

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2025

The trustees present their annual report and examined accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025.

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

Trustees

Ahmad Yabroudi (Chair)
Fathi Khalil
Mohamad Khaled Morad
Johnny Massara
Esam Albدين
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 is reviewed each year going forward. We prepared a fundraising plan based on this budget and secured five-year funding from The 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 provides 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 will be able to adjust our funding or activities as necessary. We have allowed for this eventuality in our 5-year budget running 2023–28.

Risk of a serious incident or safeguarding incident

We have robust safeguarding procedures as set out in our Safeguarding policies for children and adults at risk 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 2024-25, we continued to run our core activities to make our community stronger and more cohesive, improve our members' mental and physical wellbeing, and support Syrians to access activities and services they need.

Over 600 adults and children 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.

- 10-30 different people per week received support from our drop in service
- 25-35 people attended each of our fortnightly Breakfast Clubs
- 220 adults and children came to our Christmas party
- 200 adults and children attended our graduation celebration
- 100 children attended our Arabic language school
- 20 community members volunteered to support our activities

Our vibrant Children's Arabic School

100 children attended our Sunday Arabic School held at Brighton College. Due to the popularity of our Arabic School, we increased the number of weekly classes to 10 and the number of teachers went up to 15. We continued to run this free of charge in 2024-25 to make sure no one was excluded. This has helped children and young people from Arabic-speaking families to communicate with their parents and older relatives, to better connect with their heritage, to read literature and access written and spoken information from Syria, and to feel a sense of belonging in the Syrian community locally. In addition, our students who passed GCSE or A-levels in Arabic this year gained not only a great sense of achievement but also added a string to their bow when aiming for higher education and/or employment.

At our graduation event we thanked our teachers for all their hard work and care during the year and celebrated our children's achievements so they could understand how valued they are by all of our community.

We organised an educational and fun outing to the Sea Life Centre in Brighton for the children in June 2024, which was greatly enjoyed by our young people. Seeing wonderful marine life up close was a magical moment for them, and connected them to the wider world: their environment, wildlife and the planet.

Festivals and celebrations

Our celebrations bring our community together and enable us to build a bridge between our lives in Syria to our new lives in Brighton and Hove. Our Christmas Party in 2024 was a great success. Over 200 adults and children attended. We shared food and cake, and we organised a DJ and face-painting, and our very own Father Christmas handed out gifts to the children.

In December 2024, we also held celebrations to commemorate the end of the war in Syria. This was a very emotional and special day for all of us.

Our planned celebrations for Mother's Day and Eid al-Fitr 2025 were postponed this year as Mother's day (which we celebrate on 21st March every year) fell in the middle of Ramadan and many Syrian Christians were fasting for Easter.

Wednesday Advice Drop-in and Breakfast Club

Every Wednesday our team of volunteers provide a free advice service, which is available to everyone and accessed by many people beyond our own community. We help people to access the services they need, signpost them to specialist agencies – anything from housing, managing utility bills to communicating with medical professionals. We provide a listening ear, translation, accompany people to appointments, and continue to provide support until it is no longer needed. There has been an increase in the need for digital/technical support as many services have moved to online platforms and some of our members either don't have the digital skills/knowledge or access to the internet or smart devices.

Every two weeks we hold our Breakfast Club of traditional Syrian food, where everyone gathers and we invite representatives from the wider community to join us.

The value of long-term wrap-around support

We not only provide in-person support but we also share notices about other opportunities, training, skills, employment opportunities, job fairs, and cultural activities through our Facebook group.

Our committee has also been helping families and individuals outside of our Wednesday drop-ins to help them access services, to accompany people to appointments or helping with translation.

We have supported many members over the course of months and years, enabling them to build confidence and re-build their lives here in the UK. The long-term effects of this support are visible: we were proud to see our members gain employment, start their own small businesses and graduate from university this year.

Making our mark in the city

We connect with and support many other organisations in the city, by sharing our knowledge, experience and culture.

Over the year we have worked with organisations supporting refugees: in particular, Voices in Exile, Sanctuary on Sea, Worthing Refugee Action, Sussex Interpreting Services, Refugee Radio, Network of International Women, University of Sanctuary, EuroMernet, Best Foot Music, T4K, Jollof Café, Nam Yang, Migrant English Project. We receive referrals from these organisations and we also refer people to them.

We have continued our longstanding partnerships with Brighton College (who provide a free venue for our Sunday classes) and St Mary Magdalens Community Centre (where our weekly advice drop-in and Breakfast Club are held). We have received support from the Resource Centre, and our Chair is one of their Trustees.

We are part of the Functional Skills UK network and also signpost/refer people to support organisations, such as CAB, BHESCo, Money Advice Plus, Trust for Developing Communities, Bridging Change, Brighton and Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, local churches, mosques, universities, and schools.

We also have networks with the local Sudanese, Egyptian, Lebanese, Libyan and Moroccan communities through the work we do.

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 2024-25 we received grants of £1,930 from Brighton and Hove City Council, £5,240 from Sussex Community Foundation and £28,334 from The Lottery Communities Fund (Reaching Communities). We also received various donations, including £250 from the Co-op.

From October 2023 we have a 5-year grant from The Lottery Communities Fund, which will amount to £144,211 over the 5 years.

Reserves Policy

At 31st March 2025 we held £23,351, of which £5,664 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 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 24 / 10 / 2025

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Accounts year ended 31st March 2025

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
20th May 2025

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

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

1. _____

2. _____

Date _____

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Statement of Financial Activities year ended 31st March 2025

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2025	Restricted	Unrestricted	2024
Receipts						
Donations & grants	35,504	550	36,054	18,309	-	18,309
Total Receipts	35,504	550	36,054	18,309	-	18,309
Payments						
Expenditure on charitable activities	26,749	-	26,749	15,620	100	15,720
Total Payments	26,749	-	26,749	15,620	100	15,720
Net receipts/payments for the year	8,755	550	9,305	2,689	(100)	2,589
Funds at 1st April 2024	10,787	3,259	14,046	8,110	3,347	11,457
Transfer of funds * see note	(1,855)	1,855	-	(12)	12	-
Balance of funds at 31st March 2025	17,687	5,664	23,351	10,787	3,259	14,046

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

* Note: funds previously recorded as restricted, but were actually unrestricted.

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Receipts and Payments Account year ended 31st March 2025

	Restricted	Unrestricted	2025	Restricted	Unrestricted	2024
Receipts						
Donations & grants						
Reaching Communities - National Lottery	28,334	-	28,334	13,309	-	13,309
Brighton and Hove City Council	1,930	-	1,930	5,000	-	5,000
Sussex Community Foundation	5,240	-	5,240	-	-	-
Brighton College	-	-	-	-	-	-
Co-op	-	250	250	-	-	-
Donation	-	300	300	-	-	-
Total Receipts	35,504	550	36,054	18,309	-	18,309
Payments						
Expenditure on charitable activities						
Arabic School - teachers' fees	15,645	-	15,645	9,975	-	9,975
Arabic School - stationery, printing, supplies	2,377	-	2,377	123	-	123
Arabic School - refreshments	-	-	-	38	-	38
Arabic School - graduation party	1,141	-	1,141	306	-	306
Arabic School - volunteer expenses	625	-	625	-	-	-
Children's outings	555	-	555	-	-	-
Breakfast Club - food	469	-	469	347	-	347
Drop-in - room hire	1,440	-	1,440	1,080	-	1,080
Drop-in - refreshments	78	-	78	7	-	7
Drop-in - admin and supplies	-	-	-	52	-	52
Events - Mother's day & Easter	-	-	-	-	-	-
Events - Christmas & New Year	2,273	-	2,273	1,905	-	1,905
Events - Iftar	100	-	100	-	-	-
Events - Other	236	-	236	-	-	-
Events - Worthing Refugee Choir	-	-	-	100	-	100
English classes - travel	-	-	-	210	-	210
Driving theory classes (tutor fees)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Committee & volunteer expenses	1,690	-	1,690	1,425	-	1,425
Admin: stationery, printing etc	92	-	92	52	-	52
Miscellaneous	28	-	28	-	-	-
Emergency family support	-	-	-	-	100	100
Total Payments	26,749	-	26,749	15,620	100	15,720
Net receipts/payments for the year	8,755	550	9,305	2,689	(100)	2,589
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Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31st March 2025

Monetary Assets & Liabilities

Barclays current account	25,186
Minus uncleared cheques (126, 250-266)	(1,835)
Cash in hand	0
Balance of funds held at 31st March 2025	23,351

Non-Monetary Assets

None

Breakdown of funds at 31st March 2025

Restricted funds

Reaching Communities - National Lottery (Year 2)	10,857
Brighton and Hove City Council (Fairness Fund, 2024)	1,848
Sussex Community Foundation (2024)	5,140
<i>General funds</i>	5,506
	23,351

Sussex Syrian Community CIO

Accounts year ended 31st March 2025

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Charity correspondent:

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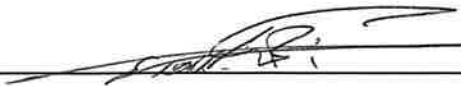
Mireille Shimoda

Resource Centre
6 Tilbury Place
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20th May 2025

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1. 

2. _____

Date 2.4/10/2025