

**HOST
NATION**

Connecting refugees with host communities

Trustees' Report and Receipts & Payments Accounts

for the year ended 30th September 2024



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.

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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.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Anneke Elwes'.

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.



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

MEG



HostNation Manchester

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.



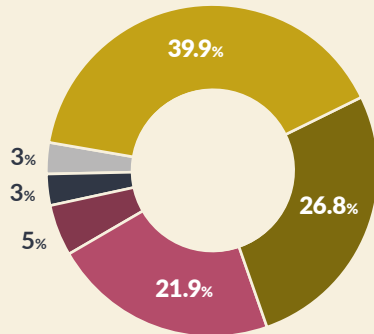
“I am genuinely so happy that your organisation exists! I hope you can take a moment to understand how many peoples’ lives you are benefiting in a positive way. Thank you so much for all you do.”

CHARLOTTE SEWELL
Specialist Support Worker, The Salvation Army



Refugee/asylum seeker age

■ under 20 ■ 20s ■ 30s ■ 40s ■ 50s ■ 60+



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.

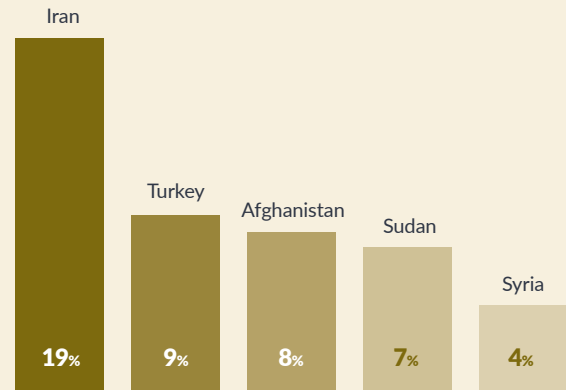


HostNation London

"Beth is the best person in the world."

AJMAL

Top countries of origin



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.

Matches, referrals and volunteer registrations across all regions

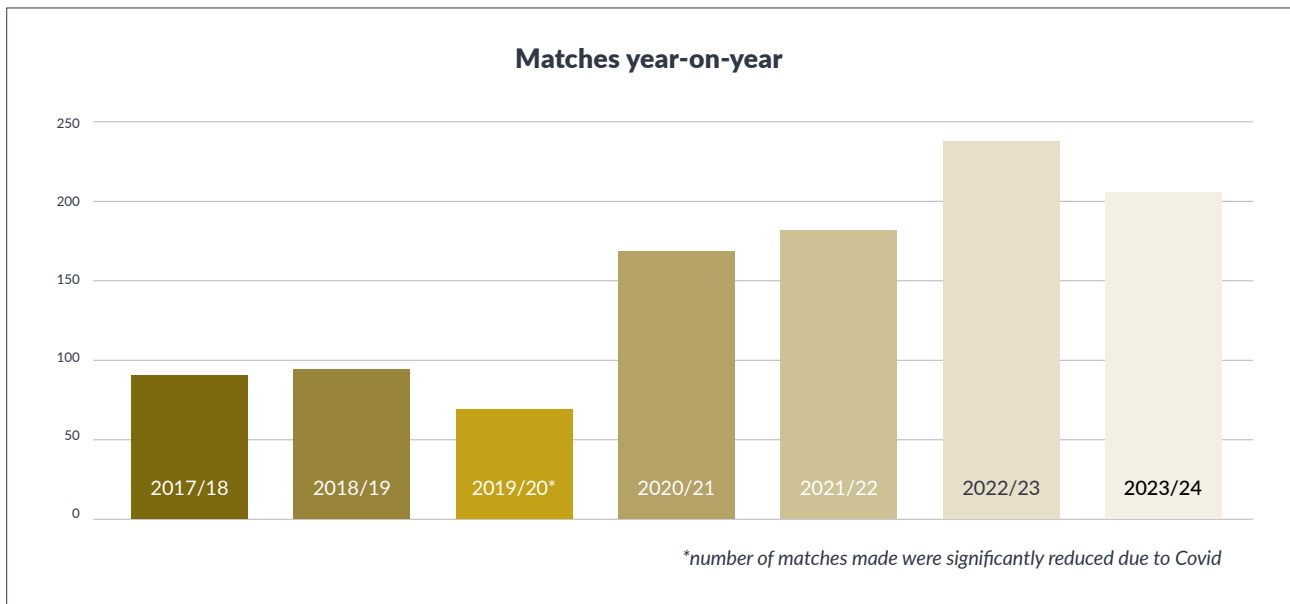
■ Oct 22 – Sep 23 ■ Oct 23 – Sep 24



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



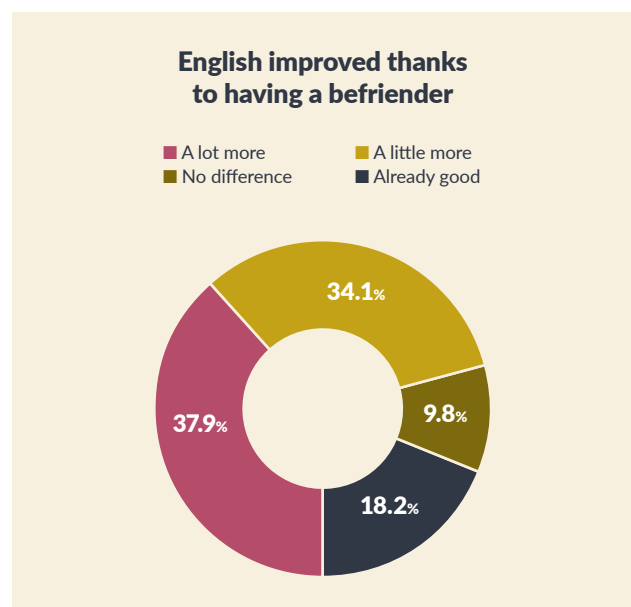
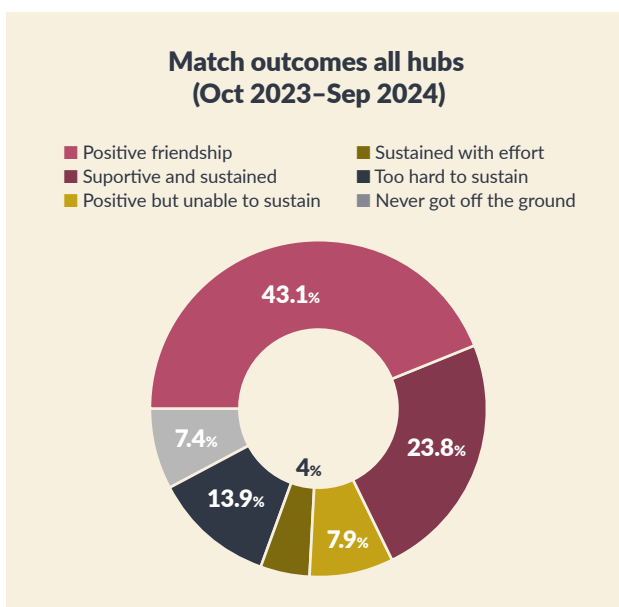
Three months after introduction, we interview both sides of our friendship matches and record qualitative outcomes.

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

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS continued



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