

Stories of Hope and Home

Registered Charity: 1195224

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2024 – MARCH 2025



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.*

Introduction and Context

This was the year in which Stories of Hope and Home turned 5, having been founded in 2019, although we only became a registered CIO (charitable incorporated organisation) in July 2021. Celebrating our 5th birthday in September 2024 with over 100 people who have been part of our story was definitely one of the highlights of the year. It was a chance to look back at what we have achieved so far and also to look ahead and dream about the future.

The external context for people who have come to the UK seeking safety continues to be exceptionally challenging. In both the laws and policies being implemented, and the rhetoric surrounding the subject, they continue to experience significant hostility.

Against that backdrop, both facets of the work of Stories of Hope and Home feel more necessary than ever. We continue to recognise the importance of offering a sense of community and safety to people seeking sanctuary: a space to be themselves, to be together, to ask questions, to create, to use language, to find support. We also continue to believe in the importance of finding ways to help their voices, so often excluded from the discourse around migration, to be heard in order to challenge misinformation and misconceptions and to help inspire the next generation to build more compassionate, welcoming communities.

In keeping with our commitment to platform different voices, this year's annual report has been written collaboratively by many of those who have shared in the life of the organisation over the past year.

Steph (Project Manager)

Stories of Hope and Home means to me a family and light that makes me believe that no matter how hard the chapter is today, a better one can begin tomorrow. With them we find strength, healing and connection.

Massaba (participant)



Our Impact: a few statistics



**86 adult
participants**

49 newcomers

**34 accompanying
children**

74 sessions

27 nationalities

**34 other trips
and activities**

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

*It is where I instantly forget my
worries and replace them with a
smile. It is my family in the UK.
Franklin (participant)*

*To me, Stories of Hope and
Home is a warm and safe place
where I felt heard, supported,
and never alone.
Zahra (participant)*

*It's not just a charity group but
strangers that are now family.
Faith (participant)*



**35 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

46 school visits

41 different schools

17 new schools visited for the first time

2 residential festivals of encounter

12 other encounters

38 Stories participants involved in school visits and other encounters

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



"Our students and staff were moved to tears by some of the stories and we were compelled to explore this further. We are 100% keen to work with you again."

Teacher

A Year in Review: Regular Activities

Projects during our regular, twice-weekly sessions over the past year have included: working towards our summer performances at the Birmingham REP Theatre, the “Trees through Time” Project with Birmingham Botanical Gardens, and beginning work on our next significant writing project “Letters from My Life” as well as plenty of other stand alone activities.

When I first came to England, I was embraced by a warm place, called Stories Hope and Home. There I found love and warmth from people from different countries, kind people united by one goal: safety, despite our language differences and the difficult path we travelled to this country.

In this beautiful place we meet to improve our English, talk to each other, help each other, write poetry and have fun, respect each other and each other's culture.

We meet every Friday and it is the best day of the week for me, the day I meet my new friends and the place where I relax from the pressure I face. Just a hug from a friend makes me feel warm and I forget that I am far from my family and country. This place for me is about hiding from my sorrows and rejoicing my time. This place provides me with psychological comfort.

I learned a lot in this place. I gained the ability to write poetry, which I loved since I was young. I learned theatre. I started going to primary schools and facing children and talking to them about my experience in England and educating them about refugees and asylum seekers.

And the end I extend my love, appreciation and respect to all the members who work hard in this beautiful space and provide us with all the love and affection, morally and materially, as we face difficult times.

Ali (participant)



I have been with Stories of Hope & Home for more than 1 year. I have attended different activities trips and parties.

I have been attending meetings at the REP. We have performed at the REP last year and also this year. I also attended meetings at Carrs Lane. Here we do different things. Sometimes we write stories, letters, and poems. I get so excited when we do the writing because I learn a lot of things. Like how to write a letter. How to write a story and poems.

We also do Birthday parties and go out for picnics. We have gone for trips, last year and also this year. I get so happy when I go for trips with the group. Because I have never gone anywhere for a trip or enjoying the way I enjoy with this group.

Stories of Hope & Home are my family. When I am with them I forget my depression and stress.

Annah (participant)



The Botanical Garden project was one of the most joyful and educational at the same time.

I learned so much about different type of trees, and plants while having so much fun with our group, and I also, want to thank everyone from the botanic gardens team for their warm hospitality and support throughout the project.

Ahmed (participant)

Writing about myself and my past has always been difficult, but being part of the writing project has been, in some ways, both therapeutic and enriching. Having this space and being around people willing to share their stories with me is a reminder that we all share something in common: the capacity to overcome obstacles, to be resilient regardless the difficulties of life, the ability to reflect, look back on the past, and tell the world that our stories matters, we matter.

Dani (participant)



A Year in Review: Outreach and Encounter

Our school visits programme has continued to expand with return visits to schools we have worked with previously as well as lots of new schools inviting us in to meet staff and students.

In the face of so many voices talking (negatively) about people seeking safety in Britain, Stories of Hope and Home offers schools (students and teachers) something different - the privileged opportunity to hear things first hand. Many thanks and congratulations to all the brave Stories people who have spoken up and shared from their experiences, challenging the misconceptions and propaganda, and inviting the world to see them as individuals, not just (often incorrect) stereotypes and statistics.

James (trustee)

Your organisation came in last year to our school with three asylum speakers to speak about what you do and their stories. First of all, that day has stuck with me ever since and I want to thank you for the activities and time you took to come and speak to us all, it really gave me a new perspective on the asylum seeker situation. Please see this as a token of appreciation for all the good that you do. Thank you very much!

Rosa (Y10 student)



We weren't quite sure what to expect from the visit and are perhaps not a typical school for the team. We were however delighted to follow up previous work we have done about refugees and the idea of home across the whole school as well as keen to quash any misconceptions that may have arisen following local riots last summer. I have had nothing but glowing feedback from your day from parents, staff, children and governors and I hope that our children remember this day as a key learning experience that they can apply to the way that they uphold our values in the future.

Susan (headteacher)

For me, visiting schools is a valuable opportunity to share my story as someone who came to this country not by choice, but in search of safety. During these visits, we speak to students of different ages, tailoring our stories so they can truly understand. It's important to me that they see us and others seeking safety as human beings, just like them. We have families and friends. We are educated, we have skills, talents, and hobbies. But we were forced to leave everything behind because of persecution and threats to our lives.

I choose to take part in these visits with my friends, members from Stories of Hope and Home to give students and teachers the chance to see us, hear from us, and connect with us directly. The aim is to challenge the negative narratives often publicised by some politicians and some of the media, blaming people seeking safety for many of the country's problems. The government often scapegoats asylum seekers when it fails to provide quality services to its own people. I want students and teachers to understand that we are not the problem. We are people with so much to offer. We want to contribute and are capable of doing so, but we are held back by hostile policies.

We answer their questions honestly and encourage them to be our mouthpieces by sharing our stories with their friends, families, and communities. We also urge them to engage with policymakers, such as their local MPs and community leaders, by writing letters and encouraging them to advocate for fairer policies for people seeking safety.

As we wrap up our sharing we always ask students to imagine how they would feel if they were the ones forced to flee their homes. It's a powerful moment that often leads to deep empathy and reflection. It's humbling to witness how much they connect with the reality of people seeking safety, and to see how eager they are to challenge negative stereotypes and shift public perception.

In some schools, students write to us letters and poems of encouragement and welcome. I have a collection of many beautiful letters & poems, full of emotion and a clear sign that these students understand and believe in a humane approach to people seeking safety. It gives me hope that when they grow older and are in positions of power, they will help make a better world, one where human dignity is truly upheld.

Visiting schools makes me feel that I'm playing a role in shaping a better future, one where the next generation leads with empathy, creates fairer policies, and respects the dignity and humanity of everyone.

Virginia (participant)



A Year in Review: Special Activities

This year included a performance of “Love is a Rebellion” on Stage at the REP and the subsequent recording and release of our first single “Love is how we Rebel”. We had two residential Festivals of Encounter, and a number of other trips. There were frequent opportunities to celebrate together: our fifth birthday was the biggest party of the year but it was far from the only one.

Our performance was in July 2024 at Birmingham Rep and it was called Love is a Rebellion. It was fun being on stage with all my friends.

In the performance we sang a song that we wrote called “Love is how we Rebel”. I love our song because the words mean something and it has got a really exciting tune. We recorded it and we had so much fun and now it is on Spotify and YouTube. If you want to listen to the song, you can search for it.

Naomi (participant)



Just a few words: a mixture of joy, sadness, comfort, disappointment, tenderness, grief, presence for each other, friendship, brotherhood, solidarity and humanism gave this magnificent show and this music.

I took a real pleasure in participating in this project; everyone's dedication, team spirit made it possible to give an unforgettable experience. Despite all our realities and differences, show that with love we can change things, mentalities, consciences, the world and have a bright future. Seeing this possible through the deep bond created with this community is really great.

Abou Bakr (participant and trustee)



I love all the trips we had. We had loads of parties in nearly every month of the year. We celebrated Stories of Hope and Home's birthday. We celebrated, Easter, Eid, Nowruz and Christmas and lots more things too. I like the trips because we have time with our friends and fresh air and at the parties we eat delicious food and we can dance!

Galilee (participant)

My family and I always remember the best moments we spent in Kintbury last year.

It was a wonderful experience for us to travel as a family from many years and allowed us to walk away from our home daily routine for 3 days.

The very best of it was the opportunity to meet and make new friends among the staff of some schools and organisations who were part of the encounter.

All the activities were well-organised. I really loved the workshops groups which were very rich in exchange of ideas on different topics connected to our stories as Asylum Seekers or refugees.

Sports activities as walking in countryside or climbing the wall were there to refresh and revitalise our muscles. My kids enjoyed particularly that part as they are very active in that field.

Furthermore, the fact of being connected with the nature was so special and revitalising without forgetting the famous bonfire in the evening associated with songs and dancing, making it a mixture of fun to add in memories.

Maurice (participant)



Going to Kintbury with 'Stories' felt like going on holiday with a group of people who you knew you would be friends with by the end of the stay. It was joyful, challenging and exciting. Our expectations were surpassed as we listened, shared and enjoyed ourselves. We felt privileged to be included.

Jackie (Festival of Encounter participant)

We had such a wonderful trip to Llandudno, the journey to Llandudno turn out to be more than just a trip, it became a memory with family and friendship. Stories of Hope and Home is a family. We knew each other before and others we were meeting for the first time and second time, but very quickly it felt as if we had always been one family.

Sharing our stories, listening to one another with open hearts, in those conversations we discovered strength, resilience, and hope.

We enjoyed delicious food and the Staff were very friendly and nice.

What made our trip unforgettable was not only the beauty of Llandudno, but how it made us feel. For three days, stress disappeared.

Massaba (participant)



A Year in Review: The old and the new

Our participants include those who have been with us from the beginning and a constant flow of new arrivals. Some stay, and there are others whose life subsequently moves them on elsewhere. It is a constantly evolving community.

Stories of Hope and Home is not just a charity for me. It was my first welcome in this country, When I arrived, this charity was established that made the relationship between me and the group so strong.

I knew lots of the British culture and the system in the UK through this group, and I have visited many places with them. I met most of my friends in this group.

When the charity celebrated the 5th year I was so proud to be a member of that group because I saw the development that happened through these years all the school visits and the effects of them , the poems we wrote and the performances they made.

This charity gave me lots of things, support, friends, and love. I will be so happy to do whatever I can to help and support this charity.

Tawasol (participant and trustee)

I was dispersed to Birmingham and I was miserable and didn't have any hope with anything. I was a sleeping person even not eating really until I met a source from Stories of Hope and Home charity dealing with asylum seekers and refugees who invited me to the group.

I didn't want many people and noisy places. To my surprise I came across such a nice lovely and welcoming lady who invited me to the group and in no time I felt home. The staff were so welcoming and helping anyhow they can.

I started enjoying every Monday at the Rep for performance and every Friday for writing anything which will be the topic of the day until I ended up being in the school visit team. Every week in different schools meeting teachers, pupils and even meeting the community at large, talking and discussing about our journey and the obstacles that we are facing.

I'm still with the group up to date and I'm no longer suicidal as before because Stories of Hope and Home gave me hope for life. I know many places around the West Midlands due to school visits and I do believe visiting schools brought a lot of changes and gave kids pupils in schools knowledge about asylum seekers and refugees.



Stories of Hope and Home is recommendable to all asylum seekers who are new and old because they all know that we have a place to call home being in the group.

I even had a special birthday celebration done and organised by them. I still thank and appreciate their effort.

Ivy (participant)

A Year in Review: Staff and Volunteer Voices 13

My first year as a Stories employee has flown by! Stepping into the role of Project Assistant after volunteering, I feel much more involved and it has been really rewarding to see how this has helped to increase capacity for the project. I am so happy to be part of this community of people, playing a small part in enabling their stories to be heard and offering support and friendship. At times it has been challenging - threatened Rwanda deportations and summer riots spring to mind, but it has always felt reassuring to be part of this team of friends, colleagues and trustees as we work together. This year has only strengthened my belief in the power of community and I know that the work we are doing is needed more than ever.

Rebecca (project assistant)

Attending group sessions on a Friday when I can is a highlight of my week. While we encounter so much negative news and rhetoric surrounding refugees and asylum seekers, it is wonderful and grounding to be in such a positive space, and for everyone just to be able to be people. It has been an experience which I wish more people could have, as you see how people have to hold their personhood alongside their status and how one definitely does not equal the other. Stories of Hope and Home is an optimistic space to be part of, even when the content that ends up being discussed is extremely heavy, as through the arts and the community built there is indeed hope. This has been impactful for me as I have a tendency to despair at the state of things, but at Stories I see how others who have suffered so much choose joy and are provided a space to do this. I also feel very privileged to hear memories from the lives of members, and this has motivated me to do more research and learn more about the migrant experience and asylum process.

Naomi (volunteer)

I have loved volunteering with Stories of Hope and Home. I have felt so welcomed and loved by everyone in the group. It has allowed me to understand more about the asylum system and intentionally spend time listening to individual stories and experiences. But for me Stories is so much more than that - it is a family, a group of people who welcome so well, who are inspirational, kind and have been an incredible community for me and many others. I have been so honoured to get to be a part of that family, to see highs and lows, parties as well as many creative writing sessions. I am so grateful to be a volunteer with this group, to learn but also to be part of a community of inclusion, welcome & championing each other!

Abi (volunteer)



A year in review: Trustee Voices

I've been part of Stories of Hope and Home from the very beginning, and it's been amazing to see how it has grown – almost like watching a child grow up with the love and care of a mother. At first, I joined as a participant, and the project gave me a safe space where I felt listened to and understood. Later, becoming a trustee was my way of giving something back. It's been a real privilege to witness the journey of Stories and to play a small part in shaping its future.

Mika (trustee and participant)



I've worked in the refugee sector for 20 plus years and the toxic environment towards people seeking asylum has never been worse. Stories of Hope and Home is unique as it provides a safe space and family to offer support and a buffer against the onslaught, while also building people's confidence to tell their stories. This act alone helps to counter the narrative.

Emma (trustee)

It has been my enormous privilege to be part of this project since the beginning. One striking aspect that I'd like to highlight is the amazing kindness of those who support our work financially and make so many positive things possible. There are school communities and other groups who raise money for us in different ways; grant-making bodies who approve our applications and then support either specific projects or ongoing core running costs; a number of generous professionals who keep our expenditure to a minimum by assisting us *pro bono*, and the



wonderful group of individuals who donate to us regularly each month which helps so much with forward planning. Those who are able to register their personal donations for Gift Aid also allow us to reclaim a significant sum of pre-paid tax each year from HMRC. Each and every person who helps us keep afloat is a genuine part of the success of Stories of Hope and Home community. Thank you all!

Helena (trustee)

Who's who

Trustees

Aboubakr Kone (from January 2025), Tawasol Abdelsamad, Musharraf Abdullayeva, Emma Birks, Helena Madden and James Trewby.

(Trustees are appointed for an initial three year term which can be renewed. New trustees are selected and invited by the existing trustee body.)

Staff

The charity employs a part-time (0.6FTE) Project Manager, Stephanie Neville; and a part-time (0.2FTE) project assistant, Rebecca Lonergan.

Volunteers

We have been very grateful for 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:

- Everyone who helps fund our work:
 - We received grants this year from Birmingham City Council, Westhill Foundation, Ben and Jerry's Foundation, The Hilden Fund, South Birmingham Friends, and The Passionists.
 - Schools and organisations who have made donations or fundraised for us.
 - Individual donors whose one-off or regular contributions are so important in sustaining what we do.
- 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, The Catholic Primary Partnership, Birmingham REP, Celebrating Sanctuary, and Birmingham Botanical Gardens.
- The Schools Of Sanctuary Network and all of the schools and other groups who have invited us or engaged with us.

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!

Financial Summary

approved by the independent examiner

Income

	restricted	unrestricted	Total
Grants	£9000	£11000	£20000
Donations and gifts	£100	£12656	£12756
Other	£1267	£3112	£4379
Total Income	£10367	£26768	£37135

Expenditure

Staffing	£28249
Travel and Subsistence	£2051
Equipment, materials, resources and refreshments	£1912
Activity Costs (including room hire)	£6159
Other	£611
Total Expenditure	£38982

Balance at 31/03/2025: £40,373

(Includes reserves of three months running costs)

Our full financial report is available separately on request.



Contact Details



info@storiesofhome.org.uk



07598922095

Social Media

You can find us on Facebook, Instagram and BlueSky.



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
01/04/2024

To

Period end date
31/03/2025

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 £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	11,000	9,000	-	20,000	35,900
Donations and gifts	12,656	100	-	12,756	7,924
Gift Aid	1,755	-	-	1,755	1,541
Payments for participation in Festivals of Encounter	-	1,170	-	1,170	250
Payment of travel costs for encounter visits	-	97	-	97	181
Payments for workshops and performances	-	-	-	-	890
Book Sales	190	-	-	190	70
Interest	1,167	-	-	1,167	225
Misc	-	-	-	-	100
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	26,768	10,367	-	37,135	47,081
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	26,768	10,367	-	37,135	47,081
A3 Payments					
Staffing	20,249	8,000	-	28,249	14,380
Travel costs	-	2,051	-	2,051	2,694
Equipment, material and resources	-	405	-	405	458
Refreshments	-	1,507	-	1,507	786
Room hire	-	405	-	405	345
Activity costs	-	5,754	-	5,754	3,066
Public liability insurance	-	303	-	303	192
Payroll Costs	-	-	-	-	239
Website and domain name	-	78	-	78	34
Other / misc	-	230	-	230	287
Sub total	20,249	18,733	-	38,982	22,481
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Laptop for project assistant	-	180	-	180	415
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	180	-	180	-
Total payments	20,249	18,913	-	39,162	22,481
Net of receipts/(payments)	6,519	- 8,546	-	- 2,028	24,600
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	28,652	13,749	-	42,401	-
Cash funds this year end	35,170	5,203	-	40,373	24,600

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 £
B1 Cash funds	Current account	4,391	3,203	-
	Instant access savings	32,779		-
	Fixed term savings account		-	-
	Total cash funds		37,170	3,203
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	Agreement Error	Agreement Error	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
	Laptop (project manager)	general	415	-
	Laptop (project assistant)		180	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	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	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
Stories of Hope and Home

On accounts for the year
ended

March 31st 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1195224

Set out on pages

17-18

(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 31/3/2025.

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:

Date:

25/10/25

Name:

Chris Clements

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

Address:

49 St Bernards Road

Solihull

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.