

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2023

The trustees present their annual report and examined accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023.

Name of charity

Sussex Syrian Community CIO Registered Charity number
1196947

Address

St. Mary Magdalens Community Centre, 55 Upper North Street, Brighton, BN1 3FH

Website address

sussexsyriancommunity.co.uk

Facebook page:

Trustees

Ahmad Yabroudi (Chair)
Fathi Khalil
Mohamad Khaled Morad
Johnny Massara
Esam Albdin
Jamal Alsakka

Accounts' Examiners

Resource Centre, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 0GY

Bank

Barclays Bank PLC, 8 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN1 2TB

Governing document

Sussex Syrian Community CIO is constituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission on 6th December 2021 under charity number 1196947. It is governed by the constitution of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Association Model) with voting members other than its trustees

Organisational structure

The charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits.

The trustees meet together monthly and are responsible for all decisions taken in relation to running all the activities provided by the charity.

Appointment of trustees

Trustees are elected by the members of the Charity at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). At each AGM half of the existing Trustees retire. The membership then elects the trustees for the coming year, which can be new Trustees or those who have retired at the beginning of the meeting.

Induction and training of Trustees

Following appointment, new trustees are provided with a copy of the constitution and advised of their responsibilities as a charity trustee. They are provided with copies of all the charity's policies and advised to familiarise themselves with them. They are asked to sign the Charity Trustee declaration of eligibility and responsibility.

Risk management

The trustees discuss possible risks to the charity and how to mitigate them at our regular monthly meetings. We have identified the main risks faced by the charity as follows.

Insufficient funds to run our core activities

In 2022 we prepared a 5 year plan of activities and budget. This allows for inflationary increases in our costs as forecast by the Office for National Statistics. This will be reviewed each year going forward. We have prepared a fundraising plan based on this budget and have secured five year funding from the National Lottery Communities Fund, starting in October 2023. This funding will not cover all of our activities and we will still need to apply to other funders. At the beginning of each year we review our budget and plan our fundraising applications accordingly. We review this throughout the year and adapt our activities depending on the level of funds we have been able to raise.

Provision of venues for our activities

The majority of our activities take place at Brighton College, Eastern Road, BN2 0AL and St. Mary Magdalens Community Centre, 55 Upper North Street, Brighton, BN1 3FH. We pay an hourly fee for the use of St Mary Magdalens, which we include in our budgeting. Brighton College very kindly provide us with space free of charge as an in-kind donation. We are aware that this may not always be available to us and so maintain regular contact with the college to ensure we will know in advance if there are any changes to this arrangement and so we will be able to adjust our funding or activities as necessary. We have allowed for this eventuality in our 5 year budget running 2023 – 2028.

Risk of a serious incident or safeguarding incident

We ensure that our insurance cover for public and Trustee Indemnity is reviewed and renewed annually. We have robust safeguarding procedures as set out in our Safeguarding policies for children and vulnerable adults, and ensure that our designated safeguarding lead receives regular training.

Objectives and activities

Our objects, as set out in our charity constitution are:

- 1) To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by working with people in Sussex who are socially excluded on the grounds of their ethnic origin, religion, belief or creed (in particular, members of the Syrian community) to relieve the needs of such people and assist them to integrate into society, in particular by providing:
 - a) education and training in the English language and in other skills and subjects;
 - b) a local network group that encourages and enables members of the Syrian community to participate more effectively with the wider community;
 - c) social and recreational facilities and events involving the local community.
- 2) The promotion of racial harmony for the public benefit by:

- a) promoting knowledge and mutual understanding between the Syrian community and all other racial groups;
- b) advancing education and raising awareness about the Syrian community to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups;
- c) raising awareness of Syrian culture by running classes, holding events and sharing information.

Activities and achievements

Public benefit

The trustees are mindful of our duty under section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Commission. We have referred to this guidance when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities. We believe the summary of our activities, outlined below, demonstrates our commitment to creating public benefit in all our work.

Summary of activities

In 2022-23 we have continued to expand our activities to make our community stronger and more cohesive, improve the mental and physical wellbeing of everyone, and support Syrians to access activities and services they need.

Over 600 adults and children have attended our activities over the year. This includes those who were already living in the area prior to the war in Syria, those who have settled here since as refugees and those who are still arriving.

- 200 people have received support from our weekly drop-in service
- 140 people have attended our Breakfast Club
- 150 adults have attended English lessons
- 120 people came to our Easter and Mother's Day celebrations in April 2022
- 100 people came to our Christmas and New year party
- 150 people came to our summer BBQs
- 120 adults and children attended our graduation celebrations
- 65 children regularly attend our Arabic language school
- 13 adults attended Driving Theory classes
- 12 adults attended Life in the UK classes
- 50 adults and children came on our outings

Supporting newly arrived families

Many of our members remember what it was like to arrive in the UK as refugees. We know what it is like to have lost everything and arrive in a country that feels strange and unfamiliar. This means we have an understanding of the needs of those who are still arriving and a responsibility to give them the support that others gave to us when we arrived.

We invite everybody, without exception, to our Breakfast Club. As a smaller gathering this gives them the chance to get to know us, talk to others one-to-one, and feel at home in a space that replicates the extended weekend family breakfasts we used to have back in Syria. It also gives us chance to get to know them and what type of support they need.

We have supported families with emergency food parcels, which are often funded by individuals from our committee. Then we help them with many of the practical things they need to sort out. This can be housing, healthcare, benefits, education and dealing with utility companies. Sometimes this

can be a referral or a one-off bit of advice, at other times it can involve taking them to an appointment, staying with them and interpreting for them. There are times when we have taken someone to hospital and stayed with them in A&E or the maternity ward.

As people become a little more settled we help them to plan for their future lives, looking at what work they can do with the skills and qualifications they have, what training they need to make this possible, and learning English so they can better integrate into the wider community. We have referred many people to other ESOL classes to supplement their attend at our weekly English classes.

Building our children's future

We have expanded our children's Arabic School from 6 teachers when we started to 12 teachers in 2023. We now have 2 kindergarten classes, a GCSE class and an A Level class. We then have four classes in between. The children work in mixed age groups as they progress from basic Arabic to GCSE level. This depends on lots of factors, including their lived experience of speaking Arabic either at home or in Syria in their early years.

We are very proud that 7 of our students achieved an A* in their Arabic language A level in 2022, and 12 students passed their GCSE.

But our school is about a lot more than exams. We encourage our children to speak Arabic for all of the time that they are at the school, so it feels familiar to them and becomes an integral part of their lives. We also encourage the children to socialise and spend time together and to build friendships. More recently, we have noticed the older children spending time together after the school and meeting up to go to cafes, bowling, or other activities. This tells us that we are succeeding in giving our children peer support structures to help them navigate their lives.

We complement the school with all our family gatherings: our summer BBQ's, outings, Christmas and New Year party, Easter and Mother's Day parties, Eid celebrations and graduation celebrations. This gives the children a chance to enjoy spending time together with their parents and feel like they are part of one big extended family.

At our school we have several children who have physical disabilities, learning disabilities, emotional difficulties and mental health problems. Some of this comes from the trauma their families have lived through. Because we work on a small personal scale, we don't leave anyone feeling like they are an outsider. We involve them all in all our activities, focusing on their strengths and what they feel comfortable doing.

Making a difference: Building skills, reducing isolation and strengthening our community

All the adults in our community face layers of trauma that they are constantly struggling to overcome. Our experiences of having to leave our own country are always in our minds, but we are also struggling to move forward for ourselves and our children. The challenges of covid and the lockdown clearly exacerbated this and many are still trying to recover from it. In early 2023 we saw the devastating effects of the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. Once again many of us have lost family and friends and this has brought back memories of the devastation of the war and our journeys to escape from it. We have been through the agony, again, of not knowing if our friends and family were alive or dead, and also hearing about the terrible conditions for those who have survived but lost their homes.

It has been a very tough year and we have survived by being together, by talking to each other and by supporting each other. Between us we have so much shared history and experience, which helps

us to understand each other. We don't always have to explain to each other how we feel, because we just know.

To keep our community strong, and maintain people's mental and physical well-being, we have to look forward and find something positive to keep us going. We celebrate every time someone passes a milestone in their life. We love to see someone break out of the trauma they are experiencing, to learn new skills, to pass their driving test or Life in the UK test. We love to see people becoming fluent in English or to get a job.

In our school we encourage the children to express their feelings about their lives and their hopes for the future through art and writing, in ways they can feel comfortable. We have informal and social time, where students bring their own art materials, toys or games from home to share with other students. We have seen how this supports the sense of community among students, especially when the older children arrange to meet and socialise together outside of the school.

Use of volunteers

Volunteers are an important resource to us in all our activities. They run the activities, prepare the food, provide transport, give advice and support, and help in too many ways to list. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without them. The majority of our volunteers are also members and beneficiaries. We aim for our volunteers to gain skills, knowledge and experience through their volunteering role that is also an asset to them in sustaining and improving the lives of themselves and their families. All our trustees also give their time freely.

Financial review

Funding sources

In 2022-23 we received grants of £7,000 from Brighton and Hove City Council and £4,080 from Brighton College. We carried forward £10,000 from The National Lottery Communities Fund and £5,000 from Sussex Community Foundation for use during the year.

From October 2023 we have a 5 year grant from The National Lottery Communities Fund, which will amount to £144,211 over the 5 years. In the current financial year we have received a grant of £5,000 from Brighton and Hove City Council and are awaiting the outcome of an application to Sussex Community Foundation (at 22/11/23).

Reserves Policy

At 31st March 2023 we held £11,457, of which £3,347 was unrestricted funds.

We rely entirely on grant funding to run our activities and therefore have a very small level of free reserves. We have always had very limited funds and to date we have always been fortunate enough to receive sufficient funding to cover our costs. Over the last 7 years we have learned to manage our expectations and our budgets carefully to ensure we are consistent, sustainable and inclusive. As the year progresses we review our budget, and make adjustments according to the success of our grant applications and the cost of activities.

Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

The charity trustees are responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and SORP (FRS 102).

The Trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing the financial statement, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent, and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to assume that the company will continue on that basis

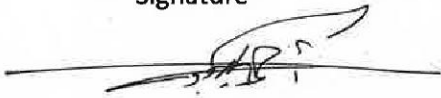
The Trustees are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees for the purposes of charity law who served during the year and up to the date of this report are set out on page 1.

Approved by the trustees and signed on its behalf by

Ahmad Yabroudi (Chair)

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ahmad Yabroudi', written over a horizontal line.

Date 23/11/2023

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Accounts year ended 31st March 2023

Registered charity: 1196947

Charity correspondent:

AHMAD YABROUDI
ST. MARY MAGDALENS COMMUNITY CENTRE
55 UPPER NORTH STREET
BRIGHTON
BN1 3FH

These accounts have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis from information and explanations supplied by the charity.


Mireille Shimoda
Resource Centre
6 Tilbury Place
Brighton BN2 0GY
10th August 2023

These accounts have been approved by the Trustees of the charity.

Signed by one or two Trustees on behalf of all the Trustees

1. Ahmad Yabroudi 
2. Fathi Khalil 

Date 10th Sept. 2023

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Statement of Financial Activities year ended 31st March 2023

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2023	Restricted	Unrestricted	2022 *see note
Receipts						
Donations & grants	11,080	-	11,080	17,000	-	17,000
Other	668	-	668	-	-	-
Total Receipts	11,748	-	11,748	17,000	-	17,000
Payments						
Expenditure on charitable activities	24,120	-	24,120	3,721	-	3,721
Other	668	-	668	-	-	-
Total Payments	24,788	-	24,788	3,721	-	3,721
Net payments for the year	(13,040)	-	(13,040)	13,279	-	13,279
Funds at 1st April 2022	22,513	1,984	24,497	9,234	1,984	11,218
Transfer of funds (Phoenix funds 2020)	(1,363)	1,363	-	-	-	-
Balance of funds at 31st March 2023	8,110	3,347	11,457	22,513	1,984	24,497

NB some additions may vary by +/- £1 due to rounding

* NOTE: 2022 is a part year, only covering the period December 2021 to March 2022. December 2021 was when the organisation was formally registered as a CIO.

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Receipts and Payments Account year ended 31st March 2023

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2023	Restricted	Unrestricted	2022 ^{see note}
Receipts						
Donations & grants						
Awards for All	-	-	-	10,000	-	10,000
Brighton and Hove City Council	7,000	-	7,000	2,000	-	2,000
Sussex Community Foundation	-	-	-	5,000	-	5,000
Brighton College	4,080	-	4,080	-	-	-
Other						
Earthquake emergency appeal	668	-	668	-	-	-
Total Receipts	11,748	-	11,748	17,000	-	17,000
Payments						
Expenditure on charitable activities						
Arabic School - teachers' fees	8,460	-	8,460	2,465	-	2,465
Arabic School - stationery, printing, supplies	535	-	535	61	-	61
Arabic School - refreshments	-	-	-	51	-	51
Arabic School - gifts to teachers	270	-	270	-	-	-
Arabic School - graduation party	1,271	-	1,271	-	-	-
Breakfast Club - food	121	-	121	148	-	148
Drop-in - room hire	1,200	-	1,200	360	-	360
Drop-in - refreshments	21	-	21	-	-	-
Drop-in - admin and supplies	49	-	49	-	-	-
Events - Mother's day & Easter	1,425	-	1,425	412	-	412
Events - Christmas & New Year	1,942	-	1,942	-	-	-
English classes - travel	5,490	-	5,490	-	-	-
Driving theory classes (tutor fees)	190	-	190	-	-	-
Committee & volunteer expenses	1,610	-	1,610	225	-	225
Emergency family support	1,536	-	1,536	-	-	-
Other						
Earthquake emergency appeal	668	-	668	-	-	-
Total Payments	24,788	-	24,788	3,721	-	3,496
Net payments for the year	(13,040)	-	(13,040)	13,279	-	13,279
Funds at 1st April 2022	22,513	1,984	24,497	9,234	1,984	11,218
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Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31st March 2023

Monetary Assets

Barclays current account	10,826
Cash in hand (held for teachers' fees & transport costs for adults' classes)	630
Balance of funds held at 31st March 2022	11,456

Liabilities

The charity has no known liabilities.

Non-Monetary Assets

None

Breakdown of funds at 31st March 2023

Restricted funds

Awards for All	6,143
Brighton and Hove City Council	1,966

General funds

3,347
11,456