



AGM 2025

Coordinator's Report

Where are we now?

Another year has passed, and things have not slowed down at all. Despite rumour, counter rumour and counter, counter rumour about closure, the hotel remains fully functional and is once again nearly full, the number of families and individuals getting their Leave to Remain and choosing to stay in our community (or returning to it!) have increased steadily and we are still finding people who have lived 'under the radar' in the community for, in one recent case, 6 years before approaching us for help. Having Leave to Remain or Resettled status is never the end of a journey, but always just another hurdle to overcome on that journey and we know that people remain in need of support and friendship for many years after that point. But progress does happen for them, albeit sometimes slowly and in the last year we have seen people get settled housing, pass their driving tests, get permanent jobs and, for those who have been here longest, start their citizenship applications. We have seen more family reunions (with others in process), shared the joys of pregnancy and the sadness of loss with our refugee friends and neighbours.

Our services continue to expand and develop, as does our volunteer list. Our colleagues in Pershore – still very new as a group when last we met – are now firmly established and doing great work with the 6 Afghan families and 2 families with LTR now living in their town. I genuinely don't know how we would have coped without them! Our sewing group has gone from strength to strength and, thanks to one rather timely PR mistake in Malvern, so has the group's reputation in the County, with the recent exhibition in the Hive being one of the outcomes. Not a single person, seeing those quilts and hearing about who made them has done anything but sing their praises. Sharon and her sewing fairies deserve our thanks, and the ladies who participate our eternal respect, for the effort and love they have put in, especially when their lives have been in such turmoil. A new addition to provision, is the pre-school activity group, which is very new but already has a few 'regulars' who are benefitting, especially given the difficulties accessing other childcare options. We have also made new links with HoW College and are currently in the middle of our first co-managed employability course, with more in the pipeline for next year.

We look back fondly to the days when Wednesday afternoons and Saturday morning were times for catching up on people's stories and spending time sorting clothes donations! Now every open session is taken up with helping people complete forms, deal with problems, follow up complaints and manage transition into the community. Unacceptable delays in people getting their asylum support has meant a heavy reliance on donations of Aldi vouchers in those first difficult weeks of adjustment – last month we got through £300 worth in 3 weeks and as a result have had to implement some minor changes to ensure we don't abuse our relationship with Caring Hands, who have been so supportive in this area.

Politically – both nationally and internationally – the last year has seen many disappointments and much despair. Our hopes of an end to the hostile environment under a new Labour Government have been cruelly dashed and the rise of the influence of the far right, especially locally, has had serious repercussions, and they haven't really got started yet! Last year's far right riots caused fear and distress to our community, and we have seen ongoing activity from Reform supporters, which has resulted in a complaint to the police and the installation of CCTV in the Sanctuary. While this is a worry for us all, it's also a reminder of how important the work we do is and how we all need to be vigilant and look out for each other.

In this climate, our work raising awareness about the realities of the asylum and refugee support system becomes even more important – and we have had lots of opportunity to do that this year, both through public events, through training and awareness raising sessions and through engagement with the media and social media. Organisations that have had input include St Egwins School staff, Caring Hands, the University of Worcester Medico-Legal Society and the local branch of BASW (*NB explain!*). Next week I am doing training for one of the Worcestershire social work teams too – that should be interesting! We have taken part in local community events – the Battle of Evesham & medieval Market, here at Wallace House and others. It all makes for good conversations. And the opportunity to challenge the myths and explain the issues.

Finally, I am pleased to say we have made the first tentative steps in gaining 'lived experience' expertise in our organisation with the registration of 2 lived experience volunteers. This remains a key strategy for us – and all organisations involved with refugees, particularly those of us linked to the City of sanctuary movement where it is a pre-requisite. We need to make stronger progress next year in this area and Lindsey and I attended a Migrant Help conference this week on this issue and will be passing on what we learned and how we can adopt a better approach to anyone who will listen over the coming months!

What are our main issues now?

In no particular priority order – because everything is a priority – here are 6 key areas to focus for the next year :

1. Local Government reorganisation – we now know that from 2028, the District Council will cease to exist and all the supportive and productive relationships we – and other voluntary sector groups – have built up with the staff there, will disappear. As yet, we don't know what will replace it, but we can be sure, it will not replicate the positives

we have now! Work is ongoing at all levels to minimise the risks, but we - and they – have to be realistic about how our support will be affected – and discussions on these topics have already proved fruitful with additional funding having been already received, more on the way and a window for at least one more significant application before it's all gone! We are all hoping for an eventual outcome, where the personnel, if not the funding, remain at least similar and the relationships can be maintained, but no one has any guarantees.

2. Premises – this year has seen the gradual, and wholly unnecessary, deterioration of the Riverside Centre, caused by the ongoing battle between the District Council and the private owner, who quite frankly plays dirty. The damage has been done, and even though there is some light at the end of the legal tunnel, the eventual closure and repurposing of the Centre is inevitable, even if it doesn't fall down first. The recent funding we have received from WDC is to help us find sustainable new premises and work has started on that, but it is no easy task! The option we thought would work best had a negative response from the potential landlord and, to date, no other building in our price range has appeared on the rental market. We are, of course, victims of our own success here, as we have expanded to fit the space we have, and we may have to re-think a bit. After yesterday, Lindsey and I are looking at this from a new perspective and will be talking to our fellow Trustees about how to engage with our service users and volunteers to both identify what services they most value and to plan what a new Sanctuary could look like and operate.
3. Managing workload – it will not have escaped any of us that our volunteer base is not getting any younger! Several of us, me included, have experienced health issues this year, which have impacted on our ability to keep as engaged as we would like to be. As the saying goes, the spirit is still willing, but the flesh has a different opinion! We have had discussions on this theme with WDC too and are currently awaiting the outcome of a bid for further finance to allow us to potentially get more help to handle the bulk of the casework that we need to complete and to free up the Trustees to do more strategic planning and evaluation. We are indebted to the continued support of WDC, especially David Manning and his team.
4. Increasing lived experience involvement – as I have mentioned this remains a key strategy that we need to take forward, especially as we are now clear that our community is growing for the long term. How we do this, and in what way, remains to be addressed, but do it we must and shall. Your ideas and thoughts on this process will be invaluable.
5. ESOL & education generally – the unexpected – and very unwelcome – closure of Evesham College has left us in a bit of a vacuum. We are assured that ESOL will continue in Evesham using both Wallace House and the Library as bases. But how sustainable and long term this will be, who knows? The other courses at Pershore College are also now much more inaccessible (despite the, as yet, untested promise of short-term free transport). Our collaboration with HoW will be a keystone to accessing educational opportunities for our service users, so we need to nurture it! And our ESOL and Maths teachers may well find they are faced with increasing demand from other migrants in the area.

6. Housing & employability – while our relationship with the Housing Department remains very positive, we cannot get away from the fact that housing locally and nationally is in shorter and shorter supply. Every person who gets Leave to Remain is now facing a long period in temporary accommodation – often very poor quality – until a permanent home becomes available. We are seeing more and more people having to go into HMOs elsewhere and we have had to be rather creative in some cases to ensure people do not end up on the streets. More of this will be needed and we need to work on as wide a range of temporary accommodation options as we can this year. The other key long term issue is employment – and especially suitable employment - as we see people ending up doing low paid and unsatisfying work that in no way reflects their skills and experience. Building links with local employers, getting people onto employability courses, finding more effective work experience opportunities are some options but I am sure there are more and we need to find them so that people can truly begin to rebuild their lives.

Things to look forward to!

As always there is lots to enjoy in the work we do, so here is a little reminder of some of the things that will bring us joy in the next year – again in no particular order.

- The arrival of Vahid and Aylar's baby and of Sami's family
- Our first new citizens
- Our team competing in the Bell boating races on July 19th in Pershore
- A local display of the wonderful quilts our ladies have done and another quilt Open Day in October
- Summer trips (volunteers for every Tuesday in the school holidays needed please!) We still have enough free tickets for 2 more trips to National Trust properties.
- Planning, setting up and making use of new premises – an opportunity for refreshing old and creating new ways of working
- Progress on our Community of Sanctuary plan and our first Evesham Church of Sanctuary
- Meeting more new friends, sharing their highs (and lows) and building our community.

Thank you to everyone here who has contributed to what we do and the successes we have had so far. There is still much to do, but together we are both strong and resilient. Be proud of yourselves!

Ros Gowers
Coordinator
EVWR
03.07.2025



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

EVESHAM VALE WELCOMES REFUGEES

1205733

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

15/11/2023

To

31/03/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations and grants	51,590	-	-	51,590	-
Interest received	382	-	-	382	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	51,972	-	-	51,972	-
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	51,972	-	-	51,972	-
A3 Payments					
Nursery fees and uniform costs	4,459	-	-	4,459	-
Relocation grants and expenses	8,829	-	-	8,829	-
Hub location expenses	6,007	-	-	6,007	-
Storage and hall hire	1,934	-	-	1,934	-
Travel costs	11,828	-	-	11,828	-
Telephone and admin costs	2,251	-	-	2,251	-
Other costs	12,041	-	-	12,041	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	47,349	-	-	47,349	-
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	47,349	-	-	47,349	-
Net of receipts/(payments)	4,623	-	-	4,623	-
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	30,300	-	-	30,300	-
Cash funds this year end	34,923	-	-	34,923	-

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	Charity account	6,408	-	-
	Deposit account	18,452	-	-
	Instant Access account	10,063	-	-
	Total cash funds	34,923	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
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)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
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	
	L.S. Stone P. Airdrie	L.S. Stone P. Airdrie	1/21/2026 1/21/2026	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name
Evesham Vale Welcomes Refugees

On accounts for the year ended

31st March 2025

Charity no
(if any)

1205733

Set out on pages

1 and 2

(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 31/03/2025DD / MM / YYYY.

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

[The charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 and I am qualified to undertake the examination by being a qualified member of [insert name of applicable listed body]]. *Delete [] if not applicable.*

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination (other than that disclosed below *) 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.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed: David Smaylen

Date: 27/01/2026

Name: David Smaylen

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body

N/A

(if any):

Address:

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.