

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY OF SANCTUARY (NCOS)

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD October 2022 – September 2023



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Registered Charity 1185663

Contents

Abbreviations	3
About Northumberland County of Sanctuary	3
1. OBJECTS.....	3
2. GOVERNANCE.....	4
THE BOARD AND EXECUTIVE.....	4
THE CHAIR, SECRETARY AND TREASURER.....	4
PRELIMINARY NOTE.....	4
3. PREFACE.....	4
4. FROM THE CHAIR.....	5
5. FROM THE SECRETARY.....	5
6. HILARY HODGSON.....	6
7. HJEM.....	6
8. PARLIAMENTARY LOBBY.....	6
9. DEVELOPMENT.....	7
10. VOLUNTEERING.....	7
11. ACTIVITIES.....	9
Drop-ins.....	10
NCOS partnership with the Red Cross	12
New Arrivals Pathway.....	12
English Language Learning.....	12
Sports.....	12
NCOS and Ukrainians.....	13
12. EVENTS.....	13
Trips.....	13
Clothing and household goods.....	13
Bicycle Training.....	13
ACTIVITY OF A MORE GENERAL SORT.....	13
From the far west of the County.....	14
Youth Club.....	14
13. IN GENERAL	15
FUNDING.....	15
14. RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS.....	15
15. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT.....	16
TRUSTEES at 31st March 2024	16
Management.....	16
Policies.....	16

16. THANK YOU.....	16
17. STATISTICS.....	17
ACCOUNTS.....	18

Abbreviations

NCOS. = Northumberland County of Sanctuary; PSS = Person(s) seeking sanctuary (asylum); LTR = people with leave to remain; SU = service user; RC = Red Cross. LE = Language Expert; NCC = Northumberland County Council; COS = City of Sanctuary.

About Northumberland County of Sanctuary

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY OF SANCTUARY (NCOS) was founded in December 2016 and registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) whose only voting members are its charity trustees, in November 2019. NCOS is governed by a Charity Commission Foundation Model Constitution. It is a Group of the national organisation City of Sanctuary.

1. OBJECTS.

1. The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers, (including convention refugees, refugee communities, people with leave to remain, asylum seekers and ex-detainees), socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by promoting and/or co-ordinating services and facilities to assist them to adapt within a new community.
2. The relief of financial hardship among asylum seekers and refugees living or working in Northumberland by acting as an umbrella and resource for local refugee support services,
3. The advancement of the education of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum and human rights.
4. The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit by promoting activities to foster understanding and good relations between the general public and people seeking sanctuary.

2. GOVERNANCE.

THE BOARD AND EXECUTIVE.

The governance of NCoS is in the hands of the Board of Trustees. This meets ten times a year regularly. The Trustees co-opt some other volunteers onto the Board, with a full role of participation except for those matters which are, by the Constitution, reserved for Trustees. The Board appoints an Executive Committee consisting of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer who may call upon other members as necessary from time to time, to undertake the day to day governance of NCoS and make essential and urgent decisions. The Executive reports to each Board meeting. The minutes are available for any who would like to see them, on request. Several members of the Board are PSS or people with LTR, including the Chair and the Treasurer.

THE CHAIR, SECRETARY AND TREASURER.

Murtala Touray has continued to be the Chair and Hilton Dawson Secretary. Muhammad Virk has taken over as Treasurer.

PRELIMINARY NOTE.

This report contains information that brings the picture of NCOS up to the time of writing, for the Annual General Meeting to be held on 20th April 2024. Although the accounts are those for 2022-2023, does not seem sensible to cut information six months ago as much has happened since then.

3. PREFACE.

Last year, Murtala Touray, the Chair, finished his report by saying:

In 2023, we are looking forward to build our new 3-year strategic plan to ensure NCOS grows from strength to strength. We have started this journey with an Away Day in March to assess our current state and desired goal. As we start this journey, we will be calling on our parent organisation, the City of Sanctuary and other partners as well as funders for their invaluable material, moral and financial support.

This report reflects those words. The Away Day in March 2023 was a very significant day for NCOS. It was led strongly by Julian Prior, to whom we are most grateful, in a way which gave us no means of escape, thus setting the path for our development. If progress seemed rather tardy at first that is because it meant such a change of gear for the organisation. We knew it was essential, but in the face of such a large task with our then very small resources, we might call to mind the prayer of the Breton Fisherman, *O God, your sea is so great and I am so small....*

But that is how the world is, and the migration situation within it. Refugee and asylum seeker numbers world-wide are in tens of millions. Of those there were 67,337 asylum applications in the UK in 2023 of whom a portion have been sent to Northumberland. It is with these people that we put our effort and try to make it as effective as it may be.

4. FROM THE CHAIR.

Another year to reflect on our work as we celebrate the invaluable contributions of our volunteers who are the cornerstone of this organisation. As a befitting tribute of our volunteers, this year's AGM is dedicated to celebrating our volunteers and the good work of volunteering. As I mentioned in our newly developed Handbook for Volunteers, without the volunteers this organisation will literally collapse at the great expense of our service users and larger community. I would like to start by thanking profusely all our volunteers who are from diverse backgrounds including our service users.

With our meagre resources, NCOS did a lot of work in the past year. The organisation was able to undertake many interventions to cater for our service users as well as to improve the policy of the government to enable a welcoming environment for people in search of sanctuary in the UK. Key highlight include a partnership with Jamie Sinclair to exhibit his film 'Hjem' at the Woodhorn Museum to considerable public acclaim. Its success can be measured by the excellent people who have been so inspired by the film that they have now become excellent volunteers with NCOS.

NCOS was also instrumental in the organisation of a parliamentary lobby to promote a positive message about the need for a fair system of asylum. The lobby in Parliament, promoted by Ian Lavery MP with an Early Day Motion was a great success. (*See below for more details*). This work is continuing ahead of the coming General Election. In addition, our International Day, that brings together the local community and our services users, was a success with Ian Lavery and Mayor amongst other dignitaries in attendance. This annual event celebrates our differences and diversity as well as our common humanity in search of a peaceful co-existence.

Sadly, we had to discontinue our Youth Club, but we are looking at ways of revamping it, when funds permit.

In the year ahead, we are working towards raising substantial amount of funds that will afford us a rented location of our own, where we will be able to provide regular consultation services every day of the week. This work has begun with the determination to ensure we are successful in our funding bid.

I would like to thank all our donors as well as individuals including some members of our board of trustees who have made very generous donations to enable the continuation of our vital services.

As you delve into this report, let's continue to celebrate our volunteers and volunteering. Every little effort goes a long way in making this world a better place for us all regardless of who we are and where we are from .

Murtala Touray

5. FROM THE SECRETARY.

The great strength of NCOS is the independence and commitment of our volunteers underpinned by the engagement of people with experience of seeking asylum.

As Secretary of NCOS during 2024-25 I have tried to build on this unique quality through regular meetings & communication with key partners, writing letters of support on behalf of service users and promoting some new models of practice to

meet people's needs. I have been working with regional support groups to promote the need for a fair asylum system to politicians of all parties.

As Volunteer Co-ordinator, I am delighted that we have recruited 14 new volunteers and generally tried to offer better support through volunteers meetings, some training and the forthcoming volunteer handbook. Our 30% increase in the number of volunteers has taken us to 43 people. We now need to recruit another 50% more volunteers to continue to improve our offer to the people whom we serve. Increasingly we are drawing upon people with asylum experience in our volunteer recruitment. This emphasises the qualities of the people with whom we are working and underlines how much they have to offer to Northumberland communities.

The priority for 2024 – 25 must be the development of a 'Welcome' project using a range of individual and group support to ensure that everyone who arrives in Northumberland receives a very warm welcome and a comprehensive introduction to their new communities.

I am more than ever convinced of the huge need for NCOS. Thankfully, I have never been more confident of our ability to serve people well and make a real difference.

Hilton Dawson

6. HILARY HODGSON.

It was with great sadness that we received the news that Hilary had died, very suddenly. She was the head of the Red Cross in Newcastle and Northumberland and was a tremendous help to NCOS, enabling and developing the key relationship between the two organisations. Hundreds of people seeking asylum will be grateful for her work in helping them through the asylum process. May she rest in peace.

7. HJEM.

Hjem is a documentary film about Ashington, produced by Jamie Sinclair, Ashington born and bred. It features the work of NCOS most empathetically. It was shown for a season at Woodhorn Museum and NCOS is most grateful both to Jamie and the Museum.

8. PARLIAMENTARY LOBBY.

A discussion about the need to promote a positive message about the need for a fair system of asylum at AGM 2023 led to a Saturday afternoon workshop at St Andrews, liaison with Ian Lavery MP & his team & the establishment of a regional group. Zara Galaeva worked with the regional group & took a very active part in their very successful lobby in Parliament, promoted by Ian Lavery MP with his Early Day Motion. The wording of the motion may be obtained from the secretary.

9. DEVELOPMENT.

As noted above, the direction of NCOS development since the last AGM was given by the Away Day in March 2023. The key findings from this were:

1. A comprehensive fundraising strategy needs to be implemented urgently.
2. Trustees must decide whether or not to invest in a professionally developed funding bid to employ a paid member of staff to lead NCoS.
3. Urgently consult with people seeking sanctuary in Northumberland to ascertain what they would like from NCoS.
4. Negotiate with Mears and Northumberland County Council to improve working practices to deliver actual joined up services.
5. A training programme for volunteers and trustees must be rolled out.
6. Closer working arrangements with other agencies to support the well being of service users.

Of these, the one that has been least developed, for various somewhat complex reasons, is the first. It has not been forgotten and is being implemented but other matters have had to take priority. Number 2 has been agreed, for when an adequate infrastructure is in place. 3, 4, 5 and 6 are all well under way, with positive progress.

No. 3 is being well practised at the drop-ins, though NCOS does wish, strongly, to find more effective ways of communicating with a wide number of people who may be at the drop-ins only rarely.

No. 4 has really taken off, as is outlined in the Secretary's report above.

There is a horrible cliché, "work in progress" (often used as an excuse) but this development really is ongoing with difficulties being tackled.. It has to be; once NCOS is satisfied it will be dead.

10. VOLUNTEERING.

All who are active within NCOS are volunteers (we would not exist without them) and they carry out a multiplicity of roles. Volunteers meet together every three months for discussion, the development of awareness, necessary training, meeting partner agencies, sociability and networking. Here are three pieces written by volunteers.

NCOS Volunteering and me

NCOS is an amazing team of people who are making migrants & refugees welcome in Northumberland. I was introduced to their existence by a post on Facebook & started to volunteer at the Saturday Drop-in. I have been thoroughly impressed by the warmth of the people who volunteer in this and the warmth of the response from those we welcome.

Some of the youngsters who have arrived in the UK without their families are particularly hard hit so the work that Hilton and I have done with Rachel Anderson, at Northumberland College, has helped them to be involved in social and sporting activities. I hope that this will enable them to feel more at home and to integrate with their local communities. I look forward to watching their progress.

It has meant so much.

I've been volunteering with NCOS since 2018 when I was 24. At the time, I struggled with various mental health issues which impacted my confidence and self-esteem – I didn't imagine that I would ever have much significance.

The impact of being part of this community has been transformational for me. Over the last 6 years, I have met hundreds and hundreds of people from around the world. The media would have us believe that people seeking asylum are either threatening opportunists or pitiful victims. While the former sells newspapers, charities often need to illicit sympathy for their cause and so they produce imagery of helplessness, suffering and pain. Neither of these representations have much to do with the human beings we have met.

The title of 'asylum seeker' is the only thing in common amongst a host of people, each with a completely unique: story, background, perspective, sense of humour, journey, favourite film, family, dream, talent, ambition, childhood, bravery, weakness, taste in music, experience of loss, experience of love...

To be part of NCOS is to be part of a sharing network of support, compassion and welcome for beneficiaries and volunteers alike. While the circumstances of people's arrival is horrendous, it is a privilege to be part of so many people's journeys.

Whether Northumberland becomes their home or whether this is one stop on the road, we're here to soften the landing and help people find their footing again.

Although it wasn't my goal, my career has benefited immensely from my volunteering experience. When I started volunteering, I was a support worker (a job I enjoyed but I didn't plan to stay forever); since joining NCOS I've been given amazing opportunities to access training and learn how charity operates, as well as taking a lead on drop-ins and projects. Through getting to know so many people, it's impossible to avoid learning new depths of knowledge, compassion, inclusion and respect. Thanks to these experiences, I'm now managing a local charity where I can practice all these things I've learned, to support and advocate for the community on a higher level.

When I first started, I didn't think I would ever have significance. Through being here and being part of a much bigger picture, I can see clearly that we all have significance in a community – we all depend on each other, celebrate together and learn from each other. I'm so grateful to be a piece of this community and for every single person I've met through NCOS.

My hope is that everyone that we welcome at NCOS will settle, find peace and be happy in the UK. Every one of them has so much to offer and I hope that they are given the opportunity to do so. I will work to help them in any way that I can.

I'm an asylum seeker from Russia.

I joined NCoS first time as a service user six years ago when I just arrived in Ashington. NCOS is everything to me: my moral and material support, my friends, my family and my teachers. I can't really remember when officially I became a volunteer, I feel like I've always been part of this wonderful community and cannot imagine myself without all of you. NCOS is doing an amazing work supporting those who are here temporarily or came up to this area to start their new lives from scratch. Having someone in the new area who is warmly welcoming you when you don't speak English, don't know how people live here, not familiar with the culture, when everything is different from where you came from is extremely important. When I joined NCOS and started to not just take but also to give something back I began to be a little bit better version of me and feel myself useful which is very important for any human being. Positive feelings help a person to cope with difficult situations and being surrounded by such strong, kind and enthusiastic people helps me to find peace of mind and balance and to understand the real values of life. I believe that being kind and tolerant is in British people genesis. Recent and past history provide the best evidence for this. You light up the souls of those you help and I just want that light to go through me and also make someone's soul a little bit lighter.

Thank you 🙏.

11. ACTIVITIES.

Descriptions of activities are written by volunteers involved.

In general:

NCOS offer :

Weekly drop-in meetings

Ashington on Tuesday 11-1 Saturday 1-4

Blyth on Tuesday 10-11 Saturday 1-3

Drop-in Cramlington, Church of the Nazarene, 2.00pm Thursday

These meetings provide good links with key partners from Red Cross, County Council, Mears & Northumbria Police & and whole range of practical & very friendly support.

We have weekly football training in Ashington & Blyth & support people into a huge variety of sporting activities

We hold an annual international festival to celebrate the countries & cultures from where people have come, to which we welcome the local community to join in.

We are currently developing art classes run by service users for the benefit of all.

We make contact with and welcome people who have newly arrived in Northumberland & are currently preparing for a specific weekly welcome meeting & a programme of home visits.

We are wholly run by volunteers & we are recruiting every month to our lively & expanding volunteer team. All volunteer meetings are held every 3 months & provide a great opportunity to share new ideas for development.

NCOS is run by trustees & people elected to our Board at our Annual AGM. The Board meets monthly, people with asylum experience are well represented & we review all aspects of our work & promote NCOS development. Board members keep a close eye on our advocacy work on behalf of individual service users & their families.

In particular.

Drop-ins. These continue to be held twice a week in both Ashington and Blyth. They continue to be our most valuable way of keeping contact and they are shown to be most valuable to our SUs.

Ashington. Tuesday. Sarah Greaves writes:

I have wanted to work with refugees and asylum seekers for many years, and in March 2022 my husband Andrew and I responded to the “Homes for Ukraine” project, and were put in touch with NCOS.

It was Ben and Sarah who responded to us, and asked whether we would be willing to come and join the team working with the Non Ukrainian asylum seekers, who as we know were not receiving the level of support from the government that the Ukrainian refugees – very justly- were.

In September 2022 we did the training to begin volunteering delivered and I believe written by Sarah BK that face to face training in a group was really valuable- it was very comprehensive and I have relied on it since.

I started to support Anne Murray with the Tuesday drop-in in November I think, but took over as organiser in April last year when she retired from that role. The main focus of the drop-in is to offer a welcome to those who come, as well as signposting to other services – and it is a place where people come to socialise and relax with each other.

It is also a time and place where the formal services working with asylum seekers and refugees come and can be accessed face to face, to offer advice and support. I think the personal human element here is fundamental to what we do.

Ashington is having to accommodate really significant numbers of new comers, and is itself offering a typical North Eastern welcome. I am not local to Ashington, and am so encouraged by the warmth and kindness of local people. I love working with our growing team at the drop-in, which combines “indigenous” Northumbrians with our service users, who bring so much ability and energy to their work with us.

I also really enjoy developing relationships with other agencies – there are lots of local organisations we are developing links with, so as to integrate our asylum seekers into the local community.

Having said that, we are having to confront real suffering and trauma. So this is not easy work. When it is very busy I can feel quite overwhelmed. But we are all working together as a team, and the relationships with the people we support, and each other, are massively sustaining. When I am at the drop-in I feel really alive...this is about being human.

Sarah Greaves.

Ashington, Saturday. Nicole Dumes writes:

We typically have between 30-40 attendees of all ages at Saturday drop-ins. The Saturday drop-in's most basic function is to provide a safe and welcoming space for asylum seekers to use the available Wi-Fi to connect with friends and family. It's also a social gathering, where people can play the games we have made available, make art, and browse our current donations for anything they may need. We have a wish list of items that people are hoping for that ranges from prams and cookware to bicycles and sewing machines.

Most of the needs of asylum seekers are simple and straightforward. Their housing doesn't provide internet, which they need to communicate with solicitors, to study English, and to provide access to services. We have been signposting and assisting those who need it to have a free SIM card from the National Databank, and are in the process of applying for our own supply to more efficiently serve our service users. Some people have limited right to work and are very motivated to find employment in the care sector, and we have assisted them with job applications, creating CVs, and coaching in preparation for interviews, as well as signposting to job agencies and the NCVA for volunteer positions to further improve their CVs.

It's my hope that in the coming year we can develop better communication and organisation to make the Saturday drop-in more enriching for everyone and to empower service users to organise activities they want to participate in.

Blyth. John Stenhouse writes:

It's been a significant year for NCOS in Blyth. Linda Tooby who had been running the weekly drop-in from its inception as well as being the Red Cross presence, moved away from the area when her husband Tony retired in October. We wish them well in their new home in Humberside. Another volunteer had to leave due to health reasons. They are a huge miss.

Despite this, the amount of support to those living in the Blyth area has developed further. The ESOL provision has improved dramatically with over 100 attending classes in Blyth provided by the County Council Learning and Skills Department, and a significant number travelling to Newcastle College. This has had a knock-on effect with attendance at the Tuesday drop-ins therefore an additional session has been introduced on Saturday afternoons. Generous funding to enable this has been received from Blyth Rotary Club, Rainbow House and a personal donation from a hard working volunteer. We are working to obtain sustainable support for the future.

Cramlington.

A Thursday afternoon drop-in is held at the Church of the Nazarene.

Other questions and problems are dealt with by the volunteers attending and clothing and household items are available.. Another extremely useful aspect of these events is that PSSs who may feel isolated and lonely have the opportunity to meet others and form friendships. They are also a way of consulting and finding out what SUs feel they need.

NCOS partnership with the Red Cross remains a cornerstone of our existence. The Red Cross have a worker assigned to NCOS needs. Since Linda moved away, we have had a bit of a struggle to maintain the quality of the connection, but that is now greatly improving. Zara Galaeva has qualified as a Red Cross volunteer, so handles things from the Ashington end. Ellen Touray has now been taken on as a Red Cross worker, for which we congratulate her.

As well as the Red Cross, NCOS also has good links with NERS, WERS and Action Foundation, and the North East Migration Partnership (NEMP) who provide expert additional support. A future step may be to enable some volunteers to train for OISC qualifications.

New Arrivals Pathway.

This programme, of which NCOS is a part, is an invaluable initiative to improve the welcome of PSSs sent to the north east. For various reasons, with NCOS it has been slow to get going. However, steps have been, and are continuing to be, taken to overcome the obstacles and enable this to grow into a major aspect of NCOS' work.

English Language Learning.

We have kept our connection with Northumberland College, which now has expanded ESOL programmes to Blyth, where over a hundred PSSs take part. For new arrivals not yet allowed to register with the College, the **LET** (Learn English Together) programme continues in Ashington on Thursdays. This is not an NCOS run programme.

Sports. NCOS has continued to help fund people, especially youngsters, with sports equipment and club fees. Football is a great way to integrate and, in Blyth, some people have contributed spectacularly to cricket teams.

Ashington sport 2023 – Report of Daniel Meija

NCOS has supported sport to ensure the physical and mental health of asylum seekers and refugees in and around Ashington.

Over the last 18 months, we have continued to support the Ashington football team, signing a partnership with Get Onside to provide financial and logistical support from a team of sports professionals. During these months, 25 pairs of indoor and outdoor football boots have been delivered and the Ashington Leisure Centre and Newbiggin Sport and Community Centre sports hall has been hired for the football team so that during the autumn and winter months the NCOS football team can continue to play. With this support we have managed to have an average attendance of 15 to 18 players of different nationalities.

Also, in the month of October 2023, the pilot scheme of fitness classes for NCOS women in Ashington was launched. Unfortunately, the weather conditions were not suitable for the women to attend the fitness classes, so we will try to start the project again in the summer of 2024.

Finally, over the next 3 years the NCOS sports coordination will be looking to implement new sports projects for the women and men asylum seekers and refugees settled in and around Ashington.

From Blyth John writes:

It has been a good year for sports and fitness activities in Blyth. Empire School of Boxing run exercise sessions each week day with additional sessions for those with mobility problems and mental health conditions. Our football team has trained weekly thanks to the funding we were granted from RISE. Our coach Bilal moved to Glasgow for work after being granted leave to remain however Newcastle United Foundation have stepped in to keep the team going. All of these activities were made possible through the Heart of Blyth coordinator Ade Keogh who works tirelessly to support NCOS. The Saturday drop-in now has a table tennis table, a caron board and a pool table to keep people occupied as well as the usual board games, toys and activities.

NCOS and Ukrainians.

NCOS helped set up and chair the network of local groups who have supported more than 500 families accommodated in Northumberland under the various homes for Ukraine initiatives.

We meet every month with the excellent Di Munro from Northumberland County Council & we have been pro-active in working with local MPs & various agencies over a whole range of issues.

The response of Ukrainian people, hundreds of Northumbrian families who have provided them with a home & communities all over the County who have welcomed them has been magnificent. Another superb initiative to send aid from Northumberland to people living & defending their Country on the front line is in operation every month.

The Ukraine support schemes have allowed people to work & Ukrainian people have worked extremely hard to the benefit of the community & themselves. In some ways this is a model for the way that the U.K. Government should treat all people fleeing war & genocide & oppression from all corners of the world.

12. EVENTS.

Trips. During the summer it was again possible to organise several trips to places in the County, including a farm and beach visits.

Clothing and household goods. NCOS has continued to receive and give these necessities as opportunity affords.

Bicycle Training. As PSS have acquired donated bicycles, we have been able, through some generous donations, to recommend them to Cycle with Jan, for coaching on cycling safely in Britain.

ACTIVITY OF A MORE GENERAL SORT.

Blyth. Activity in Blyth is both similar and different from that centred in Ashington. The following report has been written.

The opportunity to participate in activities has increased thanks to the Heart of Blyth project (a Northumberland County Council Health Improvement initiative) which has linked us with many organisations in the town including the Blyth Resource and

Initiative Centre (BRIC) which provides free SIM cards, lunches and training opportunities, Blyth CVA who are assisting NCOS develop funding know how, Forget me Not community hub which many of our service users access particularly after gaining leave to remain, Blyth Town Council who've donated bikes, Bede Academy (the only School of Sanctuary in Northumberland), who are keen to work with us on Saturdays to serve multicultural food. There are many others we have wonderful relationships with who are very supportive of our work. Mears and the County Council Housing team provide a presence most Tuesdays and there's an occasional visit from Northumbria Police, NHS, local school staff and the MPs office all of which are valuable contributions.

It has been a good year for sports and fitness activities in Blyth. Empire School of Boxing run exercise sessions each week day with additional sessions for those with mobility problems and mental health conditions. Our football team has trained weekly thanks to the funding we were granted from RISE. Our coach Bilal moved to Glasgow for work after being granted leave to remain however Newcastle United Foundation have stepped in to keep the team going. All of these activities were made possible through the Heart of Blyth coordinator Ade Keogh who works tirelessly to support NCOS. The Saturday drop-in now has a table tennis table, a caron board and a pool table to keep people occupied as well as the usual board games, toys and activities.

A new venture we are working with is Tales Without Borders. It's a very comfortable reading room containing books written by black, Asian and minority ethnic authors. It's run by a former refugee who has created a welcoming space to encourage people to gather together and share the enjoyment of reading books by people from their culture. We already have a service user volunteering there.

Much of our work is outside the drop-in sessions and there's usually something that needs doing most days of the week. We could do with a couple of extra volunteers to help spread the load.

From the far West of the County.

Wendy Bond writes:

While most asylum seekers are housed in the south east of the County, some families find themselves in the far west, in a rural setting close to Hadrian's Wall. Here they are made welcome by one of our trustees and a substantial group of friends who have helped to settle the youngsters into college courses in Carlisle and the local schools, and even a local women's football team! A local landlord went out of his way to make sure one family could settle into a home when they were granted leave to remain and furniture was lent and donated to make it comfortable. Local churches and activity groups welcome them in and they invite new friends to celebrate all their birthdays together. Best of all, they can now volunteer as full members of the community.

Youth Club.

As reported by the Chair, the trustees had to take the hard decision to close the Youth Club, in spite of the hard feelings that were entailed. During its time, the leader, volunteer Ken Cochrane, was ably assisted by teenagers from the refugee community who now have leave to remain. During its existence members had Received First Aid Training, Decided on their logo, and chose their activities, which included both leisure activities and serious learning about human rights. They

looked at topical issues that divide humanity and how these may be tackled. A key event here was taking part in the Holocaust Memorial Day at County Hall. They worked together as a cohesive democratic team, learning what that entailed.

13. IN GENERAL

Much of what goes on cannot really be categorised. We are, at present, an entirely voluntary organisation and much is done by so many people helping in many ways.

Support is given to SUs within our resources as needs become clear, but especially prominent in the memory are times of crisis. Racist or xenophobic incidents (see below) are one example. These are much fewer than they were at one time, but do still occur. We always inform the police and the Home Office. We also work with Mears if people need to move.

On the whole, people in Ashington and Blyth have been welcoming and warm.

FUNDING.

Much of NCOS' funding has come from very generous individuals and local organisations, to whom we are enormously grateful. Larger donations have come from grant giving bodies, as listed in the accounts and we are, of course equally grateful to them.

Now, funding bids for the future are in the final stages of preparation. Following the strategic review in March 2023 facilitated by Julian Prior, Helen Crowe, Peter Wood, Muhammad Virk and John Stenhouse worked on a draft to provide possible funders with evidence about our ability to deliver successful projects. Katherine Williams, a freelance consultant, was engaged to forge the ideas and information into a cohesive document. Her valuable expertise is reflected in the latest draft. Once the budget forecast for the next 3 years is approved we can apply for appropriate grants with increased confidence.

14. RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

We are part of the **Northumberland County Council's** coordinating body, and value this and the help available.

The Northumberland Council for Voluntary Action (NCVA) has been most helpful on many occasions.

We ask advice from other groups working in the sector, particularly locally, and are grateful to **Action Foundation, WERS, NERS and NEMP** for great cooperation and friendship. We have looked farther afield at times, as well.

Ian Lavery, the MP for Wansbeck has been very helpful indeed.

NCOS is a member of City of Sanctuary. This is a nationwide organisation, whose members are independent groups or individuals who subscribe to CoS aim, which is to create welcome, everywhere in the UK, for people seeking asylum, and

for those granted leave to remain. It is very helpful in keeping us informed and in bringing us together with other CoS members in the North East.

We subscribe to **Asylum Matters**, which keeps us up dated on a huge amount of activity in the refugee charity sector and makes us aware of government policy, and more. It is important and, more than useful, providing us with vital information.

15. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT.

NCOS is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation whose only voting members are the trustees. It is governed by Constitution based on the Charity Commission's Foundation Model.

TRUSTEES at 31st March 2024:

Wendy Bond
Hilton Dawson
Zara Galaeva
Elena Kassis
John Stenhouse
Murtala Touray

The maximum number of trustees is twelve.

The officers of the charity are Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. They are appointed at a meeting of the trustees. Apart from the Chair, the other officers do not have to be trustees.

Management.

As outlined at the beginning of this report.

Policies.

NCOS has policies covering: Code of Conduct; Confidentiality; Cycling; DBS checking; Equality and Diversity; Financial Control; Grievance; Health and Safety and Safeguarding. These have all been approved and updated. They may be seen on request to the Secretary.

16. THANK YOU.

NCOS is very, very grateful for all the help it has received since its inauguration. Much of this has been financial, both private giving and from trusts and organisations, without which NCOS could not have continued. However, much else has come in voluntary, sometimes unsought and unexpected, help from people who have raised funds or provided help in all sorts of ways, which has made a tremendous difference to our effectiveness. We are not only talking finance, but also friendliness and practical help in all sorts of ways. Very few names have been mentioned in compiling this report, because there are so many who deserve to be mentioned and it would not be fair to leave anyone out. However, we do want to mention:

The Northumberland Council for Voluntary Action (NCVA),
Ashington Town Council,

Northumberland County Council,
Community Police,
The Salvation Army,
Full Circle Food,
The Wardens of St. Andrew's Church. We are very sad that Christine Simpson,
who took enormous trouble to welcome us, died very recently.
Woodhorn Museum,
The Empire School of Boxing,
Blyth Rotary Club,
Blyth CVA,
BRIC,
Forget me Not Community Centre,
Blyth Town Council,
St Cuthbert's Church,
Ade Keogh, the Heart of Blyth Coordinator.
*If any organisation has been omitted, please forgive the inadequacy of the compiler
of this report.*

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH INDEED

<https://www.ncos.org.uk/>
<https://northumberland.cityofsanctuary.org>

17. STATISTICS

Owing to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) it is not possible to publish detailed statistics of SUs. What we can say is that recent figures show that there are over 490 SUs in Northumberland. They come from Afghanistan, Albania, China, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Turkey amongst others. There may well be other more recent arrivals from the countries who are not in this count.

There are also a number of people who have received leave to remain and have stayed in the area.

ACCOUNTS



Northumberland County of Sanctuary

Registered Charity no: 1185663

***Financial Statements
for the period ending
30th September 2023***

Northumberland County of Sanctuary Independent Examiners Report

I have examined the accounts of the charity for the year ending 30th September 2023 as set out page 1 and 2 and the supporting document on which the accounts are based.

I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in the course of my examination which would give me cause to believe in any material respect that:

- a) Proper accounting records have not been kept
- b) These financial statements do not accord with those records
- c) The Trustee have not met their obligations in respect of financial record keeping.

I have no other concern in connection with the examination of these accounts which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of these financial statements to be reached.

Malcolm Shield - FCMA
18 Watershaugh Road
Workworth
Morpeth
14 April 14, 2024

Income and Expenditure account

Year to 30th September 2023

	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Restricted Funds				
Donations	9,134		7,167	
Grants	41,422		40,034	
		<u>50,556</u>		<u>47,201</u>
Unrestricted Funds	12,371		11,235	
		12,371		
Total Income Received		62,927		58,436
Expenditure				
Charities Activities- Restricted	28,750		13,377	
Charitable Activities	4,174		9,082	
Total Expenditure Incurred		<u>32,924</u>		<u>22,459</u>
Net Result for the Year				
Restricted	21,806		33,824	
Unrestricted	8,196		2,153	
		30,003		35,977

Balance Sheet

as at 30th September 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	30,003	46,875
Funds of the Charity		
Restricted Funds'	21,806	39,543
Unrestricted Funds	8,196	7,332
Total Funds	<u>30,003</u>	<u>46,875</u>

Restricted Funds as at 30th September

Shoe Fund	608	1,085
Women's Group Fund	1,591	1,597
Summer Visits Fund	43	43
Warkworth Ukraine Refugee Funds	-	5,450
Sir James Knott Trust	647	4,521
NAP Welcoming Grant	3,925	4,164
Lottery Funding	4,881	7,129
St Hilda Grant	1,413	2,617
International Day	567	4,360
Rise North East (Blyth Sports Project)	1,348	4,697
Homes of Northumberland	395	395
Dickson Fund (Duke of Edinburgh Project)	240	240
Barbour Fund	-	486
Book Club	1,797	1,877
Newcastle City Council Heritage Fund	1	883
Youth Club	4,350	-
Total Restricted	<u>21,806</u>	<u>39,544</u>

Northumberland County of Sanctuary



Income and Expenditure account

Year to 30th September 2023

	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
Income				
Restricted Funds				
Donations	960		7,167	
Grants	10,053		40,034	
		<u>11,013</u>		<u>47,201</u>
Unrestricted Funds	5,040		11,235	
		5,040		
Total Income Received		<u>16,052</u>		<u>58,436</u>
Expenditure				
Charities Activities- Restricted	28,750		13,377	
Charitable Activities	4,174		9,082	
Total Expenditure Incurred		<u>32,924</u>		<u>22,459</u>
Net Income/(Expenditure)				
Restricted	(17,737)		33,824	
Unrestricted	865		2,153	
		(16,872)		35,977
Funds Brought Forward		46,875		10,897
Funds Carried Forward		30,003		46,874



CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY OF SANCTUARY

On accounts for the year
ended

30 SEPTEMBER 2023
REVISION

Charity no
(if any)

1185663

Set out on pages

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended DD / MM / YYYY.

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 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 (~~other than that disclosed below~~ *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed:

M W Shield

Date:

24/3/25

Name:

MAKOLM W SHIELD

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

FCMA

Address:

18 WATERSHAUGH ROAD

WARKWORTH

MORPETH NE65 0TX