

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

England & Wales · Charity number 1189217

Details

Other names	THE CONVERSATION CLUB
Status	Registered
Legal form	CIO
Registered	2020-04-27
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address 16 Beech Grove Terrace
Garforth
Leeds
LS25 1EG

Phone 07946368953

Email ccleeds20@gmail.com

Website <https://ccleeds.com/>

Activities

Objects: THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL INCLUSION FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT AMONG PEOPLE WHO ARE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS WHO ARE SOCIALLY EXCLUDED ON THE GROUNDS OF THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POSITION, BY PROVIDING:1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND IN VOCATIONAL SKILLS;2. SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND EVENTS INVOLVING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

Activities: The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing:(1) education and training in the English language and in vocational skills;(2) social and recreational facilities and events involving the local community.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, Economic/community Development/employment, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity
- **Who:** Other Defined Groups, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Leeds City

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£27,770	£31,065	-	-
2024-03-31	£28,317	£20,690	-	-
2023-03-31	£8,100	£10,866	-	-
2022-03-31	£9,283	£10,937	-	-
2021-03-31	£8,735	£3,529	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Dorothy Read		2020-10-15
Kathleen Anne Johnstone		2025-09-11
Peter Duncan Oldfield		2025-09-11
Susan Elizabeth Clough		2022-06-30
Waqas Al-bajjari		2025-09-11

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

England & Wales - Charity number 1189217

Accounts

Conversation Club Leeds Trustees' Report

Year to 31st March 2025



REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1189217

ADDRESS: 16 BEECH GROVE TERRACE, GARFORTH, LEEDS LS25 1EG

TRUSTEES:

DOROTHY READ (CHAIR)

MARGARET CLIFF

SUSAN CLOUGH

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Our objectives are to provide a welcoming and safe place for asylum seekers and refugees so that they can:

- practise speaking English with native speakers;
- socialise and make friends with people from their own and other nationalities;
- learn about British culture;
- access signposting to services that can assist them with their many problems.

STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The organisation's activities are carried out exclusively by volunteers. Overall management and co-ordination are carried out by the three trustees. There are no employees.

Trustees are recruited from current active volunteers by personal contact. The organisation seeks to recruit additional trustees so as to increase their number to above the minimum of three required by its constitution.

The Conversation Club, founded as an Unincorporated Association in 2016, became a registered charity (a CIO) with a slightly different name - Conversation Club Leeds - on 1st April 2020.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This year has been a challenging one for Conversation Club.

One of the biggest challenges has been the amount of homelessness among new refugees granted leave to remain in the UK. What should be a joyful time became a nightmare for many as they found the help that the local authority could give was very limited. The winter months were particularly hard. Volunteers were sometimes

left trying to find accommodation in the private-rented sector for guests who spoke little English, and who had no choice but to sleep on the street in sometimes freezing conditions. Our volunteers had no experience in this field, but felt they had to try to do something to help. We attempted to signpost guests to other agencies, only to find that they, too, were overwhelmed.

We have continued to provide weekly meetings for our asylum seeker and refugee guests throughout the past year, at two venues - one at the Holbeck Social Club on Tuesday afternoons, the other one in the city centre on Thursday afternoons.

However, as mentioned in last year's Annual Report, it became apparent in Spring 2024 that we had outgrown our original 'home' at Mill Hill Chapel due to increasing guest numbers, and we needed a new city centre venue.

After a successful four-week trial at Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral in April / May 2024, we moved there permanently on 25th July. The only downside to this otherwise very successful arrangement is that we now have to pay hire fees for our city centre venue, which we have never previously done.

The Holbeck session has always been quieter and less crowded than the city centre session, and this has continued to be the case. Around 20 -25 guests attend the Holbeck meeting each week, some of them obviously preferring the quieter atmosphere, which is focused on craft as well as English.

Last summer, riots broke out all over England, particularly aimed at hotels housing asylum seekers, due to false information posted on social media following the murders of three young girls. This was clearly an unsettling time for many of our guests. To try to reassure them, we invited the Community Integration Police Officer to a Wheeler Hall session, during which he met and chatted to many of our guests. This was an invaluable opportunity for service-users to understand that the British police force is very different from some in their own countries.

In early Spring this year, the number of attendees again increased, and it became obvious that it was becoming unmanageable. For several weeks, there was a large crowd waiting outside the doors because we could only let in the maximum number

allowed for fire safety. Most weeks, 100 people were turning up, with some being turned away.

The trustees called a consultation meeting of all volunteers, which took place on 26th March 2025. Many volunteers attended for a whole morning, producing a number of innovative ideas. It was decided to:

- reduce attendance numbers by splitting guests into two groups, and allowing each group to attend the Wheeler Hall sessions only fortnightly, not weekly;
- introduce a Club Card system to facilitate this;
- return to our core mission of simply providing English practice and a social space, and to stop the (occasional) supply of goods such as phones and laptops, which some guests were clearly attending for.

To facilitate these new ideas, it was decided that Conversation Club would close for two weeks in April 2025, and reopen with the new system in May. The outcome will be described in the next Annual Report.

Events and outings

We organised guests to attend established Leeds events such as the West Indian Carnival in August, 'Light Nights' in October, and Beeston Festival in May.



In Refugee Week, June 2024, small groups of guests went to events at Roxby Gardens and the 'Mega Conversation Cafe' organised by Leeds Playhouse for refugees and asylum seekers.

Trips

One of the highlights of our year is the outing to Fell Edge Farm, near Addingham, which this time was in April. We always receive a warm welcome and the facilities

there - painting, music, craft work, homemade food - are put at our disposal. Walking with our hosts in the open countryside, with views across Wharfedale, is a welcome change from city life. It is always a moment of peace for our guests.

The biggest outing this year was a day trip to Scarborough, taking 25 guests. All of them loved being by the sea and playing beach games. The feedback was totally positive.



We obtained specific funding to take groups on small local trips during the winter months, particularly those with families, during school holidays. Everyone enjoyed the places we visited - Haworth, Kirkstall Abbey House Museum, Bradford Media Museum and Leeds Industrial Museum - and learned something about Britain's history.

Activities

A small group of dedicated volunteers led walks around Leeds and further afield, to give guests an idea of the area they live in and an experience of the countryside. Walks were organised in various locations: from Menston to Ilkley, over the moors; along Meanwood Beck; along Leeds-Liverpool Canal, including Rodley Nature Reserve; from Roundhay Park to Shadwell; Otley Chevin. These were very much enjoyed by guests.

A number of guests, accompanied by our volunteers, joined Leeds City Council volunteers in outdoor activities, including conservation work at Breary Marsh and tree planting at Bramley Park, Tanfield Park (Yeadon) and Otley Quarry (the Chevin). Guests appreciated working alongside local people to make environmental improvements.



A small number of guests went swimming and to the gym at Leeds CC Active centres, making use of assigned funds remaining from 2023-24.

Theatre trips

Conversation Club is part of a network of local charities linked to Opera North and the Playhouse, so we are able to obtain free tickets for some performances. Some guests took advantage of these, seeing varied performances such as Syrian and Indian music, jazz, family events and the Playhouse Christmas production, 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe', which was described as 'amazing'.

Other events



In January, Conversation Club received an official visit from the Lord Mayor of Leeds, Councillor Abigail Marshall Katung. As a previous migrant herself, and the first elected councillor from Africa to hold the office, Cllr Katung understands guests' problems, and spoke empathetically to almost every person in the room.

Also in January, volunteers enjoyed a social gathering at the home of one of the Trustees - a rare time to relax together.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

This year we have been fortunate in receiving over £22,700 in grants, thanks mainly to the efforts of one volunteer, assisted at times by others.

The Hardship Fund continues to be a vital source of small emergency funds for volunteers to use for guests in dire need, particularly those who are destitute. We have bought shoes when necessary in the winter for those wearing only flip-flops, and once or twice provided overnight accommodation when temperatures were sub-zero. This fund is supplied with 10% of all non-restricted grant funding.

Summary (See p. 10 for full accounts)

<i>General Income</i>	£25,180.92
<i>Hardship Fund</i>	£818.99
<i>Restricted Funds</i>	£1,770.00
<i>Total Income</i>	£27,769.91
<i>Total Expenditure</i>	£31,064.93

Total expenditure exceeded income for the year 2024/25 by £3295.02

Opening funds £14,122.67

Deficit this year £3295.02

Funds carried forward to 2025/26 amounted to: £10,827.65

By far the largest expenditure item is bus fares, to enable guests to attend the sessions.

ORGANISATIONS WE HAVE WORKED WITH THIS YEAR

Conversation Club is fortunate to have links with many varied organisations in Leeds and beyond. These include professional and statutory organisations, and other charities. We are grateful for the support, knowledge and experience that these organisations have provided so generously over the past year.

They include:

LASSN (Leeds Asylum Seeker Support Network), Leeds

RETAS (Refugee Education Training Advice Service), Leeds

PAFRAS (Positive Action for Refugees & Asylum Seekers), Leeds

British Red Cross, West Yorkshire

Leeds City Council Housing Dept

Leeds City of Sanctuary

Fell Edge Farm, Addingham

WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network - Night Shelter)

Holbeck Community Transport

Opera North

Leeds Playhouse

Leeds Migration Partnership

FUNDERS

The Trustees gratefully acknowledge the generous financial support we have received from several funding organisations. This has made an incredible difference to the work we have been able to do. Quite simply, without this vital assistance, Conversation Club would be unable to function.

Grants were received during the period from:

Leeds City Council Asylum Support Fund

Wharfedale Foundation

Brelms Trust

Leeds Quakers

MICE Fund (Leeds City Councillors)

Marsh Charitable Trust

Sir George Martin Trust

THANKS

I am indebted to many people who have helped to support me and the other Trustees over the last year.

These include individuals working for the organisations mentioned above, who always respond when help is required by giving time or advice or sometimes sympathy.

But mainly I am grateful to the thirty or so volunteers who make Conversation Club what it is - a wonderful place to be, hopefully for our guests, but also for the volunteer team too. Of course, we don't always see eye-to-eye, but that's where ideas are sparked and differences become irrelevant. Many thanks to all of you.

And my special thanks to the two other trustees who have been a mutual support system for the past year, Margaret Cliff and Sue Clough. Without both of them, none of it would have been possible.

Dot Read

Chair, Conversation Club Leeds

Registered Charity No 1189217

<https://ccleeds.com/>

8th September 2025

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

ACCOUNTS FOR

YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

	GENERAL FUNDS TOTAL	HARDSHIP FUND	LEEDS CF MICROGRANT and MICE RESTRICTED	TOTAL FUNDS
INCOME				
Donations	4,824.38			4,824.38
Grants	20,935.00		1,770.00	22,705.00
Just Giving	205.24			205.24
Events (net)	0.00			0.00
Bank Interest	11.54			11.54
Gift Aid tax rebate	23.75			23.75
TOTAL INCOME	25,999.91	0.00	1,770.00	27,769.91
Transfer to Hardship Fund	(818.99)	818.99	0.00	0.00
NET INCOME	25,180.92	818.99	1,770.00	27,769.91
EXPENDITURE				
Phone top-ups	725.00			725.00
Bank charges	60.00			60.00
Bus tickets usage	16,224.70		273.15	16,497.85
Bus and Train fares	3,165.48			3,165.48
Food	239.61			239.61
Holbeck	1,200.00			1,200.00
Priestley Hall	1,000.00			1,000.00
Wheeler Hall	3,370.00			3,370.00
Insurance	776.89			776.89
Trips	937.06			937.06
MICE-funded activities	0.00		808.52	808.52
Correction of prior year error	(1,225.00)		1,225.00	0.00
Microgrant (sports and outings)	0.00		140.97	140.97
Miscellaneous costs	814.30	550.61		1,364.91
Mobile phone repair	30.00			30.00
Volunteer expenses	38.00			38.00
Music sessions	200.00			200.00
Website maintenance	80.00			80.00
Postage and Stationery	214.64			214.64
Just Giving	216.00			216.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	28,066.68	550.61	2,447.64	31,064.93
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(2,885.76)	268.38	(677.64)	(3,295.02)
BALANCE SHEET				
at 31ST MARCH 2025				
OPENING FUNDS	12,750.92	228.39	1,143.36	14,122.67
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) THIS YEAR	(2,885.76)	268.38	(677.64)	3,295.02
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	9,865.16	496.77	465.72	10,827.65

Represented by:

STOCK OF BUS TICKETS First WY	4,172.00
STOCK OF BUS TICKETS Metro	1,406.40
CASH IN HAND	81.64
CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE	5,197.61
	10,857.65
LESS CREDITORS	30.00
	10,827.65



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
Conversation Club Leeds

On accounts for the year ended

31st March 2025

Charity no (if any)

1189217

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31/03/2025**.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees, 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 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 which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records; or
- the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.

Signed:

Matthew Adam Thornfield

Date:

29/7/25

Name:

MATTHEW ADAM THORNFIELD

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

PREVIOUS ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CORPORATE TREASURERS

Address:

20 MOSS GARDENS, LEEDS, LS17 7BH

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

NONE

[Signature]
CONSULTANT ACCOUNTANT

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

England & Wales - Charity number 1189217

Accounts

Conversation Club Leeds Trustees' Report

Year to 31st March 2024

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1189217

ADDRESS: 16 BEECH GROVE TERRACE, GARFORTH, LEEDS LS25 1EG

TRUSTEES:

DOROTHY READ (CHAIRPERSON)

SUSAN CLOUGH

MARGARET CLIFF

1. STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The organisation's activities are carried out exclusively by volunteers. Overall management and co-ordination are carried out by the trustees. There are no employees.

Trustees are recruited by personal contact and recommendation. The organisation seeks to recruit additional trustees so as to increase their number to above the minimum of three required by its constitution.

The Conversation Club, founded as an Unincorporated Association in 2016, became a registered charity (a CIO) - Conversation Club Leeds - on 1st April 2020.

2. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Our objectives are to provide a welcoming place for asylum seekers and refugees so that they can:

- practise speaking English with native speakers;
- socialise with people from their own and other nationalities;
- learn about British culture;
- access signposting to services that can help them with their many problems.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

This year has been one of opportunities but also big challenges, for a variety of reasons.

Meetings have continued once a week at both venues throughout the past year, in the city centre at Mill Hill Chapel and at The Holbeck Social Club. We closed only for one session, which was Boxing Day.

The Mill Hill session is still much busier than Holbeck, with a focus on English conversation in informal groups, and signposting guests to statutory services and other charities to help with their many problems. The sessions have been held in the church, due to the Priestley Hall being unavailable.

The Holbeck session, while smaller and quieter, has a special focus on craftwork and creativity, which many guests enjoy.

3.1 Opportunities

We were fortunate to have the opportunity to work with several outside organisations which provided varied and stimulating alternative activities; for example a stone-walling day arranged by Nidderdale AONB; a coppicing day at a farm in North Yorkshire, and a day with our friends at Fell Edge Farm near Addingham, where we took a large group of guests and volunteers.

Other opportunities came through applying for and obtaining larger amounts of funding. This was necessary to buy more basic items such as bus tickets, because the number of attendees rose gradually during the year. We also decided to try to provide much-needed items such as phones and laptops, also gym memberships and access to swimming pools. We accessed specific funding for these, which became very popular with the younger men.

Funds for local family outings were also obtained, and several local trips were undertaken for mothers with school-age children.

We have taken advantage of events organised by local arts organisations and theatres, including free tickets for guests to Opera North and Playhouse performances, one of which was a concert organised to celebrate Refugee Week.

We have introduced guests to the local libraries, the Art Gallery and museums and to events such as the 'Bands in the Park' concerts. Varying numbers of guests signed up to these events, but they are invariably enjoyed and appreciated by those who attend.

3.2 Challenges

Several things occurred at around the same time last autumn / winter to create a challenging situation, namely:

- the cancellation of the 50% discount on bus tickets;
- a big rise in the number of attendees over the winter and spring, from about 60 per session to over 100;
- the realisation that we couldn't keep pace with the needs of guests for items we were trying to provide, and the fact that some new guests seemed to be attending solely to access them;
- the need to start giving cash reimbursements to those living in outlying hotels where our bus tickets weren't valid;
- a sudden rise in the number of new refugees given leave to remain in the UK, who had nowhere to live – desperate, homeless people asking for help became a normal part of the sessions.

We managed to negotiate an extension to the 50% bus ticket discount till the end of the financial year, 31st March, which helped to lessen the impact until next year.

Towards the end of the year, we made the difficult decision to stop providing free items such as phones and laptops, and also stopped recruiting guests to the gym scheme, although those already enrolled would be allowed to carry on with their membership until the funding was used up.

We are hoping that these measures will curb some of the increase in numbers attending, and enable us to go back to our original goal of providing English practice, friendship and a welcoming space.

Another difficult moment came in March, with the realisation that the number of guests had become too large for the space inside Mill Hill Chapel. Having enquired about hiring the Chapel's Priestley Hall as an extra space but found this was not possible, we began to look for a different venue for the Thursday session, and at the end of March made plans for a 4-week trial at Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral, to start on 18th April.

Sadly, we have had to acknowledge that we have outgrown our first and 'spiritual' home. We owe everyone at Mill Hill Chapel an enormous debt of gratitude for providing a safe and welcoming city-centre space for our guests for over eight years, especially Reverend Jo James, the admin team Emma and Raj, and the Trustees. Without their vision and generosity, we wouldn't be here today. Mill Hill will always be a special place for us.

4. FINANCIAL REVIEW

One of the main features of the finances this year is that we have applied for and received much more funding than in previous years, totalling over £17,000.

We have also instituted a Hardship Fund, to which 10% of all donated income is transferred, to help guests who need urgent small amounts of money.

General Income £24,591

Hardship Fund £1,226

Restricted Funds £2,500

Total Income £28,317

Total Expenditure £20,690

Total income exceeded expenditure for the year 2023/24 by £6,255

Funds carried forward to 2024/25 amounted to:

General Funds £12,751

Hardship Fund £229

Restricted Funds £1,143

Total Funds £14,123

5. SIGNIFICANT EVENTS APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024

Events and outings

Fell Edge Farm, 'On the Edge Festival' 30th April 2023

A group of 50+ guests and volunteers were welcomed once again by our friends at Fell Edge Farm near Addingham for a full day of activities, food and discussion designed specifically to entertain and involve asylum seekers and refugees.



18 July 2024



Page 4 of 10

**Dry stone walling,
Nidderdale, June 2023**



**Lime Tree Farm coppicing day,
Nidderdale, July 2023**



Beeston Festival, July 2023



Cross Flatts Park was transformed into a happy place of music, entertainment, children's activities and food from many cultures.

Some of our younger guests enjoyed meeting the animals.

Thwaite Mills, October 23

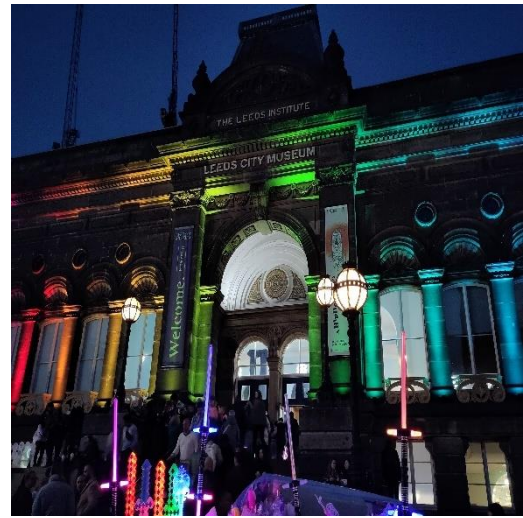
A sunny day's walk, picnic and visit to the watermill and mill owner's house, with 25 asylum seekers, 2 local councillors and volunteers.

Guests found it extremely interesting to experience the 'living history' of Leeds' industrial heritage.



Leeds Light Night

An amazing spectacle enjoyed by guests and volunteers alike



Singing and Pancake Day at the Tuesday Holbeck meeting



Haworth Parsonage and village

A day trip was also made to Haworth during February half-term, enjoyed by all and which delighted one of our teenage guests who was studying 'Jane Eyre' for GCSE.

Our musician friend Sarah Stead and her colleague Matty ran a six-week beginner recorder course from October to December, with 10 guests and volunteers joining in enthusiastically. This was the first time some of them had ever played a musical instrument.

Duncan Marwick from Threadbear Theatre ran a weekly course on mime performance, which some of our guests participated in and thoroughly enjoyed. It was a great way for people who don't speak each other's languages to get together and be creative. It culminated in a very impressive and amusing performance at the 'On the Edge Festival' at Fell Edge Farm at the end of April. Duncan also supported some of our refugee guests who are looking for jobs through his work with 'Better Working Futures'.

Other trips have included Abbey House Museum, Kirkstall; Leeds Museums' Discovery Centre, and a city-centre 'Sound Walk'.

A walking group has been started by one of the volunteers and is continuing to attract members.

A Summer Party for guests introduced the concept of a ceilidh, with traditional British and Irish music and dancing, which generated much enjoyment along with some bemusement.

Last but not least, the Christmas party for guests was a joyful occasion, with music, traditional festive food, dishes from other cultures, gifts for all, and the odd elf or two in attendance. A great afternoon was had by all.

6. ORGANISATIONS WE HAVE WORKED WITH THIS YEAR

Conversation Club volunteers have been fortunate to work with many different organisations over the past year, and we are grateful for the support and learning we have gained from these relationships.

- LASSN (Leeds Asylum Seeker Support Network)
- RETAS (Refugee Education Training Advice Service)
- British Red Cross
- Fell Edge Farm
- Nidderdale AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
- Leeds City Council Housing Dept
- Leeds City of Sanctuary
- WYDAN (West Yorkshire Destitute Asylum Network) (Night Shelter)
- Holbeck Community Transport

7. FUNDERS

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support we have received over the past year from our funders, without whose generosity we simply would not be able to function in the way that we do.

They are:

- Allen Lane Foundation
- Sir George Martin Trust
- Leeds City Council Asylum Dispersal Fund
- MICE Funds (Leeds councillors)
- The Wharfedale Foundation
- The Brelms Trust
- Leeds Community Foundation Microgrants Fund
- Unity in Poverty Action

8. THANKS

Finally, I would like to thank the amazing group of volunteers who spend so much of their time and put so much effort into making Conversation Club work - those who come to the guest meetings every week and simply get stuck in helping guests, and those who work behind the scenes doing all manner of routine jobs, organising events, or applying for vital funds.

I would like to thank especially the two other trustees, Sue and Margaret, who just keep on working, and on whom I rely a huge amount. Also Colin, who has worked tirelessly on funding applications and successfully obtained all the funds he has applied for this year - quite a feat!

Also huge thanks to Phil, our treasurer, who produces regular monthly and annual accounts and is a great support to me, never seeming to be fazed by any question I may ask him, however strange.

But without the whole team working together, Conversation Club simply wouldn't exist, and our guests' lives would, I believe, be a little less colourful and a little harder to bear.

Thank you to one and all.

Dot Read
Chair

18th July 2024

ACCOUNTS FOR

1st APRIL 2023 TO 31st MARCH 2024

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

	<u>GENERAL FUNDS TOTAL</u>	<u>HARDSHIP FUND</u>	<u>LEEDS MICRO COM FOUNDATION RESTRICTED</u>	<u>TOTAL FUNDS</u>
INCOME				
Donations	6,434.65			6,434.65
Grants	14,535.00		2,500.00	17,035.00
MICE donations	1,275.00			1,275.00
Just Giving	2,010.91	250.00	0.00	2,260.91
Events (net)	303.00			303.00
Bank Interest	18.23			18.23
Gift Aid tax rebate	990.61			990.61
TOTAL INCOME	25,567.40	250.00	2,500.00	28,317.40
Transfer to Hardship Fund	(975.74)	975.74	0.00	0.00
NET INCOME	24,591.66	1,225.74	2,500.00	28,317.40
EXPENDITURE				
Phone top-ups	910.00			910.00
Bank charges	60.00			60.00
Bus tickets usage	9,796.35			9,796.35
Bus and Train fares	1,869.00			1,869.00
Healthy Eating	724.35			724.35
Holbeck	1,100.00			1,100.00
Priestley Hall	125.71			125.71
Insurance	285.63			285.63
Website Cost	72.20			72.20
Theatre events	450.00			450.00
Mobile Phones	165.00			165.00
Microgrant (sports and outings)	0.00		1,356.64	1,356.64
Miscellaneous costs	1,903.86	977.35	0.00	2,881.21
Trustees Training	156.00			156.00
Volunteer expenses	0.00	20.00	0.00	20.00
Winter party	502.30			502.30
Just Giving	216.00			216.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	18,336.40	997.35	1,356.64	20,690.39
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	6,255.26	228.39	1,143.36	7,627.01
<u>BALANCE SHEET</u>				
at 31st MARCH 2024				
OPENING FUNDS	6,495.66			
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	6,255.26			
GENERAL FUNDS TOTAL	12,750.92			
RESTRICTED FUND - LEEDS MICRO GRANT	1,143.36			
EARMARKED FUNDS - HARDSHIP FUND	228.39			
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	14,122.67			
Represented by:				
STOCK OF BUS TICKETS	8,921.25			
CASH IN HAND	66.64			
CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE	9,046.37			
	18,034.26			
LESS CREDITORS	(3,911.59)			
	14,122.67			

Independent examiners report to the trustees of Conversation Club Leeds

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31st of March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of the report

As the charity 's trustees you all 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 charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 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, which give me cause to believe that, in any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act, or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records.

The accounts I reviewed provided greater detail than that required for the form and content of the account set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. I have not considered whether the accounts give a "true and fair view" as this is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.

Signed	
Date	26 th April 2024
Name	Matthew A Thornfield
Address	20 Moss Gardens, Leeds, LS17 7BH
Qualification or body	Previous member of the Association of Corporate Treasurers

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

England & Wales - Charity number 1189217

Accounts

Conversation Club Leeds

Trustees' Report

Year to 31st March 2023

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1189217

ADDRESS: 16 BEECH GROVE TERRACE, GARFORTH, LEEDS LS25 1EG

TRUSTEES:

DOROTHY READ (CHAIRPERSON)

ELIZABETH MARY CATHERINE THOMAS

WAQAS SAAD SHAKIR AL BAJJARI

SUSAN CLOUGH

STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Conversation Club Leeds is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), governed by a Constitution. It has voting members other than trustees; volunteers can become members but there is no obligation to do so. Volunteers who are not members cannot vote.

The Constitution states that there must be at least three trustees. Trustees are usually recruited from the volunteers by invitation from the existing trustees.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives

The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing:

- (1) education and training in the English language and in vocational skills;
- (2) social and recreational facilities and events involving the local community.

Activities

Conversation Club's main activities are undertaken in order to fulfil these objectives.

They are:

- providing a welcoming and safe place for our asylum seeker and refugee 'guests' to meet and socialise with British people, and with other people in similar situations - this happens at our twice-weekly meetings at Mill Hill Chapel and the Holbeck Social Club;
- providing an opportunity for guests to practise speaking English through semi-structured English lessons and informal conversation with native-speaker volunteers;
- helping guests with tasks such as applying for college English courses, navigating the Home Office and Social Security systems; making health appointments etc;
- providing free bus tickets to enable them to attend meetings (this is our major expenditure); also providing some mobile phone 'top-up' vouchers to enable access to the internet and keeping contact with family.
- organising visits to museums, other places of interest, and day trips to the countryside, to give guests a wider view of British culture and, we hope, encourage integration.

Contribution made by volunteers

Without volunteers, Conversation Club wouldn't exist. It is only through their efforts and dedication that we are able to host so many individuals and families at our meetings each week, and to provide them with a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Several volunteers give their time outside meetings to organise events and outings, to undertake fundraising and to provide extra support when needed by individual guests.

FINANCIAL REVIEW - FINANCIAL POSITION AT END OF PERIOD

1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Opening funds	9,261.83
Total income	8,099.74
Total expenditure	10,865.91
Closing funds	6495.66

Main sources of income

Successful funding applications:	2980.00
Funding for Healthy Eating campaign:	710.29
Donations:	3436.95:
Newly-acquired 'Just Giving' page:	684.31
Gift Aid (registered in August):	131.13

Main expenditure

Bus tickets for guests:	5316.80
Mobile phone 'top-ups':	1720.00
Donation to the Holbeck for venue use:	600.00

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In the year commencing April 2022, the organisation has been slowly returning to its pre-pandemic normality, with guest numbers increasing steadily at both venues, but more markedly at Mill Hill Chapel, where 50+ guests is now the norm. At the Holbeck meeting, the numbers have grown from just a few immediately post-pandemic, to currently around 20 or more.

We give free day bus tickets to our asylum seeker guests, otherwise they would not be able to attend meetings. Every week we see many of the same people, which presumably means they are happy to participate, at least for the chance to socialise

with others in the same situation, or from the same region or country. We know from their comments that they appreciate the contact with others to relieve their isolation.

In the past, we have given mobile phone 'top-ups' to a few people, to enable them to use the internet or stay in contact with family, but this had to be restricted because of the expense. Over the last few months however, we applied for and received a large number of free SIM cards from Vodafone, which has resulted in most of our guests being able to access the internet. This has made studying, accessing statutory agencies and keeping in touch with family much easier.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS APRIL 2022 - MARCH 2023



14th June - Trip to Ilkley by train - 20+ guests enjoyed a day trip to Ilkley.

15th June 2022 - 'Musicultural Conversations' began - an 8-week course by Nicky Bray, for guests to learn English through song.



20th June - Little Amal: a group of volunteers and guests went to see the giant puppet, representing an 8-year-old asylum seeker child, when she visited Leeds



23rd June - Refugee Week 'Love Chain' event - guests and volunteers made a huge paper chain with welcoming messages from schoolchildren and members of the public, and displayed it outside Mill Hill Chapel.



31st August - Day trip by train to Skipton, including a visit to the historic castle.



Oct - Nov - Healthy Eating campaign: a 7-week programme designed by two volunteers with guidance and funding from Leeds Community Champions (NHS), to encourage guests to understand and choose a healthy diet.

14th October - Leeds Light Night event - guests and volunteers enjoyed the vivid light installations

15th December - Christmas party for guests, with food, singing and dancing.

December - monthly volunteer lunch meetings initiated, to encourage socialising, discussion and exchange of ideas among volunteers.

January - April - 'Threadbear Theatre' drama company started working with a small group of guests each week, to produce short 'playback theatre' improvisation pieces, which were performed at a festival at Fell Edge Farm, Addingham, in April.

20th February - the 'Winter Outings' programme began - a series of trips to places of interest, for which we obtained funding. First trip - Kirkstall Abbey House Museum.

6th March - visit to Museum of Science and Media, Bradford.

15th March - visit to National Railway Museum, York.



22nd March - tree planting event in Nidderdale - a group of volunteers and guests planted over 200 trees in an event organised by Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

ORGANISATIONS WE HAVE WORKED WITH DURING THE YEAR

Grateful thanks for support and advice given, all of which has made our job easier.

Asylum Matters

Christchurch, Ilkley

Community Champions

Fell Edge Farm

Harmony Choir

LASSN

LEDAS

Leeds libraries

Leeds Migration Partnership

Leeds Playhouse

Nicky Bray - Community Music Worker

Nidderdale AONB

Opera North

Red Cross

Slung Low Theatre

Threadbear Theatre

Wheeler Hall (Leeds Cathedral)

FUNDERS

We are extremely grateful to the following organisations for funds awarded to us during the year. Without this income, Conversation Club would not have been able to carry on the work of supporting asylum seekers and refugees to the same extent.

Allen Lane Foundation

Arts Together

Community Champions

Dales Millennium Trust

GivTo

Mid Counties Cooperative

THANKS

Finally, but most importantly, I would like to thank each and every Conversation Club volunteer who has given their time and energy to help people facing enormous difficulties. They have done it all with unfailing enthusiasm, cheerfulness and a lot of humour. Several of them have taken on specific roles such as fundraising, organising volunteers, organising trips and liaising with outside groups such as theatres etc, all of which has been of enormous help.

In particular, I would like to give special thanks to the three other trustees, Liz, Waqas and Sue, who have taken on the job of guiding the organisation, with all the extra time and effort which it entails; and Phil, our treasurer, who has provided a continuous expert overview of our finances. Their support has been vital. Thank you all.

Dorothy Read,

Chair

8th April 2023

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

ACCOUNTS FOR

1st APRIL 2022 TO 31st MARCH 2023

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

	TOTAL	Unrestricted Breims	Unrestricted Uchoose Funds	Unrestricted General Funds	Wades Restricted Bus fares/ equipment
INCOME					
Donations	3,436.95			3,436.95	
Grants	2,980.00			2,980.00	
Just Giving	634.81			634.81	
Events	200.00			200.00	
Bank Interest	6.56			6.56	
Gift Aid tax rebate	131.13			131.13	
Healthy Eating	710.29			710.29	
TOTAL INCOME	8,099.74	0.00	0.00	8,099.74	0.00
EXPENDITURE					
Phone top-ups	1,875.00	768.94		1,106.06	
Bank charges	72.00			72.00	
Bus tickets usage	5,316.80			4,087.16	1,229.64
Bus fares	63.00			63.00	
Train fares	123.20			123.20	
Holbeck	600.00			600.00	
Holbeck food	7.15			7.15	
Wheeler Hall	100.00			100.00	
Insurance	285.63			285.63	
Website Cost	0.00			0.00	
N Bray workshops	150.00		94.67	55.33	
Miscellaneous costs	188.62		28.41	160.21	
Ikley trip	340.51			89.41	251.10
Love Chain event	126.00			126.00	
Fell Edge transport	434.40			226.00	208.40
Skipton trip	810.86			0.00	810.86
Christmas party	156.74			156.74	
Just Giving	216.00			216.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	10,865.91	768.94	123.08	7,473.89	2,500.00
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(2,766.17)	(768.94)	(123.08)	625.85	(2,500.00)
BALANCE SHEET					
at 31st MARCH 2023					
OPENING FUNDS	9,261.83	768.94	123.08	5,869.81	2,500.00
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(2,766.17)	(768.94)	(123.08)	625.85	(2,500.00)
CLOSING FUNDS	6,495.66	0.00	0.00	6,495.66	0.00
Represented by:					
STOCK OF BUS TICKETS	717.60				
PETTY CASH	62.54				
CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE	5,715.52				
	6,495.66				

Independent examiners report to the trustees of Conversation Club Leeds

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31st of March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of the report

As the charity 's trustees you all 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 charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 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, which give me cause to believe that, in any material respect:

- the accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act, or
- the accounts did not accord with the accounting records.

The accounts I reviewed provided greater detail than that required for the form and content of the account set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. I have not considered whether the accounts give a "true and fair view" as this is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.

Signed



Date

29th May 2023

Name

Matthew A Thornfield

Address

20 Moss Gardens, Leeds, LS17 7BH

Qualification or body

Previous member of the Association of Corporate Treasurers

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

England & Wales - Charity number 1189217

Accounts

Conversation Club Leeds

Trustees' Report

Year to 31st March 2022

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1189217

ADDRESS: 16 BEECH GROVE, GARFORTH, LEEDS, LS25 1EG

TRUSTEES:

DOROTHY READ (CHAIRPERSON)

WAQAS SAAD SHAKIR AL BAJJARI

ELIZABETH MARY CATHERINE THOMAS

STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The organisation's activities are carried out exclusively by volunteers. Overall management and co-ordination are carried out by the trustees. There are no employees.

Trustees are recruited by personal contact and recommendation. The organisation seeks to recruit additional trustees so as to increase their number to above the minimum of three required by its constitution.

The Conversation Club, founded as an Unincorporated Association in 2016, became a registered charity (a CIO) - Conversation Club Leeds - on 1st April 2020.

OBJECTIVES

The organisation exists for the promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing: (1) education and training in the English language and in vocational skills; (2) social and recreational facilities and events involving the local community.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The year to March 2022 was a challenging one, perhaps even more so than the previous year of pandemic lockdowns and severe restrictions.

Although things started opening up, the constant changes in infection rates and official guidance made it difficult to decide when to open face-to-face meetings again, our first priority of course being to keep guests safe.

But here we are in May 2022, with currently two weekly guest meetings a week, having just celebrated our 6th anniversary.

Guest meetings

The Holbeck

In April 2021, we took the tentative step of opening up again with weekly face to face meetings on Tuesdays at The Holbeck. One year on, in April 2022, we celebrated our 1st anniversary. Over the whole 12 month period, thanks to the commitment of volunteers, we only closed for one week during the Christmas holidays.

At first, meetings were on a very small scale in order to comply with covid regulations, but we gradually increased our numbers, bearing hygiene, Covid testing and social distancing guidelines in mind. We also encouraged guests to get the vaccine and provided packs of tests. When covid cases were on the rise again around Christmas and New Year, we continued to meet by moving to the model of outdoor gatherings for a few weeks; walks around Holbeck Moor with a hot drink afterwards, using the facilities at The Holbeck.

The location of the venue, with its outside space and nearby green areas, offered flexibility. As the weather improved, we could sit outside and therefore were able to relax our approach to the number of people invited. By August, attendance was up to an average of 10 attendees per week and rose to 15 + in the autumn months as word got around. The largest number achieved, just before Christmas, was 23.

The content of the meeting was very informal at first, simply chatting and catching up with guests, but with increasing numbers, we gradually moved to a more structured approach with a planned language based activity, such as a quiz or a discussion topic. This year, 2022/23, we've expanded our repertoire to include exciting craft activities and in May, three music and language workshops led by Nicky Bray. Attendance has risen to a weekly average of 16+.

Our connection with The Holbeck has also enabled us to benefit from a football initiative launched by Leeds United Foundation. Two coaches have come along each week and gradually built a small football team from amongst our guests. Football kit has also been provided.

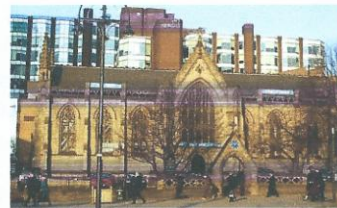
Many thanks are owed to the *Slung Low* team, who run The Holbeck, for allowing us to be based on the premises in exchange for a modest monthly donation. Looking to the future, *Slung Low* is seeking new premises in Holbeck and have invited us to follow them if we wish.



Mill Hill Chapel

After the first Covid lockdown period, we were hoping to start Thursday meetings again in September 2021, in our old home in the hall at Mill Hill Chapel. However, this was delayed due to rapidly rising case numbers and deaths across the country, due to the virus Delta variant.

We were able to reopen on 2nd December, with hand sanitisation, mask-wearing and social-distancing measures in place. However, the Priestley Hall was not now available to us, the church trustees having had no choice but to hire it out to regular users in order to recoup considerable funds lost during the pandemic. We started using the Chapel building itself, which while not ideally suited to large interactive group meetings, nevertheless has the same warm and welcoming atmosphere, where guests obviously feel at home.



Unfortunately, our meetings at Mill Hill had to stop again on 16th December, due this time the steep rise in cases of the Omicron variant, both nationally and locally.



Over the next few weeks, we offered short walks around the city centre, seeing places of interest, with usually just a few guests braving the cold. Jo James kindly let us use the facilities in the chapel to make hot drinks, which were served outside or in the church porch.

Meetings restarted again on 24th February, and have continued since then.

At first there were very low numbers of guests, sometimes only three or four, and once or twice more volunteers than guests, despite emails and WhatsApp messages being sent every week. But gradually the numbers increased, and now there are usually between 15 and 25 guests each week.

We are providing basic English support, mainly conversation, with some learning of everyday vocabulary, and some reading / writing practice of simple words and phrases.

Recently we spent the session taking a group of 15 guests on a guided tour of Leeds City Library to see the many different services provided, and interest groups available. Several of them became library members on this visit.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Rev Jo James and the trustees of Mill Hill Chapel for generously allowing Conversation Club to use the chapel free of charge for our meetings.

Significant events 2021-22

1st July - Nicky Bray of *Musicultural Conversations* gave a musical performance to guests at the Holbeck meeting via Zoom.



16th August - a group of guests and volunteers visited Fell Edge Farm in Addingham, together with guests from LEDAS (Leeds Destitute Asylum Seeker Support), and participated in art sessions and a walk up the nearby fell.

19th August - we ran our last online meeting. We had run these since the beginning of the pandemic, and although

they never replaced face-to-face meetings as a viable alternative, for a few guests they were a lifeline to combat isolation.

18th September - Beeston Festival. A group of volunteers and guests attended this lively, mainly South Asian festival in Beeston Park.



14/15 October - Leeds Light Nights. Two groups of volunteers, on two consecutive nights, took parties of guests around the spectacular light displays in the city centre.

22 October - The 'Orange Hearts' Campaign was a nationwide campaign to raise awareness of the Nationality & Borders Bill going through Parliament, which would have a severe negative impact on many asylum seekers. Volunteers encouraged guests to make orange hearts as a sign of solidarity, and then along with staff from *Asylum Matters* and *Mafwa Theatre* they led the Leeds public protest outside Mill Hill Chapel which was attended by the Lord Mayor, plus the Council Leader and Deputy Leader.



17th November - an Indian cookery demonstration and lunch by one of our guests was held at *Open Source Arts* in Kirkstall, a great success we hope to repeat.

Christmas 2021 - Conversation Club meetings continued throughout the Christmas period at Mill Hill Chapel, so our mainly Muslim guests still had somewhere to meet when much else was closed.

9th Feb 2022 - A recruitment drive for new volunteers was launched, as numbers had fallen to around 10 during the pandemic. This was very successful, resulting in over 20 applicants, of whom about 12 now attend meetings at varying regular intervals. They are already a great asset, very enthusiastic and engaging well with guests.

30th March 2022 - website launch. We were very pleased to launch our first website, which thanks to our designer Clare Bryden of Websites Ahoy!, has received many positive comments for its vibrant look and comprehensive content. This will make it easier for people to access information about us, and to keep our guests and volunteers informed.



Organisations we have worked with during the year

Opera North - Conversation Club guests have taken advantage of free tickets supplied to asylum seekers, to attend various concerts, including jazz, Middle Eastern music, and a children's orchestral concert. In March, planning started for an upcoming 'International Lullaby Project' to collect recordings of traditional lullabies around the world, from guests and volunteers.

Open Source Arts - hire of facilities for a cookery demonstration by a guest.

Fell Edge farm - welcomed us on a day trip for guests in the Dales.

Leeds City Libraries - explanatory tour for guests.

Refugee Council - we attended meetings organised to help asylum seekers in hotels.

Cafe4Calais - charity providing clothes and other practical help, also campaigning on behalf of asylum seekers.

Together with Refugees - Conversation Club is a member of this campaigning group

Choirs: Holbeck Choir, Harmony Choir, Asmarina Voices

Asylum Matters - local campaigning and awareness-raising organisation, which we have worked with several times.

Leeds United Foundation, with *Active Leeds* – football club at the Holbeck.

Allotments group at Woodhouse Moor.

A significant part of the work we do to help our guests involves signposting to relevant agencies and helping them with online applications, telephone follow-up or other information needs relating to a wide range of issues, from legal advice to housing and health problems. In doing this, we have gradually expanded the range of organisations with which we are connected – in Leeds and beyond – and with whom we share news and projects.

Funders

We submitted several applications for funding during the year, and were successful in obtaining funds from the following:

The Brelms Trust CIO - £4,500

Wade's Charity - £2,500

Wharfedale Foundation - £500

We extend our sincere thanks to these organisations for their support. Without these funds, Conversation Club would not be able to continue.

Our annual accounts 2021 – 2022 are available as a separate document.

Thanks

A huge 'Thank You' is due to the wonderful team of volunteers at Conversation Club, without whom it simply couldn't function.

Throughout the pandemic lockdowns they faithfully attended weekly online meetings to keep things going, and when face-to-face guest meetings started again they duly turned up, cheerful and enthusiastic, to take up where they had left off two years before - only now they were running two meetings a week, instead of one.

Some also performed extra tasks such as applying for funding, taking meeting minutes, organising walks, cultural events and allotment visits. And perhaps most importantly, keeping in touch with guests by phone or text, consequently helping to solve many different problems for

our guests raised by the pandemic, e.g. closure of services, access to food banks etc. This was all generously done in their own time, without complaint.

I would like to thank particularly my two fellow trustees, Liz Thomas and Waqas Al Bajjari who, as well as performing general volunteer duties, have worked hard attending trustee meetings, helping to make decisions and providing me with unstinting support. Their efforts have been invaluable in keeping Conversation Club afloat during this challenging time of emerging from the pandemic.

Dot Read

Chair.

19th May 2022



CONVERSATION CLUB LEADS
ACCOUNTS FOR 1st APRIL 2021 TO 31st MARCH 2022

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

	Unrestricted The Balance	Unrestricted Wharfedale Funds	Unrestricted Lidoose Funds	Unrestricted General Funds	Grail Restricted Data top-ups and fares	Wades Restricted Bus fares/ equipment	PREVIOUS YEAR TOTALS
INCOME							
Donations	1,646.52			1,646.52			0.00
Events	136.74			136.74			35.00
Grants	7,500.00						8,700.00
TOTAL INCOME	9,283.26	4,500.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	2,500.00	8,735.00
EXPENDITURE							
Phone top-ups	5,752.99				4,770.00		2,635.00
Bank charges	96.00	982.99					0.00
Zoom	71.95						142.86
Bus fares and tickets usage	1,947.70	1,717.70			230.00		151.50
Holbeck	1,000.00			1,000.00			0.00
Holbeck food	109.77		109.77				0.00
Holbeck activities	43.20		43.20				0.00
Insurance	271.53						0.00
Food for Park event	34.00		34.00				0.00
Wheeler Hall rent	62.50		62.50				0.00
Website Cost	1,137.22		967.87	169.35			0.00
Miscellaneous costs	143.68		143.68				599.69
Just Giving	90.00			90.00			0.00
Lidoose expenditure	176.92			176.92			0.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	10,937.46	3,731.06	500.00	176.92	5,000.00	0.00	3,529.05
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(1,654.20)	768.94	0.00	(176.92)	(5,000.00)	2,500.00	5,205.95
BALANCE SHEET at 31st MARCH 2022							
OPENING FUNDS	10,916.03			300.00	5,000.00		5,710.08
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(1,654.20)	768.94	0.00	(176.92)	(5,000.00)	2,500.00	5,205.95
CLOSING FUNDS	9,261.83	768.94	0.00	123.08	0.00	2,500.00	10,916.03
Represented by:							
STOCK OF BUS TICKETS	1,444.40						2,047.00
PETTY CASH	153.65						397.20
CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE	7,663.78						8,471.83
	9,261.83						10,916.03

SIGNED:

D.M. Read

D.M. READ CHAIR

T.P. Lawler

T.P. LAWLER TREASURER

DATE: 17th September 2022

CONVERSATION CLUB LEEDS

England & Wales - Charity number 1189217

Accounts

Conversation Club Leeds

Trustees' Report 2020-2021



REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1189217

ADDRESS: 16 BEECH GROVE, GARFORTH, LEEDS, LS25 1EG

TRUSTEES:

DOROTHY READ (CHAIRPERSON)

WAQAS SAAD SHAKIR AL BAJJARI

ELIZABETH MARY CATHERINE THOMAS

STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

The organisation's activities are carried out exclusively by volunteers. Overall management and co-ordination are carried out by the trustees. There are no employees.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES:

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Activities during the year 2020/21 are set out in the following paragraphs.

A SHORT HISTORY

Conversation Club started in 2016, in response to the refugee crisis sweeping across Europe in the wake of the Syrian civil war and other events in the Middle East and Africa. A large public meeting at the Yorkshire Playhouse resulted in various spin-off groups; our group planned to help asylum-seekers to practise speaking English in a safe and welcoming environment.

We were fortunate to have support from the Rev Jo James at Mill Hill Chapel, who allowed us to use the church hall free of charge for our weekly meetings. At the first meeting on 12th May 2016, just four asylum seekers attended, with probably six or eight volunteers! From that small beginning, word quickly spread among the asylum seeker community and it soon became a very lively, noisy and popular place for them to make friends and meet up, providing a much-needed social space. We continued with increasing numbers until it became obvious that in order to raise enough funds to pay for guests' bus fares, we needed to become a registered charity.

This happened one week after the start of the first national lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the year in between has been a challenging one, to say the least. From hosting 80 - 90 asylum-seeker guests plus volunteers at the weekly drop-in sessions in Mill Hill Chapel, our face-to-face meetings stopped on 12th March 2020, and up to the current time, March 2021, have not restarted.

With our guests uppermost in our minds, we set about finding an alternative way of reaching them and trying to support them remotely. We were acutely aware of the desperate loneliness and mental health problems many of them were facing

due to enforced isolation and lack of social contact, as well as basic physical needs such as food, and access to medical and dental care.

OPERATING ON-LINE

Along with the rest of the world, we discovered Zoom, and set up a weekly online Zoom meeting at the normal Conversation Club meeting time. At first this had only two or three guests a week, sometimes none, but once we realised that a huge issue for guests was a lack of mobile phone data, we applied for and were awarded funds last summer by the Leeds Community Fund to purchase phone top-ups. Since then, the numbers attending the weekly session have been gradually increasing, and guests are beginning to enjoy attending, and chatting in a group about the weekly topic and other issues. Each week, around six or eight volunteers also attend.

We also tried another online space we called the 'Coffee Bar', which was available for anyone to meet-up online at any time; however there wasn't enough demand at the time to make it work.

PARTNERSHIPS

For weeks after the first lockdown, some of our guests were in need of food parcels, and basic supplies such as nappies and baby food, which we were able to organise, and we became a registered referral agency for Leeds South & East Food Bank.

We have always had a close relationship with HARP (Health Access for Refugees Programme), part of the Refugee Council, and this connection has proved invaluable in getting GP, dental, mental health and hospital appointments during the pandemic. These have been difficult to access for everyone, but especially for our guests, many of whom have limited English.

We have also been communicating and working with other organisations including LASSN, the Red Cross, Touchstone, RETAS and PAFRAS, many of whom come together in the framework of the Leeds Migration Partnership. We are in touch with some Conversation Clubs and similar projects around the country.

LOCKDOWN SUPPORT and PROJECTS

We have supported asylum seeker guests with many challenging situations this year, including hospital admissions, sudden changes in accommodation, accessing GP and hospital treatment, potential homelessness, finding furniture for those who have been granted refugee status. We have also supported LEDAS by providing access to phone top-ups for their residents. Volunteers have been contacting a number of guests regularly by text and phone, checking that they are ok. Some volunteers have also provided individual English lessons / conversation practice on the phone or on Zoom.

During the summer, when meeting outdoors was allowed, we started meeting in local parks to make access easy for guests. We managed to keep the guests in groups of six, and though there weren't big numbers, they really seemed to enjoy just sitting and talking to each other.

That all stopped with the second lockdown - and the colder weather - on 2nd November. We had reports from our own volunteers and other organisations that many guests were suffering depression caused by the enforced isolation and the darker days. We started encouraging guests to take photos when they went for their walk in their local parks, and from this we collaborated with LASSN, Refugee Council, and other organisations to develop the idea of an online photograph gallery. We called it 'Lighting Up Lockdown' and asked guests and volunteers to send photos on different themes for the seven weeks until the end of the year. The result was a gallery of a lot of wonderful photos, which have now been collected into a video.

We have also commissioned a short film about Conversation Club, which is now on the Facebook page. A website is currently under construction.

Three volunteers are currently making our first podcast, which is proving to be quite a learning curve. But we hope that we will be able to produce it regularly, to help keep in touch with guests.

FUNDING NEEDS

We are currently looking for funding to cover various future Conversation Club costs, including potential room hire fees, phone data top-ups, bus fares, digital equipment (laptops / tablets) for guests, possibly day trips. We recently applied for and received a £5000 grant from the Grail Society.

FUTURE PLANS

While we would love to go back to our original 'roots' in Mill Hill Chapel, this seems unlikely, and we are looking for other venues, probably for two smaller meetings per week, instead of one large one.

THANKS

I would like to say a huge 'Thank You' to the Rev Jo James and the trustees of Mill Hill Chapel, where we had an extremely happy and fruitful (and rent-free!) four years - Conversation Club wouldn't be the same had we not had such a great start there.

Our grateful thanks are also due to Clive Briscoe, who is stepping down as treasurer after three years, during which he guided the trustees through the process of becoming a registered charity. And we say a warm welcome to Phil Lawler, who has stepped into Clive's shoes. Phil has a great deal of past experience in business and also within the refugee charity sector. Also, a huge 'Thank you' to Ann Callarman, who has been a committed volunteer since the start of Conversation Club, and has also been a trustee and the secretary since we became a registered charity, working tirelessly to get us through the seemingly endless paperwork.

We gratefully acknowledge much needed financial support from our funders in 2020-21:

- Leeds Community Foundation
- Grail Society

Finally, I would like to say a huge 'Thank You' to the amazing group of volunteers who have stoically kept Conversation Club alive through the last grim and unprecedented 12 months. They have shown great tenacity in attending weekly online meetings; reliability and compassion in supporting guests; ingenuity, humour and, in some cases, downright stubbornness in refusing to give up when standing up for guests against sometimes uncaring officialdom. Without their dedication over the past year, Conversation Club simply wouldn't have survived.

IN MEMORIAM

We pay tribute to two individual volunteers who played important roles in the development of the club:

- Helen Parkin, one of the founder members, died in March 2018. Her energy, enthusiasm and commitment to Conversation Club were legendary. She is still very much missed to this day.
- John Hall died in early 2021. Every week he supported asylum seekers in his own quiet way in the structured English classes at Conversation Club. When face-to-face meetings resume, we will miss his unassuming presence and his wonderful Northern Irish sense of humour.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021, and the balance sheet at the end of that year, are shown below.

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE TRUSTEES

D READ

29TH JUNE 2021

Dot Read, Chairperson

CONVERSATION CLUB
LEEDS
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST
MARCH 2021
BALANCE SHEET

	<u>This</u> <u>Year</u>	-	<u>2020</u>
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash at Bank	8,471. 83	2,571.0 6	
Cash in Hand	397.20	457.20	
Stock of bus tickets	2,047. 00	2,198.5 0	
Debtors	0.00	698.71	
	10,916		5,925.
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	.03		47
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Creditors	0.00	15.39	
Loans	0.00	200.00	
TOTAL LIABILITIES	0.00		215.39
	10,916		5,710.
TOTAL NET ASSETS	.03		08
Represented by:			
OPENING FUNDS	5,710. 08		5,210. 46
SURPLUS THIS YEAR	5,205. 95		(831.7 8)
CLOSING FUNDS	10,916 .03		5,710. 08
<u>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE</u> <u>ACCOUNT</u>			
	This		Previou

	<u>Year</u>	<u>s</u> <u>Year</u>
INCOME		
Donations	0.00	1,957.31
Fundraising income	0.00	1,585.46
Grants	8,700.00	6,094.86
Sales	35.00	989.72
Miscellaneous	0.00	362.29
	8,735.00	10,989.64
TOTAL INCOME		
EXPENDITURE		
Administration	49.00	0.00
Bus tickets	151.50	10,524.10
Craft goods and purchases	0.00	484.32
Fundraising expenses	0.00	415.00
Hardship gifts	122.40	100.00
Miscellaneous	248.32	298.00
Telephone top-ups	2,635.00	0.00
Social media	142.86	0.00
Training	179.97	0.00
	3,529.05	11,821.42
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		
SURPLUS INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	5,205.95	(831.78)