609**	4,043
Digital and other direct costs	**6,498**	4,154
Professional fees	**4,283**	2,460
Total payments	**153,229**	124,861

2. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	At 1 October 2023 £	Receipts £	Payments £	At 30 September 2024
Restricted funds				
The Henry Smith Charity	-	38,000	(38,000)	-
City Bridge Foundation	-	42,500	(42,500)	-
Mila Charitable Trust	-	10,000	(10,000)	-
St. Catherine's Church	-	1,630	(1,630)	-
Total restricted funds	-	92,130	(92,130)	
Unrestricted funds	87,792	61,137	(61,099)	**87,830**
Total funds	87,792	153,267	(153,229)	**87,830**

Purposes of restricted funds

Income and expenditure are restricted by geographical location. HostNation manages three hubs across the UK: Manchester, Newcastle, and London. The donors listed below provide funding restricted to use within specific hubs.

The Henry Smith Charity provide support to HostNation through their 'Improving Lives' programme. The grant was provided to support running costs of an organisation providing a befriending service for refugees for three years. Income received this year has been divided between all three hubs.

Manchester

St. Catherine's Church's sponsorship group provided funding to be restricted specifically to the Manchester hub.

Newcastle

Mila Charitable Trust is a family trust that supports HostNation in the North East.

London

City Bridge Foundation have been supporting HostNation since 2020, and have an agreement in place to continue providing funding until 2025.



"I love being able to help with the strategic aspects of HostNation's work and to use my skills and background to support their mission.

It's so rewarding watching the charity grow, and getting to be part of that."

OLIVIA, HostNation trustee

Reference and administrative details

For the year ended 30 September 2024

Charity number

1180004

Registered office

23 Lawford Road
London
NW5 2LH

Trustees

The trustees who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Dostyar Dost
Appointed 1 April 2024
Emiljan Gega
Resigned 18 January 2024
Gulsom Gohar
Appointed 1 April 2024
Mohamed Massoud
Dina Nayeri
Resigned 18 January 2024
Olivia Petie
Daniel Silverstone
Lucy Vidal
Joanna Winterbottom
Resigned 15 November 2023

Bankers

Metro Bank
One Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA

Virgin Money
7 Gold Street
Northampton
NN1 1EN

Independent examiners

Godfrey Wilson Limited
Chartered accountants and statutory auditors
5th Floor Mariner House
62 Prince Street
Bristol
BS1 4QD



1000 FRIENDSHIPS

HOSTNATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1180004

Accounts

HOST NATION

Connecting refugees with host communities

Trustees' Report and Receipts & Payments Accounts

for the year ended 30th September 2023

FRIENDS IN DEED

HostNation is a registered charity no. 1180004

HostNation Annual Report 2022-23

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the period ended 30 September 2023.

Contents

PAGE

Letter from the Chair 3

Letter from the Director 4

Strategic report 5
Vision, mission & objectives
Outcomes and impact
Financial review
Strategic review
Risk management

Structure, governance and management 16
Organisational structure
Public benefit
Safeguarding
Independent examiners

Report of the independent examiner 17

Receipts & payments account 18
Receipts & payments account
Statement of assets & liabilities
Notes to the financial statements

Reference & administrative details 22

Letter from the Chair

It is my pleasure to introduce this report of a year well spent. While it is impossible to ignore the bleak policy landscape in the UK and Europe that forms a background to our work, I draw enormous comfort from the fact that we are providing lasting friendships for refugees.

The toxic political narrative makes me and my fellow trustees all the more grateful for the positive community that has flourished around HostNation, full of trust, welcome and friendship.

The British people are in fact among those with the most positive attitude towards refugees globally; an Ipsos survey of 22,000 people in 29 countries in June 2023 showed 56% of Britons believe refugees make 'a positive contribution', putting us in the top three warmest countries.

This runs counter to the Illegal Migration Act, which we and our sister refugee charities saw pass with deep concern in July 2023. The denial of the UK's obligations under international human rights law and conventions on refugees sets us on a very dangerous path. The determination of the government to offshore asylum seekers to Rwanda in opposition to the UK Supreme Court is alarming. Meanwhile no new safe and legal routes have been provided for people seeking refuge here.

What HostNation is doing in the face of this hostility is true to the long tradition of Britain welcoming those fleeing war, persecution and natural disaster.

We will continue reaching out through our outstanding befrienders. We are humbled by their commitment, enthusiasm and generosity, as we are by the stoicism and humanity shown by our refugee and asylum seeker friends.

My thanks to our staff and our Board of Trustees. It is one of the most creative, friendly, engaged and professional teams with whom I have ever worked. I would encourage you to contact us on **info@hostnation.org.uk** if you would like to support our work or become a befriender.





DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair

"It's a way of helping a refugee but coming at it from a more joyous perspective."
CHLOE



"I know there's someone here who cares about me."
SHOAIB

Letter from the Director

The theme of this report is 'Friends in Deed'. Our refugee befrienders consistently tell us how much they enjoy the opportunity to make a real difference to someone's life through active friendship.

They introduce their friends to new places and experiences, while helping them participate in local life. We call this being a 'Friend in Deed', and it is what sets HostNation apart. Genuine friendships are built on equality and work both ways. As one befriender said: "It doesn't feel like volunteering, it just feels like hanging out with a mate."

Practically all our befrienders (94%) tell us how rewarding it has been and how much they've gained from the cultural exchange. Meanwhile nine out of ten of our refugee friends say they have had a positive befriending experience. We are very proud of these outcomes.

Alongside our London work, we have had our first full operating year in our two northern hubs – Greater Manchester and Tyne & Wear. We are on target with making matches, with consistently positive outcomes. Word is spreading fast about the value of our project.

We feel well poised to enter our seventh year, with the joy and trust at the heart of what we do beautifully captured in a short flagship film *Friends in Deed*, made for us thanks to City Bridge Foundation and the Media Trust.

This joy was very much present at a number of social events that brought our friendship matches together to swap stories, share food and build community. These are wonderful occasions for bringing asylum seekers and refugees out of the isolation that many are enduring.

We are delighted to have turned 1,700 strangers into friends over the last six years. We are hugely grateful to our volunteers, who are in the frontline of carrying out our mission of friendship. But we also could not achieve what we do without our donors and are delighted to report that more than a third of our income now comes from major donors and individual donations alongside our institutional funding.

So thank you to all our Friends in Deed: volunteers, funders and donors. You have helped to create many lasting friendships, and that is definitely worth celebrating.





ANNEKE ELWES
Founder & Director



> **"I can open my heart to one person, to hope it makes a difference to their life. You can too!"**
>
> **LINDA**
> Befriender

Strategic report

Our vision

HostNation believes every refugee deserves a friend.

Our mission

We are a befriending service connecting refugees and asylum seekers to friendly locals.

We tackle the loneliness experienced by those seeking a new home in Britain by making it easier for local people to connect with them via our digital platform.

Our aim is to transform social relations in our communities through small acts of hospitality, inclusion and friendship.

We wish HostNation to become *the* way to befriend refugees in our major cities – online, easy, sustainable and scalable.

Our objectives

Our objectives as defined in our constitution are:

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among those who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants by providing:

- A local 1:1 befriending service that offers friendship, social opportunities, community connection and support in order to address social isolation amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.
- A service that facilitates intercultural relationships to help prevent the self-exclusion of migrant communities from the wider community.
- Increased opportunities for social integration and engagement in the local community to enable asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to positively participate in society.
- Increased opportunities to practise and improve the English skills of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in communities in the UK through friendship with native English speakers in order to promote greater social integration.
- Opportunities for positive action by citizens to change the circumstances that have led to social exclusion amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

2. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit amongst those who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with a view to tackling discrimination, inequality and social disadvantage by providing:

- Connection and relationships with UK citizens and residents who can treat them equally, identify opportunities for them and help build their sense of self-worth.
- Meaningful social interaction and inter-cultural relationships between British citizens and asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in order to encourage greater social cohesion and cultural diversity in communities in the UK.
- A means by which the public can engage with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants as individuals and people with needs, not simply statistics.

To achieve these objectives, we recruit volunteers via an online database, then screen and train them before matching them with refugees. The latter are referred by refugee service providers and other agencies. We aim to make meaningful matches based on geography, gender, age and interests. We then introduce the new friends and provide guidance and relationship support.

"I'd recommend it highly. Where else do you get the opportunity to do something natural and to help another person? It's a very low ask to have a high result."

TIM
Befriender



Outcomes and impact

1. HOSTNATION EXPANSION IN THE NORTH

This was our first full year of having three HostNation hubs up and running – London plus our new operations in Manchester and Tyne & Wear. It has been a solid start, meeting our targets and seeing word spreading among refugee support organisations who send their clients to us.

The need in the north is clear, with the demand for refugee services becoming ever more urgent. There are many new arrivals of dispersed refugees and asylum seekers, and insufficient integration projects.

HostNation Manchester

Set up in 2022, our hub covering Greater Manchester was ready to pick up momentum in 2023. The value of our project is becoming known through local volunteer, community and refugee networks and we now have 13 local referral partners who send us their clients.

We reached our friendship target this year, making 55 matches, and it has been a joy to see our HostNation 'family' in the north west building rich and rewarding relationships.

We have two core refugee referral partners here, Breaking Barriers and Manchester City Council. Our relationship with the council centres on their Ukraine Support Team and Ukraine Response Service, leading to the fact that the top country of origin for our referrals in the north west this year is Ukraine.

Breaking Barriers mostly work with refugees who have been granted asylum, so this gives us a greater number of befriendees in Manchester with refugee status or humanitarian protection (73% compared with 43% in London and 46% in the north east).

We are also building connections in Manchester with British Red Cross, Refugee Action, Freedom from Torture and Oldham Social Prescribing.

CASE STUDY HOSTNATION MANCHESTER

You saved my life

Waseem and Clare met through us in May 2023. The Libyan refugee and the pink-haired charity worker hit it off straight away.

"It's just been so easy and life enriching," Clare tells us. Waseem, who has endured deep trauma, has transformed since meeting her.

"Clare is one of the nicest people I have ever met and made a huge change in my life," he exclaims. "She feels like part of my family. I don't know what I would do without her. She helped make me happy and confident. Thanks to you for introducing us. I will never forget your kindness." Clare has noted the change: "Now his face is lit up."

They meet weekly to eat, visit the beach or the countryside. Waseem gets along famously with Clare's husband.

"They watch the footie together and have a right laugh," she says. "He'll come to Christmas with us and all of that good stuff. We count him as part of the family. Definitely friends forever I hope!"

Waseem tells Clare she has given him a fresh start. "Before I met you, I had no desire to do anything, everything was dark in front of me. After I met you, my life changed to much better. You saved my life."



CASE STUDY HOSTNATION NORTHEAST

Feeling braver now

"I've made a good friend with Mehmet," says befriender Terry, interviewed by BBC Radio Newcastle. "We enjoy each other's company."

Mehmet, a former accountant from Turkey, is now an asylum seeker finding his way in Tyne & Wear.

"When I came to this country first, I think: 'I must improve my English'. I am happy now with Mrs Terry. I believe we are good friends."



The two love exchanging stories of their lives over coffee. "We always seem to have lots to talk about," says Terry, who has met Mehmet's family and been to community Iftar with him during Ramadan. "We both support Newcastle United!"

Nearly a year after being introduced, they still meet weekly. Regular chats with Terry have improved Mehmet's English, and his confidence. "This relationship made me more brave," he declares.

"It's just something that I like to do," says Terry simply. "I think refugees and asylum seekers need as many friends as they can get."

HostNation North East

Our Tyne & Wear hub, established at the end of 2021, now has a strong resource of volunteer befrienders as well as a solid network of 14 partnerships with the local refugee sector. This year we have made 43 friendship matches, of which an outstanding 83% were positive.

A strong partnership has been built with the Comfrey Project, along with their spin-off organisations the Dialogue Society and NEDES. The first two work closely with the Turkish community, so nearly half of the asylum seekers or refugees referred to us in the north east are from Turkey this year.

Our hub welcomed referrals from 15 origin countries, with Turkey, Iran and Sudan at the top. Just over 50% were still in the asylum system, while 46% had already received refugee status. The vast majority were under 50, with a preponderance towards males (65%) over females (35%).

2. RECRUITING FRIENDS IN DEED

Over the last year we have welcomed 180 new befrienders to join our existing pool: 69 across Greater London, 56 in Greater Manchester and 55 in Tyne & Wear.

We recruit through many channels, including volunteer portals and in-person events, partnering with councils and community organisations, social media, press stories, and most powerful of all, word of mouth from existing befrienders.

We have a thorough screening process for befrienders, and then add them to our database of checked and trained volunteers who are ready to step up as refugees are referred to us.

The age profile of our volunteers is very similar in London and Manchester with 72% and 73% of new volunteers registered last year being under 40. In the north east there is a wider age range, with 62% being below 40.

"We've forged a great friendship and I'm really grateful for that."
JORDAN



"He was the friend who showed me the way."
ABDUL

This year saw a 25% drop in new registrations compared with last year, a dip in volunteering that has been reported across the whole charity sector. We speculate this may be due in part to the cost of living crisis.

However, we have worked hard in all three regions to remedy the situation and by the year's end have made our highest-ever number of friendship matches, having been able to draw on our existing bank of London volunteers.

Training and support

As our befrienders may have no prior experience with asylum seekers and refugees, we offer a solid foundation of support services.

Our interactive training is mandatory. Befrienders learn about the hardships that refugees face in the UK, and explore how traumatic events may impact the ability to develop relationships. We discuss how to create a safe and empowering environment to allow friendship to flourish. We outline potential challenges of befriending a refugee and consider safeguarding and boundaries.

Befrienders are also given written resources to guide them in their journey. Our monthly newsletter lists free activities and opportunities for refugees. We provide signposting resources for local refugee support agencies as well as supplying guides to effective befriending and safeguarding.

3. REFUGEE & ASYLUM SEEKER REFERRALS

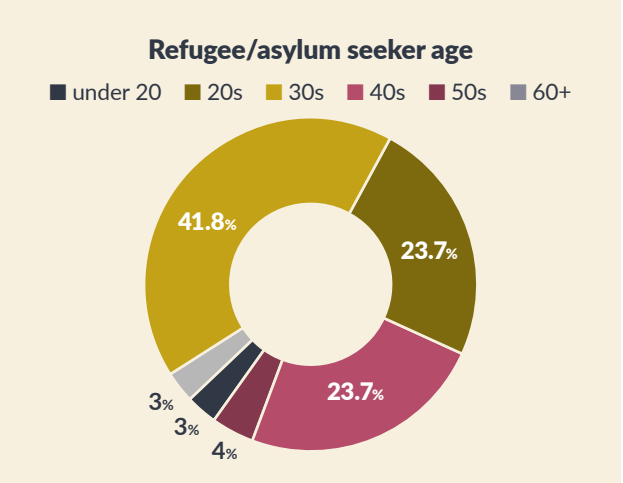
We are proud to have found friends for 226 asylum seekers and refugees across our three regions this year, with 126 in London, 44 in Newcastle and 56 in Manchester.

The word about the positive power of befriending continues to spread around the refugee support sector, with more and more organisations sending their clients to us. There is a growing understanding that people caught up in the UK asylum system need their social and emotional health tended to alongside practical matters of visas, housing and work.

Our top referrers across all hubs by number of people passed to us for friendship were Breaking Barriers, the Refugee Council, Manchester City Council, Hestia and the Comfrey Project (Newcastle).

Half of those referred to us have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection and around one third (35%) have been in the UK for three years or longer. Many are still lonely after spending years here, and do not have friends outside the diaspora of refugees or their own nationalities. So a local befriender has enormous value.

The majority are young, aged in their 20s and 30s (65%). This year the proportion of male referrals has increased to six in ten (from 55% to 59%).

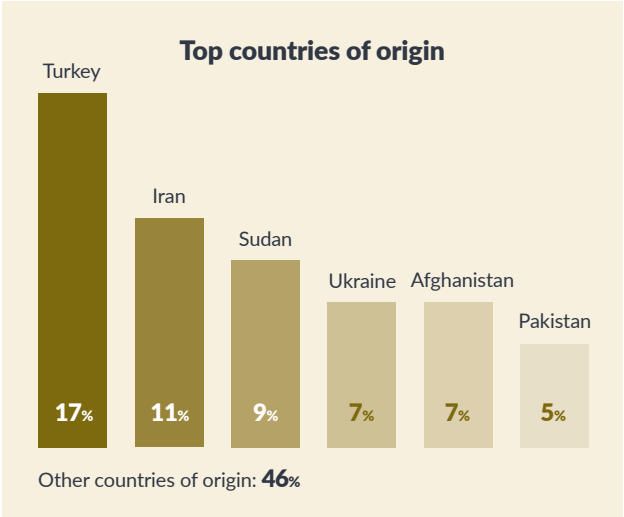


> **"I think HostNation is an amazing service. It is essential to help our clients improve their English language skills and confidence to speak, socialise in a safe environment and explore their cities and the British culture."**
>
> REEM OTHMAN
> Senior Employment and Integration Adviser at Breaking Barriers in Manchester

The percentage of London referrals based in 'temporary' accommodation (mainly unsuitable hotels), was 32%, slightly lower than 37% the year before. This reflects government promises to stop hotel placements, but this policy has also led to new problems of people finding themselves turned out onto the streets without alternative accommodation.

Our top countries of origin have altered since 2021-22 when Iran topped the list and Turkey was fifth. This year we have seen fewer refugees and asylum seekers from Syria than the year before; instead we had more from Ukraine, due to visa schemes which brought numbers larger in scale than any other single forced migration flow to the UK in recent history.

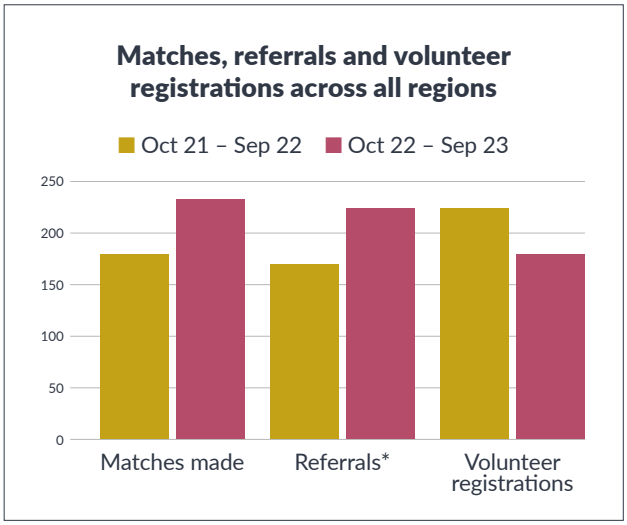
Referrals from Sudan doubled as conflict increased there, those from Pakistan were also up, while those from Afghanistan stayed at a similar level.



Our top origin countries differ from Home Office figures for total arrivals across the UK, where Ukrainians represent the highest number of refugees and Afghans the highest number applying for asylum. This is due to the pipeline effect of referrals who arrived over a year ago, as well as our partnerships with refugee organisations who may support more of one particular community than another. In London we had most referrals from Iran, in Manchester from Ukraine and in Newcastle from Turkey.

4. FRIENDSHIP MATCH OUTCOMES

In an encouraging result, referrals and matches across our three hubs are up by one third compared to the previous 12 months. This gives us our best-ever year for the number of friendship matches achieved, despite a drop in volunteers.



*Not including archived or deleted

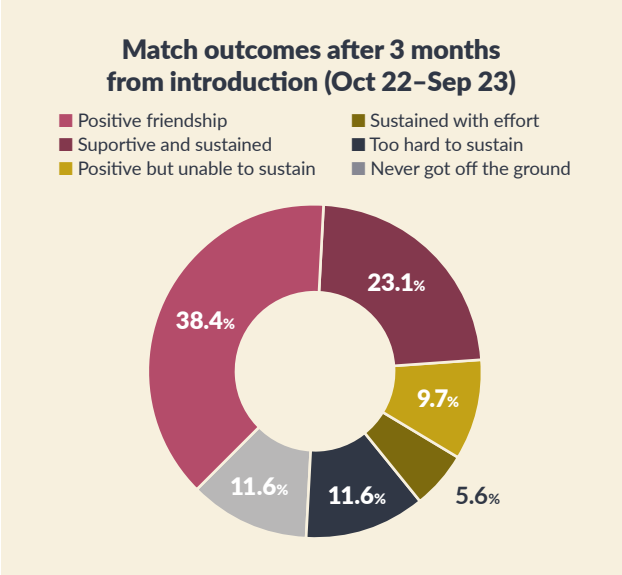
Positive experiences and meaningful relationships remain our priority, however, rather than quantity, and this informs our impact assessments. Three months after introduction, we interview both sides of our friendship matches and record qualitative outcomes.

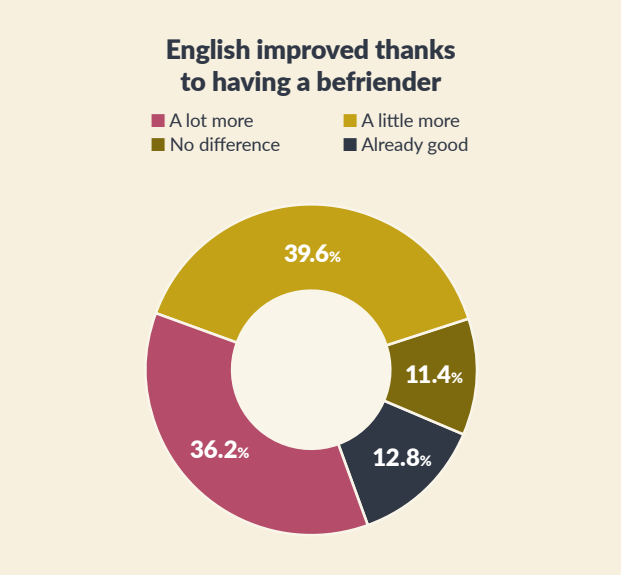
88% of refugees reported improved wellbeing

93% of befrienders found it a rewarding experience

75% of refugees said their English had improved

When balancing the results from both sides, seven in ten of all introductions had a good outcome. More than half told us that genuine friendship had resulted and also includes those we judge to be supportive and sustained and a small number of those which





both sides found positive but could not be kept up beyond three months (often because their refugee friend was moved away).

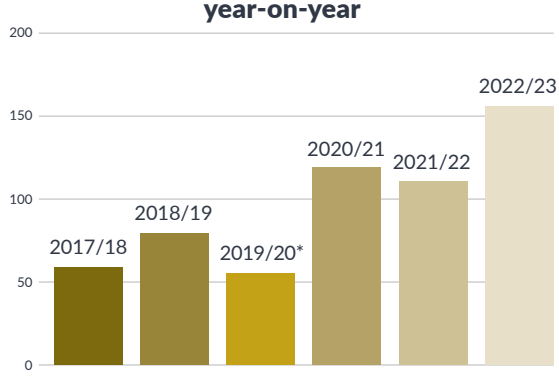
The prevailing reasons for matches that never got off the ground, were too hard to sustain or sustained with effort are similar, and include feeling overwhelmed, fragile mental health and poor English language skills.

We are immensely encouraged that in London nearly half our matches are still in touch a year after being introduced, despite the initial commitment period being just three months.

Just over 75% of refugees said that thanks to their befriender, they now know more about British culture and had improved their English.

The number reporting that their English skills had improved 'a lot' rose significantly from 23% to 36% compared with the previous year.

Of course, it is not only our refugee friends who benefit from befriending. The vast majority of our volunteers, 93%, told us that befriending a refugee was a rewarding experience, and 82% reported that it had helped them to broaden their cultural understanding.





"We just have so much fun together."

ELISSA AND YULIIA

5. COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

The primary purpose of our communications is to promote values of welcome and compassion for refugees and asylum seekers, celebrating all they bring to their new communities here.

We use our platforms to encourage more volunteers to become friends, and refugee agencies to bring their clients to us. This year saw a wonderful bonus with the award of a professionally-directed film made about HostNation, thanks to our funder City Bridge Foundation and the Media Trust who implemented the project.

We launched *Friends In Deed* at a screening event in the autumn, together with our new website and Youtube channel. The short film perfectly captures the joy of refugee befriending. Our partner Breaking Barriers also showed a film on asylum seekers, featuring two of our HostNation friends.

Such stories matter, against a negative narrative towards asylum seekers driven by the government. We support the campaigning efforts of our referral partners including Care4Calais and the Refugee Council across social media, and work to amplify the voices of real people at the heart of the refugee story.

"Wow! I don't believe I have ever seen a more beautiful and heartwarming video on any charity website, well done!"

MICAEL SHAM KYRIAKAKIS
Cotton Tree Trust
(formerly at Breaking Barriers)

The 25th annual Refugee Week brought coverage on ITV and the BBC in Newcastle, with HostNation friends describing the positive impact of meeting. In Manchester, two asylum seekers (including Waseem whose story is on p6), bravely told the Manchester Evening News of their traumatic experiences and the huge difference that their HostNation befriender makes. We also ran our own filmed testimonies from many refugees explaining the support they find in their new friendships. "He's my family now," as one said.

CASE STUDY HOSTNATION LONDON

The most important gift

Sheila fled terrible experiences to seek refuge in this country. At first she was fearful about getting around London by herself, but her befriender Sabrina changed all that.

The two women clicked at their first meeting. "Sabrina just ran towards me and gave me a big hug, like we'd already met for a long time," says Sheila. "She is very vibrant and energetic."

Their story features in our film *Friends In Deed*, about the joy of befriending. "Friendship is the most important gift I have to offer," says Sabrina in the film.

Sheila has regained confidence, and is now very involved in local community activities. "Sabrina has introduced me to so many hubs," she explains. "My week is full: I have joined a choir, I am in a dance and yoga club, she has helped me to meet other African poets. The centre of my world has grown bigger."



HostNation supper clubs

Social integration is essential to our mission and this year we have brought our friendship matches together for food, music and celebration.

We have a new bi-monthly supper club in central London thanks to our excellent partnership with the American International Church, who host events for those of all faiths and none.

In September we had a very successful supper club in Tyne & Wear to mark having made our first 60 matches in the region, with one for Manchester planned in the next financial year.

Our refugees and their befrienders welcome these opportunities to meet other matches in a relaxed setting.

We are delighted to be back to these in-person events to celebrate friendships, build connections and nourish our HostNation family.



"Nina filled a void for me. She is so amazing! She is like a sister to me. Meeting her is divine."

VICKIE
Refugee friend

Financial review

Our funding position in 2022-23 was strong. Income was up by a third on 2021-22, with increases in grants, individual giving and major donors. This gave us the opportunity to increase the hourly rate we pay our staff and freelancers (87% of our costs), upgrade our digital platform and website, and increase hardship payments to our refugee friends.

We are also in a position to carry over substantial unrestricted funds to our next financial year, exceeding our cash reserves target and supporting project delivery and planned activities in 2023-24, such as further social media support and regular social events to build a sense of community across all three hubs. It also gives us additional financial resilience as some of our grants come to an end and the current funding landscape remains volatile.

FUNDING PARTNERS

We are immensely grateful to the following funders:

City Bridge Foundation (restricted to London)

City Bridge Foundation support London communities. They have a funding stream for rebuilding the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in the capital. We have finished our initial three years of funding (£96,000) from the foundation and this financial year we received £33,000 to support our London hub. A further two years of continuation funding has been granted and will take us to 2025.

Trust for London (restricted to London)

Trust for London work towards a fairer city by prioritising the reduction of poverty and inequality. They support pathways to resettlement, connected communities and good neighbourhoods. They have supported our London hub for five years; this financial year was the final year of continuation support with a £20,000 grant.

The Henry Smith Charity

The Henry Smith Charity helps people and communities at times of need to bring about positive change. They fund HostNation through their Improving Lives programme. We were granted three years funding (£135,000) in April 2023. As this was halfway through our financial year, it was agreed that we would receive £20,000 this financial year, with the rest of the grant accounted for between October 23–April 2026.

Hilden Charitable Fund

The Hilden Charitable Fund made us a grant of £10,000 over two years. Both payments (£5,000 p.a.) were made in this financial year, one in October 2022 and the other in September 2023, so they are being accounted for in the same year.

The Mila Charitable Organisation (restricted to North East)

Mila is a small family charitable trust that supports projects in the North East. The funding was restricted to project delivery in Tyne & Wear for 12 months from November 2022.

Other funding

We received over £40,000 unrestricted funding from other major donors (corporate, charitable and individual). We have raised a further £15,000 unrestricted funding from both one-off and recurring individual donations (including Gift Aid). We now use JustGiving as our primary donations platform.

CASH RESERVES

The trustees continue to take a risk-based approach to reserve targets, as in previous years. Since we operate as a digital platform, fixed costs and forward financial commitments are minimal. However since our unrestricted income has increased, we feel we can support a higher level of cash reserves and at the end of this financial year our trustees agreed to increase our cash reserves to £30,000, which covers three months predicted running costs and gives us a bridge should there be any discontinuities in funding.

COSTS AND BUDGETING

As a charity we are governed by the Charity Commission's financial regulations. Our costs are predominantly staff related, with 87% of our expenditure in 2022-23 relating to directly employed and freelance staff (including HMRC payments). Expenditure on staff and freelancers reflects the increase in the hourly pay rate introduced in April.

Our financial statements reflect a full year of running our hubs in Newcastle and Manchester and making matches. Our managers in these cities are engaged on a self-employed basis and paid as freelancers, thus the increase in freelance costs this financial year as opposed to the previous financial year when we were still in the 'start-up' phase. The remainder of in-year spend (13%) relates to hardship payments to our refugee friends, professional services, travel and

hospitality expenses, digital costs, community events and other direct costs.

Running costs are kept close to 10% of total expenditure, which includes staff time on fundraising and communications, IT systems, maintenance, web hosting, insurance, payroll and accountancy.

This year 12% of our expenditure is core running costs and 88% is direct project delivery. These are 'volume-related' matching costs across our three hubs, i.e. staff time spent sourcing referrals; recruiting; screening, checking and training befrienders; making matches; liaising with referrers; safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation; media and reporting.

As we still make most matches in London, our project delivery expenditure was nearly half in London (49%), with Manchester coming in at just under a quarter (23%) and Newcastle a little over (28%).

Strategic review by AMBS
(Alliance Manchester Business School)

Our trustee and AMBS alumnus Mo Massoud put HostNation forward as the subject of the not-for-profit module for the MBA students at Alliance Manchester Business School. As a result, a cohort of international students analysed and reviewed our strategy at the end of 2022.

The team took both a wide-angle view of the UK refugee sector and focused on HostNation staff and referral partners through 18 qualitative interviews.

Their competitive mapping concluded that we are unique. There is no other specialist, multi-city befriending service in the UK.

They recommended that we strengthen our referral partner model through a structured program of meetings and communication with organisations offering integration rather than crisis support. We are acting on this and now have a bi-monthly newsletter for 250 referral and refugee sector contacts. We also produce various language versions of our refugee leaflets for their service users.

The students identified Glasgow as the next possible location for a HostNation hub, based on low competition, high refugee population, suitable referrers and the potential size of the volunteer pool. However their advice was to consolidate our achievements and partnerships in our two northern hubs in 2023-24 before considering expansion.

Finally, they examined our funding model and confirmed that institutional funding will always be our main donor source as refugee causes do not have mass appeal, which will inevitably limit individual donations. We are hugely grateful for their hard work on our behalf.

> **"HostNation's niche service and presence in various cities in the UK gives it an organisational focus, a track record, and experience that other providers do not have."**
>
> GROWTH STRATEGY FOR HOSTNATION REPORT
> AMBS



HostNation team and MBA students.

Risk management

In 2019, our trustees devised a register of risks. A three-stage traffic light system was adopted:

RED High risk (business critical)

AMBER Low risk (potentially constraining)

GREEN Negligible/low risk (no action)

In 2020 our risks were amended to include public policy and we set out four risks we would review regularly.

Risk	Mitigation actions
Insufficient resources – human or financial – leading to an inability to achieve our objectives and outcomes.	• Regular review of budget, funding strategy, staffing levels and ability to meet demand for services. • Maintain close relations with existing funders.
Reputational damage caused by being seen to act unprofessionally or in a manner inappropriate to a charity.	• Regular review of our training procedures, financial and safeguarding policies.
Governance risks – failure by the trustees to carry out their functions in accordance with best governance practice & charity law.	• Regular review of our Board to ensure we have a balance of the skills required for effective governance and financial oversight.
Public policy and external environment risks leading to an inability to achieve our objectives and outcomes.	• Close monitoring of the changing environment in which we operate.

All risks have been on green for 2022-23, apart from public policy and external environment which was placed on amber in May 2021 and has remained at higher risk ever since. The hostile environment, the use of unsuitable temporary hotel accommodation by the Home Office, the Illegal Migration Bill and the pervasive anti-refugee rhetoric, have all combined to affect the stability and mental health of our refugee friends.

With no recourse to public funds or the right to work, they face considerable challenges which can impact on the sustainability of befriending relationships. We have considered moving this risk up to red and will continue to review it at every trustees' meeting.

Structure, governance & management

Organisational structure

HostNation incorporated as a charity (CIO) and registered with the Charity Commission in September 2018.

As of October 1st 2022–30 September 2023, there were seven trustees – four women and three men – who work on a voluntary basis. Two of our trustees, Dina Nayeri and Emiljan Gega, are former child refugees. Our Chair, Daniel Silverstone, was CEO at both the Commission for Racial Equality and Interights. The board meets quarterly.

Our two most recent trustees, appointed in December 2021 – Mohamed Massoud and Lucy Gould – one with a charity finance background and the other with business strategy experience, have helped HostNation become financially resilient.

We have a lean operational team, who all work from home, so our overheads are low. All staff and freelancers are paid an hourly rate that is twice the minimum wage. Three of the management team are on PAYE. We employ six freelancers on a part-time, self-employed basis: our three regional hub managers; a London operations manager, a communications manager and a designer.

Public benefit

The trustees are aware of the Charity Commission's guidelines on public benefit and consider these measures when carrying out the charitable objectives of this charity.

Safeguarding

In 2023 we updated our safeguarding policies and procedures, having consulted widely to make sure we were up to speed on best practice.

All our staff, our Chair and our trustee safeguarding lead have attended safeguarding training for those working with asylum seekers, refugees and people who have been trafficked. This endorsed our current processes, and helped us make them even more robust.

Our management and trustee safeguarding leads also attended the NCVO training for charity safeguarding leads.

As a result we have developed a full safeguarding policy with reporting processes, new safeguarding guidelines for befrienders and a screening and checks policy (all available on our website), which we will review annually.

We have also updated the safeguarding training that is delivered to new volunteer befrienders by our safeguarding lead every month.

Independent examiners

Godfrey Wilson Limited were appointed as independent examiners to the charity during the year and have expressed their willingness to continue in that capacity.

Approved by the trustees on 20 January 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees
Date: 20 January 2024

Independent examiner's report to the HostNation trustees

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of HostNation (the charity) for the year ended 30 September 2023, which are set out on pages 18-21.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

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

I report in respect of my examination of the charity'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

Godfrey Wilson Limited also provided payroll services to the charity. I confirm that as a member of the ICAEW I am subject to the FRC's Revised Ethical Standard 2016, which I have applied with respect to this engagement.

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 charity as required by section 130 of the Act;

or

(2) The accounts do not accord with those records.

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 by:

Alison Godfrey

ALISON GODFREY FCA
Member of the ICAEW

Date: 20 January 2024
For and on behalf of:

Godfrey Wilson Limited

Chartered accountants and statutory auditors,
5th Floor Mariner House,
62 Prince Street, Bristol,
BS1 4QD

Receipts & payments account

Receipts & payments account

For the year ended 30 September 2023

RECEIPTS	Note	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Grants		83,000	13,008	**96,008**	73,500
Individual giving		-	12,852	**12,852**	8,978
Gift aid		-	2,608	**2,608**	2,289
Major donors		-	40,820	**40,820**	33,054
Total receipts		83,000	69,288	**152,288**	117,821
Payments	1	93,092	31,769	**124,861**	99,086
Net receipts / (payments)		(10,092)	37,519	**27,427**	18,735
Cash funds at 1 October 2022		10,092	50,273	**60,365**	41,630
Cash funds at 30 September 2023	2	-	87,792	**87,792**	60,365

Statement of assets and liabilities

As at 30 September 2023

CASH FUNDS	2023 £	2022 £
Cash at bank and in hand	**87,792**	60,365
Total cash funds	**87,792**	60,365
Restricted funds	–	10,092
Unrestricted funds	**87,792**	50,273
Total cash funds	**87,792**	60,365

Approved by the trustees on 20 January 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees

Notes to the financial statements

1. TOTAL PAYMENTS	2023 Total £	2022 Total £
Staff costs	**59,201**	55,236
Freelance fees	**49,137**	32,075
Travel and subsistence	**2,975**	1,953
Workshops, events and training	**2,891**	1,014
Hardship fund	**4,043**	3,448
Digital and other direct costs	**4,154**	2,960
Professional fees	**2,460**	2,400
Total payments	**124,861**	99,086

2. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	At 1 October 2022 £	Receipts £	Payments £	At 30 September 2023
Restricted funds				
Manchester SuppHer Club	450	-	(450)	-
Paul Hamlyn Expansion	4,576	-	(4,576)	-
City Bridge Fund	2,066	33,000	(35,066)	-
Trust for London	3,000	20,000	(23,000)	-
The Henry Smith Charity	-	20,000	(20,000)	-
Mila Charitable Trust	-	10,000	(10,000)	-
Total restricted funds	10,092	83,000	(93,092)	
Unrestricted funds	50,273	69,288	(31,769)	**87,792**
Total funds	60,365	152,288	(124,861)	**87,792**

Purposes of restricted funds

Income and expenditure are restricted by geographical location. HostNation manages three hubs across the UK: Manchester, Newcastle, and London. The donors listed below provide funding restricted to use within specific hubs.

Manchester

SuppHer Club provided funding specifically for the Manchester hub.

Paul Hamlyn Expansion provided initial seed funding for the hubs in Manchester and Newcastle.

Newcastle

Mila Charitable Trust is a family trust that supports HostNation in the North East.

London

Trust for London provided a final year of continuation funding under their grant to reduce poverty and inequality in the capital.

City Bridge Foundation provided a 3-year grant starting in 2020, for the purpose of helping rebuild the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in London.

The Henry Smith Charity provided support to HostNation through their 'Improving Lives' programme. The grant was given for three years' running costs from 2022.

Reference and administrative details

For the year ended 30 September 2023

Charity number

1180004

Registered office and operational address

23 Lawford Road
London
NW5 2LH

Trustees

The trustees who served during the year and up to the date of this report were as follows:

Emiljan Gega
Lucy Gould
Mohamed Massoud
Olivia Petie
Daniel Silverstone
Dina Viegutz
Joanna Winterbottom (resigned 15.11.2023)

Bankers

Metro Bank
One Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA

Independent examiners

Godfrey Wilson Limited
Chartered accountants and statutory auditors
5th Floor Mariner House
62 Prince Street
Bristol
BS1 4QD

"I'm so glad I got involved in the process, it was so rewarding and I learnt so much."

JOSH



"I had no friends, no family, no one at all. I won't forget him."

BAHAA

HOSTNATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1180004

Accounts

HOST NATION

Connecting refugees with host communities

HostNation Trustees' Report and Financial Statements

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022



FIVE YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

HostNation Annual Report 2021-22

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the period ended 30 September 2022.

Contents

PAGE

Letter from the Chair 3

Letter from the Director 4

Strategic report 5

Vision and objectives
Outcomes and impact
Financial review
Future plans
Risk management

Statement of governance and management 15

Statement of trustees' responsibilities 16

Report of the independent examiner 17

Financial statements 18

Administrative details 21

Letter from the Chair

As we pass our fifth anniversary milestone, I am very proud that the goodwill between our befrienders and their refugee friends brings light into a very dark landscape for asylum seekers and refugees.

Unfortunately, the prevailing policy and operational environment in the UK remains characterised by a lack of generosity, humanity and decency. Well over 150,000 asylum seekers are stuck in the Home Office backlog crisis. They are trapped in a cruel limbo, often in unfit accommodation, unable to work. The situation is intolerable.

Against this background, more and more of our fellow citizens are aware of the disconnect between public policy and the UK's proud tradition of welcoming people seeking asylum. This resonates with me personally since my mother arrived here as a child refugee in 1939 on the last Kindertransport out of Prague. She never forgot the generosity she received in those troubled times.

The political context around refugees has deteriorated to the point that UK citizens who are also Holocaust survivors were moved to publish an open letter to the Home Secretary:

"People seeking asylum simply want to rebuild their lives in safety, in a country that is committed to the rules introduced after the Holocaust to protect all of us if we flee torture, war or persecution.

The horrors we experienced began inch by inch, by taking away people's humanity, and casting them as threats, as others, as less than human. We've seen where this path can go. But when we treat people with compassion and dignity, our communities, and our countries, are better for it."

The vital work of HostNation is based on timeless and universal principles of compassion, friendship and human rights. Friendly local people make new arrivals feel warmly welcomed into our communities and this integration is a huge public good. It builds on our national traditions of generosity and voluntary action, most recently seen in the surge of citizen support for Ukrainians displaced by war.

This is an antidote to the bitter rhetoric we hear so often, and it brings moments of warmth and joy into an increasingly desperate situation.

I want to thank our talented and passionate staff team and our trustees who have together established such an important platform on which we can build on our founding principle, that **every refugee deserves a friend.**





DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair



"As always, I massively recommend @HostNationUK if you want to do something pleasant and useful during all this awfulness."

FRANCES LEACH
Befriender, via Twitter

Letter from the Director

I am delighted that as we mark five years since our foundation, we have not only built a flourishing network of rewarding friendships in the capital, but are now offering our refugee befriending service in both Manchester and Newcastle.

We welcomed many of our wonderful friendship matches to our fifth anniversary celebration in September, including some who have stayed close friends since our early days. As one told us, "It was so wonderful to be amongst the HostNation family."

By September 2022 we had made over 600 matches between friendly locals and lonely refugees and asylum seekers. A large number of these introductions have resulted in transformative friendships, a testament to the effort that goes into careful matchmaking and safeguarding by our team, and to the generosity and warmth on both sides of the relationship.

Intense public sympathy around refugee crises including the exodus from Afghanistan and the war in Ukraine led to a surge of people signing up to befriend with us. To manage the flow we decided to close our online registration temporarily and create a waitlist, as you can read in these pages.

All this goes to show that our founding premise – that there are many good people willing to step up to help refugees but who just don't know how – was spot on. The feedback from our refugee friends is both heartwarming and encouraging, with 85% reporting improved wellbeing, and 75% saying they feel less lonely since they met their befriender. Creating intercultural relationships between locals and refugees promotes integration and helps improve our refugee friends' English skills.

This is more important than ever, since nearly four in ten of our asylum seekers this year were stranded in temporary hotel accommodation. We are learning how to manage relationships under these precarious conditions.

Our success in London has given us the springboard we needed to launch in Manchester and Newcastle. We now have a great team in the north – Harley Kuyck-Cohen, Cara Dattani and Kim Gowland – building our presence and making matches in these two great cities. Early feedback has been inspiring, as you will see in this report.

We like to think of HostNation as a social movement, mobilising people to counter the hostile environment by welcoming new arrivals who have lost and suffered so much. Thank you to our incredible befrienders, our refugee friends who have placed their trust in us and our generous donors and funders who show continued faith in the importance of what we do.





ANNEKE ELWES
Founder & Director



"HostNation is amazing and it was really inspiring to see how many connections have been made across London and beyond."

CALUM
Befriender

Strategic report

Our vision

HostNation believes every refugee deserves a friend.

Our mission

We are a befriending service connecting refugees and asylum seekers to friendly locals.

As a digital introductory platform, we tackle the loneliness experienced by asylum-seekers and refugees by making it easier for those of us already at home in Britain to connect with those looking for a new home.

We aim to transform social relations in our communities by using technology to bring local people and refugees together, through small acts of hospitality, inclusion and friendship.

We wish HostNation to become the way to befriend refugees in our cities – online, easy, sustainable and scalable.

Our objectives

Our objectives as defined in our constitution are:

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among those who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants by providing:

- A local 1:1 befriending service that offers friendship, social opportunities, community connection and support in order to address social isolation amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.
- A service that facilitates intercultural relationships to help prevent the self-exclusion of migrant communities from the wider community.
- Increased opportunities for social integration and engagement in the local community to enable asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to positively participate in society.
- Increased opportunities to practice and improve the English skills of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in communities in the UK through friendship with native English speakers in order to promote greater social integration.
- Opportunities for positive action by citizens to change the circumstances that have led to social exclusion amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

2. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit amongst those who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with a view to tackling discrimination, inequality and social disadvantage by providing:

- Connection and relationships with UK citizens and residents who can treat them equally, identify opportunities for them and help build their sense of self-worth.
- Meaningful social interaction and inter-cultural relationships between British citizens and asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in order to encourage greater social cohesion and cultural diversity in communities in the UK.
- A means by which the public can engage with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants as individuals and people with needs, not simply statistics.

To achieve these objectives, we recruit volunteers via an online database, then screen and train them before matching them with refugees. The latter are referred by refugee service providers and other agencies. We aim to make meaningful matches based on geography, gender, age and interests. We then introduce the new friends and provide guidance and relationship support.

Matt spent many weekends helping Hade study English to get into university. His brilliant refugee friend is now in his third year of an aeronautical engineering degree. **“It was so great that we were matched,”** says Matt.



Outcomes and impact

1. EXPANSION INTO NEW REGIONS

The headline news of our year is the opening of new HostNation hubs in Tyne & Wear and Greater Manchester, bringing our tried and tested befriending model to the north of the UK.

Our objective of expanding beyond London was delayed by the pandemic, but is now fully underway.

The need in the north of the UK was clear, with the demand for refugee services in both the north-east and north-west becoming ever more urgent. There are many new arrivals of dispersed refugees and asylum seekers, and insufficient integration projects.

As we reported last year, we first tested the water with a 12-month pilot scheme in Teesside, where we partnered with IPC, a community-led refugee support organisation. After this trial, they advised that there was greater potential for our service in the larger metropolitan area of Tyne & Wear. We also made the strategic decision to replicate our successful London model by running hubs directly, rather than in partnership. Our Teesside operation was taken in house by IPC and rebranded Friends Without Borders and we now work closely with IPC Tyneside.

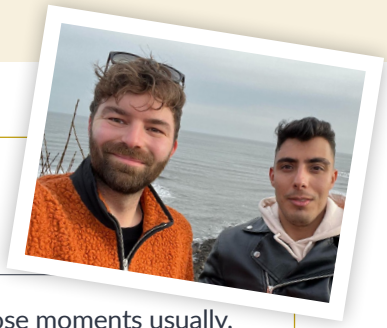
The process of recruiting, screening, and training befrienders began in Tyne & Wear in December 2021 and in Greater Manchester in March 2022. Our programme of awareness-raising also reached out to the refugee sector to establish our credentials.

We have been rewarded with a steady build of befrienders, and in April and May we received our first refugee referrals. Our reported outcomes include data from these new hubs, but with less than six months of active matching, it is a little early to assess their full impact.



"I'm so excited about this opportunity for our community. I know lots of volunteers will be passionate about welcoming those seeking safety and dignity on Tyneside."

HARLEY KUYCK-COHEN
HostNation North East



CASE STUDY NEWCASTLE

A wonderful highlight of my year

"It's a genuine friendship," says Mike, who befriended Hamid through our Newcastle hub in summer 2022. "It's unconditional. It's a two-way thing and we are equals. We both get a lot out of it."

"It's not easy being an asylum seeker leaving my country," says Hamid. "I share with Mike my worries and he reassures me that everything will be OK. He is like my brother."

Mike has shown Hamid all round the Tyne & Wear area, with long walks down by the River Tyne, along the beach at King Edward's Bay, or over to Leazes Park. "The best thing about it is to meet somebody as a blank canvas, as a human first and foremost," reflects Mike. "It's hard to have those moments usually, to learn from somebody new, who you'd never meet normally. It's a rare experience." Hamid in turn has taught Mike about Iranian music, and guided him on a six-month search for the best Persian restaurant in Newcastle. As Mike says: "HostNation is pretty transformative. It's been a wonderful highlight of my year."

2. BEFRIENDER RECRUITMENT

We now have the largest online resource of refugee befrienders in the UK, a testament to the goodwill of local people and the appeal of our model. In the last year we accepted 225 new befriender registrations: 106 across Greater London, 61 in Greater Manchester and 47 in Tyne & Wear.

Over our five years of operations we have had well over 1,000 befriending enquiries. Such has been the interest in the simple, practical way people can support refugees with us, that at times we have had to create waiting lists or even temporarily halt recruitment, while waiting for the flow of referrals to catch up with befriender registrations.

Last year we reported the surge in interest following the Afghan evacuation; this year it was the war in Ukraine that led to a spike in volunteering. We do our best to manage these peaks carefully, to avoid disappointing expectations. In London we like to have 150 checked and trained befrienders available to be matched, to give us a good range of people across the city's boroughs as refugees are referred to us.

We have developed a rigorous screening process for befrienders, which includes checking visual ID, obtaining independent references and having an in-depth conversation to ascertain motivation, empathy, understanding and experience. This process is detailed in our HostNation Handbook, a guide to best practice for all our teams.

> **"HostNation is very welcoming and informative. It's left up to you how you want to spend your time, but at the same time HostNation is so supportive."**
>
> SONJA Befriender

Training and support

As our befrienders are volunteers who may have no prior experience of the reality of asylum seekers and refugees, we offer them a solid foundation of support services.

Our online training programme is mandatory for all befrienders. In our 90-minute interactive session they learn about the hardships that refugees face in the UK. They explore how traumatic events may impact someone's ability to develop relationships, and learn how to create a safe and empowering environment to allow friendship to flourish. We outline the potential challenges of befriending a refugee and consider safeguarding and boundaries.

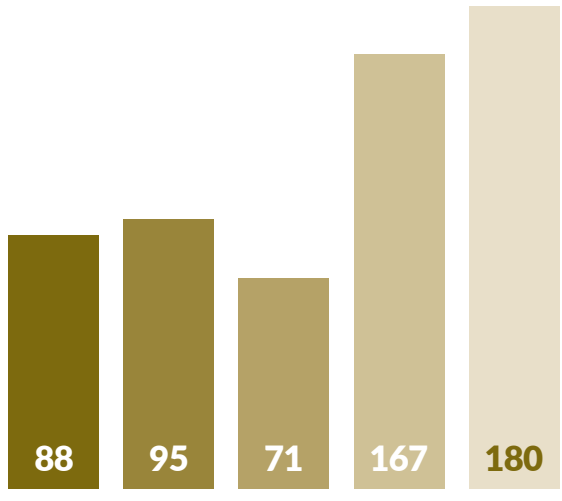
Befrienders are also provided with written resources to guide them in their journey. Our monthly newsletter lists ideas for free activities and opportunities for refugees in all three cities where we operate. We provide comprehensive signposting resources and alert our befrienders to local refugee support agencies. We also supply guides to effective befriending and safeguarding, a HostNation lead contact person and links to local safeguarding teams should befrienders have any cause for concern.

3. REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER REFERRALS

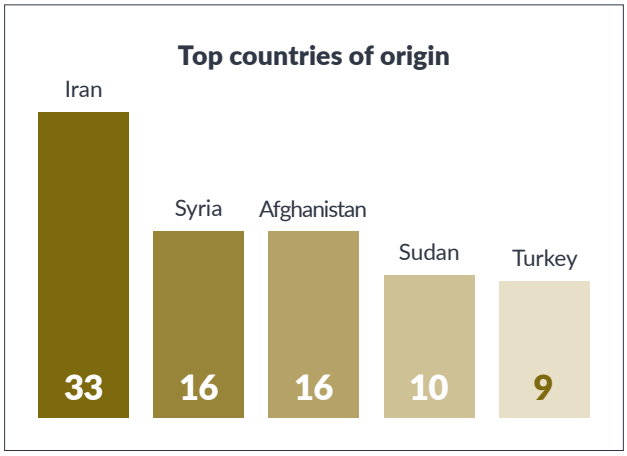
We have been reaching more and more refugees every year, with our expansion into Greater Manchester and Tyne & Wear bringing greater potential for outreach.

In 2021-22 we made 180 friendship matches across all hubs, this includes 20 matches made in Tyne & Wear and 12 matches in Greater Manchester. This brings the total number of refugees and asylum seekers we have matched to 600 over five years.

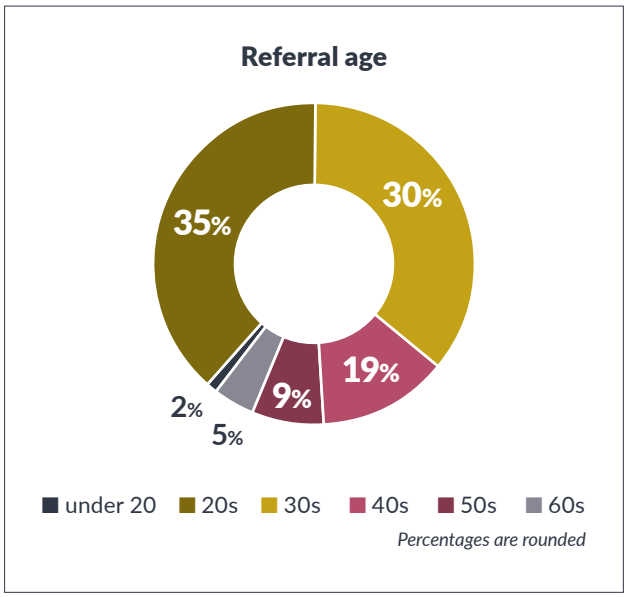
HostNation matches 2017–2022



Our refugee friends this year came from 40 different countries, with the top countries of origin substantially the same as the previous year. Iran leads across each of our hubs; we receive twice as many referrals from there as we do from Syria, with Afghanistan having moved up to joint second place. This year we saw further referrals from Ukraine, China, Albania and El Salvador.



Whilst the majority of our refugee friends are in their 20s and 30s, we have seen an increase amongst those in their 40s, often here with their families on resettlement schemes. Overall, men slightly outnumber women; in Tyne & Wear more women have been referred to us but in Manchester the reverse is true.



People referred to us were evenly split between those with refugee status and those still in the asylum process, awaiting a decision.

We have seen much evidence in the last year of the impact of the hostile political environment for refugees and asylum seekers. Our referral partners are dealing with clients whose lives are in crisis, due to the huge Home Office backlog in dealing with asylum cases, the deficiencies of the housing system and many other factors. This can mean referrers are too busy to refer people for friendship, or that they may on occasion make inappropriate referrals due to a lack of time for screening.

Our service has also been negatively impacted by the instability caused by new arrivals being placed in temporary, often unfit accommodation and then moved without warning. A full 37% of our referrals in the last year were housed in 'temporary' hotels, adding to the difficulty of forming local friendships.

Referral partnerships

Every year there are more refugee support organisations finding out about HostNation and referring their clients to us for friendship. This includes refugee service providers, NHS social prescribers, ESOL colleges and community organisations.

Over the last five years we have built strong relationships with major referrers such as the Refugee Council, Breaking Barriers and Care4Calais and in this financial year we had a further 17 agencies entrust their clients to us. Hestia, who work with victims of modern day slavery and trafficking, have become one of our most regular referral partners.

Leading referral partners 2021-22

- Breaking Barriers
- IPC (North East)
- Hestia
- Groundwork
- Care4Calais
- Refugee Council

> **"The friendships our clients have made have been pivotal in their recovery journey and in building confidence and connection. It has been wonderful to witness!"**
>
> HANNAH RAE
> Former referral partner, Helen Bamber Foundation

In total, 214 asylum seekers and refugees were referred to us in 2021-22. Of these, over 30 were deemed inappropriate for matching with our volunteers. Criteria for this decision rest on factors such as complete lack of English, unstable mental health, or referrals being too busy and not in fact looking for friendship.

We pay a lot of attention to keeping referrers up to date about the outcomes for their refugee clients. This is not only aimed at encouraging future referrals but also to help them better understand our criteria.

We receive consistently positive feedback from our partners over the excellent outcomes for their clients, and the ease of our referral process. There are few other schemes that give refugees a chance just to relax and be themselves.

4. FRIENDSHIP MATCH OUTCOMES

Positive outcomes and meaningful relationships remain our priority, rather than quantity. The aim we gave ourselves at the outset was: *"Improving the lived experience of refugees and asylum seekers in our cities".*

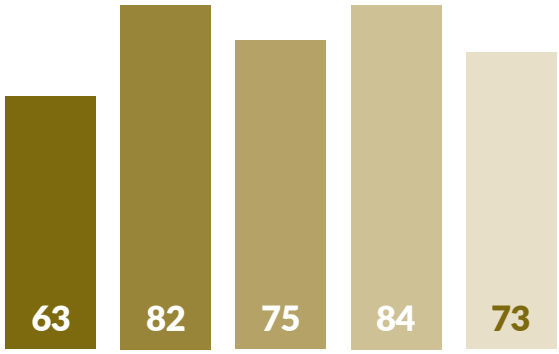
Our more specific outcomes are:

- reduced isolation and feelings of loneliness
- improved spoken/conversational English
- increased sense of inclusion and participation.

We made 180 friendship matches across our three regions over the year. When we interviewed our refugee friends, 85% said they were feeling better since having a befriender, and three quarters reported feeling less lonely. This is a real tribute to the warmth and commitment of our befrienders.

From our one-month and three-month interview feedback, over 7 out of 10 matches were positive, with 6 out of 10 intending to stay in touch after the initial three-month period. While the number of positive outcomes does fluctuate year on year, it remains high overall. Whilst still over 70%, our London activity this year has seen a 13% drop in successful match outcomes compared to 2020-21, so we have considered the reasons for this carefully.

All positive relationships 2017-2022



> **"Everything Rodger does for me is so helpful. The friendship is also really good for my English."**
>
> DOST



> **"It's a relationship of equals. I get as much out of it as Dost does. That's important."**
>
> RODGER Befriender

It is mainly due to an 8% increase in matches that never got off the ground, usually because the referral to us was inappropriate, for reasons stated above. We also made changes to our methodology to make our feedback process more robust and less prone to bias, which may have impacted the results.

Recently, we introduced an internal traffic light system to indicate how relationships are going. This helps us to keep a close eye on those friendships that might need a bit more support at an earlier stage, so we can make positive interventions.

Friendship match outcomes: 5-year round-up

To mark our five-year anniversary, we have reviewed our results across the entire period. We are proud to report that of the 600 matches we have made across all our hubs in the last five years, over three quarters (76%) have had a positive outcome.

Looking at the longer-term benefit for social integration and community wellbeing, 65% of friendships plan to continue seeing each other regularly after the initial three-month period, and 35% of matches are still friends a year later.

These five-year results are very encouraging, given the many uncertainties surrounding the lives of refugees and asylum seekers.

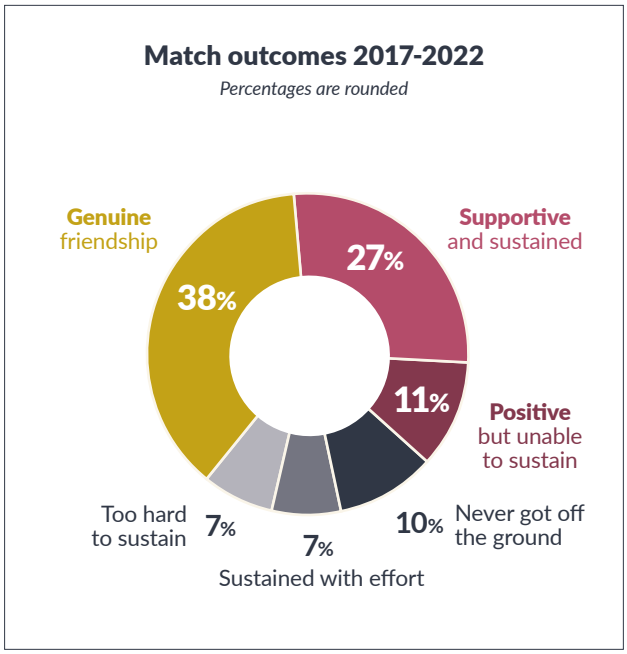
Our most important measurements are those that relate to the positive impact that having a befriender makes to our refugee friends' health and wellbeing. Being included in local life by a friendly person means a huge amount to someone who may be stuck in a single hotel room for months or even years.

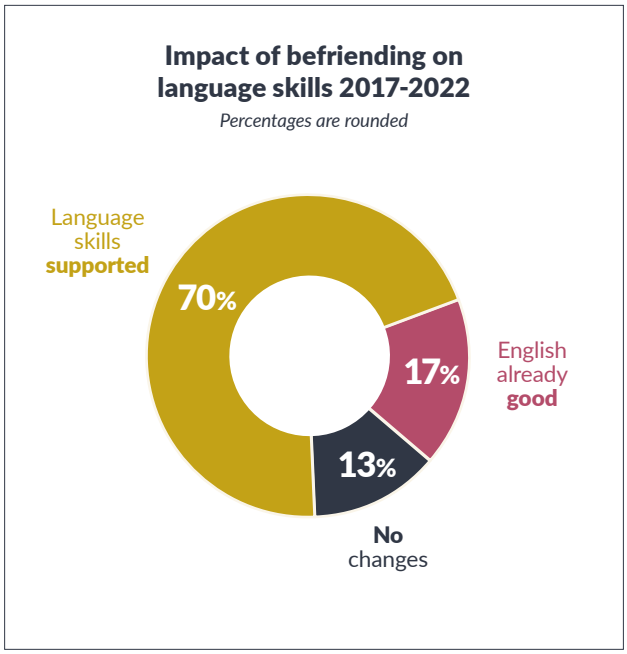
Over the last five years, eight in ten refugees have told us they felt better and less lonely after meeting up with their befriender for three months. Overall, 93% of refugees who were matched had a positive experience.

For those who had a positive relationship but were not able to continue, the leading reason was the sudden dispersal of their refugee friend to a different location.

Improving their spoken English is very high on the list of priorities for those who are referred to HostNation, and is a key outcome for us. Seven in ten felt that speaking to their befriender had improved their conversational language skills (around two in ten already spoke good English).

To help our refugee and asylum seeker friends connect with their befrienders, we give a limited amount of practical support in collaboration with other organisations and donors. We provided data packages and donated smartphones, wifi boxes, mini tablets and laptops. We also provided one-off travel cards and have successfully referred many friends to the excellent Bike Project for free bikes and training.





CASE STUDY NORTH WEST

A miracle in my life

Sonja and Qadir are the first friendship match made by our new hub in Manchester. Qadir describes himself as quite shy, but Sonja gradually melted his fears.

"I try to emphasise the similarities between us, rather than the differences," as she says. "And with HostNation, a lot of thought goes into who you are paired with. You feel very safe."

She and Qadir have done yoga together, gone dancing, eaten pizza, and visited the spectacular Derbyshire countryside. The friendship has powerfully impacted both of them. "I find him really inspiring," says Sonja.

"She is a miracle in my life," exclaims Qadir. "When I feel something inside, I share it with her. She makes me feel stronger."



"Transformative": the impact on our befrienders

We see time and again how befriending has a hugely positive impact not only on our refugee friends but on their befrienders too.

An overwhelming nine out of ten said they found befriending rewarding. On top of the positive feelings of making a real difference to someone's life, many tell us how the experience is full of new learning and fresh encounters.

They love getting to know someone from a different culture whom they would otherwise never have met.

They also find it a relief to have a practical way to show solidarity with refugees in such a negative political climate. As befriender Chloe told us, "So many of us want to help but just don't really know how."

5. ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Although we are a small charity, we keep our voice raised for refugee advocacy. On social media, on our website and at our events we promote the values of welcome and compassion for refugees and asylum seekers, celebrating all that our HostNation friends bring to their new communities.



"I welcome the opportunity to show someone around our lovely city, to chat about common interests, and to offer friendship.

Befriender ANNIE appeared on **ITV Tyne Tees** with her refugee friend NABIHA

Throughout Refugee Week 2022 we promoted simple acts of kindness towards people seeking safety here. This led to one of our matches appearing on ITV Tyne Tees to explain the value of friendship, with retired lecturer Annie chatting to her new Syrian friend Nabiha in Gateshead.

Against a very negative narrative driven by the government and an alarming amount of public disinformation, we work to amplify the voices of the real people caught up in forced migration. Our HostNation friends have generously engaged with the media to tell their stories, including ITV, Whitehall's insider journal The House and the WorldWide Tribe podcast.

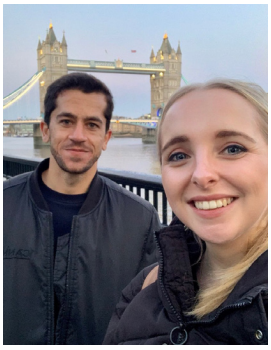
Through social media we support the campaigning efforts of our referral partners. Together with many refugee agencies including the Refugee Council and Together With Refugees we pushed for amendments to the new Nationality and Borders Bill. We strongly voiced our support for the legal challenge by our referral partner Care4Calais against the government's plan to forcibly remove asylum seekers to Rwanda.

"We have all sacrificed so much to get here," one of our HostNation friends told us. "Many were lost along the way. The idea that we could be sent to Rwanda after all that is making people think of ending their lives."

Together with 120 other refugee agencies we signed an open letter to the Home Office protesting against the asylum system collapse, which impacts our friends so seriously as they wait years for their cases to be heard, meanwhile living in the most precarious conditions.

"It's very hard to live here when you are all alone. I stayed in the hotel for weeks at a time without going out. I can't believe how much things have changed since I met Chloe."

SHOAIB
Asylum seeker, in our opinion piece for *The House* magazine





FIVE YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

Financial review

FUNDING PARTNERS

We feel we have achieved our financial objective of diversifying our funding base and securing a much larger proportion of unrestricted funding to increase our financial resilience in 2021-22.

We are immensely grateful to the following funders:

City Bridge Trust
Granted 3 years of restricted, core funding in October 2020 for our London programme, to run until 2023. This year we received £32,000.

Trust for London
Granted us a further £50,000 of continuation funding to run for two years from November 2020, restricted for London expenditure. This year we received the final £25,000.

Manchester SuppHer Club raised £939 for our new hub from a fundraising event.

The Garfield Weston Foundation granted us £15,000 in unrestricted funding.

The Headley Trust gave us a further £1,500, also unrestricted.

We received £33,000 unrestricted funding from major donors (corporate and individual).

Our donations platform raised a further £12,000 unrestricted funding from individual supporters along with Gift Aid.

RESERVES

The trustees continue to take a risk-based approach to reserves, as in previous years. Since we operate as a digital platform, fixed costs and forward financial commitments are minimal.

Based on a multiple of at least three times all forward financial commitments, our reserves are set at £15,000. This gives us a bridge should there be any discontinuities in funding and it is also an amount that we can reasonably expect to fund from unrestricted income.

We ended the financial year with £60,000 cash in the bank. This is 4 x our reserves and covers 7 months predicted running costs.

COSTS AND BUDGETING

As a charity we are governed by the Charity Commission's financial regulations.

Our costs are predominantly staff related, with 88% of our expenditure in 2021-22 relating to directly employed staff and freelance staff costs, including HMRC payments.

The remainder of in-year spend relates to hardship payments to our refugee friends, professional services, travel and hospitality expenses, digital costs, community events and other direct costs.

Expansion into the north
Our financial statements reflect the launch of two new hubs: Newcastle in November 2021 and Manchester in March 2022. Our managers in these cities are engaged on a self-employed basis and paid as freelancers, thus the increase in freelance costs reflects three new people working to establish our new hubs. London costs have come down as some staff time has been transferred from London to help manage this work.

Indirect project costs
Running costs are kept close to 10% of total expenditure, which includes staff time on fundraising and communications, IT systems, maintenance, web hosting, insurance, payroll and accountancy. These have reduced over time as the start-up costs of our digital infrastructure tend to be front-loaded.

Direct project costs
Approximately 90% of our expenditure is on direct project delivery. These are 'volume-related' matching costs across our three hubs, ie. staff time spent sourcing referrals; recruiting; screening, checking and training befrienders; making matches; liaising with referrers; safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation; media and reporting.

Online matching, whilst enabling efficiency and scaling up, also requires careful safeguarding, monitoring and regular conversations with all parties concerned. It is a delicate process and each new match costs approximately £300 in labour and other volume-related costs.

Currently we make most matches in London and our project delivery expenditure in 2021-22 was split 61% London and 39% Manchester and Newcastle.

Plans for the future

Reviewing the plans we set out last year, we achieved the majority of what we set out to do and in our next financial year (2022-23) we will focus on consolidating these achievements.

- 500+ matches reached by Sept 2022.
- Two regional hubs opened with referral partnerships in place.

London

We foresee that our services will be needed more than ever in London, with thousands of refugees and asylum seekers stranded in temporary hotel accommodation, in dire need of support and friendship. Our expanding network of referral partners is opening access to these hard-to-reach groups.

Regional

Our new northern hubs are now in their development phase, having launched in spring 2022. It is too early to evaluate their outcomes but we strongly believe that HostNation has potential to meet a great need in these regions. We will continue to build refugee referral pathways and invest in communications and outreach to recruit befrienders.

Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS) selected HostNation as their not-for-profit MBA module in September and are due to report back on growth strategy. We anticipate this will recommend we focus on our three current hubs for the next year and not open a fourth before 2024 at the earliest.

Risk management

In 2019, our trustees devised a register of the risks we might face. A 3-stage traffic light system was adopted:

RED High risk (business critical)
AMBER Low risk (potentially constraining)
GREEN Negligible/low risk (no action)

In 2020 our risks were amended to include public policy and we set out four risks we would review regularly.

Risk	Mitigation actions
Insufficient resources – human or financial – leading to an inability to achieve our objectives and outcomes.	· Regular review of budget, funding strategy, staffing levels and ability to meet demand for services. · Maintain close relations with existing funders.
Reputational damage caused by being seen to act unprofessionally or in a manner inappropriate to a charity.	· Regular review of our training procedures, financial and safeguarding policies.
Governance risks – failure by the trustees to carry out their functions in accordance with best governance practice & charity law.	· Regular review of our Board to ensure we have a balance of the skills required for effective governance. Mo Massoud and Lucy Gould have joined our board to enhance financial oversight.
Public policy and external environment risks – changing context and Home Office policy towards asylum and resettlement leading to an inability to achieve our objectives and outcomes.	· Close monitoring of the changing environment in which we operate. Trustee Jo Winterbottom has been tasked with reporting to the board on this.

"Insufficient resources" was turned to amber at the board meeting in May 2021, however sufficient new funds were secured between May and 30 September for this to be returned to green.
Because of the hostile environment and immigration policy, external environment risk was also placed on amber by the trustees in May 2021.
This risk remains on amber and is being closely monitored.
All other risks are currently green.

"Thank you so much for all your amazing work and for making an important difference in people's lives."

COSKU FERTINGER
Referral partner at Breaking Barriers

Structure, governance & management

Organisational structure

HostNation incorporated as a charity (CIO) and registered with the Charity Commission in September 2018.

As of 30 September 2022 there were seven trustees, four women and three men, who work on a voluntary basis. Two of our trustees, Dina Nayeri and Emiljan Gega, are former child refugees. Our Chair, Daniel Silverstone, was CEO at both the Commission for Racial Equality and Interights. The board meets quarterly.

In 2021 we appointed two new trustees with financial experience – Mohamed Massoud and Lucy Gould – to help with accounting and funding strategy.

As Treasurer, Lucy comes to us from a background in charity sector finance, with expertise in developing financial strategy and organisational growth. She works with both grant-making and grant-receiving organisations and is currently in the healthcare field.

Mohamed befriended through us in 2020 and has expertise in banking, corporate finance and funding projects with social and development impact in the global south. He holds an MBA from Manchester Business School where he maintains contacts, making him a strong addition now we have expanded into the north west.

We have a lean operational team, who work from home. Towards the end of 2021 we appointed three regional hub managers – Cara Dattani and Kim Gowland to run the Greater Manchester hub as a freelance job share and Harley Kuyck-Cohen to run our hub in Tyne & Wear. All staff and freelancers are paid an hourly rate above the London living wage. Three of the management team are on PAYE. We employ six freelancers on a self-employed basis: our three regional hub managers; a London operations manager; a design manager and a communications manager.

Public benefit

The trustees are aware of the Charity Commission's guidelines on public benefit and consider these measures when carrying out the charitable objectives of this charity.

Safeguarding

HostNation is committed to protecting all who come into contact with the organisation and its services from all forms of abuse.

Our safeguarding policy is updated annually and a safeguarding guide is sent out to all befrienders when they are matched along with the contact details of the safeguarding lead from our team for their match.

We implement sensible safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and volunteers. No female refugee or asylum seeker is ever matched with a male befriender. HostNation does not accept referrals of people with serious mental health needs, in need of care, or aged under 18.

Our full safeguarding policy is available on application.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial period that give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statement of recommended practice have been followed subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping 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. 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.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees
Date: 20th December 2022

Report of the independent examiner

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the period ended 30 September 2022, which are set out on pages 18-21.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER

The Charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this period under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

BASIS OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed by:



SAMUEL DAVID CLARKE FCA
Haines Watts (City) LLP

New Derwent House, 69-73 Theobolds Road,
London, WC1X 8TA
Date: 20 December 2022

Statement of financial activities

for the period ended 30 September 2022

	Note	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2022 Total £	2021 Total £
INCOME					
Donations received	2	43,382	939	44,321	11,874
Grants	2	16,500	57,000	73,500	82,938
Total income		**59,882**	**57,939**	**117,821**	**94,812**
EXPENDITURE					
Charitable activities	3	33,871	65,215	99,086	74,529
Total expenditure		**33,871**	**65,215**	**99,086**	**74,529**
Net movement in funds	4	**26,011**	**-7,276**	**18,735**	**20,283**

Balance sheet

as at 30 September 2022

CURRENT ASSETS	Note	2022 Total £	2021 Total £
Cash at bank		60,365	41,630
Net current assets		**60,365**	**41,630**
Unrestricted funds		50,273	24,262
Restricted funds		10,092	17,368
Total funds	4	**60,365**	**41,630**

Notes to the financial statement

Forming part of the financial statement for the period ended 30 September 2022

1. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) Accounting convention

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in preparing the financial statements the Charity follows best practice as laid down in the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (SORP 2015) issued in 2015.

(b) Income

Donation income is accounted for in the period in which the Charity is entitled to receipt and the amount can be quantified.

(c) Expenditure is included on an accruals basis

(d) Funds structure

Restricted funds are granted in accordance with the desires of the donors. Unrestricted funds are disbursed at the discretion of the trustees.

(e) Going concern

The accounts are prepared on the basis that the trustees have adequate resources to continue to operate.

(g) Financial instruments and critical accounting estimates and judgements

Basic financial instruments including basic financial liabilities – other payables – which are recognised at transaction price. Cash at bank includes cash held with banks. In the application of the accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and assumptions are based on experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates, which are reviewed on an ongoing basis and recognised when appropriate.

2. INCOME BY TYPE

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2022 Total £	2021 Total £
Grants	16,500	57,000	73,500	82,938
Individual giving	8,038	939	8,978	9,068
Gift aid	2,289	–	2,289	2,308
Major donors	33,055	–	33,054	–
Total income	**59,882**	**57,939**	**117,821**	**94,812**

3. CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE BY TYPE

	Staff costs	Freelance fees	Travel and subsistence	Workshops, events, training	Hardship fund	Digital and other direct costs	Total expenditure
2022 £	55,236	32,075	1,953	1,014	3,448	5,360	**99,086**
2021 £	49,991	11,156	729	70	4,917	7,666	**74,529**

4. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Paul Hamlyn Expansion	Trust for London	City Bridge Trust	Manchester SuppHer Club	Total
Brought forward	10,776	4,069	2,523	–	**17,368**
Income	–	25,000	32,000	939	**57,939**
Expenditure	6,200	26,069	32,457	489	**65,215**
Carried forward	4,576	3,000	2,066	450	**10,092**

Administrative details

HostNation is a registered charity no. 1180004.

Founder-Director:
Anneke Elwes

Director of London programme:
Rossana Horsley

Trustees:
- Daniel Silverstone (Chair)
- Lucy Gould (Treasurer)
- Olivia Petie
- Mohamed Massoud
- Joanna Winterbottom
- Dina Nayeri Viegutz
- Emiljan Gega

Independent Examiner:
S D Clarke FCA
Haines Watts (City) LLP
New Derwent House
69-73 Theobolds Road
London
WC1X 8TA

Registered Address:
23 Lawford Road
London
NW5 2LH

Bank:
Metro Bank
One Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA



"I feel so lucky and happy to have Mathilda, she is a very good friend. I'm really learning about this country and the culture here."

ALAN
HostNation friend

HOSTNATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1180004

Accounts

HOST NATION

Connecting refugees with host communities

HostNation Trustees' Report & Financial Statements

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021

> Thanks to HostNation for the blessing of friendship.
>
> **TES,**
> asylum seeker

HostNation Annual Report 2020-21

The trustees present their report along with the financial statements of the charity for the period ended 30 September 2021.

Contents

PAGE

Letter from the Director 3

Letter from the Chair 4

Strategic report 5

Vision and objectives
Outcomes and impact
Financial review
Future plans
Risk management

Structure, governance & management 15

Administrative details

Statement of trustees' responsibilities 16

Report of the independent examiner 17

Financial statements 18

Letter from the Director

HostNation was founded in 2017 with one simple idea: to offer friendship to asylum seekers and refugees. We wanted to give people who are trying to start a new life a way into our society – through the kindness of locals.

Last year was tough but by the end we were both stronger and more flexible. The pandemic has had many tragic aspects, but it has also emphasised the sheer importance of friendship and social connection. This led to a renewed interest in community volunteering.

We answered lockdown with our new approach of 'smart' befriending – a hybrid of online and face-to-face encounters – and we haven't looked back. We are already close to achieving next year's target of introducing 1,000 people to one another (500 friendship pairs) and we're now matching across Teesside as well as Greater London.

Our first-ever London match are such great friends that they are planning to spend their fourth Christmas together. And one of our latest friendships was firmly sealed at the very first face-to-face meeting, when refugee Jennifer gave birth with her new friend Emma by her side!

One of our ambitions is to make HostNation the place to go for refugee befriending. With referrals in Greater London more than doubling in the last year and a surge in volunteers, we feel we are making this a reality.

We now have a training programme for befrienders and this is paying off in terms of commitment and results. We work hard on monitoring our outcomes, and you will read in these pages the heart-warming words we hear about improvements to people's quality of life and well-being.

We are delighted this year to report the highest percentage so far of positive outcomes from our matches – 84% – with nearly half reporting that a genuine and lasting friendship has been formed.

So where next? We have a digital platform with a proven track record across London. With an efficient solution to a social problem and a lean team with low overheads, we have a model we are confident can be replicated wherever the need is great. We have committed volunteers in the north of the UK who are as passionate as we are to prove that our communities can be truly welcoming, who are already working to start our programme in their cities.

With so many rewarding friendships formed despite the challenges of the pandemic, we're incredibly proud of our HostNation befrienders and all the warmth, understanding and joy they have shared with their refugee friends.





ANNEKE ELWES
Founder & Director



It's been a brilliant experience. For me it means having a friend, because I've just moved here too. It's definitely very rewarding.
SHERRY USA

She's more than a friend, she's family, like a sister. Thank you so much!
AMIRA Pakistan

Letter from the Chair

Looking back over the last 12 months I can think of no equivalent period characterised by such change and uncertainty. I am particularly thinking about the impacts of the pandemic, and the increasingly harsh policy and media environment around issues of refugee and asylum rights, and migration more generally.

Our bespoke model of providing a personalised befriending offer to refugees is a perfect response to the hostile environment underpinning government policy and practice. It taps into the generosity of so many individuals and organisations in our country, looking to offer practical support and a friendly face to people seeking safety here.

I am a child of a refugee. My mother arrived here aged 12 in 1939, fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. I know the difference that friendship can make and what refugees can offer this country. I am the result of this country's generosity at that time.

The collapse of the Afghan government in Kabul and the panic as people fled the country dramatically underlines that point. As I write, Camden alone is hosting 3,000 Afghan refugees, while the government decides on the components of a resettlement scheme.

The pandemic faced us with a strategic choice when our face-to-face befriending service was potentially undermined by lockdowns. Do we hibernate and re-emerge with more normal times or do we upgrade our digital befriending offer? We chose the latter and have come through with renewed energy.

We have begun this year to scale up our operation beyond London. We now have an established working partnership in Teesside, with positive contact taking place with partners in the north west and north east of the UK.

So, despite the external hostile environment, we continue to expand the range and quality of our work.

I would like to thank our staff – so ably led by Anneke and Rossana – for their creativity and commitment and my fellow trustees for their support and engagement.

I'd particularly like to welcome Olivia Petie who joined us as a trustee this year. Olivia is already making a significant impact on our business planning.

Most importantly, I want to thank all our befrienders and befriendees, who lie at the beating heart of our work.





DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair

**Thanks for all the work HostNation does.
I've heard nothing but praise from the clients I've referred to you.
It reminds me that all the work we do is really worth it!**

ORLA VAN'T HOFF
Housing & Advice Worker at the Refugee Council

Strategic report

Our vision

HostNation believes every refugee deserves a friend.

Our mission

As a digital introductory platform, we tackle the loneliness experienced by asylum-seekers and refugees by making it easier for those of us at home in Britain to connect with those looking for a place they can call home.

We aim to transform social relations in our communities by using technology to help us bring local people and refugees together, through small acts of hospitality, inclusion and friendship.

We wish HostNation to become *the* way to befriend refugees in our cities – easy, sustainable and scalable.

What we do

To achieve our charitable objectives (see right), we recruit volunteer befrienders online, then screen and train them before making matches with refugees referred to us by service providers and other agencies.

We aim to make meaningful face to face matches based on geography, gender, age and interests. We then facilitate the introduction and provide guidance and relationship support.

Our objectives as defined in our constitution are:

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among those who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants by providing:

- A local 1:1 befriending service that offers friendship, social opportunities, community connection and support in order to address social isolation amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.
- A service that facilitates intercultural relationships to help prevent the self-exclusion of migrant communities from the wider community.
- Increased opportunities for social integration and engagement in the local community to enable asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to positively participate in society.
- Increased opportunities to practice and improve the English skills of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in communities in the UK through friendship with native English speakers in order to promote greater social integration.
- Opportunities for positive action by citizens to change the circumstances that have led to social exclusion amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

2. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit amongst those who are asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with a view to tackling discrimination, inequality and social disadvantage by providing:

- Connection and relationships with UK citizens and residents who can treat them equally, identify opportunities for them and help build their sense of self-worth.
- Meaningful social interaction and inter-cultural relationships between British citizens and asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in order to encourage greater social cohesion and cultural diversity in communities in the UK.
- A means by which the public can engage with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants as individuals and people with needs, not simply statistics.



Many refugee organisations seem better at securing funding than changing the situation for their end users. That's why I think HostNation is such a great idea, its help is so direct and one-on-one that it seems like it can really effect change.

JAMES has befriended 3 times

Outcomes and impact

1 BEFRIENDER RECRUITMENT

We have had over 700 volunteers register to befriend through HostNation since 2017. In addition we are holding 300 people on our waiting list, and inviting them to register as and when suitable referrals are made. This gives us the largest online resource of refugee befrienders in the UK.

These are friendly locals who give their time freely to make isolated people feel more welcome and valued. The benefits are mutual, as so many tell us.

"It's always fun to hang out with somebody new and learn about each other's culture," says George who has befriended three times. "And it's great to show off the city you live in and love."



Befrienders George (2nd left) and Suzy enjoy a dinner cooked by Said (left). George and Said featured in The Observer, below.

Training and support

Befrienders are provided with comprehensive resources to guide them in their journey. We send a monthly befriender newsletter, with links to events and opportunities for refugees. We provide signposting resources and alert our befrienders to refugee support agencies.

In addition to our written materials, this year we pioneered a new online training programme. Befrienders learn about the hardships that refugees face in the UK. They explore how traumatic events may impact someone's ability to develop relationships, and learn how to create a safe and empowering environment to allow friendship to flourish.

We also discuss the potential challenges of befriending a refugee and consider safeguarding and boundaries in a befriending relationship.

Afghan crisis inspires surge in applicants

In August 2021, headlines were dominated by the mass exodus from Afghanistan. As evacuations from Kabul accelerated, we experienced a surge of people volunteering to befriend refugees.

In two hours we received five times the number of online applications we usually get in a month.

In the last few years, many Afghans have sought refuge here and been referred to us. In due course we hope to help the new arrivals who have been offered legal resettlement, as well as those who will risk all to reach places of safety and are equally deserving of a warm welcome and friendship.

The August rise in public altruism also brought us media attention, including an article in the Observer and a national news segment on Channel 5.

Our social media increased in profile, with a spike in interest at the peak of the Afghan crisis.


News

A friend in need: volunteers rush to help refugees feel at home in UK

Up to 50 people a day are signing up to offer help to Afghans who fled the Taliban

Clea Skopeliti

'It's often difficult for asylum seekers to meet people... it's about helping refugees feel like Londoners too'

George Wigzell, left

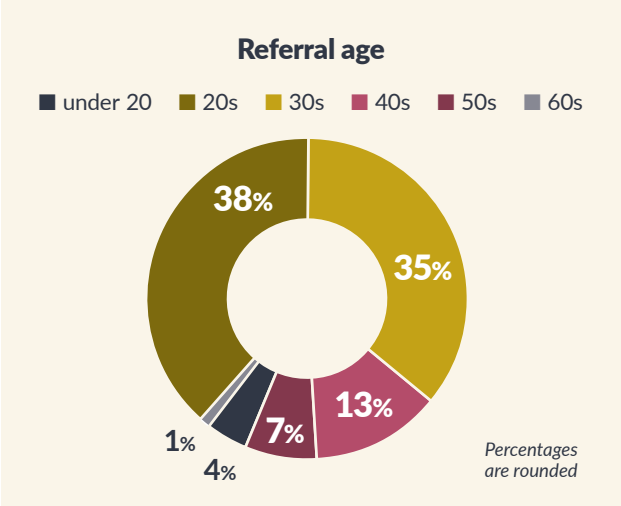
2 REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER REFERRALS

This year referrals to HostNation in London doubled, with 201 referrals of asylum seekers and refugees coming from across London and Teesside. We made 167 matches by this year end and will match the remainder (mostly from Teesside) in the first quarter of our next financial year.

Our refugee friends come from 45 countries with Iran as the lead origin country. We expect Afghans to move up this list next year as new arrivals following the Taliban takeover make their way through the system.



Most of those referred to us are aged in their 20s and 30s with gender being evenly balanced. This year only one third had refugee status; the majority were asylum seekers, reflecting the fact that most of those referred in the north-east are still seeking asylum.



Referral partnerships

We have increased our reach and reputation within the wider refugee sector and the growing number of people referred to us reflects this.

Our network of referral partners now includes over 45 refugee service providers, NHS social prescribers, ESOL colleges and community organisations.

We received most referrals from IPC, Care4Calais, the Refugee Council, Breaking Barriers, the Helen Bamber Foundation and Groundwork.

Referral partners (2021 new partnerships in colour):

- Barnet Federated GPS
- Breaking Barriers
- British Red Cross
- Caras
- Care 4 Calais
- Citizens of The World Choir
- Claremont Clinic
- Community Recovery Team Newham
- Conversation Over Borders
- Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants
- E7 Health First 4 Health Group
- Ealing IAPT
- Ealing Recovery Team West
- East Meets West Lancaster
- Emmanuel Church Northwood
- Freedom from Torture
- Groundwork
- Hestia
- Haringey Migrant Support Centre
- Helen Bamber Foundation
- Highview Dental Practice
- Hope for the Young
- Investing in People and Culture
- London Borough of Hillingdon
- MAP Middlesbrough
- Migrant Help
- Nelft Redbridge Refugee Service
- North East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Pan Intercultural Arts
- Quay Health Solutions
- Refugee Council
- Renaisi
- Room to Heal
- SHP
- Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers
- Single Homeless Project
- Syrian British Council
- Talking Therapies Barking and Dagenham
- The Other Perspective
- The Parent House
- Urgent Response Team – London Borough of Barnet
- Waltham Forest Talking Therapies
- West London College
- Woodfield Trauma Service
- Young Roots

> **They all love having their own friend. When they are with us, they are one of many, but with their HostNation friends they are one of one.**
>
> **LARA BISHOP** Care4Calais

We have received consistently positive feedback from our partners over the successful outcomes for their clients, and the ease of our referral process. Megan Karlshoej-Pedersen from charity project Groundwork Circle told us:

"HostNation has been absolutely incredible in regards to how well you've supported and matched everyone I sent your way, but also more generally in regards to how you've communicated with my colleagues and me about your work, making it easy for us to engage."

Referrers tell us that they know of no other scheme which gives their clients a chance to relax, have fun and be themselves.

Referrer feedback

We refer people to HostNation who are particularly interested in improving their English. They are at a point in their journey where improving their language skills is their main focus. So as much socialising as possible is vital.

Many of our clients have extensive professional experience and just need to bridge the gap. So the way HostNation can provide a bespoke friendship match, often with someone from the same professional background, is very important. HostNation has just made a match for a client who is a clinical psychologist, with a person with shared experience.

HostNation is quite unique in offering support that is very broad, where the starting point is the friendship and all kinds of other benefits can lead from there. Usually with our clients we are telling them to go to a specific place, usually an office, with a particular goal. Even the mentoring we offer is more limited in range, being focused on meeting certain aspirations.



Pinar (on the right), a refugee from Turkey, was referred to us by Breaking Barriers. She and her befriender Rebecca, now very close friends, featured on the podcast "A friend indeed", talking about all that their meeting has meant to them.

Some of the friendships are still quite new, so it will be exciting to see how things turn out further down the line!!

MIA BAINES
Breaking Barriers

3 FRIENDSHIP MATCH OUTCOMES

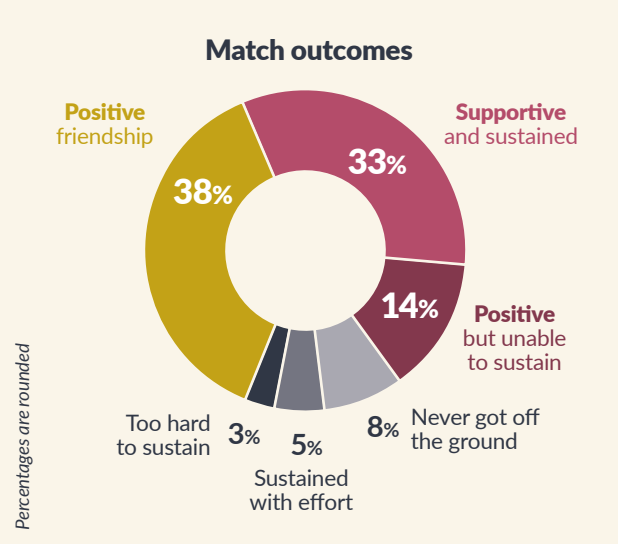
Our target for this year was to make 150 matches and we have made 167 – double the output of our previous year.

Overall, we have introduced nearly 900 people to one another since first opening for referrals four years ago (i.e. 450 friendship pairs). However, it is positive outcomes and meaningful relationships that remain our priority, rather than quantity.

The aim we gave ourselves was: "Improving the lived experience of refugees and asylum seekers in our cities".

Our more specific outcomes were:

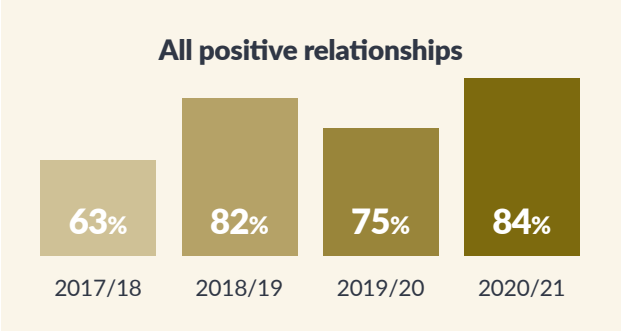
- reduced isolation and feelings of loneliness
- improved spoken/conversational English
- increased sense of inclusion and participation.



Positive outcomes as reported by our befrienders and befriendees have increased year on year and we now have 84% falling into one of our three top categories.

Out of these positive outcomes, 45% say they have formed a genuine, long-lasting friendship, and a further 38% continue at a level they describe as rewarding and supportive. This is a real tribute to the warmth and commitment of both sides.

Comparing financial year on year, the number of relationships achieving a positive outcome has increased by a quarter since we started matching in 2017. We believe this is a result of more attention being paid to training our volunteers, managing expectations better, talking directly to referrals prior to matching and communicating our referral criteria more effectively.



This year 14% of matches started positively but were unable to sustain the friendship. Most of these are directly linked to the Home Office's policy of placing many asylum seekers and refugees in 'temporary holding' accommodation. They are then often moved out of London at short notice, making befriending hard to sustain.

Well-being: impact on our refugee friends

Our most important measurements are those that relate to our refugee friends' health and well-being. Taking a walk in a park, going to a café, playing football – refugees have described such simple shared activities as boosting their confidence.



"He involves me in his life... and that makes me feel relevant," says Saoud of his befriender Robert. Photo: Damn Fine Media

We have improved our ability to evaluate the impact of befriending on 'hard to reach' refugee friends with limited English by simplifying our questions.

After three months of befriending, 91% tell us that the experience was positive and 82% that it has helped them to feel better.

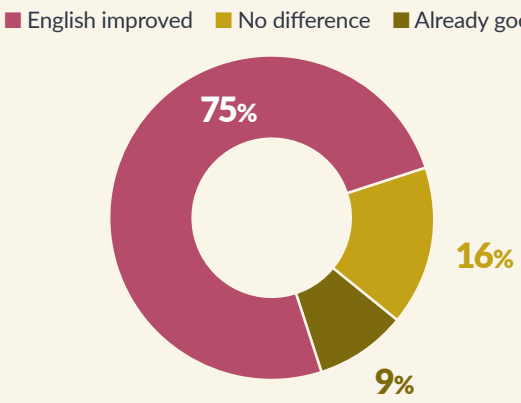
Four out of five of our refugee friends say they feel more included and know more about British culture as a result of having a befriender, while 71% say they feel less lonely.

The positive impact of befriending

	A LITTLE	A LOT	TOTAL
FEEL BETTER	44%	38%	82%
FEEL LESS LONELY	40%	31%	71%
FEEL MORE INCLUDED	46%	29%	75%

Language skills have scored very highly, with three in four of our refugee friends saying that having a befriender has helped to improve their spoken English – one of the most important benefits of befriending.

Has your English improved as a result of having a befriender?



Feeling rewarded: impact on our befrienders

This year an overwhelming 93% say they have found the experience rewarding (up from a healthy 88% last year). Almost all report that they find befriending to be a two-way street, and that they receive as much as they give. "It has opened my mind," says befriender Megan.

Befrienders report a sense of satisfaction that they have helped their friend to improve their English and to feel more confident in their new surroundings. They felt this has encouraged their friend to get involved in local life, with two thirds saying that they have introduced their refugee friend to new places.

Most of all, they tell us how much they have enjoyed getting to know someone from a different culture who they would otherwise never have met.

We are beyond friends – it's much deeper. HostNation are like magicians and you conjured me and Helene out of the hat!
HÉLÈNE'S SYRIAN FRIEND

It's absolutely wonderful, we share so much. She's in my heart all the time. I'm not letting her go!
HÉLÈNE Befriender





HostNation friends Megan and Nada featured in an ITN report celebrating the power of friendship to change lives.

"I can't imagine if I wouldn't have Meg," said Nada, who is from Somalia. **"She's a very good person. She has helped me a lot."**

Megan explains how she is benefiting too: **"It feels like we are genuinely friends. She has educated me and inspired me to make as much of a difference as I can."**

BEFRIENDING IN A TIME OF COVID-19

The pandemic has been challenging for a programme that connects people socially and encourages them to participate in the life of the city. But it was clear that friendship was more important than ever for people's well-being during this isolated time, so we turned to technology for help.

From summer 2020 we introduced a hybrid model of 'smart befriending'. Introductions took place online and friends then continued on video calls until both felt comfortable to meet in person. Some good friendships were forged purely online during the first 6 months of the year.

In collaboration with other organisations we gave practical support to get our refugee friends digitally connected, with data packages, refurbished smartphones, wifi boxes, mini tablets and laptops. To help them get out and about we also provided travel cards and referred some of our friends to get bikes and cycle training from the Bike Project.

ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS

We have been part of the national conversation on refugee advocacy. We have supported efforts to amend the Nationality and Borders Bill, attending demonstrations at Westminster as well as webinars and other forums, along with social media awareness raising.

We are collaborating with Together with Refugees, the Connection Coalition and Solidarity with Refugees amongst others in promoting a welcoming environment for refugees and asylum seekers.

Our volunteers and their friends have stepped up to represent HostNation in the media, including the Observer, ITN's Channel 5, BBC Radio, Yours Magazine and podcasts. "I love talking about HostNation," said befriendee Hanifah, "because you really mean a lot to me and I can't stop telling people about the benefits they might get."

Hanifah and two more refugee friends featured in a film made for the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme, talking movingly about what home means to them. We are proud of them for their wonderful contribution.

EXPANSION: HOSTNATION IN THE NORTH EAST

The financial year began with the opening of our first HostNation hub outside London. In October 2020 we partnered with IPC (Investing in People and Culture), a major refugee service provider in the North East, to serve the refugee and asylum seeker communities in Middlesbrough and Stockton-on-Tees. We agreed on an initial 12-month 'pilot' period.

Co-branding has helped HostNation NE acquire a strong identity, and the software, protocols and

materials developed by HostNation are being implemented by HostNation NE, with backup from the London team.

We have built awareness of the programme, with the result that the Mayor of Middlesbrough has signed up as a befriender, as has the ex-MP for Redcar. Mainstream media has responded positively, with BBC Radio Tees and Tyne Tees news (TV) featuring the project and an article in the Evening Gazette.

At first the pandemic had a significant impact on our launch, given that restrictions were at their height. After a slow start, the removal of restrictions coincided with positive media publicity leading to a momentum shift at the end of summer 2021. We are now on track to make 50 matches in the North East by the end of 2021, in line with our forecast. Further hubs we had planned in Newcastle and Greater Manchester were postponed due to the pandemic.

The primary school head & the Eritrean Teessider

Tes loves football, cooking and history. He has a contagious sense of humour. He also has three master's degrees.

Tes is an asylum seeker from Eritrea, who arrived in Middlesbrough six months ago. "It has been such a long, demanding journey to get here," as he says.

Far from home and missing his new wife desperately, he needed a friend. Our partner on Teesside, IPC, referred Tes to us and we matched him with Judith, a retired head teacher with a deep interest in Africa. They clicked straightaway.

"They made me a perfect match!" says Tes. "We really chat open-heartedly about everything."

Judith, who has lived in Uganda and Ghana, knows what it's like to be an outsider. In her case, she was welcomed by local people and wanted to reciprocate by making someone feel at home here in the UK.

"I've really enjoyed it and I'm glad that it's been beneficial," she explained in an interview with BBC Radio Tees. "I think it's a really lovely thing to do... I am proud of the way my town has assimilated refugees and asylum seekers so successfully."

For Tes the friendship is a lifeline. "Since the start of our friendship, my life has changed significantly – simply because I met someone who cares and supports and informs and open-heartedly chats with me about the daily hassles I struggle with as I adjust to life here. Judith has not only been an indispensable friend but a trustworthy advisor."

Read the full story on our website at https://bit.ly/TesStory

> **"Since the start of our friendship, my life has changed significantly."**
> TES



Financial review

FUNDING PARTNERS

We are immensely grateful to the following funders in 2020-2021:

City Bridge Trust
Granted us 3 years of restricted, core funding in October 2020 for our London programme, to run until 2023. This year we received £31,000.

Trust for London
Granted us a further £50,000 of continuation funding to run for two years from November 2020. This year we received £25,000.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Granted us £13,950 towards our northern expansion plans. This has, in large part, been carried over to 2021-22 due to delay caused by covid-19.

Team London
We received £1,834 (20%) of our grant from the Mayor of London's office to support social prescriptions in 2020-21.

The National Lottery / DCMS Covid Response
Gave emergency funding support of £20,000 for the second half of 2020. Half was reported last year and half this year.

We are also extremely grateful to the Headley Trust and all of the individuals who generously donated. This provided a further £11,875 in unrestricted funding in 2020-21.

RESERVES

The trustees continue to take a risk-based approach to reserves as in previous years. However, since we operate as a digital platform, fixed costs and forward financial commitments are minimal.

We have re-worked our estimate of the minimum required reserves as a multiple of at least three times all forward financial commitments; so for this financial year and the next, the reserves will be £15,000. This gives us a bridge should there be any discontinuities in funding and it is also an amount that we can reasonably expect to fund from unrestricted income.

COSTS AND BUDGETING

As a charity we are governed by the Charity Commission's financial regulations. Our costs are predominantly staff time and freelance fees for project delivery.

We have three categories of costs:

1. Start-up costs (one-off)
Staffing costs for building awareness, recruiting befrienders, outreach, networking and communications. These costs are one-off and incurred before the process of matching friends begins. Given our digital infrastructure, they are largely front-loaded and in 2020-21 had mostly transferred to project delivery.

2. Indirect core costs (recurring)
Based on 'core' staff time required to remain a going concern, these include on-going tech; IT; web hosting and maintenance; insurance and accountancy. We have no major overheads due to remote working, no premises and no fixed contracts. Thus our forward financial commitments are low. Our indirect core costs for the London programme were 15% of total expenditure in 2020-21.

3. Direct project costs
Project delivery accounted for 85% of our expenditure in 2020-21. These are 'volume-related' matching costs, ie. staff time spent sourcing referrals; recruiting; screening, checking and training befrienders; making matches; liaising with referrers; safeguarding, monitoring and evaluation; media and reporting.

We have a 5-year budget based on the costs of running the London programme at a similar level to this year (150-200 matches a year), while opening new hubs in Newcastle, Manchester and Glasgow.

Online matching, whilst enabling efficiency and scaling up, also requires careful policing, safeguarding, monitoring and a commitment to regular conversations with all parties concerned – befrienders, befriendees and their referrers.

Matching is a delicate process that takes time and each new match costs approximately £300 in labour and other volume-related costs.

We have also funded pre-paid travel cards (£30 + £5 deposit) and data packages (£20) to facilitate travel and communication for our refugee friends.

Plans for the future

In summer 2021 we participated in the Cranfield Management 'Strive' programme funded by our donor City Bridge Trust.

The business strategy mentor provided by this programme gave expert consultation for our 2021-22 business plan. We are grateful for this assistance.

This business plan lays out the following goals for our next financial year:

- **500+ matches across London by Sept 2022, our 5-year anniversary.**
  Demand in London has increased but we anticipate 2021-22 will be similar to 2020-21.
- **Open two regional hubs in the north-west (Manchester) and north-east (Newcastle),** achieving 125 matches by Sept 2022. Increased demand for refugee services is anticipated in these areas.
- **Establish referral partnerships** in these hubs, with one major source of referrals.
- **Establish a strong resettlement programme referral pathway.**
  As national asylum policy continues to favour resettled refugees over asylum seekers, we aim to build more referral pathways with the resettlement programme. This last year has seen many Syrians referred to HostNation and we anticipate similar referrals of Afghan families.

Risk management

In 2019, our trustees devised a register of the risks we might face. A 3-stage traffic light system was adopted:

RED High risk (business critical)
AMBER Low risk (potentially constraining)
GREEN Negligible/low risk (no action)

In 2020 our risks were amended to include public policy and we set out four risks:

Risk	Mitigation actions
Insufficient resources – human or financial – leading to an inability to achieve our objectives and outcomes.	· Regular review of budget, funding strategy, staffing levels and ability to meet demand for services. · Maintain close relations with existing funders.
Reputational damage caused by being seen to act unprofessionally or in a manner inappropriate to a charity.	· Regular review of our procedures, financial and safeguarding policies. · Befriender training to raise levels of commitment to the project.
Governance risks – failure by the trustees to carry out their functions in accordance with best governance practice & charity law.	· We have strengthened our Board with a new appointee and we plan to appoint a Treasurer Trustee to enhance financial oversight.
Public policy and external environment risks – changing context and Home Office policy towards asylum and resettlement leading to an inability to achieve our objectives and outcomes.	· Close monitoring of the changing environment in which we operate. Trustee Jo Winterbottom has been tasked with reporting to the board on this.

Insufficient resources was returned to green (from amber) at our board meeting in December 2020, as a result of an emergency grant from The National Lottery/DCMS and 3 years of funding confirmed by City Bridge Trust in October 2020.
All risks are currently green.

Structure, governance & management

Organisational structure

HostNation incorporated as a charity (CIO) and registered with the Charity Commission in September 2018.

As of 30 September 2021 there were five trustees, three women and two men, who work on a voluntary basis. Two of our trustees, Dina Nayeri and Emiljan Gega, were once child refugees, from Iran and Albania respectively.

Our Chair, Daniel Silverstone, was CEO at both the Commission for Racial Equality and Interights.

In 2020 we appointed Olivia Petie as a trustee. As a social researcher and evaluator, Olivia has worked with other charities on scaling strategies and has previous experience of the refugee sector. She and two of our other' trustees have befriended refugees through HostNation. The board meets quarterly.

We have a lean operational team, who work from home. All staff are paid an hourly rate above the London living wage. Three of the management team are on PAYE. During 2020-21 we employed three freelancers on a self-employed basis: an operation manager; a digital manager and a communications manager.

Public benefit

The trustees are aware of the Charity Commission's guidelines on public benefit and consider these measures when carrying out the charitable objectives of this charity.

Safeguarding

HostNation is committed to protecting all who come into contact with the organisation and its services from all forms of abuse.

Our full safeguarding policies are sent out to all befrienders when they are matched. Each befriender is given their own safeguarding lead from our team.

We implement sensible safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and volunteers. No female refugee or asylum seeker is ever matched with a male befriender. HostNation does not accept referral of people with serious mental health needs, in need of care, or aged under 18.

Our full safeguarding policy is available on application.

Administrative details

HostNation is a registered charity no. 1180004.

Founder-Director:
Anneke Elwes

Director of London programme:
Rossana Horsley

Trustees:
- Daniel Silverstone
- Dina Nayeri Viegutz
- Joanna Winterbottom
- Emiljan Gega
- Olivia Petie

Independent Examiner:
S D Clarke FCA
Haines Watts (City) LLP
New Derwent House
69-73 Theobolds Road
London
WC1X 8TA

Registered Address:
23 Lawford Road
London
NW5 2LH

Bank:
Metro Bank
One Southampton Row
London
WC1B 5HA

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial period that give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statement of recommended practice have been followed subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping 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. 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.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:



DANIEL SILVERSTONE
Chair of trustees
Date: 15th December 2021

Report of the independent examiner

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the period ended 30 September 2021, which are set out on pages 18-20.

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER

The Charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this period under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed. It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

BASIS OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed by:



SAMUEL DAVID CLARKE FCA
Haines Watts (City) LLP

New Derwent House, 69-73 Theobolds Road, London, WC1X 8TA
Date: 15th December 2021

Statement of financial activities

for the period ended 30 September 2021

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	2021 Total £	2020 Total £
INCOME				
Donations received	11,876	82,937	94,813	62,485
Other income (furlough)	-	-	-	1,858
Total income	**11,876**	**82,937**	**94,813**	**64,343**
EXPENDITURE				
Charitable activities	7,997	66,532	74,529	56,312
Total expenditure	**7,997**	**66,532**	**74,529**	**56,312**
Net movement in funds	**3,878**	**16,405**	**20,283**	**8,031**

Balance sheet

as at 30 September 2021

CURRENT ASSETS	2021 Total £	2020 Total £
Cash at bank	41,630	21,347
Net current assets	**41,630**	**21,347**
Unrestricted funds	24,262	20,384
Restricted funds	17,368	963
Total funds	**41,630**	**21,347**

Notes to the financial statement

forming part of the financial statements for the period ended 30 September 2021

1. PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) Accounting convention
The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention and in preparing the financial statements the Charity follows best practice as laid down in the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (SORP 2015) issued in 2015.

(b) Income
Donation income is accounted for in the period in which the Charity is entitled to receipt and the amount can be quantified.

(c) Expenditure is included on an accruals basis

(d) Funds structure
Restricted funds are granted in accordance with the desires of the donors. Unrestricted funds are disbursed at the discretion of the trustees.

(e) Going concern
The accounts are prepared on the basis that the trustees have adequate resources to continue to operate.

The continued impact of Covid-19 is discussed in the Trustee report and the Charity has taken measures to mitigate this. Based on these assessments the trustees have concluded that they can continue to adapt on an ongoing concern basis in preparing the annual report and accounts.

(g) Financial instruments and critical accounting estimates and judgements
Basic financial instruments including basic financial liabilities – other payables – which are recognised at transaction price.

Cash at bank includes cash held with banks.

In the application of the accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and assumptions are based on experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual result may differ from these estimates, which are reviewed on an ongoing basis and recognised when appropriate.

2. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Covid/ DCMS	FfT Hardship	Team London	Paul Hamlyn Expansion	Trust for London	City Bridge Trust
Income	10,000	1,153	1,834	13,950	25,000	31,000
Expenditure	10,000	1,153	1,834	3,174	21,155	28,477
Balance carried forward	0	0	0	10,776	4,069	2,523

3. INCLUDED IN CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE ARE SUPPORT COSTS OF:

	Staff costs	Freelance fees*	Travel and subsistence	Workshops /events/ training	Hardship fund	Digital and other direct costs	Total expenditure
2021 £	49,991	11,156	729	70	4,917	7,666	**74,529**
2020 £	39,774	7,560	870	843	–	7,265	**56,312**

**engaged on self employed basis*

No trustees received remuneration or were reimbursed for expenses in the current period.
In 2020-2021 HostNation had three employees on PAYE. No employees were paid over £60,000