



**Leicester
City of Sanctuary**

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

**Committed to creating a 'culture of welcome' for
asylum seekers & refugees in our city and county**

LEICESTER CITY OF SANCTUARY CHAIR'S REPORT

Trustees are responsible both to the members of the charity, at our AGM, and also to the Charity Commission and the law of the land, to ensure we operate not just lawfully, but with the best interests of our beneficiaries in mind. We now meet bi-monthly and so will have met six times in the past year, as well as extra Workshops with key staff and group leaders, as mentioned below. We have all committed to a standard of behaviour and work for the charity, for which we hold each other accountable. Trustees for the past year have been: Pete Hobson (Chair), Jenny Dnes (Vice-Chair), Ajay Aggarwal, Margaret Bonney, Eric Nkundumubano, Sam Javid and Golden Ngwenya.

This has been a significant year of both consolidation and planned expansion for LCoS and it has been a pleasure to chair a trustee body, which is rising to the challenges of governance in both areas.

Consolidation – we began the year with two newly created employee posts of coordinator and finance officer. 12 months on we have seen the whole organisation adjust well to this slightly different way of operating, with paid staff having clear lines of reporting to trustees, and working operationally alongside the many others who enable LCoS to keep on delivering all that we do. We have also benefitted from work done with an external consultant Adrian Masters, funded by our Lloyds TSB Enable grant. Meeting with a group from across the charity, Adrian helped us develop a Strategic Plan 2019-2022 and, working with trustees, he has helped us look afresh at best practice for governance in a charity of our size, drawing on guidance from the Charity Commissioners and others in the sector. The Strategic Plan is now on our website and will be presented to the AGM. The governance discussions have resulted in some new ideas about how trustees are appointed in the future, which will be put to a formal vote at the meeting.

Planned expansion – Shali's part of this Annual Report makes clear just how much we now do, and what is involved in holding this all together operationally as she does. It became abundantly clear to trustees during the year that it is not realistic to expect one person to oversee all this. It also risks leaving us vulnerable on succession planning. After exploring a number of options, we agreed there is capacity to appoint an assistant coordinator, at least for a year, which would also free up more of Shali's time to take an overview on fundraising, working with trustees, to secure this for the longer-term future. Shali's report also mentions the increase in the support offered by the LCFC Community Trust. These two developments help us secure what we already do, and plan for the future demands we reasonably anticipate.

Pete Hobson – Chair of Trustees 2018-19

A VIEW FROM THE VICE-CHAIR

Having completed my first year as trustee I now fully appreciate the scale and complexity of the work of LCoS. There are three aspects of this work I would like to mention.

Firstly, as a trustee with particular responsibility for the finances, I am aware how important it is to use our funds wisely and effectively. In my view, we achieve a great deal with limited resources. The recent decision to employ two part-time staff has strengthened our position significantly. Together they bring both energy and continuity and without their efforts we would not be able to function.

Secondly, we are totally reliant on the work of our volunteers who collaborate to ensure that all the activities take place on a regular basis. Effective communication is essential, and many volunteers give additional time to meet and plan together.

Thirdly, the trustee body has strategic oversight of all LCoS activities. In order to continue to meet the needs of asylum seekers in Leicestershire we have to be flexible and alert to our changing environment. The development of a strategic plan has encouraged us to think pro-actively about how we might change and develop in the years ahead. In addition, the charity world is complex and we also need to be confident that we comply with relevant legislation.

I appreciate the importance of the work that we do collectively to support local asylum seekers and am encouraged by the support we receive from the local community. There is still much to be done, and I look forward to the challenges that lie ahead.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2018/9

The financial position remains good, with total funds at about £43,000 on 31st March 2019. This is £10,000 less than on 31st March 2018. The decrease in funds is mainly the result of a fall in one-off donations during 2018/19 and an increase in expenditure. Grant income held up, thanks to the Enable grant which funded work on the strategic plan and the review of our governance structures.

The scale and range of activities undertaken during 2018/9 was significant and expenditure rose to about £64,000 compared with about £45,000 during 2017/8. This is partly due to higher rent with the move to The Bridge and also because 2018/9 was the first full year of salaries for the two paid posts.

Trustees have approved a reserves policy that aims to carry forward at least four months' worth of expenditure as a reserve at the end of each financial year. This allows scope for some financial planning and also helps to protect us from fluctuations in income, particularly those associated with grant funding.

Jenny Dnes – Vice-Chair and Finance Oversight



COORDINATOR'S REPORT

In October 2018 the drop-in moved from The Holy Cross Centre to The Bridge. Holy Cross had issues with heating and kitchen facilities, and the move was necessary to allow us to cook our own lunches and avoid the high cost of buying meals in. As is so often the case, the community rallied round, and Move IT Europe Ltd, a local removals company, took away much of the strain by transporting our equipment at no charge. We have settled well, and are now enjoying excellent kitchen facilities. We are also developing synergies with the Bridge, sharing goods and knowledge for the benefit of both charities.

Our partnership with British Red Cross is strong, and they remain a regular presence at the drop-in to take casework referrals. BRC recently relocated to the city centre, making it easier for people to access their service. BRC and LCoS are now the leading refugee assisting agencies in Leicester, as the sector is depleted and other agencies are losing funding. BRC and LCoS have taken over co-chairing the Multi Agency Forum for refugees and asylum seekers in Leicester, where issues around refugee protection and integration are discussed. This will allow us to foster efficient, joined up working and maximise support for our service users.

An independent mid-term evaluation of the BRC-LCoS partnership has confirmed the positive impact of the project, and highlighted the huge value of the drop-in as a 'safe place, where people feel welcomed and treated with dignity.

As a leading agency in the sector, the profile of LCoS remains high and a growing number of external organisations are engaging with us, both to learn about, and to offer help to the community we serve. Our drop-in acts as the local 'hub', and over the past year we have welcomed trainee reporters, trainee social workers, medical students and junior doctors, as well as visits from others with whom we have ongoing relationships.

We have been working closely with the police and have received a two year grant from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Leicestershire (PCC) to help with our integration work. The police are now regular visitors at the drop-in, where

they are warmly received. We were delighted to welcome back local PSCO Claire Tohill and her new baby, Tommy. Before going on maternity leave, Claire had been our named officer, and baby Tommy was greeted very enthusiastically, and much admired. He was passed most tenderly around the drop-in, receiving many cuddles, whilst Claire enjoyed having her hands decorated by one of our mehndi experts. As well as providing a regular presence at the drop-in so that both sides can get to know each other, the police deliver talks on topics such as the role of the police, hate crime and modern slavery.

DROP-IN

As well as helping to tackle isolation and providing a safe space to make friends, the drop-in provides a range of opportunities. Here's what we delivered between February 2018 - March 2019, with the help of our volunteers, more than half of whom are asylum seekers or refugees:

- 3773 Hot meals
- 362 Therapeutic Massages to relieve stress and anxiety
- Welcomed 130 new arrivals to our organisation
- Made 250 referrals to Open Hands
- Distributed over £10,000 worth of goods on our weekly gift table
- Provided volunteering opportunities for more than 30 asylum seekers and refugees
- Hosted more than 30 workshops/ talks/training sessions
- Provided £3340 in small emergency payments to those in desperate circumstances

The children's play area has gone from strength to strength. We now have nine RAS volunteers to help Maggie in the area, and a small number of young volunteers in the school holidays. Our biggest challenge has been adapting to a smaller space at our new premises, and we have plans to extend our activities into Abbey park in the summer holidays, when we regularly cater for between 20 and 30 children and their carers.



TRIPS

As well as being great fun, our trips help people feel more integrated in the local community. Highlights of the 11 trips organised this year included a trip to Skegness, a visit to a dairy farm near Billesdon, an afternoon at Spinney Hill police station where the children enjoyed exploring a police van, and a day out at Conkers for 55 people ranging in age from 2-85, funded by LCFC Community Trust. Regular volunteers and their families also had a great time at Go Kids Go in December.

ENGLISH CLASSES

English lessons are delivered in partnership with Leicester University to help our people improve their English to facilitate community integration & interaction. The University of Leicester (UoL) has widened the range of English classes on offer, thus allowing more newly arrived asylum seekers to learn English from day one of their dispersal to Leicester. There are six ESOL classes, one EAP (academic English) class, and a reading circle, spanning the full range of levels from beginner to advanced. There are also opportunities for people prepare for higher education and professional exams. Three people, who were doctors in their home countries have passed the Occupational English Test exam, an English test for healthcare professionals, and are now preparing for a further test, which would allow them to practice medicine in the UK. There will soon be a Sanctuary Room, which will function as a library, computer room, safe space, 1:1 consultation room and IAG hub for the LCoS ESOL students.

SEWING AND I.T.

The sewing group now meets for an extended three hour session. There are six regular attendees, all women, with drop in visits from others who come to use the machines for mending. The group has embarked on an informal training course, starting with making a basic personal pattern block that can be adapted for different styles. The group will then progress to a step-by-step course in specific technical sewing skills. The group are all completing garments every month and a fashion show is being organised as part of the Journeys Festival. Group members will model a range of clothes that they have made themselves. All six of the regular attendees have now been gifted with a donated sewing machine together with a basic sewing kit to allow them to continue sewing and practising at home between classes. We have also received many donations of fabric that we are fast using up.

The computing drop-in also meets on Thursday afternoon alongside the sewing group. The laptops are used mainly for internet searches, listening to music and podcasts and word processing. There is also access to a printer which is used for printing documents and photos. It is a friendly and relaxed atmosphere with refreshments available and a volunteer on hand to help out with any issues and to teach basic computer skills if required.

BIKE SCHEME

12 bikes were provided last year, each with a helmet, light and lock. We have developed a new relationship with Future Cycles in Market Street, town centre, who will accept donations of used bikes in good condition from the public. Future Cycles will refurbish these for our bike scheme at a very reasonable cost, and we hope this will help us increase the number of bikes we can offer going forward.



FOOTBALL

The Saturday football session has now been running for three years and continues to attract people seeking sanctuary and those with refugee status. Numbers have increased and we now have more than 40 players most weeks. The session has been strengthened by the addition of two willing volunteers, Rich Scales and Craig Atton.

We have taken part in a number of tournaments and enjoyed them immensely. Highlights include winning the tournament organised by Fulham FC last Summer; playing friendly matches and watching Premier League football at Burnley and Leicester's home game against Arsenal recently. Leicester City continue to support all our activities and recently organised a successful football festival along with De Montfort University at St. Margaret's Pastures as part of Amnesty's Football Welcomes events.

NEST

The New Evidence Search Team (NEST) continues to support refused asylum seekers to help them understand their reasons for refusal and help to find new evidence for their cases. BRC have referred 15 cases since June 2018. NEST volunteers are recruited from the local community; and both University of Leicester and De Montfort University. One newly recruited volunteer holds Level 1 OISC (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) accreditation. We aim to register NEST as a group with OISC by July 2019 to allow registered volunteers to advise on human rights issues for cases where relevant.

UNIVERSITY OF SANCTUARY

We're delighted that the University of Leicester was officially awarded University of Sanctuary status in November 2018. UoL is continuing to develop the ways in which to share, learn and embed support for refugees and asylum seekers across the University. As well as its ESOL classes, it's now offering distance learning fee waivers, free classes in other languages, and is also working with other groups who support asylum seekers and refugees, including Red Cross, After 18 and Art Reach.

LCFC COMMUNITY TRUST

Our partnership has developed over the past year, and LCFC Community Trust has decided to fund a join post related to sport and well-being. We're delighted that Sarah Jones will be joining us to support our drop-in each week and develop opportunities beyond the drop-in relating to improving health and well-being. Sarah has been running drop-in Soccercise sessions, and it's wonderful that she will now play a much bigger role with us, helping to support our work. It's a great vote of confidence in our organisation and a very exciting development for the coming year.

AND FINALLY...

We would like to say a special thank you to:

- Christchurch Clarendon Park for making us their Charity of the Year and running various fundraising initiatives for us, including a very successful art sale.
- Trustee Margaret Bonney for her sponsored walk on our behalf
- And to Margaret Fingerhut for her very special fundraising concert hosted by Leicester Cathedral, which provided us with a brilliant night out and also raised £1,000 for our charity.

Shali Bullough - LCoS Co-ordinator