

# Stories of Hope and Home

Registered Charity: 1195224

## ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024



 [@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), with 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 lovely family where we treat each other with love, kindness and respect."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

## Context: The World Around Us

It has been an exceptionally challenging year for those trapped in the UK asylum system. As the year began, the Illegal Migration Bill was passing through parliament, becoming law in July 2023, and as the year ended, the Safety of Rwanda bill was making its way into law. The already limited rights and protections for people seeking asylum were under attack. Beyond the laws and policies, much of the political and media rhetoric around asylum and migration was designed to sow division, fear and hate. The detrimental impact of all of this on the people seeking sanctuary with whom we have the privilege to work was significant.

In the midst of it all, though, there were still signs of hope. We bear witness to the incredible strength and resilience of so many sanctuary-seekers and to the gestures of compassion and welcome and the commitment to campaigning for change that we see in wider society. We also were delighted to be able to celebrate with those who, in some cases after many years, were finally granted leave to remain.

We know our work remains more necessary than ever.





# A Year in Review: Building Community

*Stories of Hope and Home* is 'home' to an ever-increasing community of people. United by their common experience of seeking asylum in the UK, they are, in every other way, a very diverse group of people with different ages and genders, different cultures and backgrounds, different skills and personalities, and different aspirations and dreams for the future.

Close-knit and mutually supportive, many participants describe *Stories of Hope and Home* as their family. Having all experienced what it means to be outsiders, they remain welcoming and hospitable to newcomers and the continued growth of the project stands as testament to that.

## Regular Sessions

Our regular, twice-weekly sessions are at the heart of the project: creating safe space to be together, build community, and deepen connections with one another. The content of the sessions varies, but generally includes some form of creative writing. We have also used sessions to help people understand aspects of the asylum process or of British culture. Plus there is always space for lots of informal conversation, coffee and cake!

***"It's a caring and concerned group that makes one feel at home though away from home. Your impact and importance is visible for my life."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

## Individual Support

The success of *Stories of Hope and Home* relies on the building of relationships of trust. Away from the increasingly busy group sessions, we offer a variety of individual support. For many participants, the issues they face are not easily resolved, but being present, accompanying people and offering a listening ear are essential.

***"It is my place of rest and to have great fun with friends."***

***"It is where I find strength for not giving up."***

***"Stories of Hope and Home is my second home"***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participants*



# A Year in Review: Trips and Celebrations

When life is hard, it is incredibly important to find opportunities to relax, to forget about your struggles, to laugh, to dance, to have fun and share joy ... and we are always keen to find any excuse for a party! One of the many advantages of such a diverse community is the chance to celebrate so many different religious and cultural festivals.

A number of different trips and visits through the year, including ice-skating as a Christmas treat, have also been wonderful opportunities to spend time together, to enjoy ourselves and to discover the local area.

***"It helps with my mental health knowing that I'm not alone."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*



***"I had a wonderful trip, it made me forget about everything. I was so happy, I met new people and I got more friends. Sincerely I wanted to stay for more days."***

*Festival of Stories Participant*

## Festival of Stories

At the end of August we had another return visit to St Cassian's Centre in Kintbury, a place where we always receive such a warm welcome and from which we come away refreshed and uplifted. This year's "Festival of Stories", was a chance for us to spend time together as a group, getting to know each other better and exploring our lives, stories and identities.



***"I loved the conversations and how there was a great balance between reflection, activities and relaxation. When people shared about their lives and we did activities together that gave me a great sense of hope."***

*Festival of Stories Participant*



# A Year in Review: Outreach and Encounter

While the time we spend together as a community is crucial, the second, outward-facing aspect of the life of Stories of Hope and Home is equally important. We continue to believe in the transformative power of encounter as a way to challenge misconceptions about people seeking sanctuary and helping young people to recognise their humanity.

***"It improves my communication skills and gives me more confidence speaking to people."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

***"Sharing our stories with them helps heal a wounded soul."***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

This year's visits have taken us to meet old friends as well as to many new schools. We have worked with children from reception classes right through to sixth forms as well as with school staff.

At times when the hostile environment has weighed heavily on the lives of people seeking sanctuary, our work in schools has also been a reliable source of hope.

Young people have been consistently open-minded, reflective and compassionate in the way they have engaged with us and the subject matter we present. Once they hear the reality faced by people in the asylum process, they invariably recognise the injustices and want to be involved in creating change. We come away from every school visit believing the future is in good hands.

School visits remain our priority but we are also able to respond to invitations from other groups and organisations and this year that included two visits to universities (Aston University and the University of Wolverhampton), a youth event in Plymouth Diocese, working with a team of young volunteers at a retreat centre, speaking at an inter-faith iftar at Birmingham Progressive Synagogue, and a public-facing event at the University of Birmingham.



***"It was extremely powerful to watch the reactions of students as the volunteers told their stories. Stories of Hope and Home plays a vital role in debunking myths and spreading the truth about those seeking asylum."***

*Teacher*

# A Year in Review: Campaigning and Media

***“Days like today are important because as asylum seekers we don't have a voice and these children are representing us and giving us their voices.”***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

Throughout the year, both the laws and policies being implemented, and the political and media rhetoric around the subject of seeking asylum have been exceptionally hostile. Active involvement in effecting change through campaigning and advocacy, and trying to find ways for the so-often-silenced voices of those with lived experience to be heard has felt essential. One significant, positive development this year has been bringing together our campaigning with our schools outreach work.

Outraged by what they heard about the decision to paint over murals at a reception centre, pupils from St Gerard's School took action and spoke to the media, launching what would become a national campaign.

We also worked with several different schools to take part in the Lift the Ban campaign High Street Challenge, campaigning for asylum seekers to be given the right to work while they wait for their claims to be processed.

Other engagement with direct efforts to effect change included participants meeting with Tahir Ali MP, speaking at a meeting with civil servants from the Asylum Support Policy department at the Home Office, sharing stories with the local media and contributing to the Asylum Matters report “Surviving in Poverty”.

***“When we were going out to ask people to join the campaign I felt a bit nervous but afterwards it felt great and amazing to spread the news and see how people actually care.”***

*School pupil*

***“This project helps us to to share our story and counter negative narrative in the public domain about refugee and asylum seekers.”***

***“We can help them realise that asylum seekers are not here because they want to be, but for their protection.”***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participants*





# A Year in Review: Creative Projects

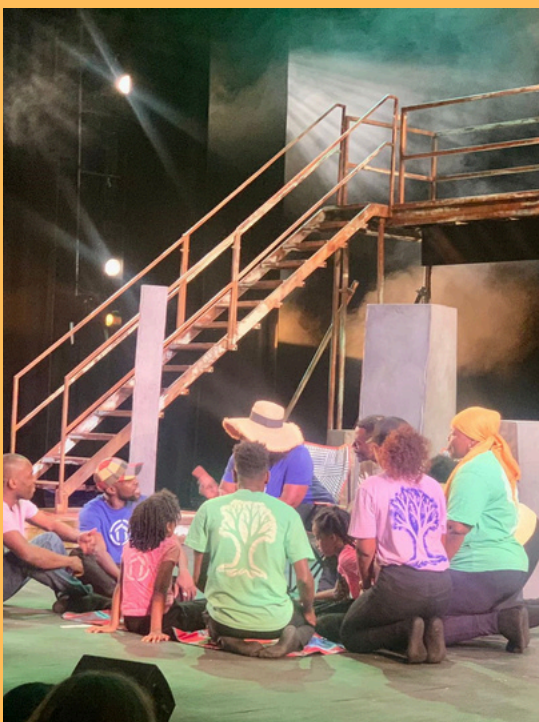
***"I felt like a famous star or a celebrity when we were on stage and after when we came out to meet everyone from the audience."***

*Stories Performer*

As the year began, work was underway on our next significant performance project. We had some external support with the script from Steven Camden, some help with the movement and much more with the sound and stage tech from the team at the REP, but without a doubt one of the best things about this year's performance was that it was very much the group's own creation. As "In the Shadow of the Trees" came together, it told the stories they wanted to tell, in the ways they wanted them told. Every idea, the overarching themes and all the little details came from within the group. Creative writing and performance talent, confidence, collaboration and leadership skills emerged, sometimes in unexpected people. After a small, intimate performance during Refugee Week, we performed to hundreds of school students in July 2023, in the main theatre at the REP and it was beautiful!

***"It was a very inspirational story. The stories were very heart warming and were portrayed beautifully They will do good in the world."***

*School pupil, audience member*



There were other smaller creative projects during the year too, including a photography and poetry project "You can see me, but I don't exist" which included an exhibition at the Library of Birmingham as well as two performances bringing together texts from Shakespeare with texts we had written.

***"Thank you for the invite. It was a lovely opportunity for our children to experience the stories of people who come to the UK to seek refuge."***

*Teacher, audience member.*

By the end of the year we were hard at work devising and writing our next performance piece. The REP had chosen the theme "Love and Rebellion" for their festival and we were in our element ... but more on that next year!

***"Seeing the show awoke a lot of emotions in me. I feel very proud when I saw my friends perform."***

*Stories Participant, Audience member*



# Our Impact: a few statistics



**78 adult  
participants**

**37 newcomers**

**32 accompanying  
children**

**77 sessions**

**32 nationalities**

**20 other trips  
and activities**

**Every participant who  
completed our  
evaluation\* could  
identify positive  
impacts of the charity  
on their lives**

***"Stories of Hope and Home  
gives me courage to tell my  
stories, and being heard by  
many different people. "***

*Stories of Hope and Home Participant*

***"My time with the group has  
been life-affirming and such a  
privilege: I feel so lucky to be a  
part of the Stories family - it is  
such an honour to support the  
work of amplifying the voices of  
those with lived experience."***

*Volunteer*



*\*33 participants completed the evaluation. Identified benefits included improved mental well-being, more confidence, ability to access support, a sense of belonging, feeling able to make a difference, and developing new skills.*

# Our Impact: a few statistics

**36 school visits**

**30 different schools**

**23 new schools visited for the first time**

**5800 students (approx)**

**10 other encounters**

**27 Stories participants involved in school visits and other encounters**

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



**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**

***"These visits are invaluable in moving past media headlines and damaging language and supporting pupils, and staff, in recognising the human experiences of others."***

*Teacher*



# Who's who

## Trustees

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

## Staff

The charity employs a part-time (0.6FTE) Project Manager, Stephanie Neville. Since March 2024, we have appointed a project assistant (0.2FTE), Rebecca Loneran.

## Volunteers

We have been very grateful for the commitment of our regular volunteer, Hannah Loneran.

## 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 before April 2023 which continued to support our work during this year)*
  - The National Lottery, The Congregation of the Passion, Westhill Foundation, MSN fund, Hilden fund, Jesuit Fund for Social Justice, Birmingham City Council, Ben and Jerry's Foundation
  - the schools and organisations who have donated or fundraised for us
  - the individual donors whose one-off or regular contributions have been so important to us
- 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, Birmingham REP, Gignoux Photos, Celebrating Sanctuary, St Cassian's Centre,
- 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

*approved by the independent examiner*

## Income

	restricted	unrestricted	Total
Grants	17900	18000	35900
Donations and gifts	175	7749	7924
Other	431	2826	3257
Total Income	18506	28575	47081

## Expenditure

Staffing	14380
Travel and Subsistence	2694
Equipment, materials, resources and refreshments	1243
Activity Costs (including room hire)	3411
Other	752
Total Expenditure	<b>22480</b>

Balance at 31/03/2023: £42,401

***Our full financial report is available separately on request.***







CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name  
Stories of Hope and Home

No (if any)  
1195224

## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period  
from

Period start date  
01/04/2023

To

Period end date  
31/03/2024

### 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	18,000	17,900	-	35,900	21,000
Dontions and gifts	7,749	175	-	7,924	7,244
Gift Aid	1,541	-	-	1,541	542
Payments for participation in Festivals of Encounter	-	250	-	250	1,150
Payment of travel costs for encounter visits	-	181	-	181	1,215
Payments for workshops and performances	890	-	-	890	670
Book Sales	70	-	-	70	425
Interest	225	-	-	225	-
Misc	100	-	-	100	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>28,575</b>	<b>18,506</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>47,081</b>	<b>32,246</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>28,575</b>	<b>18,506</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>47,081</b>	<b>32,246</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
Staffing	9,146	5,234	-	14,380	9,554
Travel costs	-	2,694	-	2,694	3,055
Equipment, material and resources	-	458	-	458	100
Refreshments	-	786	-	786	275
Room hire	-	345	-	345	250
Activity costs	2,641	425	-	3,066	3,295
Public liability insurance	192	-	-	192	192
Payroll Costs	239	-	-	239	120
Website and domain name	34	-	-	34	82
Other / misc	287	-	-	287	100
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>12,540</b>	<b>9,940</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>22,480</b>	<b>17,024</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
Laptop for project manager	415	-	-	415	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>12,955</b>	<b>9,940</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>22,895</b>	<b>17,024</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>15,620</b>	<b>8,566</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>24,186</b>	<b>15,222</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>13,032</b>	<b>5,184</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18,215</b>	<b>2,993</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>28,652</b>	<b>13,749</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>42,401</b>	<b>18,215</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>	Current account	2,176	-	-
	Instant access savings	18,476	13,749	-
	Fixed term savings account	8,000	-	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>		<b>28,652</b>	<b>13,749</b>
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		<b>Unrestricted funds to nearest £</b>	<b>Restricted funds to nearest £</b>	<b>Endowment funds to nearest £</b>
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>	Details			
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>	Details			
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>	Details			
	Laptop	general	415	-
	Bus ticket stock (90 adult daysavers purchased at £3.80 each)	travel	342	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>	Details			
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	





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> 2024

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:

03/9/24

Name:

Chris Clements

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

Address:

49 St Bernards Road

Solihull

B92 7AX