

Charity Number 1183558

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

**Report and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st August 2023**

Address	<p>Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group PO Box 1615, Southampton SO17 3WF Email: info@swvg-refugees.org.uk Web: www.swvg-refugees.org.uk</p>
Patrons	<p>Miriam Margolyes, OBE John Pilkington Dr. Shirley Firth</p>
Trustees	<p>Chair: Mark Courtice Treasurer: David Smith Co-ordinator: Claudia Glyn</p> <p>Catherine Hartley William Brook-Hart Jeyatharshan Vettivel Stash Kozlowski (resigned 15 December 2022) Rev. Dr. Stephen Sizer (resigned 31 January 2023) David Retter (resigned 15 December 2022) Jackie Batchelor (resigned 7 August 2023) Leila Karimi (resigned 20 October 2022) Paul Munns (appointed 28 August and resigned 2 September 2023)</p>
Secretary	Jessica Hasan
Administrator	David Rees
Bankers	HSBC Bank Plc, 19 High Street, Salisbury SP1 1TE
Independent Examiner	Peter Casson FCA

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023.

Formation

The charity was formed as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation to take over the activities and assets and liabilities of the unincorporated charity of the same name. It was registered with the Charity Commission on 29 May 2019.

Governance and management

The Trustee Board comprises a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 12 members elected at each Annual General Meeting. Trustees who held office during the year are listed on page 2.

The Board meets every six weeks and is supported by a number of sub-committees which report to the Trustees.

Aims and objectives

The main objects of the Group as set out in its constitution are:

For the relief of need, hardship and distress in the United Kingdom amongst refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants by providing such charitable assistance as the Trustees think fit, including providing such persons with advice, assistance, representation, counselling, in matters such as money, debts, welfare, benefits, housing, health, asylum, immigration, education, training and employment.

Focus of our work

The Group is a volunteer led charity whose members work with asylum seekers and refugees mainly living in Southampton. Our work includes, providing English and other teaching and providing one-to-one support for individual clients, who are assigned a trained visitor who meets with them regularly to provide friendship and practical help. In addition we support approximately 170 people who are resident in two local hotels. We provide well-being support through social and cultural activities. We also have funded the provision of phones, laptops and data to some of the students and hotel residents.

SWVG is the leading partner in the Avenue Multicultural Centre (AMC) in Southampton URC and runs it in conjunction with CLEAR and Avenue St Andrews URC. AMC is a very popular drop-in centre, which runs every Friday morning for those seeking asylum. We staff a help desk with two experienced visitors and the SWVG administrator. This drop-in is frequented by the residents in Home Office government asylum accommodation and one of the hotels. For the second, bigger, hotel we run a separate help desk at the hotel once a week on Wednesdays together with CLEAR.

We also work in partnership with SCRATCH, where a number of clients volunteer, with New Forest National Park, where we run visits in conjunction with the rangers, and with John Hansard Gallery, MAST Studios, Sea City Museum and Southampton City Libraries for our culture project.

We also have links to Refugee Action and Together with Refugees and are members of NACCOM and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Strategic Migration Group.

Review of the year

The drop-in centre at Avenue St Andrews URC continued in operation and is attended by well over a hundred clients and helpers/teachers every week. During the year the number of refugees and asylum seekers we saw at the help desk was over 250.

We supported 24 clients, and in some cases their families, with regular visits; most of them live in NASS accommodation. Out of these, 12 clients were granted Leave to Remain during the year. In addition there are a number of English students with LTR, as well as hotel residents for whom we cannot give precise figures because we do not see all the residents.

A decision was taken to close the hostel because it was no longer fulfilling its original objectives and the trustees felt that there were better alternative uses for the resources. On average only three of the hostel's six rooms were occupied for most of the year

Several of our clients have had to wait years to have their asylum case assessed by the Home Office and further months or years for a decision, but we have also seen some fast decisions. Due to the government's effort to cut the backlog of outstanding asylum decisions, clients from certain countries received a fast track questionnaire, which in turn made it difficult to find the necessary legal support to complete these documents.

The Home Office has continued to increase the number of people in Southampton who are seeking asylum accommodated in hotels but without providing adequate support facilities.

During the year we responded at short notice to the opening by the Home Office of a hotel for asylum seekers in a highly unsuitable location near Winchester. The hotel accommodated up to 60 young men and SWVG provided them with English language teaching, sports and other social activities and day-to-day support.

Some individual SWVG members are involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees. While SWVG believes that all refugees should be treated fairly and humanely, our focus continues to be on those of all nationalities who do not get proper government support.

More information on our activities can be found on the website at swvg-refugees.org.uk

English teaching

Around 80 students are currently receiving English lessons both one-to-one and in groups. At least 80 more have attended lessons during the past year including the men from the hotel that opened near Winchester. We have purchased text books and continued with the scheme to lend laptops to people learning English, and to provide 33 clients with mobile data packages, which also benefitted other adult family members and children.

Volunteers and staff

We currently have around 100 active volunteers and continue to receive applications from potential volunteers. Our training activity is now carried out partly online and partly in person.

The Trustees have been grateful to note that the volunteer group now includes people with lived experience of the asylum system.

Our two part time staff continue to provide essential support services.

Campaigning

The campaign group seeks to ensure that the membership of SWVG is informed of national campaigns that call for a humane asylum system and oppose current laws which persecute people who claim asylum, notably the Illegal Migration Act 2023. We encourage members to raise the issues with their MP's and local councils and we speak at local groups and forums.

Together with three other campaigning and refugee support agencies we organised a very successful outdoor event, with music, dance and a parade in the centre of Southampton to celebrate Refugee Week. This created links between many local cultural support groups who came to showcase their positive contributions to the City. Over 1,000 people came, including many currently claiming asylum. We attracted sponsorship from the council and local businesses and very positive interviews with local TV and radio. In preparation, we involved over 1,600 local schoolchildren in discussion sessions meeting people who are refugees. Schools, community groups and the general public were also involved in making decorations for the event which allowed issues to be talked about in a non-confrontational setting.

Finance

Receipts for the year were £109,033, and payments were £107,795 producing a surplus of £1,238.

Receipts-Grants

Grants from charitable trusts amounted to £54,466. We are most grateful for a further grant from the Tolkien Trust of £20,000 which covers a significant part of our support costs.

We are also grateful for an anonymous institutional grant of £10,000 and a £5,000 grant from The French Huguenot Church of London Charitable Trust to be used for social activities. The final tranche of National Lottery funding was received during the year to be used for teaching and social activities as well as funding subsistence costs for those without government support.

We have also received grants of £1,360 and £1,218 from Winchester City Council and from Energise Me respectively for support to those housed in a Winchester hotel. Southampton City Council supported our Refugee Week activities with a grant of £2,500.

We also gratefully acknowledge a grant of £1,600 from the Girdlers Trust and continuing support from The One Per Cent scheme which amounted to £4,496.

Details of grants received are set out on page 8 of this report.

Receipts-Other income

We are grateful for the donations we have received from churches, other organisations and many individuals who have continued to support us in difficult circumstances. In particular we are grateful for a anonymous donation of £10,000. Ahmad Tea Ltd have supported us regularly with donations totalling £3,300 for which we are also most grateful.

Payments included £37,343 for accommodation and subsistence for destitute asylum seekers, £27,500 of which was for the rent of the hostel. Expenditure on other client activities further increased reflecting the differing needs of asylum seekers and the increasing numbers accommodated in Southampton and for the first time Winchester. Expenditure on social activities to improve well-being amounted to £12,301 and £9,341 was spent on English teaching by providing internet access and books as described above.

Emergency Response Fund

This fund was created in 2021 and now stands at £15,000.

Reserves Policy

The Trustees have agreed that the value of unrestricted reserves should be in the region of £60,000 representing approximately 6 months normal expenditure plus a provision for three months for salaries. Unrestricted reserves at 31 August, excluding the Emergency Response Fund, were £65,818

This report was approved by the Trustees on 30 October 2023 and signed on their behalf by Mark Courtice (Chair).

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (the Group) for the year ended 31 August 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the Trustees of the Group 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 Group'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 Group 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.

Peter Casson FCA 4th November 2023

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Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group
Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2023

Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted £	2023 Restricted £	Total £	2022 Total
RECEIPTS				
Donations from organisations	8,367		8,367	4,120
Donations from individuals including gift aid	36,281		36,281	22,668
Grants from charitable trusts	37,896	16,570	54,466	53,174
Proceeds of fund-raising events	8,365		8,365	13,083
Interest	1,554		1,554	596
Total receipts	92,463	16,570	109,033	93,641
PAYMENTS				
Client-facing activities				
Campaigning	1,693	2,500	4,193	6,667
Visitors' travel and other expenses	3,365		3,365	4,003
Professional fees		1,966	1,966	175
Accommodation and subsistence	28,128	9,215	37,343	35,673
Travel	6,360		6,360	5,523
English teaching	3,482	5,859	9,341	7,535
Mobile phones	3,257		3,257	
Social activities	4,723	7,578	12,301	7,674
Other	2,248	626	2,874	4,814
Total payments to or for clients	53,256	27,744	81,000	72,064
Support activities				
Communications	551		551	1,906
Salaries	17,212		17,212	16,144
Fund-raising costs	216		216	652
Training	182		182	443
Insurance	616		616	480
Website	2,762		2,762	302
Other office and admin costs	5,256		5,256	2,236
Total administration expenses	26,795		26,795	22,163
Total payments	80,051	27,744	107,795	94,227
Net excess of receipts over payments for the year	12,412	(11,174)	1,238	(586)
Balance brought forward	68,406	12,284	80,690	81,276
Balance carried forward	80,818	1,110	81,928	80,690

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group
Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2022

Statement of assets and liabilities at 31 August 2023

	01.09.22	Received	Paid	31.08.23
	£	£	£	£
CASH FUNDS				
Unrestricted Funds				
General Unrestricted Funds	53,406	92,463	80,051	65,818
Emergency Response Fund	15,000			15,000
Total Unrestricted Funds	68,406	92,463	80,051	80,818
Restricted Funds				
Legal Justice Fund	2,726	0	1,966	760
Winchester Emergency	0	2,578	2,578	0
Bike project	976	0	626	350
National Lottery	8,582	6,492	15,074	0
Campaigning	0	2,500	2,500	0
Social activities	0	5,000	5,000	0
Total Restricted Funds	12,284	16,570	27,744	1,110
Total Funds	80,690	109,033	107,795	81,928
 Represented by:			31.08.23	31.08.22
			£	£
HSBC current account			13,128	8,890
Nationwide Building Society			14,000	22,000
Redwood Bank			54,000	54,000
Float for expenses			800	800
Less: Deferred income				(5,000)
			81,928	80,690
 DEBTORS				
Tax on Gift Aid donations			1,657	1,086
Other debtors			533	416
			2,190	1,502
 CREDITORS				
For expenses			432	142

Signed for and on behalf of the Trustees on 30 October 2023 by

Mark Courtice (Chair)

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2023

NOTES:

GRANTS

	Unrestricted	2023 Restricted	Total	2022 Total
	£	£	£	£
Grants received from charitable trusts were:				
The Tolkien Trust	20,000		20,000	20,000
Anonymous	10,000		10,000	
Garfield Weston Foundation				10,000
One Percent Scheme	4,496		4,496	2,107
Knight Charitable Trust	300		300	400
Sheba Charitable Trust				400
St Clare and St Francis Trust	1,500		1,500	500
The Girdlers Trust	1,600		1,600	
 The French Huguenot Church of London – social activities		5,000	5,000	5,000
The National Lottery – subsistence and teaching		6,492	6,492	12,857
Winchester City Council – teaching, social activities and football		1,360	1,360	
Energise Me - football		1,218	1,218	
Southampton City Council – Refugee Week		2,500	2,500	1,910
	<u>37,896</u>	<u>16,570</u>	<u>54,466</u>	<u>53,174</u>

TRUSTEE EXPENSES

Expenses reimbursed to trustees during the period amounted to £1,028 (2022 £890).

COMMITMENTS

The Group had outstanding commitments for the support of clients which fall after the year end of £1,285 (2022 £4,943).