

# **Asylum and Refugee Community Blackburn Annual Report 2020-2021**

## **Charity Purposes**

The purpose of the ARC Project is to address the needs of newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees (AS&R) in Blackburn, who are one of the most disadvantaged groups in this area of high deprivation. Blackburn with Darwen (BwD) became a Home Office dispersal area in 2004. The ARC Project, run by the Methodist Church responded to this need from 2004 until April 2020 when the newly formed independent charity, ARC Blackburn, was formed and now continues this work.

Joint Needs Assessment identifies that the Borough has high levels of deprivation, low skills, poor health and significant economic inactivity affecting the life of its communities; this is challenged by austerity, government welfare policy changes, increasing unemployment and an increasingly Home Office 'hostile environment'. Asylum Seekers and Refugees(AS&R) fall into the above categories of deprivation when they arrive with nothing, mostly no or little English language skills, poor physical and mental health due to trauma of fleeing their country and many have no recognised qualifications or skills. Even highly qualified AS&R such as civil engineers, doctors and teachers are highly disadvantaged and suffer great stress from being uprooted. They face long periods of unemployment due to discrimination in the labour market and /or the need to improve English language and the process of re-training and qualifications not being recognised, often having to resort to low skilled work.

ARC Blackburn is well placed to deliver this project as it is located in Wesley Hall Methodist Church which is in the centre of Blackburn and which has excellent space and facilities for running the ARC Blackburn charity. Through local community and church links ARC Blackburn is able to recruit the considerable volunteer resources needed to support the project. Many staff and volunteers bring skills and experience from a professional/voluntary background of work in pastoral/counselling, education, health, social services and charities. ARC Blackburn, being in the town centre, is well placed to network and build meaningful links with other key faith and community organisations as well as with nearby Blackburn College, legal bodies and health and local council services. This is vital as ARC service users come from a wide range of backgrounds and faiths with multi-layered social needs.

ARC Blackburn is highly regarded nationally, both by the Government and by the Methodist Church headquarters and regionally by several foundations and trusts as a flagship project serving the needs of asylum seekers and refugees which is demonstrated by the ongoing funding support by these bodies.

## **What the charity has done to carry out those purposes**

ARC casework office is open 3 days a week and meets the needs of AS&R by

providing help and support at a critical moment, especially when they arrive, through both emergency and planned appointments. Their basic food and temporary housing needs are met through the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS). However there are continually vital issues which need to be urgently resolved; accommodation is often problematic with issues such as damp, boiler breakdown, inadequate furnishing, kitchen equipment etc. ARC casework involves assisting AS&R to register with GPs and make appointments, find solicitors to help with their asylum appeals, facilitate school placement for children as well as providing links and signposting to the many community organisations and services vital to meeting their individual needs. ARC also provides interpreting support and free language learning support through the English Club two days a week. Additionally, learners are taken on educational trips to Blackburn's library, museum and cathedral. The weekly social Drop-in session addresses the issue of loneliness and social isolation as well as helping to build a strong community providing a social space, refreshments and sports activities and recreational trips, including regular trips as guests to Blackburn Rovers matches. Other local organisations and services access the Drop-in to initiate the various support they can provide to AS&R. The transition from Asylum Seeker to Refugee status with 'leave to remain' is a very vulnerable period. NASS payments cease and mainstream benefits such as Universal Credit and Child Benefit do not kick in for several weeks, leaving people destitute. ARC assists refugees to apply for housing after notice to quit NASS accommodation.

Single young men are often in the poorest accommodation such as hostels. They become particularly vulnerable to loneliness, being the victim or perpetrator of crime and/or succumbing to negative societal influences which can lead to addiction, financial troubles and/or destitution. ARC Drop-in and Youth Club have been vital in addressing this situation. Many speak of ARC as their FAMILY-a place where they feel safe, included, befriended, supported and valued and where they can support each other through also volunteering their time.

We have many case stories of AS&R which highlight how ARC has supported clients; during this reporting period, a Sudanese woman 8 months pregnant with a disturbed 2 yr old girl arrived in Blackburn as an asylum seeker with no family connections, traumatised from leaving family to flee from danger, with little English and no idea about how to get any help. ARC immediately helped her to register with a GP and ante-natal care, photocopied documents for her asylum application, arranged for interpreters for all appointments, signposted for housing, baby equipment, gave emergency food when needed, enrolled her in English class and introduced her to others at the social Drop-in which meets on Tuesdays. ARC helped her, (and many others like her), to overcome the destitution 'gap' whilst transitioning to refugee status by acting in a timely manner to help her quickly access income support and child benefits.

Given the current situation of increased numbers of people fleeing war torn countries, we expect to support around 900 cases per year. AS&R average monthly actions for casework were maintained at around 80. We work with an individual or family repeatedly over a period which usually stretches over several years. Case work sessions average 1 hour but complex issues often related to Universal Credit and housing can require over 2 hours especially with increasingly long waits by telephone.. By continuing English classes/club, in both individual and group sessions, we anticipate, that though few are likely to secure

permanent employment due to language and competition in the job market, more clients will obtain temporary work (currently 90 English Club participants).

## **Covid**

Throughout this reporting period ARC Blackburn has been greatly challenged by keeping services running in a way that kept service users, staff and volunteers safe whilst maintaining vital support.

During the lockdown periods we offered virtual casework support and social interaction through phone and Whatsapp. We met service users face to face only in emergency situations and with scaled back staff cover. Post lockdown periods when more people were entering the building, we implemented extensive Covid safe measures based on careful risk assessment. During lockdowns the English Club continued on-line using zoom in three different level groups.

Unfortunately the highly attended weekly social drop-in was regarded as too high risk for infection so was cancelled. This was a period of great stress and loneliness for our beneficiaries. ARC staff and volunteers rallied around to make regular 'well-being calls' to keep in touch and be able to assess any urgent needs. Regular 'Covid safe' health messages and vaccination information was sent out by Whatsapp.

During the lockdown periods ARC ran a weekly food parcel distribution both outside the charity building and also home delivery for families and individuals in desperate need.

## **Charity Regulation and Guidance**

ARC Blackburn Trustees have been meeting at least monthly to ensure smooth management and oversight of the charity. Decisions are made taking full account of and with regard to charities regulation (2008) and Charity Commission Public Benefit Guidance. All trustees are aware of the guidance provided by the charities regulation statement 2008 and carry out their duties in accordance with this. All actions are approved and carefully minuted.

## ASYLUM AND REFUGEE COMMUNITY, BLACKBURN

### Accounts for the year ending 31 August 2020

#### Income

Donations	5009
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#### **Grants**

Dept Communities & Local Government Controlling	
Immigration Fund	21161
National Methodist Connection	20000
Lancashire Methodist District	11000
West Pennine Moors Methodist Circuit	10229
Clitheroe Parish Church	2150
Duchy of Lancaster	2000
Lancashire Community Foundation	5000

Tinta Appeal *	<u>760</u>
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**77309**

#### Expenses

Telephone	1870
Petty Cash	900
Rent	6648
Stationary	751
Sundries	2575
Insurance	595
Salaries	<u>69376</u>
	<b>82715</b>

**-5406**

Bank balance B/fwd	20110
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Bank Balance 31 August 2020	14704
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#### **Tinta Appeal \***

This is a public appeal to cover legal expenses in challenging a decision by the Home Office to refuse asylum for Tinta who has been a much valued member of our ARCB family for several years - total raised as at 31 October 2020 - £8950

Auditors certificate for these accounts is held

**Asylum and Refugee Community, Blackburn**  
**Registered Charity No: 1188910**

**ACCOUNTS &  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
for the year ended 31 August 2021**

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**Year ended 31 August 2021.**

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**Asylum Refugee Community Blackburn**

Registered Charity No : 1188910

**Income & Expenditure Account**

Year Ended 31 August 2021

	£	£
Income		
Grants		72,065.00
Donations		5,075.95
Miscellaneous Income		0.00
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		77,140.95
<b>Less Expenses and Overheads</b>		
<b>Staffing Costs</b>		
Staff Wages & Salaries	46,006.45	
Staff NIC	0.00	
Pensions	787.48	
Staff Training Costs	50.00	
Staff Expenses	125.52	
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		46,969.45
<b>Tinta Appeal Expenses</b>		0.00
<b>Administration &amp; Marketing</b>		
Stationery & Inks	30.00	
Charity Expenses (Food Packages)	750.10	
Memberships	30.00	
Postage	0.00	
Accountancy, Payroll & Examination of Accounts	647.60	
Funding Application	1,325.00	
Professional Fees	150.00	
Bank & Card Fees	76.50	
Travel Expenses	63.59	
Website Fees	400.07	
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		3,472.86
<b>Establishment Expenses</b>		
Rent, Electricity & water	0.00	
Insurance	1,022.65	
Telephone	2,331.59	
Computer Expenses	179.15	
Alarm & Security	0.00	
Repairs & Sundry Equipment	219.67	
Equipment Hire	0.00	
Sundry Expenses	81.10	
Cleaning Expenses	0.00	
Sundry Donation	0.00	
Depreciation of Assets	712.07	
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		4,546.23
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<hr/>
		54,988.54
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<b>(Loss) Surplus Generated from Operations</b>		22,152.41
<b>Profits (Losses) transfered to Revenue Reserves</b>		22,152.41
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**Asylum Refugee Community Blackburn**

**Registered Charity No : 1188910**

**Balance Sheet**

**31 August 2021**

	£	£
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Laptops & Printers	2,367.07	
Less : Depreciation	712.07	
		1,655.00
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash at bank-3840	37,280.07	
West Pennine Methodist Circuit (Debtor)	2,186.41	
Petty Cash in Hand	0.00	
	39,466.48	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accrued Charges	350.00	
Wages	0.00	
Pensions	215.72	
PAYE & NI	0.00	
	565.72	
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		38,900.76
		40,555.76
<b>Less : Restricted Funding re Tinta Ali</b>		(3,700.00)
		36,855.76
<b>Represented by</b>		
Capital Introduced		
HSBC (share of Balance)	4,280.95	
Methodist Circuit Current Account	10,422.40	
		14,703.35
<b>Add: Surplus (Deficit) for the year</b>		22,152.41
		36,855.76



**For the year ended 31 August 2021**

## **ACCOUNTING POLICIES**

### **Accounting Principles**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners under Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and with applicable Accounting Standards.

### **Depreciation**

Depreciation has been calculated to write off the net book values of fixed assets over their expected economic lives at the following annual rates.

Computer Equipment	30 % on reducing balance
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## **2. TURNOVER**

Turnover for the year was £77,141 and represents various charitable grants and donations received in the year

## **3. CORPORATION TAX**

Corporation tax is charged in the accounts in the period to which it relates.

The amount of Corporation tax due on Non-Charitable trading activities for the year was £ Nil.

## **4. CONTINUING OPERATIONS**

None of the charity's activities were acquired or discontinued during the year.

## **5 TOTAL RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES**

The charity has no recognised gains or losses other than the loss for the financial period detailed herewith

## **Independent Examiner's Report**

### **To the Trustees and Members of Asylum and Refugee Community, Blackburn**

I report on the Accounts and Financial Statements on pages 1 to 2 which have been prepared under the historical cost convention and the accounting policies set out on page 3.

#### **Responsibilities of the Trustees and Committee.**

It is the charity's committee's responsibility to prepare accounts and financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements the committee are required to :

- i) Select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- ii) Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- iii) Prepare the accounts and financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The committee is also responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking responsible steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

#### **Respective responsibility of Trustees and Examiner.**

As described above the charity's trustees and committee are responsible for the preparation of accounts and financial statements. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- a) examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- b) to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 145(b) of the 2011 Act ; and
- c) to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

#### **Basis of Independent Examiner's report.**

My examination was conducted in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. The examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts and financial statements presented with those records and making such limited enquiries of the officers of the charity as we considered necessary for the purposes of this report. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. These procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

#### **Independent Examiner's Statement of Opinion**

In connection with my examination it is my opinion that;

- a) The financial statements are in agreement with the books and records kept by the charity and that the accounting records have been maintained in accordance with section 145 of the 2011 Act

b) Having read only to, and on the basis of, the information contained in those accounting records the accounts and financial statements have been drawn up in a manner consistent with the accounting requirements specified in the 2011 Act;

No matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect of the requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met.

No matter has come to my attention, to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Bennett', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Graham Bennett FFA. FAIA.**  
**Bennett & Co. Accountants**  
**Spring House 194-196 Union Road**  
**Oswaldtwistle**  
**Accrington BB5 3EG**

**7 April 2022.**