

Trustees' Annual Report for the period

April 2025 To March 2026

Birmingham Community Hosting Network
Also known as BIRCH Network

Address; 204 Scott House, The Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Deritend, Birmingham, B9 4AA

Charity registration number: 1151763

Trustees:
Andrew Jolly (from 22nd Nov 2025)
Chris Benfield
David Newsome
Emma Hawthorne
Isobel Knowles
Katherine Green
Massaba Dite Oumou Kouyate (from 26th March 2026)

Independent Examiner: Gerald Gurriet

Trustees Report:

Objectives and Activities

Objectives as set out in the constitution:

The relief of financial hardship amongst those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom or who are refugees, and who reside in the West Midlands.

To preserve and protect the physical and mental health of those awaiting and those granted refugee status and their dependents.

Activities:
- Community hosting network for destitute refugees and migrants
- Befriending and advocacy support for separated young refugees
- Sessional activities and support for newly arrived asylum seeking families
- Outreach support to newly arrived asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation

Trustee's Responsibilities in Relation to the Financial Statements.

The charity trustees are responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that 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 Charities Act 1993, the charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Summary of main achievements

This was another very challenging year for our organisation. Across the course of the year we supported 1092 sanctuary seekers, making this our busiest year ever. The vast majority of people were supported by our support hubs during our hotel outreach sessions across four asylum hotels in Birmingham (846 individuals). We also supported 244 young sanctuary seekers via our youth project. We ran over 130 hotel support hubs across four hotels in Birmingham, 46 youth hub sessions and over 55 wellbeing trips and activities - this included: Litter Picking sessions with Kingston Community Litter Pickers, Creative Projects with Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham, Library visits, trips to museums, Botanical Gardens, parks and community gardens, seeing Basketball Finals, bowling, Christmas light shows and attending other community events running in Birmingham.

We also hosted three destitute sanctuary seekers, providing 29 nights of accommodation. We continued to receive referrals and enquiries but many of these did not meet our criteria. Where possible we signposted these cases to other projects or provided information about where to access further advice and support.

Some of the main challenges during the year have been the rapid turnover of residents in the hotels we work in. This has meant that we have had to shift our work in our community hubs to more early intervention support, as many residents are only in Birmingham for a couple of months. As such, we have continued to focus on trying to link people to community groups. We have been very successful in linking residents from one hotel to a local litter picking group. Following on from the litter picking group, our outreach coordinator supported the Kingston Community Group to secure funding to run some further 'Share My Language' sessions and will work with them to deliver their sessions with residents from Bordersley Green. These will include some litter picking and community gardening sessions, other wellbeing sessions with the local community based in Birmingham City Football Club's Community Hub. The aim is to help hotel residents improve their language, engage in meaningful conversations/activities outside of the hotel and to meet people from the local community.

At the hubs we offer a wide range of advocacy support, information, signposting and referrals to a range of services e.g The Bike Project, mens and womens groups, befriending, community volunteer gardening, explaining letters, helping people to send emails or respond to enquiries. Staff also took the time to go through the Right to Remain Toolkit to try to help people prepare for their Home Office interviews. Our staff also provide Move On support for those who get refugee status and refer them to the Refugee and Migrant Centre who lead on this support.

For the families we support, we continued to help children apply for nurseries, schools and colleges. We linked expectant mothers with Doula groups, helped to source free baby items and ensured that they were linked in with appropriate maternity services.

Our staff and volunteers also distribute SIM cards (over 1000) and phones where possible, and emergency amounts of subsistence support for small items.

One of our main offers is emotional support and the value of listening and providing a safe space for people to talk about their hopes and fears is reflected in the feedback we outline below.

We also provide one to one advocacy outside of the hubs either via WhatsApp, face to face and engage in follow up casework e.g. referrals, signposting. For several months of the year our outreach coordinator was shadowed by Médecins Sans Frontières who were developing their new mental health project offering mental health support to sanctuary seekers who have experienced trauma and who gave a lot of positive feedback about how instrumental this time was for them. We continue to work closely with them, making referrals for individuals who need mental health support and to answer any queries their staff have.

The increase of Far Right protests was particularly prevalent for residents in the hotel we support in Sutton Coldfield. For many months, there were particularly vocal and sometimes

violent weekly protests outside the hotel. This triggered a response from the local community who sometimes ran counter demonstrations and community groups also wrote letters of welcome which were distributed to residents in the hotel who were very distressed by how they were being treated. We also saw an increase in the number of local residents who wanted to volunteer with us as a way to show their support via our weekly ESOL classes in the hotel, as well as a new group of volunteers who started a weekly games evening from April 26 onwards. We were also in touch with the Migration Team at the City Council, helping to get reports from residents about their experiences to feed into the police and Council to try to dispel the weekly protests.

We continue to see an increase in the number of age disputed young people we support. Our youth hub has been busier than ever and we moved venues in October 2025 to Birmingham Association of Youth Clubs but quickly outgrew this space and moved again to a fantastic new space, the Unitarians New Meeting Hall which is much more suitable for the needs of the young people we support. Over the year we supported 244 young sanctuary seekers aged 16-19 years old, many of whom were age disputed and we referred them to social services.

Many of these young people were supported via one-to-one advocacy support and advice from our project staff and volunteers. Some of this support might have been very short term (if a referral to social services is accepted quickly we might not hear from them again) but for about a third of the young people we support, our support extends to many weeks and often up to a year and beyond. In addition to supporting these young people with their age dispute issues, we also offer a holistic advocacy programme which means that we signpost and refer to a wide range of other agencies and support services. This can include: mental health support, advocacy with health teams, befriending support, social groups, sports groups, volunteering, education support, liaison with the Home Office or legal representatives. We try to help these young people integrate more into their local community and build more connections, to help improve their confidence and resilience.

We match some of the most vulnerable young people we support to our volunteer befrienders and during the period of this grant, we matched 17 young people with volunteer befrienders as well as supporting some historic matches.

We have continued to contribute to various campaigns that have run throughout the year. Our outreach worker worked with Asylum Matters to support some hotel resident set up their own 38 degrees campaign against the Earned Settlement Proposals: https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-leave-refugees-in-limbo-scrap-the-20-year-wait We responded to the Earned Settlement Consultation in February 2026, aiming to highlight some of the devastating impacts this could have on sanctuary seekers who could face an indefinite period of limited leave to remain in the UK.

As our work has developed and increased, we took the decision to increase our management support and increased our Development Worker's hours in September 2025 to ensure that we were able to support staff appropriately and to allocate more time to fundraising. We also took the decision to increase our staff team and were able to recruit a new Charity administrator and support worker for 14 hours a week. This new role has focussed on helping to deliver outreach support in one of the busiest asylum hotels we run

outreach hubs in and has also helped our Development Worker with our volunteer recruitment. Our new staff member has lived experience as a refugee and had brought invaluable insights into our way of working, has helped us reach some of the harder to reach beneficiaries as we have been able to use the range of languages they have,

We have continued to apply to a wide range of charitable trusts and received a very substantial grant from Birmingham City Council's Sanctuary grant scheme, being one of only eight organisations that were funded in Birmingham. We also secured a three year unrestricted grant from Lloyds TSB Foundation which helped us to grow our staff team. We also started a strategic review of our services following some free consultancy via our Lloyds TSB Foundation grant and hope to build on this to plan the next couple of years.

We are in a good financial position going into the next financial year and hope to continue to develop our projects and maintain our reserves.

Structure, Governance and Management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted on 5th Feb 2013.

Financial Review

Birmingham Community Hosting (BIRCH) Network has a generous pool of local and regional charitable trusts and funders, as well as support from the National Lottery and good support from individual, and community funders. BIRCH raised **£55554** from charitable trusts and foundations, and **£6380** from community donations; we raised **£233** in sales from our shop sales. We also received a grant award from Birmingham City Council's Sanctuary Grant Scheme of **£39133** of which **£27393** was secured this financial year.

At the end of the financial year, we had secured total funds of **£92,944** during this financial year. We also carried forward **£83,214** from the previous financial year. At the end of the financial year we had **£67,164** in secured cash funds. Out of these funds **£35959** (unrestricted funds) was designated to reserves (accounting for four months of operating costs), **£31205** (unrestricted funds) was carried forward and designated to project running costs.

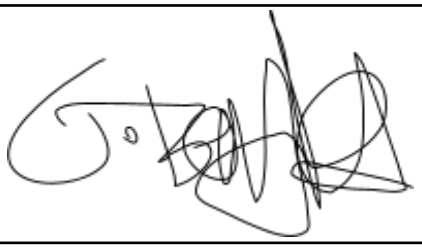
Reserves policy

Our reserves policy states that we should hold three months operating costs.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signatures		
Full name	Emma Hawthorne	Chris Benfield
Position	Chair of Trustees	Trustee and Treasurer
Date	17.09.26	17.09.26

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/directors/ members of	Birmingham Community Hosting Network
On accounts for the year ended	31 March 2026

Charity no.:	1151763	Company no.:	

Set out on pages

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees of the Charity, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act").

I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). In carrying out my examination, I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

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

☐ Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
☐ The accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Venusia Ltd
Apt 316
Wimbledon Central
21-33 Worple Road
London - SW19 4BJ
www.venusia.co.uk

Signed: **Date:** 15 August 2026

Name: Gerald Gurriet

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): Association of International Accountants

Address: Venusia Ltd

London, SW19 4BJ

Apt 316 Wimbledon Central, 21 – 33 Worple Road

Receipts and payments account

For the year ended 31 March 2026

RECEIPTS	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	**Last year**
	£	£	£	£
Funds received	47,501	45,444	**92,944**	**94,953**
Total Receipts	47,501	45,444	**92,944**	**94,953**
PAYMENTS				
Charitable Activities	-	108994	**108,994**	**95,600**
Total Payments			**108994**	**95,600**
Net of Receipts/(payments)			**-16,050**	**-647**
Cash funds last year end	63342	19,872	**83,214**	**83,861**
Cash funds this year end	110,843	-43,679	**67,164**	**83,214**

Analysis of expenditure 2025/26

Project	**Total 2025/26**	**Total 2024/25**
	£	£
Family Fun Sessions	26,253	19,532
Family Befriending	42,307	40,171
Hosting Network	135	2,282
Refugee Outreach Project	22,178	19,421
Development Work	17,498	14,195
Admin and support Work	623	0
Total	**108,994**	**95,600**

Analysis of income 2025/26

Income	**2025/26**
Type of income	
Restricted Income	**Amount £**
Baron Davenport	700
Birmingham City Council Sanctuary Grant (Part 1)	27393
Birmingham City Council Bus Ticket Reimbursement	2934
Celebrating Sanctuary Birmingham	463
Comic Relief Community Fund	2455
Community donation	150
George Henry Collins	1000
Grantham Yorke Trust	3000
Joseph Hopkins & Sayer Trust	700
Just Giving Mobile Phone Winter Appeal	1662
Migrant Help	3200
Zohar Dean Trust	1786
Total Restricted Income	**45444**
Unrestricted Income	
Albert Hunt	5000
Card Factory Foundation	5000
Community Donations	4568
Gowling	500
Lloyds TSB Foundation	25000
Marsh Christian Trust	600
NACCOM	1100
Shop sales	233
Southall Trust	5000
W.E.D. Charitable Trust	500
Total Unrestricted Income	**47501**
Total Income	**92944**

Summary of income and expenditure

Income	**2025/26 £**
Charitable Activities	3167
Community Donations (inc GIFT AID)	6380
Charitable Trusts	55554
Birmingham City Council - Sanctuary Grant	27393
Other income for specific activities	450
Total Income	**92944**
Expenditure	**2025/26 £**
Asylum seeker travel & subsistence	6154
Equipment & Materials	1256
Finance Software costs	189
Football Activities	374
Fundraising Activities	291
Independent Examiner (audit)	250
Membership Fees (DBS & NACCOM, ICO etc)	167
Mobile phone purchase - asylum seeker	1679
Outside Agency Costs e.g. Immigration advice/External Supervision	415
Public Liability Insurance	3010
Refreshments	5280
Refugee Events	387
Reimbursement of payments for bus tickets	7739
Staff Stationery/ Phone	505
Staff Training, Travel and Subsistence	1640
Staff salary costs	74002
Sundries incl. postage	298
Trustee Costs	594
Venue Hire	1500
Volunteer Travel & Subsistence/ DBS checks	854
Website/Email/IT maintenance costs	806
Wellbeing Activities - Asylum Seeker	1238
Wellbeing Activities - Staff	368
Total Expenditure	**108994**
Operating surplus (deficit)	-16050
Carry forward 2024/25	83214
Cash funds this year end	67164
Allocation of cash funds	
Reserves	35959
Designated/restricted funding	31205