



**HOPE FOR
COMMUNITIES**

**TRUSTEE
ANNUAL
REPORT**

2023–2024



Charity Information

Founders and Directors of Hope for Communities

Sharo Ahmedi

Alexis Rachel Ahmedi

Trustees of Hope for Communities (as of 31st March 2024,
unless stated, all acted for the entire year)

Andrew David McCullough

Sarah Anne Louise Harris

John Douglas Henry Greenway

Michael Alexander Ross Channon

Abey Varghese Philip

Phillip Andrew Gray elected as a trustee 26th February 2024

David John Nunn Resigned as a trustee 28th April 2023

Vivienne Lesley Nunn Resigned as a trustee 26th February 2024

*Note: All trustees have confirmed that they have regarded the
guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.*

Charity Commission Registration Number 1180747

Charity UK address

121 Drummond Rd, Bermondsey,
London, England.
SE16 2JY

Charity website

www.hopeforcommunities.com

Why We Exist

This is a summary of our charity's objectives, as set out in our governing document:

The prevention or relief of poverty or financial hardship anywhere in the world, but in particular Iraq, by providing or assisting in the provision of, primarily but not limited to, education, training, healthcare projects and all the necessary support designed to enable individuals to generate a sustainable income and be self-sufficient.

A Letter from Sharo and Alexis, Directors of Hope for Communities

We are so thankful for another wonderful year with Hope for Communities. The impact that we have had as a charity has continued to grow. Each success and every high that we have seen in all of our different projects, has been celebrated. We've had the joy of seeing our motto, 'The best for the least', genuinely being achieved in people's lives.

As we talk about the amazing things that Hope for Communities has been doing, we want to be very clear that so many of these successes are thanks to our amazing local staff. We have invested in and built a dynamic and inspiring team, who share our values and have adopted our vision in a unique and encouraging way. When we share highlights and encouraging developments please know that these are all due to the work of our fantastic team.

We are also thankful to our trustees, and to all those who have generously volunteered time to support us. As the work of the charity has grown, our group of wonderful supporters has, too. So we want to thank all of you who have helped us and stood with us. Without your commitment and backing we wouldn't have been able to invest in all these communities.

Our charity is already making a real impact, and as we head into our seventh year, we are looking forward to growing even more effective in fulfilling our vision to bring hope to communities.

Our Values, Vision and Mission

When we founded Hope for Communities, we knew why we were starting it, and many of our values have been there from the beginning. But as the charity has grown, so has our understanding of what our values, vision and mission are:

OUR VALUES

The arrows that guide us

Hope – We believe that even the most marginalised communities can be transformed by **courageous, contagious hope**.

Generosity – We believe that those so long considered the least deserve our very best, so our motto is “**The best for the least**”.

Sustainable impact – We’re not interested in short-term fixes, but in building to last.

Growing people – We’re nurturing the amazing talent and potential in our local community.

Integrity – We steward our resources with honesty, transparency and diligence for maximum benefit to all.

Honour – We act with humility as we work with different communities, respecting their cultures and learning from them.

OUR VISION

Where we’re going

Our vision is to see **hope restored** to communities where it has been crushed by war, displacement or poverty.

OUR MISSION

What we’re doing to get there

We’re restoring hope by helping to provide education, training, healthcare*, and all the support needed to enable individuals in the most marginalised communities to reach sustainable self-sufficiency.

*as our capacity grows

A Summary of the Main Activities and Achievements of Hope for Communities

Barika Community Centre, Kurdistan Region, Northern Iraq

This was our first project and we see it as being foundational, reflecting how our values and vision were shaped. It was as we started to train and invest in the development of local teachers who work in the centre that we realised we can bring hope to communities not just directly through our projects, but indirectly through training up an amazing team of local staff. As the centre is so **grounded in our values** it is the perfect place for new staff to be inducted into our mission and ethos.



Sustainability is also such a key part of what we are trying to do in the community. Many charities and NGOs provide short-term relief and projects in a community, often delivering essentials, or offering short, one-off courses and experiences. We felt strongly that to bring real hope and change we should aim for what we offer to be sustainable. That doesn't mean things aren't evolving and developing, but we want to be a consistent source of hope and opportunity for this community. This has meant that we have children and young people that we have known for seven years, helping us enormously as we seek to encourage them in developing skills and characteristics such as self-confidence and resilience.

We are currently at our centre five days a week, with our amazing team. We offer English Language classes with a developed curriculum that has proved very effective. We offer a variety of sports classes, games, crafts and a lot of fun. **We are a safe space for children and young people to come and be with their friends.** For economic reasons, teachers aren't consistently receiving salaries and schools are often



closed. For the teenage girls in the community many say that if they were unable to come to our centre, when schools were closed they would never be able to leave their homes, due to local tradition, and there would be nowhere else for them to go.

Projects in Government Orphanages

We have continued to go into the government orphanages every week for a couple of hours. For two of the homes we always try to take the children outside for an activity. At the youngest home (0–5 year olds) **this is the only time the children leave the house in the week**, so it's truly vital for their wellbeing. If schools are open, the children at the oldest boy's home (12–18) will travel to be educated, but our visit is still the only time they will be let outside for any fun or recreation.

Another way we give the young boys autonomy is by asking their opinions on what activities we should do. When one of them had moved up from the 5–12-year-old house, he was so excited to see our staff member, as he knew them so well from our regular visits over four years. He said "The older boys told me a group came in every week and took us out to fun places, but I didn't realise it would be you!" This continuity in the children's lives is really important. The staff in the various homes, and the homes themselves, are all normally kept completely separate. This means that when a child gets old enough to move into a new home, they will leave behind everyone they know, and the adults caring for them are usually strangers.



We feel so privileged that **although it is just for one day a week, our team has managed to build such positive, healthy relationships with the children**, and they are able to continue even when the children move up to older homes.

Apprenticeship Training Programme

We have many encouraging stories and highlights that we could share from our Apprenticeship Programme, but of course there are also many challenges. Every apprentice has a different set of complex needs and has experienced different traumas.

One of the biggest gifts we can give our apprentices is our time. Our wonderful team spend a lot of time with the apprentices and, if appropriate, meet family members to see how we can best support them. As every situation is unique, the programme we offer is tailored to each apprentice. Some of the young men have been homeless and so we have also had to support them in finding housing. Others have reached 18 and left the orphanage and find themselves in a situation where they are now also caring for, or needing to support, their own siblings.

What is really positive is the ability to see our value of **sustainable impact** really playing out. Not only because we are with our apprentices as they grow up through the care system so that we already have strong and healthy relationships with them when they start working with us. But also because after they have left our programme and moved into new situations we still regularly check in on them. They come to visit our team and let us know how they are.

One thing that we can really see is that our team of mentors have really become the people that our apprentices turn to when they need support. When they face challenges or find themselves in difficulty, someone from our team is the first person they call. **They know they can trust us and they feel safe with us.** This is even more significant when you realise that for most of these young men, life has taught them to not trust or rely on anyone. They don't easily give trust or respect as sadly life has taught them this isn't wise.

One way we really hope to help our apprentices is to support them to return to education. Our team have advocated and provided a lot of support, and **all three of our current apprentices are back in school** and trying to do two years at a time to catch up and complete their schooling. For some of them, the issue of trust really limits them, and they



often struggle with behavioural issues and consequent threats of expulsion. We have worked hard to develop a good relationship with their schools and meet regularly to support their continued education. **One of our young men came top in exams for his school year** showing the potential even the most troubled young people have if they are patiently supported through their challenges.

Hope Hub Café and Community Centre



We are still working out what Hope Hub may become. We know our top priority is that it is a safe place for our apprentices to work and to train with us. It is difficult for it become a successful and busy coffee shop when this is our top priority.

Most people who work in our region are employed by the government, and due to economic pressures more often than not people aren't receiving salaries. For all businesses like ours there is a struggle to remain open, with many similar ventures opening for a few months and then closing.

What Hope Hub has managed to become is **a space for people in the community to gather and build friendships**. We have a number of different events happening throughout the week, such as English language cafés, book clubs, art clubs, and games evenings. People have commented how significant our events are at **helping them find positive social connection**.



Staff Training and Development

As Hope for Communities has grown, one of our increasingly important core values has been the emphasis we place on **growing people** – nurturing the talent and potential in the local community. We provide high-quality training tailored to the needs of our team. When they start working in a teaching role, all new staff members go through **a training programme that we have developed**. During this time they learn practical skills that are useful in the classroom, and our long-term staff members take the opportunity to explain and instil our values into them.

It's important for us to hear from our team as to how they feel we can support their development. One area where all of our team felt they needed more understanding was in special educational needs. It's an area of education that in our region has only recently received attention, so many of our team felt unprepared to work with children with additional needs. We were able to organise **a superb two-day workshop** where two visitors from the UK who both have many years of experience in this field were able to come and provide training. It was an excellent time, and the highlight for us was seeing how our staff responded and immediately saw how they could apply the training and use it to help our children and young people.



Our monthly team meetings are a key time for us to grow together as a team, sharing updates and encouraging stories. We also use the time as an opportunity for training, with our team taking turns to provide peer-led tutorials on a variety of different topics. We have also recently started a training programme for those in our team with management responsibilities, which focuses on them developing leadership and management skills.

New Projects

Scholarship Programmes

As we have shared, Hope for Communities feels strongly that those who are used to getting the worst of things from their communities and societies shouldn't just get better things – **we believe they deserve the best**. As we started to dream with our students in our Barika Community Centre, we began to imagine supporting them to get scholarships to attend the best university in our region. We have started by supporting one of our students to get a scholarship to a great university, this story can be found in our case study later on in the report. With your support we hope to help many more young people to get the best!

Teacher Training in Kurdistan



Another new project that we hope to develop more in 2024 is deploying some of our staff's training and experience to see them go into local government schools and provide training sessions for teachers.

We hope that our education manager Shkar, who received his PGCE in the UK, will be able to impart some of what he has learned to benefit teachers and school children across Kurdistan.

Although it might just be one workshop in a school, **we have heard encouraging stories from teachers in Kurdistan who changed their entire practice following similar sessions**, when they realised there were alternative ways to teach and manage their classrooms.



Visitor's Report

*By Peter Wood, Deputy Head of St James School,
London, who provided a training workshop*

I visited Hope for Communities in the Spring of 2024. The purpose of the visit was to support the team in working with children who may have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). My background is in education and developing practice in SEND, and I have worked in a London primary school for the last 19 years, where I am a Deputy Headteacher.



I travelled with a friend and spent a week staying with Sharo and Alexis and their family. Over the week, I visited Hope Hub, the work in Barika, and spent time with the team understanding the work they do, seeing it in practice and then leading them through two days of full training with them.

The aim of the first two days was to gain a better understanding of how the charity operates within its context and culture, and learn from the team and people involved in the charity. This was crucial because although the training on SEND and inclusion was already planned, I knew we could not just place a blanket of how we operate in the UK and expect it to work in another context. So, over the first two days I gained clarity through spending time with the team and children, learning and amending the training to fit as best as possible so it was more beneficial for the Hope for Communities team. Upon arrival, we headed out to visit Hope Hub where we met some of the team working there,



and boys who were completing their apprenticeship in the café. We spent some time together talking through the charity, how Hope Hub worked, and the boys that were being supported there. These conversations were so important for me to build a better understanding of the people in the team and the young people they work with, as well as the culture and understanding of SEND.

Continued overleaf

These conversations continued into the following day where we spent the day at Barika. My friend and I had a brilliant Q&A session at Barika with one of Alexis' classes where the students showcased their outstanding English! This was also a great chance to see and discuss with some of the pupils how they view the charity and the team and what it means to them. It was clear from these conversations how precious the Hope for Communities school is to them and how they genuinely feel the team care and love them, wanting the best for them. We also observed some lessons and joined in with a sports session. It was a real privilege to spend time here and meet so many of the children and workers. Again, this was key to see so that I could better understand what the team needed for their training.

The following two days were spent at Hope Hub, where the coffee shop was closed so that we could run the full two days' training with all of the Hope for Communities team. We looked at what inclusion and SEND are; different categories of need; types of need and practical solutions that may help. Within their context and with the resources available, we spent time brainstorming and developing plans that are solution-focused. I was blown away by the compassion and heart the team had for the young people they are working with. I had already witnessed it in action during the first two days but throughout the training too, it was clear the team has a culture of inclusivity and the key in the training was to draw this out further. It was clear as we trained that Sharo and Alexis have built a very special team that all have their own skill sets and strengths but also all share one joint vision and heart for what they do. The whole team engaged brilliantly and thoughtfully throughout and we all finished feeling like it had been beneficial.

The final few days were spent visiting people, spending time seeing the city and surrounding areas and their staggering beauty! Throughout the trip we were looked after so well by Sharo and Alexis and the family whose hospitality, friendship and insights made the trip all the more successful and enjoyable. The team made us feel incredibly welcome the whole time and it was clear to see what a unique and passionate team Hope for Communities have built.



A Case Study – Sara’s story

(name changed)

We have been working in Sara’s community for nearly seven years. It’s made up of people who have been internally displaced by war and oppression in Iraq or are refugees from Iran and Syria. Most of the children who come to our centre were born in that community. They are refugees, unable to return safely to their home countries. They live outside the city and face many challenges: economic hardship, unemployment, and low standards of education and healthcare. When we started working among them, we asked people how we could best support them. It was unanimous: the adults all wanted us to teach their children English to increase their chances of future employment, and the children all wanted to learn karate. So, this is how we started.

Sara and her siblings have been with us from the start. At that time we didn’t have our amazing team of locally-trained staff, so our main English teacher was one of our directors, Alexis. We had English classes filled with singing, games and crafts for the younger children and an older class following a curriculum. Sara was only 12 but came along with her older sisters. In the first lesson, Alexis explained that this wasn’t really the right class for her, but as she had come with her sisters she could stay for that lesson. We quickly realised that she was not only able to keep up with the older teenagers, she was flying.

From that day, she has remained in our highest-level English class and could now be described as fluent. We have spent years in our English lessons asking the children questions like “What are you dreaming for your future?” But we always try to strike a balance between dreams, ambition, and realism about what may be possible. Sara dreamed of getting into a good university, of having a future where she has a good job and a happy life. These would be normal dreams for most young people, but sadly for Sara and many of her peers they were close to being unrealistic and might only lead to disappointment.



Continued overleaf

As we saw our oldest students approaching University age, we began as a team to dream with them. One thing we have always strived for is for the children and young people that we work with to get the best. They are so used to receiving the least: they go to the worst schools, which sometimes open for just three months out of 12. So we decided to trial a scholarship programme. What would it look like for our students to not only find themselves at University, but at the best private university in our city? The year we started was very challenging: many of the students were unable to pass their final year, as their school just hadn't been open.

But with her fierce determination and self-motivation, Sara was able to get a good enough pass to get into the University. Because she is an exceptional young person, with our support, she was able to get a scholarship to the best University in our city. To achieve the degree that Sara is getting at her University means she will pretty much be guaranteed to find a good job at the end. The scholarship she received covered a percentage of her tuition, and as a charity we are committed to funding the remaining costs and the costs of her accommodation and living expenses. We are also mentoring and supporting Sara as she faces this huge transition.

It is sometimes hard to keep dreaming for bigger and better things when you are faced with so many barriers. But we are committed to keep on dreaming so that we can bring hope to more communities. **We want Sara to be the first of many young people who are able to go to university.** We want to find creative ways to support young people in the community who may not be so academic, and help them find ways to build a brighter and more hopeful future, too.

Contribution Made by Volunteers

The directors of the charity (Sharo and Alexis Ahmedi), were in this time period volunteering for the charity Hope for Communities. The charity is thankful for their contribution.

Financial Review

Hope for Communities is very grateful to all of its supporters who have so generously helped us in being able to continue with all of our projects.

Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held:

The trustees have agreed to hold three months of the charities running costs in reserve. This is to enable projects to continue in the event of a drop in income.

Amount of reserves held at end of financial year: £65,541

This was more than the needed 3 months' running costs (as of March 2024), however at present our projects are constantly developing and we are starting new projects and so these additional reserves help us in being able to confidently start new initiatives.

(At the end of the financial year, there was also £12,876 that has been transferred from our UK bank for projects and initiatives in the Kurdish region of Iraq that is yet to be deployed.)

Reasons for holding zero reserves	Para 1.22	n/a
Details of fund materially in deficit	Para 1.24	n/a
Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern	Para 1.23	n/a

Funds held as custodian trustees on behalf of others

Description of the assets held in this capacity	n/a
Name and objects of the charity on whose behalf the assets are held and how this falls within the custodian charity's objects	n/a
Details of arrangements for safe custody and segregation of such assets from the charity's own assets	n/a

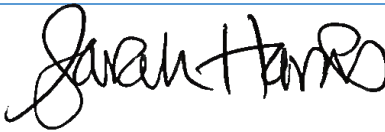
Structure, Governance and Management

Description of charity's trusts:		
Type of governing document (trust deed, royal charter)	Para 1.25	Constitution
How is the charity constituted? (e.g. unincorporated association, CIO)	Para 1.25	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees	Para 1.25	<p>According to the constitution:</p> <p>Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed [for a term of three years] by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.</p> <p>In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.</p>

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature	
Full Name	Sarah Harris
Position	Trustee
Date	28th January 2025

Charity Name		No (if any)		CC16a
Receipts and payments accounts				
For the period from	Period start date 1/4/2023	To	Period end date 31/3/2024	

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
One-off donations from individuals	16,886	-	-	16,886	8,690
Regular invoiced donations from individuals	5,900	-	-	5,900	3,740
Donations from businesses/organisations	22,250	66,558	-	88,808	50,811
Give as you live	16	-	-	16	36
Amazon	25	-	-	25	24
HMRC-reclaimed gift aid	-	-	-	-	1,629
Bank refunds	35	-	-	35	-
		-	-		
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	45,112	66,558	-	111,670	64,930
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	45,112	66,558	-	111,670	64,930
A3 Payments					
Staff	1,712	32,415	-	34,127	21,283
Rent	1,894	4,939	-	6,833	2,307
Utilities/heating	1,344	1,553	-	2,897	619
Petrol/vehicle maintenance	853	244	-	1,097	1,488
Staff meetings/training	440	-	-	440	350
Projects:Equipment/refreshments/resources	3,348	6,619	-	9,967	10,502
Buildings maintenance	186	-	-	186	382
Bank charges/comms/admin kurdistan	546	-	-	546	318
Orphanages:Trips out/events	349	668	-	1,017	624
Apprenticeships salaries/support		7,412		7,412	294
Travel/Accommodation	1,794			1,794	
Staff development/investment	3,291			3,291	1,083
Communications/admin UK	452			452	403
Fundraising agency				-	750
Charges for bank transfers	1,222			1,222	1,266
Stripe Fees	334			334	177
Draw down of funds previously transferred to Kurdistan that were yet to be deployed in prior periods	- 1,314	-	-	- 1,314	12,524
Sub total	16,451	53,850	-	70,301	54,370

A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	16,451	53,850	-	70,301	54,370
Net of receipts/(payments)	28,661	12,708	-	41,369	10,560
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	24,172	-	-	24,172	13,612
Cash funds this year end	52,833	12,708	-	65,541	24,172

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

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	UK bank account	52,833	12,708	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	52,833	12,708	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets				
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use				

B5 Liabilities

		-	-
		-	-

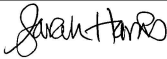

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Money transferred to projects in Kurdistan, including prior periods, that is yet to be deployed at the end of 31 Mar 2024

Unrestricted funds to nearest £

	12,876
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Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Sarah Harris	28/01/2025
	Abey Varghese Philip	28/01/2025

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Hope for Communities

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Hope for Communities Trust (the Trust) for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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

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

Independent examiner's statement

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

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts 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. Please see supplementary information section for additional details of examination undertaken.

Signed: 

Name: Gajen Ganandran MEng, ACMA

Relevant professional qualification: Qualified Chartered Management Accountant

Address: 83 Chalgrove Crescent, Clayhall, Ilford, Essex IG5 0LX UK

Date: 26 January 2025