

Crossings Community Group Annual Report

From: 01/01/24 To: 31/12/24

Reference and Administration Information

Charity name: Crossings Community Group

Charity Registration Number: 1187739

Principle address: 139 Durham Place, Birtley, Chester-le-Street, DH3 2AJ

Foundation Constitution registered with the Charity Commission 4 February 2020

Registered Charity Number 1887739. CIO.

Organisational Structure

As we reported in the previous year the Board consists of a chair, secretary and treasurer, plus three other trustees who are responsible for the management of the charity. The Chair liaises between the trustees, paid staff (who are responsible to the Board) and volunteers. The board meets approximately 4 -6 times a year, usually bi-monthly, to make decision regarding management and future strategies.

The chair is elected at the AGM, and has this role for a period of five years. Secretary and Treasurer are elected or co-opted at a committee meeting. Trustees are elected for a period of three years. At present, they have been recruited from our members and attend sessions on a regular basis. During this year we have advertised for additional trustees with specific skills to compliment the Board.

Names of the Trustees who manage the charity

- Isabelle Okongwu Scicluna [Chair]
- Rosemary Louise Wellington
- James Robertson
- Jade Dinsdale
- Kim Amhed

Crossings Community Group: The aim and purpose is to bring together immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and local people. To develop a sense of community through creative activities. To make creative arts and music to share the stories of individuals to enhance understanding and involvement in the community. Crossings Community Group provides opportunities for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to interrelate into the communities in which they live. We use music, song writing and team activities to build relationships within the group and with the wider community of the Newcastle and Gateshead area. We aim to improve relationships and understanding through shared positive experiences.

Activities

Crossings Community Group deliver weekly drop-in music sessions where participants can learn a variety of instruments, from guitar to drumming, keyboard to violin. Tutors facilitate adults sessions, as well as providing space for children to play whilst parents or carers are participating in the sessions. As many of our members are on low incomes, attendance is free, instruments provided and travel expenses to a certain level are refunded. We also provide light refreshments.

Positive and Creative Learning Experience: The cross-cultural language of music promotes genuine engagement between tutors, participants, and volunteers. The exchange of multi-cultural song and music happens across the sessions in spontaneous ways leading to a welcoming and interesting environment. Some public performances within the wider community are a way of showcasing the different cultures of our membership and support the integration of displaced people into the local community. We do not put pressure on members to perform but support their wellbeing by providing a creative output and community environment.

Main Venues and Volunteers: The Comfrey Project in Gateshead and Brunswick Methodist Church in Newcastle. As we have reported before members are always keen to support the sessions in an informal manner, from preparing refreshments, supervising younger children, or helping clear up at the end of an evening.

It is important to report here that during this year the Trustees have had to deal with some specific challenges. Following consultation with the Project's HR Advisor we ended the contractual arrangement with one tutor.

In this time period the Trustees also reviewed the reported concern of lower attendance. It was acknowledged by Trustees that a strong possible reason for this was that some members were afraid to leave the safety of their homes following the media reported violent unrest directed at refugees and asylum seekers in a local North East area. Informal contact with other local projects reported similarly.

Financial review – Income and Expenditure:

Grants are our principal source of income. The principal funder for this financial period was The *People's Health Trust* and the *Big Lottery* both which recognises and acknowledges the benefits of our project for improving the mental and emotional health of our participants. Also noting the general contribution to community and social wellbeing. The summaries of expenditure reported to the respective Funders were formally accepted by these organisations and the Trustees received a very positive response for the management and recorded use of the resources.

Planning for 2024-25

The Trustees acknowledged that the year ahead was likely to include dealing with various challenges. Circumstances and changes re attendance and other factors were likely to lead to reviewing Crossings Projects activities in two locations. The

relationship with the Comfrey Project in Gateshead, with its shared but broader emphasis on engagement with refugees and asylum seekers through gardening and practical skills development was the strongest and likely context for The Crossings Project partnership and future development.

Recruiting volunteers and attracting new trustees with particular skills continues to be an ongoing and challenging task. Trustees with longstanding commitment to the project were thanked for their consistent attention to Project concerns and affairs