

Charity Number 1183558

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

**Report and Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st August 2025**

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>Co-chairs: Catherine Hartley (appointed 2 December 2024) Hazel Inskip (appointed 2 December 2024) Chair: Mark Courtice (resigned 16 October 2024) Vice Chair: Chris Stephens (appointed 2 December 2024) Treasurer: David Robertson Co-ordinator: Susan Jessup (resigned 4 August 2025)</p> <p>Judith Evans (resigned 6 May 2025) Katie Gearing Khalid Omer Andrew Taylor Jeyatharshan Vettivel</p>
Secretary	<p>Lea Hayes</p>
Administrator	<p>David Rees</p>
Bankers	<p>HSBC Bank Plc, 19 Minster Street, Salisbury SP1 1TE</p>
Independent Examiner	<p>Chay Champness FCMA, CGMA</p>

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2025.

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 that 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, people seeking asylum 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 people seeking asylum and refugees mainly living in Southampton and Winchester. Our work includes providing English and other teaching, and one-to-one support for individual people, who are assigned a trained visitor who meets with them regularly to offer friendship and practical help. We support approximately 200 people in government accommodation, who are resident either in a local hotel or in shared houses. We provide wellbeing support through social and cultural activities. We have also funded gym access, phones, and bikes.

SWVG runs the Avenue Multicultural Centre (AMC) in Southampton United Reform Church (URC). It hosts some of the work of partner charities that also support those seeking asylum, notably CLEAR and Southampton Action. AMC is a very popular drop-in centre, which runs every Friday morning.

We also work in partnership with SCRATCH, where a number of people 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

Our core work, namely the provision of support to people seeking asylum and newly given Leave To Remain has continued. We have supported many young men placed in a hotel in Southampton, as well as people in other accommodation locally.

The drop-in centre (AMC) at Avenue St Andrews URC has continued in operation and welcomes more than 150 people each week. Around 40 people per week access our help desks staffed by experienced volunteers, receiving a variety of support, including finding solicitors. A new database system allows us to monitor our activities, and, in the six months from February 2025, 582 different people visited our help desks, with more than 1,000 interactions, some people being seen more than once. We also organise a food bank as well as activities including English language lessons. CLEAR also runs a help desk at AMC and Southampton Action runs a clothes bank.

AMC hosts guest organisations including the City Library service; Medaille Trust, supporting people who have been trafficked; Yellow Door, working with survivors of trauma, violence and abuse; and a Smoking Cessation team. Volunteers run a music group and a yoga session. As well as an extra, specific help desk for accommodation

matters and school placements, a further desk is dedicated to managing gym memberships and the bike scheme and issuing mobile phones, and another to finding volunteer opportunities for people seeking asylum.

We continue to benefit from the strong sense of community generated at AMC. The management team and the AMC volunteers include a high proportion of people with lived experience of asylum.

The number of people seeking asylum in Southampton and Winchester who receive regular and individual support from a Visitor was 29 adults at the end of August 2025. They have 32 children between them. The Visitor relationship is now reserved mainly for people with complex needs. However, a considerable number of people who received Leave To Remain still need support to transition into independence. Finding accommodation is the most pressing problem. We cannot give precise figures for those who received a positive decision over the year because we do not see all the residents in hotels and houses, but up to 30% of our support is targeted at post Leave to Remain.

It is increasingly difficult for people accommodated in hotels where sharing rooms is the norm nowadays, leading inevitably to a rise in mental health issues and, occasionally, aggressive behaviour, because there are not enough support facilities. We have been involved in arranging and regularly attending a group including Migrant Help, the local authority, the Police and the Home Office to support the management of the hotel and the residents to monitor the problems. Since the summer, aggressive anti-migrant protests have been held outside the hotel each Friday evening, with a large demonstration in mid-August on a Sunday. This is frightening and distressing for the residents and SWVG offers support engaging with the local police and councillors.

Whilst we have seen some fast decisions, too many people still have to wait years to have their asylum claims assessed. A lack of legal support is a key issue nowadays, particularly at appeal. There are not enough immigration solicitors working for Legal Aid and many people now have to attend their substantive interview or even an appeal hearing without prior discussion with a solicitor.

English teaching

Around 60 students are currently receiving English lessons either one-to-one or in a small group, though more have been taught across the year due to frequent movement in and out of the hotel. Around 100 more have attended lessons during the past year. About 38 teachers are currently teaching at least one student. We have had donations of text books and exercise books, and have purchased more when necessary.

We run a conversation group in partnership with Southampton Central Library, which can involve up to 20 people each week.

Volunteers and contracted staff

We currently have around 100 active volunteers and continue to receive applications from potential volunteers. Our training activity has now been refreshed and the first contact new volunteers have is one-to-one with a member of the training team either online or in person. This is followed up with a full day's training. The Trustees have been grateful to note that the volunteer group now increasingly includes people with lived experience of the asylum system.

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

Campaigning

The Campaigning Group supports national campaigns that call for a humane asylum system and we oppose policies that persecute people who claim asylum. We encourage members to raise the issues with their MPs and local councils, and we speak at local groups and forums. We think it important for politicians to talk to people who have lived experience of asylum. We have been pleased to organise visits to AMC from local MPs this year, and have shown Caroline Nokes, MP for Romsey and Southampton North, and currently a deputy speaker, and Liz Jarvis, MP for Eastleigh, around the Centre. Other MPs have been visited in their surgeries.

Refugee Week in June is a special time to celebrate the cultures and capabilities that refugees and other people who have sought sanctuary bring to our local communities. Together with many local organisations and community groups, we organised a series of events including drama, films, music, dance, a stall, artwork and a parade in the centre of Southampton. This improves the links between many local cultural groups who came to showcase their positive contributions to the city. We are also most grateful to people with lived experience who gave radio and TV interviews.

In preparation, we visited 13 local schools involving upwards of 1,600 local schoolchildren in discussion sessions, meeting people who are refugees. The children decorated tote bags with generosity and imagination, as gifts for people seeking asylum, in response to this year's theme, Community.

Wellbeing and Activities

We arrange activities to support wellbeing, including 110 people joining trips to the New Forest and Bournemouth beach, and tree planting trips for the National Trust. Additionally we offer opportunities for people to work on our allotment and to cook meals, we source and repair bikes, enable volunteering opportunities, and organise cultural activities. Some 215 people have been on theatre trips (115 individuals, some attending more than once).

Cooking for Friends Saturday evening events and the associated fundraising dinners started two years ago. The issue of food is an important one for residents of the hotel as they do not have the opportunity to cook, nor to eat food from home. We developed a scheme that involves two of the hotel residents acting as chefs on a Saturday evening. They each invite up to six friends to eat with them. This has led to a regular sharing of food and good fun, and the scheme runs every Saturday evening (subject to venue availability). All the chefs are required to undertake basic food hygiene to Level 1, providing a useful qualification for their CVs and later employment. Several of the chefs have attained Level 2.

The success of this scheme has led to a spin-off series of fundraising dinners which raise about £1,000 a time. These are important not just because of money but also as an advertisement and celebration of community and shared values, with singing and dancing as well as a very varied menu.

Reporting Support

We continue to co-ordinate and join a group of local people gathering at the police station where people on immigration bail have to report to Border Force officials on Monday mornings. We publicise the support available in Southampton, including from SWVG, give out information cards and offer to inform a solicitor or friend, should anyone be detained.

We aim to build on positive relationships in Southampton, Winchester and neighbouring towns, to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Finance

Receipts for the year were £89,255 and payments were £92,693 producing a deficit of £3,438. This was part of the Trustees' plan to achieve a deficit in the year in order to bring the level of reserves in line with our reserves policy. The Trustees' plan for 2026 continues this approach expecting to deliver a small deficit in the year.

Receipts-Grants

Grants from charitable trusts amounted to £49,750. We are most grateful for a further grant from the Tolkien Trust of £22,000 which covers a significant part of our support costs.

We are also grateful for an anonymous institutional grant of £10,000, the grant from French Huguenot Church of £5,000 and a grant of £1,500 from St Claire and St Francis Parochial Parish Council.

We have also received a grant of £5,000 from the Hilden Trust and £2,000 from the Misselbrook Trust.

We also gratefully acknowledge continuing support from the One Per Cent scheme which amounted to £3,150.

Details of grants received are set out on page 10 of this report.

Receipts-Other income

We acknowledge the financial donation from the Girdlers Trust: £2,600 towards the Cooking for Friends initiative. We are also grateful for the donations we have received from churches, other organisations and many individuals who have continued to support us in difficult circumstances.

Payments. We have continued to shift our spending towards practical help and social activities. The AMC has continued to increase in size and costs have increased commensurately (2025 £17,575/2024 £12,766). The Cooking for Friends initiative, gym memberships and the bike project continue to grow (2025 £18,387/2024 £16,028). In the 2024/25 annual report and accounts the proportion of contracted staff's costs that are incurred at AMC have been shown against that cost line (2025 £7,611/2024 £6,504). In 2023/24 this was included under salaries in support activities, the comparative figures have been adjusted to reflect this change. We continue to supply mobile phones to those who require them, though the cost has dropped from the previous year (2025 £7,436/2024 £9,634). As noted above, increasingly people are being asked to attend interviews without legal representation. As a consequence they need funds for the translation of key documents, which ordinarily Legal Aid would fund if they had legal representation. We have supported people where this is the case (2025 £860) and we can see that this could be an increasing pressure going forward. The trustees had recognised that there was a requirement to modernise our record keeping to make it secure, simple and more efficient. During the year we invested in a new database system (£6,285) to do this.

We continue to manage our support activity costs tightly, although these have been impacted by inflation in the year. For 2024/25 the support costs account for 24% of our expenditure in the year.

Emergency Response Fund

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

AMC Designated Fund

This fund holds the monies received relating to the running of AMC.

Reserves

The Trustees have agreed that the value of unrestricted reserves should be in the region of £55,000 representing approximately 6 months normal expenditure plus a provision for three months for salaries.

Unrestricted reserves at 31 August, excluding the Emergency Response Fund and AMC fund, were £82,799.



This report was approved by the Trustees on 8th December 2025 and signed on their behalf by Catherine Hartley (Co-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 2025.

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').

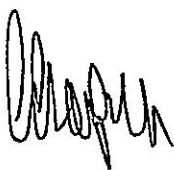
I report in respect of my examination of the Group's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

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.



Chay Champness FCMA, CGMA

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16/12/25

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2025

Receipts and payments

		2025		2024
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS				
Donations from organisations	4,168	6,870	11,038	19,095
Donations from individuals inc. gift aid	17,604	240	17,844	21,459
Grants from charitable trusts	44,750	5,000	49,750	54,614
Proceeds of fund-raising events	7,908		7,908	9,368
AMC receipt	0		0	11,238
Interest	2,715		2,715	2,863
Total receipts	77,145	12,110	89,255	118,637
PAYMENTS				
Direct activities				
Campaigning	0	1,913	1,913	1,152
Visitors' travel and other expenses	2,550		2,550	3,281
Accommodation and subsistence	1,711		1,711	4,484
Travel	6,090		6,090	6,262
English teaching	2,261		2,261	7,409
Mobile phones	7,436		7,436	9,634
AMC and social activities	22,275	12,110	34,385	28,794
Other	12,999	760	13,759	3,211
Total direct activities	55,322	14,783	70,105	64,227
Support activities				
Communications	98		98	142
Salaries	14,797		14,797	13,820
Fund-raising costs	306		306	318
Training	1,739		1,739	558
Insurance	787		787	848
Website	1,108		1,108	3,493
Other office and admin costs	3,753		3,753	2,532
Total support activities	22,588	0	22,588	21,711
Total payments	77,910	14,783	92,693	85,938
Net excess of receipts over payments for the year				
	-765	-2,673	-3,438	32,699
Balance brought forward	111,702	2,925	114,627	81,928
Balance carried forward	110,937	252	111,189	114,627

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2025

Statement of assets and liabilities at 31 August 2025

	01.09.24 £	Received £	Paid £	31.08.25 £
CASH FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds				
General Unrestricted Funds	85,464	75,245	77,910	82,799
Emergency Response Fund	15,000			15,000
Mark Courtice Education Fund	0	1,900		1,900
AMC Designated Fund	11,238			11,238
Total Unrestricted Funds	111,702	77,145	77,910	110,937
Restricted Funds				
Legal Justice Fund	760		760	0
Cooking for friends	0	2,600	2,600	0
Campaigning	2,165		1,913	252
AMC Restricted Fund	0	4,510	4,510	0
Social activities	0	5,000	5,000	0
Total Restricted Funds	2,925	12,110	14,783	252
Total Funds	114,627	89,255	92,693	111,189

Represented by:	31.08.25	31.08.24
	£	£
HSBC current account	40,669	15,827
Nationwide Building Society	0	28,000
Redwood Bank	70,000	70,000
Float for expenses	520	800
Total funds	111,189	114,627

Creditors

For expenses	2,289	1,199
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Signed for and on behalf of the Trustees on 8th December 2025 by Catherine Hartley (Co Chair)

Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2025

Notes :

Grants	2025		2024	
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
The Tolkien Trust	22,000		22,000	22,000
Anonymous	10,000		10,000	10,000
Garfield Weston Foundation	0		0	7,500
One Per Cent Scheme	3,150		3,150	5,297
Hilden Trust	5,000		5,000	5,000
St Clare and St Francis Trust	1,500		1,500	1,500
Misselbrook Trust	2,000		2,000	2,000
NACOM	1,100		1,100	0
The French Huguenot Church		5,000	5,000	0
Southampton City Council - Refugee Week		0	0	1,317
	44,750	5,000	49,750	54,614

TRUSTEE EXPENSES

Expenses reimbursed to trustees during the period amounted to £1,611 (2024 £824).