



2023 Annual Report & Financial Statements

Peace of Mind Annual Report

January 2023 to December 2023

We are pleased to report that Peace of Mind has successfully continued its mission to support refugee and asylum-seeking (RAS) families and individuals throughout 2023, despite significant challenges. Our work, aimed at alleviating poverty, providing practical assistance, and fostering community integration, has grown in scope and impact over the last year. The ongoing economic crisis, cost of living pressures, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have disproportionately affected the communities we serve, driving many of our beneficiaries into deeper hardship. Nonetheless, our continued presence and expanded support services have been a lifeline for many.

A Message from Our Board of Trustees:

As Trustees, we are acutely aware of the evolving landscape of challenges facing the refugee and asylum-seeking community in the North East. The past year has witnessed an unprecedented convergence of global crises, economic pressures, and policy changes that have significantly impacted our beneficiaries. Despite these formidable challenges, we are immensely proud of the resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment demonstrated by our staff, volunteers, and the community we serve.

Our organisation has not merely responded to immediate needs but has taken proactive steps to address systemic issues through advocacy and partnership-building. We have strengthened our governance structures, diversified our funding streams, and invested in capacity-building to ensure the long-term sustainability of our vital services.

As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing compassionate, effective support to refugees and asylum seekers. Concurrently, we are working towards broader societal changes that promote inclusion, dignity, and equal opportunities for all. Our efforts are underpinned by our unique position as a refugee-led charity, which allows us to truly understand and address the needs of our community.

The achievements outlined in this report are a testament to the collective effort of our entire community. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to our

work, including our dedicated volunteers, staff, partners, and supporters. Your continued support enables us to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who have sought safety and a new beginning in our region.

As we navigate the challenges ahead, we remain inspired by the resilience of those we serve and motivated by the positive impact of our work. Together, we will continue to build a more inclusive and supportive community for refugees and asylum seekers in the North East.

Activities:

- Weekly drop-in sessions offering support, advice, and signposting
- Emergency food, clothing, and hygiene parcels distribution
- Warm Space provision
- English conversation classes (Basic, Advanced, and Women-Only)
- Digital inclusion initiatives
- Holiday activities for children, including culturally appropriate hot meals
- Training and workshops
- One-to-one support
- Newborn baby equipment and household items
- Advocacy support

Key Challenges:

The RAS (Refugee and Asylum Seeking) community continues to grapple with severe disadvantages, which has only been exacerbated by current economic conditions. The cost of living crisis has pushed many families into poverty, forcing them to make impossible choices between basic needs like heating, eating, and shelter. Due to their precarious legal and socio-economic status, many refugee and asylum-seeking individuals do not have access to the same level of support as others, leaving them more vulnerable to deprivation and exploitation.

In 2023, the North East of England faced particular challenges in supporting its RAS community. The region saw a significant increase in asylum seekers, with the North East currently hosting ten times as many asylum seekers and refugees as the South East and South West of England. This influx, coupled with the dispersal of vulnerable populations to already deprived areas with limited resources, has likely worsened their health outcomes.

The value of asylum support payments fell by 29% in real terms between 2000 and 2023, despite nominal increases. This reduction in financial support, combined with

rising costs of essential items, has severely impacted the ability of asylum seekers to meet their basic needs. Many struggle to afford formula milk for children (85%), nappies (88%), toiletries and cleaning products (89%), medicine for children (90%), and culturally appropriate food (93%).

Mental health issues have become increasingly prevalent, with 61% of asylum seekers experiencing serious mental distress. The ongoing uncertainty of the asylum process, coupled with the trauma of their past experiences, has contributed to this mental health crisis. Refugees are five times more likely to have mental health needs than the UK population.

One poignant example of the impact of this crisis is the story of a young mother who requested baby milk as a Christmas gift for her infant—an emblematic reflection of the hardship many in our community are experiencing. Similarly, a homeless beneficiary shared their struggle with food insecurity, recounting that the food provided by our services was the first meal they had had in five days. These stories highlight the extreme vulnerability faced by many in the RAS community, who, despite their resilience, are battling entrenched poverty.

Volunteers:

Our volunteer team experienced fluctuations in the first quarter of 2023, initially decreasing from 24 to 19 members in the first quarter as some individuals moved into paid work and others were relocated by housing providers. However, we successfully recruited new volunteers, resulting in an overall growth to 28 members by year's end. This expansion has significantly enhanced our capacity to provide support. Our weekly drop-in team, comprising 11 dedicated volunteers, collectively speaks 10 different languages, which greatly reduces our interpreting and translation expenses while ensuring effective communication with our diverse beneficiary group. This resilience and growth in our volunteer base reflect both the challenges faced by the refugee and asylum-seeking community and the strong commitment of individuals to support our cause.

Partnerships:

We maintain robust partnerships with a wide array of organisations and agencies across the North East. Our collaborative network includes local government bodies such as Gateshead Council, its Refugee Resettlement Team, Housing Department, Youth Council, Education Department, and Public Health team. We also work closely with charitable organisations like Citizens Advice Gateshead, the Regional Refugee

Forum, Feeding Families, The Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Social Justice Lass, Asylum Matters, Connected Voice, Mears (the designated housing provider for asylum seekers), Migrant Help, Support & Grow North East Charity and Gateshead Health Watch. This comprehensive coalition of partners enables us to deliver a holistic suite of emotional and practical support services to the refugee and asylum-seeking community, ensuring that we can address their diverse and complex needs effectively.

Achievements and Impact:

2023 has been a year of significant achievement for Peace of Mind. We have expanded our reach and deepened our impact across a range of critical services, providing essential support to hundreds of families and individuals.

In 2023, Peace of Mind CIO continued to demonstrate its commitment to supporting the refugee and asylum-seeking (RAS) community, achieving significant recognition and making substantial contributions to the sector. Our key accomplishments include:

- 1. Award Recognition:**

Peace of Mind was honoured with the prestigious "Refugee-Led Community Organisation of the Year 2023 - North East England Award". This accolade recognises our dedicated efforts in supporting the RAS community and underscores the invaluable support we receive from the people of the North East. The award is featured in Acquisition International's winners list, highlighting our impact on a broader stage.

- 2. Warm Welcome Network Participation:**

We maintained our active involvement in the Warm Welcome Network, with our efforts being prominently featured in their annual report. This collaboration reinforces our commitment to providing a welcoming environment for refugees and asylum seekers.

- 3. Policy Influence and Advocacy:**

On 21st March 2023, Peace of Mind participated in the North East Local Engagement Hearing for the Commission on the Integration of Refugees. As one of the panellists, we represented the collective voice of the Gateshead RAS community, submitting evidence and recommendations to inform the Commission's report. This engagement aims to drive meaningful changes to the UK's Refugee and Asylum System, emphasising the importance of lived experience in shaping policy.

- 4. Media Recognition:**

Our organisation was featured in Connected Voice's Spring Magazine 2023. The

article highlighted the personal story of our volunteer, Mahnoor Mansoor, who eloquently described the transformative power of volunteering with Peace of Mind, both for personal mental health and in supporting others.

5. **Community Engagement:**

On 24th June, we celebrated Refugee Week 2023 in partnership with Gateshead City of Sanctuary. The event, themed around 'compassion', provided a platform for our refugee friends to express their perspectives on what compassion means to them, fostering understanding and connection within the community.



6. **Local Support and Donations:**

We are grateful for the generous support we received throughout 2023, which included individual monetary donations and standing orders from our friends and supporters. Notably, we received a generous donation of £300 from local councillor Denise Robson and the Unite the Union NE/403/11 Branch Members on 13th January 2023. This contribution enabled us to provide essential emergency and hardship support to newly arrived members of the RAS community, exemplified by our ability to supply food for a family who lost their

Aspen Payment card over the Christmas period. Such acts of kindness are vital in helping us meet the immediate needs of those we serve, and we extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have supported our mission.

These achievements reflect Peace of Mind's ongoing commitment to supporting the RAS community, advocating for systemic change, and fostering community integration. Our success is a testament to the dedication of our team, the support of our partners, and the generosity of the North East community. We remain grateful for this collaborative effort that enables us to continue our vital work in supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

The Number of Families and Individuals Supported in 2023:

Gateshead: 932

Newcastle upon Tyne: 305

Other areas: 148+

This represents 2,232 individuals and over 8,000 contact episodes throughout 2023, reflecting the significant need for emotional and practical support. Our comprehensive support package included welfare and benefits advice, assistance with form-filling, homelessness support, emergency food and hygiene supplies, weather-appropriate clothing, school uniforms, newborn essentials, baby buggies, household items and small furniture pieces.

In 2023, we distributed:

- 4,972 emergency food parcels
- 1,869 hot meals through our Warm Space initiative
- 2,425 hygiene parcels

Peace of Mind CIO supported individuals from 42 different nationalities during the past year.

Our Year in Numbers:

- 8,000+ contact episodes
- 2,232 individuals supported directly or indirectly across our services
- 238 individuals supported with health and wellbeing issues
- 195 refugees and asylum seekers assisted through our advocacy support

- 110 individuals supported to learn English through our weekly conversational classes
- 64 women attended our English classes
- 318 Vodafone SIM cards distributed, supporting over 200 households to stay connected, providing an essential lifeline for many isolated families
- 32 young people supported with volunteering opportunities
- 224 refugee and asylum-seeking children supported through holiday activities, addressing holiday hunger and social isolation
- 2,310 hot meals provided to children during the Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays, offering vital nutrition when school-provided meals were unavailable

Our weekly drop-in sessions, offering emotional and practical support, remain at the core of our work. This year has been another exceptionally busy period, surpassing previous records in terms of demand and support provided. We have warmly welcomed new arrivals and implemented plans to address emerging issues created by the cost-of-living crisis.

Christmas Support 2023

During the festive season, we ensured **368 children** woke up on Christmas day with a gift of their own, ensuring they didn't feel excluded or different from their peers. Additionally, **219 adults** received Christmas gifts and food hampers, providing them with much-needed relief and joy during this challenging time of year.

Beneficiary Feedback

The feedback from our beneficiaries highlights the profound impact of our services on their lives. Here are a few of their heartfelt comments:

- *"Peace of Mind charity is like my home."*
- *"I feel safe when I am at Peace of Mind."*
- *"When you said: don't be afraid of asking for help. This made me very happy and relaxed. First time someone spoke to me so nicely."*
- *"Thank you, thank you for the food and toys. My children are so happy. We love the Peace of Mind Community."*
- *"I like meeting people from my country, it makes me feel happy and not alone."*

One particularly touching story came from a woman whose NASS section 95 support was stopped twice. She explained, *"If Peace of Mind was not there to support with weekly food parcels, my family, including three young children, would have starved to death. Thank you, Peace of Mind.:"*

Survey:

We conducted a survey to better understand the needs and satisfaction of our RAS community. The key findings from the survey are as follows:

- **98%** were happy to receive advocacy support.
- **98%** were happy to receive culturally appropriate food, toiletries, and clothing support in their time of hardship/financial difficulty.
- **91%** were happy to have the opportunity to take part in wellbeing activities as a family with their children.
- **89%** were happy to receive befriending support and having someone to talk to about their concerns/needs.
- **89%** were happy to receive support around digital inclusion.
- **85%** were happy to access legal aid support through our referral process.
- **85%** were happy to receive information about their entitlement to free NHS services.

We also gathered data on specific challenges faced by our beneficiaries:

- **85%** struggle to afford formula milk for their children.
- **88%** struggle to afford nappies for their children.
- **89%** struggle to afford toiletries and cleaning products.
- **90%** struggle to buy medicine for their children.
- **93%** never have enough money to buy food, especially culturally appropriate food.
- **95%** struggle to afford the clothes they need, particularly winter clothing for children.
- **96%** struggle to buy secondary school uniforms and other supplies, including stationery.

These findings underscore the urgent need for continued support. Therefore, we will persist in providing relief through emergency assistance for food, clothing, toiletries, and baby items, as well as offering casework support to meet the immediate needs of new arrivals and those facing severe hardship.

Future Outlook

The demand for our services has surged in 2024 as the challenges facing the RAS community continue to evolve amid ongoing economic uncertainty and social inequalities. Many families and individuals now require sustained, repeated support to combat homelessness, hunger, and isolation. We remain steadfast in our commitment to addressing these needs by expanding our core services—food, clothing, digital

inclusion, and emotional support—while also advocating for enhanced rights and assistance for the RAS community across the North East.

Conclusion

2023 has been a year of both tremendous challenge and achievement for Peace of Mind. The communities we serve continue to face significant hardship, but thanks to our dedicated team, volunteers, and the unwavering support of our funders and partners, we have been able to provide a lifeline to thousands of vulnerable individuals and families.

The challenges ahead are significant, but so is our resolve. We remain committed to promoting dignity, inclusion, and hope for the RAS community, and we thank all those who have supported us in making this year's work possible.

Together, we will continue to create lasting change and provide essential services to those who need them most.

Peace of Mind CIO

Financial Statements

For the period 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023

Charity Number: 1194752

Registered Office:

Methodist Church
Whitehall Road
Gateshead
Tyne & Wear
NE8 4LH

Date CIO Registered: 10th June 2021

Core purpose of CIO:

The objects of the CIO are to relieve the needs of those granted refugee status or those seeking asylum and their dependents living (temporarily or permanently) in Gateshead and Newcastle, and the surrounding areas by:

- a) relieving poverty or financial hardship in particular, but not exclusively, by the provision of advice, translating, education, emergency food packs, small grants, household, and personal care items
- b) the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship, or social and economic circumstances.

Trustees:

Nida Muzaffar

Rifat Farrukh Siddiqi

Tanveer Shuja

Mahnoor Mansoor

This report has been agreed at the Peace of Mind CIO board meeting on 30th August 2024

Financial Summary

Income of £237,608 was received during the reporting period, of which £214,810 (90%) was restricted funds. After expenses of £205,647, a surplus of £31,961 was retained and carried forward to 2024.

Capital & Reserves brought forward at 1st January 2023 were £132,475, and with a surplus of £31,961 generated in 2023, the balance carried forward at 31st December 2023 is £164,435, of which £74,500 (45%) is restricted funds. The restricted funds are represented by:

- Gateshead Borough Council: £12,537
- Tyne & Wear Community Foundation: £7,500
- Lloyds Bank Foundation: £25,000
- Groundwork UK: £1,463
- Whittington Charity: £20,000
- Power to Change: £8,000

From the unrestricted funds of £89,935 the Board of Trustees have allocated £41,000 to the following projects:

- Women's Empowerment: £20,000
- Economic Inclusion: £15,000
- Individual Hardship (Asylum applicants): £6,000

This leaves a balance of £48,935 unrestricted funds, which is in line with the charity's policy of keeping reserves of around 25% of current annual spend (including restricted funds).

Financial Statement: 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023

Income	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total
Grants	214,810		214,810
Donations		22,798	22,798
	£214,810	£22,798	£237,608
Expenditure			
Beneficiary support			113,242
Volunteer Expenses			1,879
Premises costs			12,799
Facilitator Fees			74,849
Professional costs			2,878
Total Expenditure			£205,647
Surplus for 2023			£31,961

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2023

Net Assets		
Cash at Bank	184,551	
Creditors	(20,115)	
		£164,436
Capital & Reserves		
Surplus b/fwd 1 st January 2023	132,475	
Surplus generated in 2023	31,961	
Surplus c/fwd at 31st December 2023		£164,436

Acknowledgements

The trustees would like to thank the following for their generous contributions during 2023.

Virgin Money Foundation
Gateshead Council
Rise North East
Lloyds Bank Foundation
Tyne & Wear Community Foundation
J H Rausing Trust
Groundwork UK
Prism Gift Fund
Power to Change
Bauer Radio's Cash
Fund for Human Need
Whittington Charity
Local Giving Ltd

And all those kind individuals and volunteers who supported the CIO.



Peace of Mind volunteers



Independent Examiners Report

Independent Examiner's Report to Peace of Mind CIO

I report on the accounts of Peace of Mind CIO for the year 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023, which are summarised in the charity's 2023 Annual Report.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees of Peace of Mind CIO

The Trustees of Peace of Mind CIO are responsible for keeping proper financial records, including invoices, receipts and bank and other income statements. My responsibility is to review these, along with the accounts and state whether any particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by Peace of Mind CIO and verification of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the Trustees of Peace of Mind CIO concerning any such matters.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention, which gives me reasonable cause to believe that the requirements to keep proper accounting records and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records have been fully met.

Signed: 

Name: Peter Anderson

Relevant qualification: Independent Accountant

Address: Pinetree Business Services, Birtley Business Centre, Station Lane, Birtley, Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham DH3 1QT

Date: 13/08/2024