



# Stories of Hope and Home

Registered Charity: 1195224

## ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2022 – MARCH 2023



[@stories\\_of\\_home](https://twitter.com/stories_of_home)



[hopeandhomestories](https://www.facebook.com/hopeandhomestories)

[www.storiesofhome.org.uk](http://www.storiesofhome.org.uk)



# Our Vision

*For people who have lived experience of the UK asylum system to have spaces for their stories and experiences to be shared and heard, contributing to a more well-informed and welcoming society in which people who have sought sanctuary feel empowered, included, and re-humanised.*



## Our Aims

*Stories of Hope and Home has dual, complementary aims:*

to bring together people with lived experience of seeking asylum:  
to create safe spaces to build community and to explore and process their experiences.

to facilitate encounters and share stories with others:  
promoting learning, challenging misconceptions, developing empathy and inspiring action.

*Or, as stated in our constitution:*

- 1) The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among refugees and asylum seekers in the West Midlands who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing a space and community in which to meet others, build friendships, practise the English language, learn communication skills and creatively explore stories and life experiences as a means of integrating into a new community.*
- 2) To advance the education of the public through the provision of activities and events which inform participants and develop their understanding of the lived experience of asylum seekers and refugees who flee persecution and settle in a new country, help to foster positive attitudes towards diversity and migration and counter misinformation.*

# Context: The Story So Far

*Stories of Hope and Home* came into existence in October 2019 and, having survived a pandemic, became a registered CIO (charitable incorporated organisation), charity number: 1195224 on 20th July 2021.

From the germ of an idea to fulfil a need, *Stories of Hope and Home* has grown and flourished. This report tells part of that story.

***"Stories of Hope and Home is a charity where people from everywhere can come and feel welcomed."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

## Context: The society that surrounds us

The reality faced by people seeking sanctuary in the UK has become increasingly challenging. Political discourse and certain sections of the media have become ever-more anti-migration, and laws and policies have been introduced to make the lives of people seeking sanctuary progressively worse. Within the year to which this report relates we saw the introduction of the *Nationality and Borders Act* and then the presentation of the *Illegal Migration Bill* (now Act). The lengthy periods of time people are spending both in unsuitable hotel accommodation as well as waiting for decisions on their claims are having a serious impact on people's wellbeing.

It is not all dark clouds and thunder storms. We also find many seeds of hope. We are inspired by the resilience and joy we witness among the sanctuary-seekers despite all they are going through, and by the desire to offer compassion and welcome we see from those we encounter.

We know both aspects of our work are more needed now than ever.





# A Year in Review: Building Community

*Stories of Hope and Home* brings together a group of people with lived experience of seeking asylum at regular twice-weekly sessions. Attendance varies, and includes both regular attenders and those who come and go. The group is close-knit and mutually supportive, with participants frequently describing the project as a "family"; but it always remains open and welcoming to newcomers too.

Regular sessions involve space to build community and for conversation, creative writing and lots of coffee and cake! These sessions are the bedrock which makes everything else possible. Trips and shared activities also play an important role in how we build community and deepen our connections with one another. We never miss an opportunity for a party or celebration. Through the year we have celebrated birthdays, a variety of cultural celebrations including Eid, Eritrean Christmas and Nowruz (Persian / Kurdish / Azeri New Year), and perhaps the best celebrations of all ...

when we get to share in the joy of someone finally being granted their right to remain in the UK, often after a very long wait.

Beyond this time spent together as a group, one-to-one assistance offered to individual participants also makes an important contribution to creating this supportive community. By definition wide and varied in reach, this support includes both the practical and the emotional. Whether it is filling in forms, helping with studies, or offering a listening ear, we know that having somewhere to turn for help really matters.

***"It's like a second family to me, and I know that if ever need any help or support I have Stories of Hope and Home to rely on."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

***"It means a lot to me. It is like a life story. Things happen in life and they make you to understand what life is."***

***"It has meant to me like a new chapter started in my life and shed a weight from my chest."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participants*



# A Year in Review: Outreach and Encounter

Our programme of facilitated encounters took us to 23 different schools this year, of which we visited 20 for the first time. They included both primary and secondary schools and we met with children from three to eighteen and all ages in between, as well as leading sessions with groups of school staff.

***"It helps me clear my emotions and also help the children know more about the Asylum System."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

In the face of hostile political discourse and the harsh realities experienced by those who have come to our country in search of safety, these young people restore our hope.

Without fail, the children we meet recognise the injustice and inhumanity of the asylum system. We see in them empathy, warmth and generosity. Above all we see their desire for change and their commitment to working to create welcoming, compassionate, fair communities. Their thoughtful reflections, insightful questions, and passion for action suggest the future is in good hands.

***"Educating them with sharing my experience makes me feel I matter in the society."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

While our priority is visiting schools we have also encountered a number of other groups during the year including trainee teachers at the *University of Wolverhampton*, trainee Christian ministers at *Queens Foundation* and addressing the CTBI (*Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*) conference "Life Beyond Borders".



***"The visit really helped us to gain a better understanding of the reality faced by so many in regard to the trauma caused by life experiences in home country, journeys to the UK and challenges faced once here. There was lots of positive feedback. It was incredibly insightful and inspiring."***

*Teacher*



# A Year in Review: Campaigning and Media

Forced migration is a hot topic in media and political discourse but all too often it is a subject from which the voices of the people most concerned are excluded. Empowering people who have lived experience of seeking sanctuary to find and use their voice is at the heart of the ethos of *Stories of Hope and Home*. Sometimes that is through poetry and performance, sometimes through encounters with school children, and sometimes through involvement in campaigning or speaking to the media.

***"The project has helped me have opportunities to show myself as a migrant and change the stereotype of migrants who came to the UK through irregular routes."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

Many of the participants in *Stories of Hope and Home* have added their voices to campaigns about the treatment of people seeking sanctuary. Several participants contributed to [a campaign video against the anti-refugee laws](#). Others, after participating in the national conference, contributed to [a video about the right to work](#) produced by the Lift the Ban coalition.

Several *Stories of Hope and Home* participants have [shared parts of their stories with journalists](#), as another way of [contributing to the conversation](#) and [changing perceptions](#). (*Underlined text takes you to different linked stories*)

*Stories of Hope and Home* Participants have also engaged directly with elected representatives, including writing to local MPs. One of our participants addressed a full Birmingham City Council Meeting, who confirmed they would sign the pledge against the anti-refugee laws, [a story covered in the local news](#).



***"Stories of Hope and Home gives sanctuary to asylum seekers and makes many people understand the difficulties the asylum seekers and refugees are facing. By telling their difficult stories that they have faced we make more people involved to help them overcome those pasts."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

# A Year in Review: Creative Projects

***"I learned that people come to England with lots of different experiences and that although we have different backgrounds, there are many things that we have in common."***

*School pupil, audience member.*

***"My highlight of the event was the audience especially the school children showed so much excitement and keen interest during our performance. In fact it made me really emotional"***

*Stories Performer*

At the beginning of the year we had just started work on an exciting collaborative project with *Welsh National Opera* and *Birmingham REP*. Working with writer Stephen Camden and composer Daniel Blanco Albert, a script and score was devised that poetically meshed together parts of the participants' life stories.

The project culminated in an incredible performance of *"Refugee: What do you know about me?"* where project participants performed alongside professional musicians and singers on the main stage of the Rep to an audience of 500 school pupils. It was an amazing day with very positive feedback from both the performers and the audience.

***"I loved listening to the music. The personalities of the people on stage really came though in their acting."***

*School pupil, audience member*

As the year ended, work was well underway on our next major performance project: a play the group were devising and writing themselves. But more of that next year!

In between times there have been some other smaller creative projects: we performed some of our poetry at three different events during Refugee Week 2022, took part in a *"We Are Birmingham"* art project with *Celebrating Sanctuary*, discovered a unique part of British culture by performing a pantomime version of *Cinderella* in two primary schools just before Christmas, and contributed to a photography and writing project *"You can see me but I don't exist"*





# A Year in Review: Festivals of Encounter

In the summer of 2022 we returned to St Cassian's Centre, Kintbury where we held our first *Festival of Encounter* twelve months earlier. We invited back some of those who had participated in our two previous festivals. Many brought friends or family members to share the experience. Friendships were renewed, stories were shared, poetry was written ... and much fun was had!

In March we were finally able to have our next *Festival of Encounter* at Soli House in Alton. We say "finally" because after it had been twice postponed by Covid, it was a particular joy to come together at last. On the final morning someone described it as "walking in to loving chaos, like a family": testament to the success of these events. 24 hours earlier, we had only just met.



***"No other experience gives you this opportunity, there is so much learning to be had from getting out of your comfort zone. Immersing yourself into an encounter like this allows 360 degree learning, reflections and knowledge to be gained. There's no 'us' and 'them' we are all just one group."***

*Festival of Encounter Participant*

In the autumn, we had the opportunity to speak about the pedagogy surrounding the festivals at the *TEESNet* conference. It was a chance to reflect on and share our learning and to encourage others to explore this model of learning through encounter.



***"It made me recognise that, unconsciously, I had predetermined ideas and views of asylum seekers and refugees. Encountering people in the way we did enabled me to gain an understanding of others' experiences that I would never have gained had I not participated. It was authentic, just people being people and that's what made it so significant."***

*Festival of Encounter Participant*



# Our Impact: a few statistics



**64 adult  
participants**

**24 newcomers**

**21 accompanying  
children**

**For each of our nine  
indicators\*, over 80% of  
participants identified a  
positive impact.**

**72 sessions**

**2 residentials**

**32 other trips  
and activities**

*"My life has been enriched by  
the sense of friendship with  
others and belonging to my  
wider community. I feel  
privileged and thankful to be  
part of this family"*

*Volunteer*

**23 nationalities**

*"This project helps me to  
overcome a lot of difficulties  
and move on. Thanks to  
everyone who made this  
project."*

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*



(\* the 9 indicators we asked about were: **Improve** mental wellbeing / feel happier, **Improve** English, **Feel** more confident, **Discover** or develop new skills, **Make** new friends / feel part of a community, **Understand** the asylum process better, **Feel** better integrated into my local community, **Get** support when I need it)

# Our Impact: A few statistics

**28 school  
visits**

**23 different  
schools**

**23 Stories  
participants  
involved in  
school visits**

**4200 students  
(approx)**

**10 other  
encounters**

*We asked schools to sum up their encounters in three words: this is what they said:*



**3 poetry  
performances**

**2 opera  
performances**

**2 pantomime  
performances**

**100% of schools said  
they would like to  
work with us again**

**100% of schools were able to identify actions  
they had taken in response to the encounter.**

*"It was inspirational. A few sentences couldn't  
begin to do justice to the impact."*

*Teacher*



# Who's who

## Trustees

Tawasol Abdelsamad, Musharaf Abdullayeva, Emma Birks, Helena Madden and James Trewby.

## Staff

The charity employs one part-time (0.4FTE) member of staff as Project Manager, Stephanie Neville.

## Volunteers

We have appreciated the support of a number of regular and occasional volunteers.

## With Thanks


We are grateful to all our funders, partners and everyone who supports us in different ways to make what we do possible, including:

- Our funders: *(including funding received prior to the period in question which continued to support our work during this year)*
  - Near Neighbours, The National Lottery Awards for All, The Congregation of the Passion, The Westhill Foundation;
  - the schools and organisations who have donated or fundraised for us;
  - the individual and anonymous donors whose one-off or regular contributions have been invaluable in supporting our work;
  - everyone who has bought a copy of our poetry book *"Soaring with Clipped Wings"*.
- The Church at Carrs Lane and Birmingham REP who host our regular sessions.
- All who have collaborated on projects with us during the year: Asylum Matters, The Columban Missionaries, Near Neighbours, Welsh National Opera, Birmingham REP, Gignoux Photos, Celebrating Sanctuary, St Cassian's Centre, Birmingham Catholic Youth Service.
- The Birmingham Schools Of Sanctuary Network and all the schools who have invited us or engaged with us.

## Contact Details

If you are interested in learning more about Stories of Hope and Home, joining the project, or collaborating with us in some way, we'd love to hear from you!

 [info@storiesofhome.org.uk](mailto:info@storiesofhome.org.uk)

 07598922095

# Financial Summary

*\*subject to independent examination*

## Income

	restricted	unrestricted	Total
Grants	15000	6000	21000
Donations and gifts	0	7244	7244
Other	2610	1392	4002
Total Income	17610	14636	32246

## Expenditure

Staffing	9554
Travel and Subsistence	3055
Equipment, materials, resources and refreshments	375
Activity Costs (including room hire)	3545
Other	495
Total	<b>17024</b>

Balance at 31/03/2023: £18,215

***Our full financial report will be available separately.***







CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name  
Stories of Hope and Home

No (if any)  
1195224

CC16a

## Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01/04/2022	To	Period end date 31/03/2023
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### Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Grants	6,000	15,000	-	21,000	2,800
Dontions and gifts	7,244	-	-	7,244	4,281
Gift Aid	542	-	-	542	-
Payments for participation in Festivals of Encounter	-	1,150	-	1,150	240
Payment of travel costs for encounter visits	-	1,215	-	1,215	24
Payments for workshops and performances	425	245	-	670	-
Book Sales	425	-	-	425	550
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>14,636</b>	<b>17,610</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>32,246</b>	<b>7,895</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>14,636</b>	<b>17,610</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>32,246</b>	<b>7,895</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Staffing	-	9,554	-	9,554	7,560
Travel costs	-	3,055	-	3,055	1,925
Equipment, material and resources	-	100	-	100	338
Refreshments	-	275	-	275	370
Room hire	250	-	-	250	-
Activity costs	2,145	1,150	-	3,295	1,602
Public liability insurance	-	192	-	192	192
Payroll Costs	120	-	-	120	60
Website and domain name	82	-	-	82	14
Other / misc	-	100	-	100	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>2,597</b>	<b>14,426</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,024</b>	<b>12,063</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>2,597</b>	<b>14,426</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>17,024</b>	<b>12,063</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>12,039</b>	<b>3,184</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>15,222</b>	<b>- 4,168</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,993</b>	<b>7,160</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>13,032</b>	<b>5,184</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,215</b>	<b>2,993</b>

## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Cash at bank	13,032	5,184	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	13,032	5,184	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		H. Madden	29/09/2023	





Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/  
members of

Stories of Hope and Home

On accounts for the year  
ended

March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023

Charity no  
(if any)

1195224

Set out on pages

13-14

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/03/2023.

Responsibilities and  
basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent  
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

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

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

Signed:

Date:

23/1/24

Name:

Chris Clements

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

Address:

49 St Bernards Road

Solihull

B92 7AX