Stories of Hope and Home

Registered Charity: 1195224

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026











www.storiesofhome.org.uk

Who we are

Stories of Hope and Home was founded in 2019 and became a registered CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) in 2021. It is a close-knit and yet ever-evolving community of people from all over the world: from different cultures, backgrounds, faiths, genders, ages and experiences; who are united by the common struggle of seeking safety and learning to call the UK their home.

We run twice-weekly meetings in Birmingham where participants engage in a variety of activities: particularly creative writing, poetry and theatre. Throughout the year we invite participants to take part in a range of different trips, activities and celebrations to support their wellbeing and improve integration. We also offer emotional and practical support to the individuals in our community. The outreach part of our programme involves people with lived experience of the UK asylum system mostly visiting schools, as well as other groups, to share their experiences, using personal encounter to challenge misconceptions.

In our own words

We asked current participants to describe Stories of Hope and Home in one sentence. These are some of their responses:

"This group is the chosen family that gave me a home when I felt homeless."

"A place where I can interact with people and share my life experiences aiming to create something positive."

"I found my identity with Stories of Hope and Home."

"It's a place of refuge and a safe house, where I can feel free to share my burden."

"It's a great shelter and reminder that humanity still exists."

"A place I always feel welcome and understood."

"They are my second family who love me unconditionally and I feel comfortable and loved when I am among them."





Our Vision



For people who have lived experience of the UK asylum system to have spaces for their stories and experiences to be shared and heard, contributing to a better informed and more welcoming society in which people who have sought sanctuary feel empowered, included, and re-humanised.

Our Aims

Stories of Hope and Home has dual, complementary aims:

to bring together people with lived experience of seeking asylum:
to create safe spaces, to build community and to explore and process their experiences.

to facilitate encounters and share stories with others:
promoting learning, challenging misconceptions, developing empathy and inspiring action.

As stated in our constitution:

1) The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among refugees and asylum seekers in the West Midlands who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing a space and community in which to meet others, build friendships, practise the English language, learn communication skills and creatively explore stories and life experiences as a means of integrating into a new community.

2) To advance the education of the public through the provision of activities and events which inform participants and develop their understanding of the lived experience of asylum seekers and refugees who flee persecution and settle in a new country, help to foster positive attitudes towards diversity and migration and counter misinformation.

Who we are

This year:

Over 100 adult participants

49 newcomers

37 accompanying children

38 nationalities



Trustees

Tawasol Abdelsamad, Musharraf Abdullayeva (until July 2025), Emma Birks, Aboubakr Kone, Helena Madden, and James Trewby.

(Trustees are appointed for a three year term which may be renewed. New trustees are selected and invited by the existing trustee body.)

Staff

The charity employs a part-time (0.6FTE) Manager, Stephanie Neville; and a part-time (0.2FTE) Assistant, Rebecca Lonergan.

We have also been very grateful for the support of a number of regular and occasional volunteers.



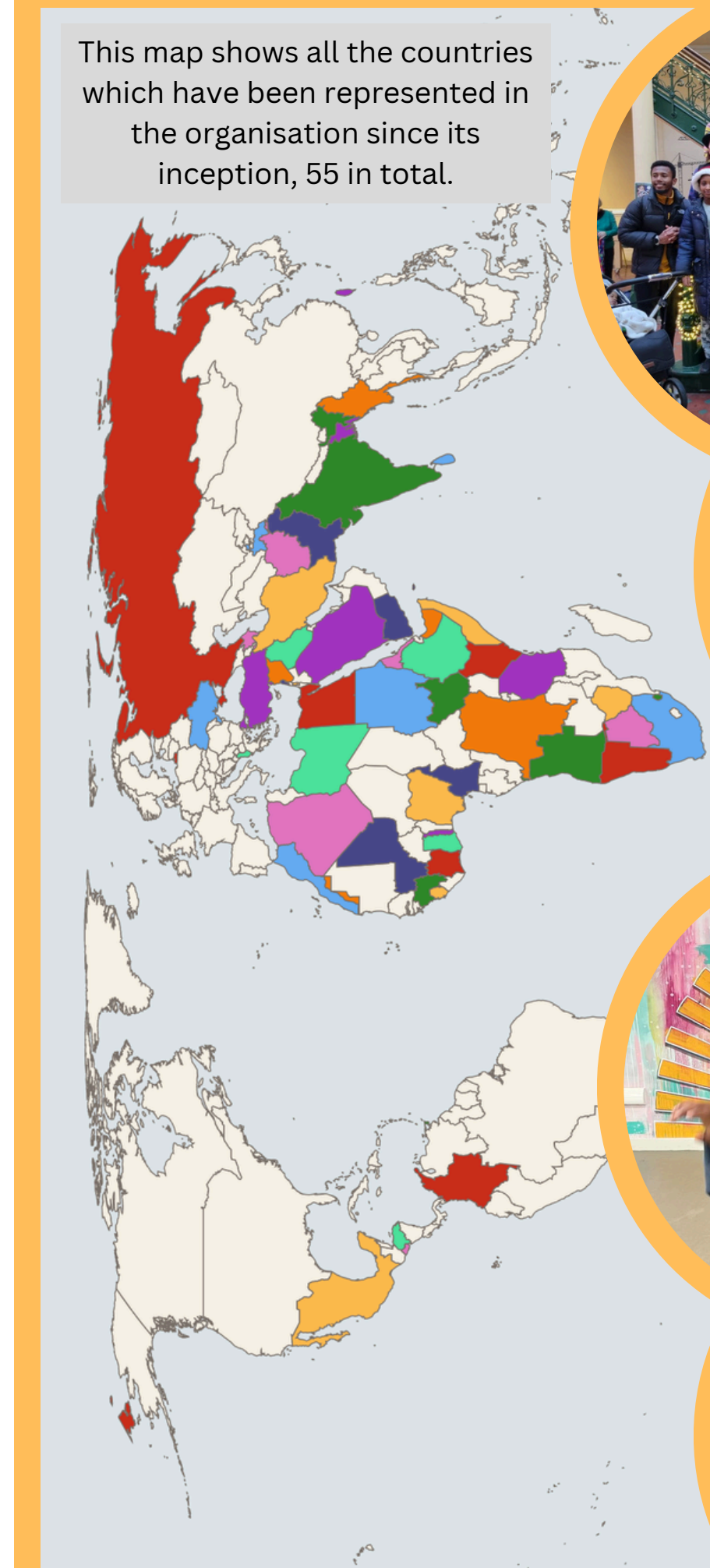
Funders

We were supported by grant funding from: Ben and Jerry's Foundation, Birmingham City Council, Dudley CVC, Hilden Fund, Jesuit Fund for Social Justice, MSN Fund, The Passionists, Society of the Holy Child Jesus, and South Birmingham Friends.
We are also grateful to schools and groups who fundraise for us, and all our individual donors, both regular and occasional.

Supporters and Partners

Asylum Matters, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham REP Theatre, Catholic Primary Partnership, Celebrating Sanctuary, The Church at Carrs Lane, The Missionary Society of St Columban, St Cassian's Centre and the Schools of Sanctuary Network.

This map shows all the countries which have been represented in the organisation since its inception, 55 in total.











“They have embedded in me that I am human and I am valuable. My life has colour since I joined Stories of Hope and Home.”

What we do



This year:

69 regular sessions

9 parties

29 trips

4 residential trips and encounters

53 encounters

39 different schools

19 schools and groups visited for the first time

35 Stories participants involved in school visits and other encounters



5 performances

And a countless number of cups of tea and pieces of cake!

Regular Sessions

Stories of Hope and Home usually meets together twice a week. Every session involves tea and snacks!

Our Monday sessions, hosted by Birmingham REP, are loosely focused around drama and performance including devising and writing as well as developing performance skills.

Our Friday sessions take place at The Church at Carrs Lane, and include a range of discussion and writing activities aimed at exploring our lives, stories and experiences. We have been working on a project called “Letters from my Life” which we hope will be published by the end of 2026.

During some sessions we have learned about different aspects of British society and culture, and educated ourselves about our rights and about ongoing changes, developments and realities of life in the asylum system.

Parties, trips and celebrations

One of the beauties of bringing together together such a diverse community is that there are always plenty of different opportunities for celebrations!

Our trips this year included wonderful residentials as well as many local visits. The external context for people seeking sanctuary remains incredibly challenging so opportunities to relax together are essential.

Performances

We performed our devised piece “Home is Where we Belong” at Birmingham REP Theatre on 18th July 2025, exploring what makes a home and what it is like to have multiple places to call home, none of which feel like a place where you fully belong. Smaller performances through the year gave us other opportunities to showcase the piece.

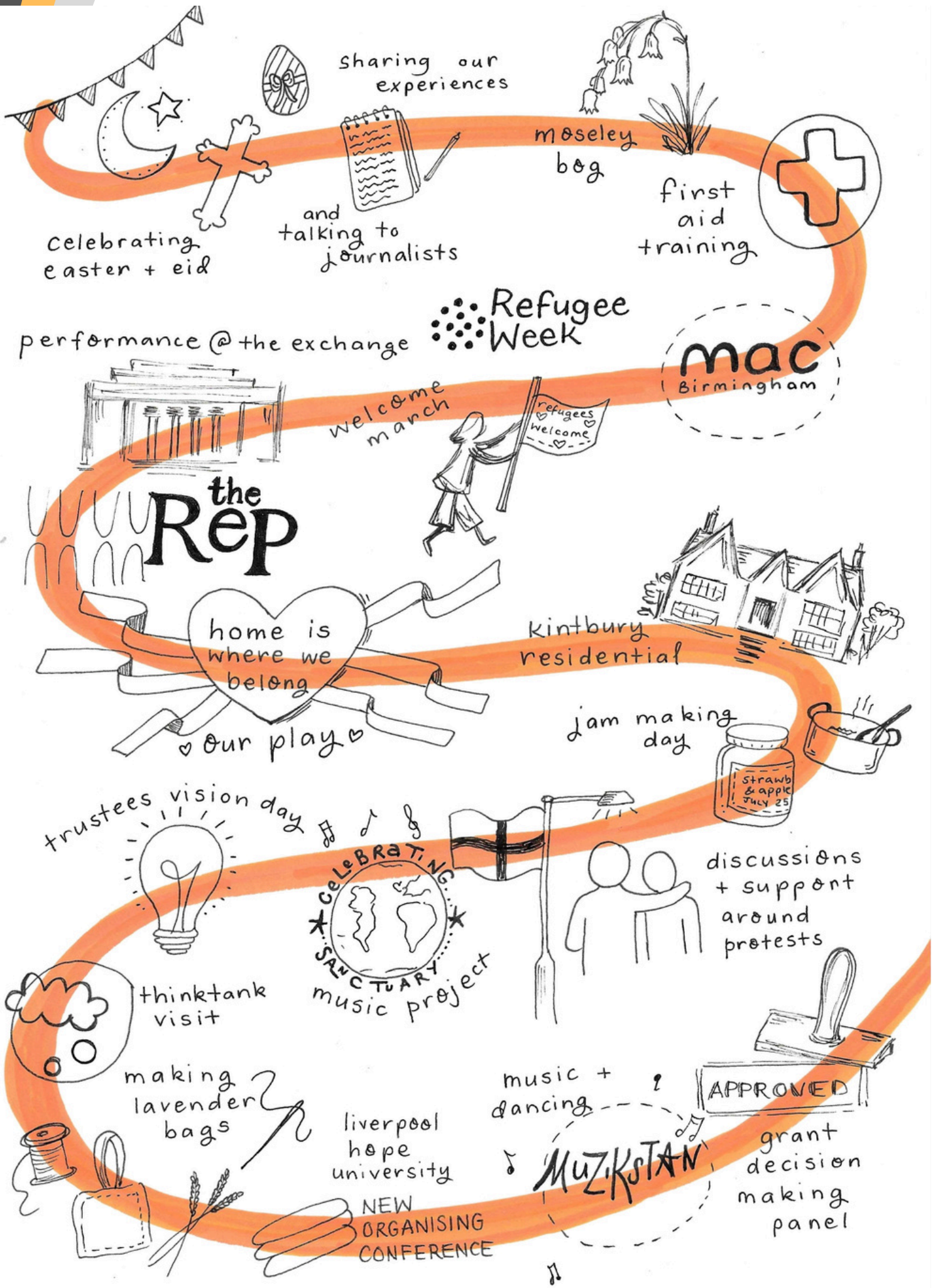
School Visits and Encounters

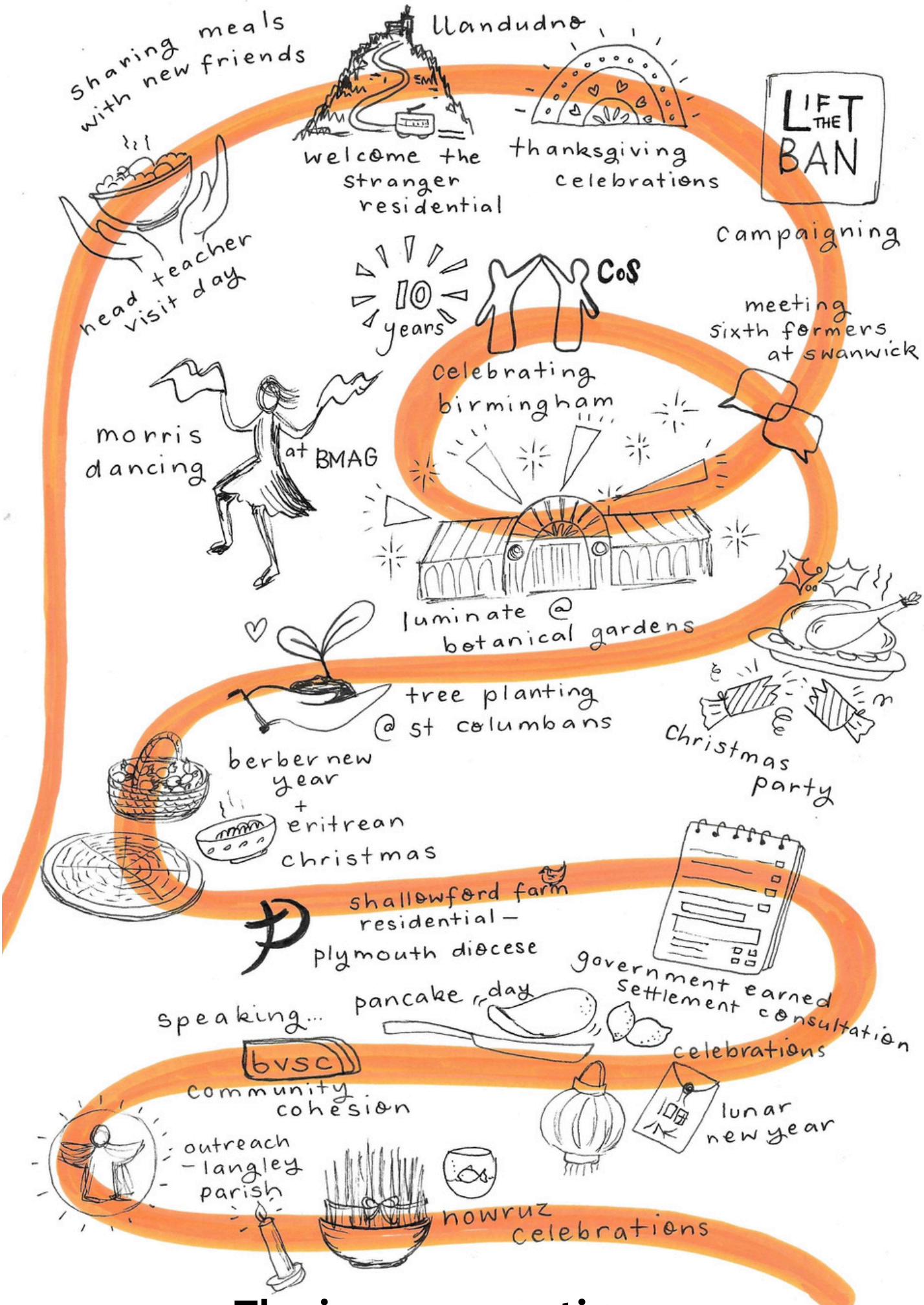
Finding opportunities for our stories to be shared and heard beyond our own community is core to what we are about. Our visits this year have taken us around the West Midlands and further afield, and we have enjoyed meeting many new schools and groups.

This aspect of our work has never felt more necessary against the backdrop of relentless political and media hostility and misinformation around the subject of seeking safety.



What we do


sharing our experiences
moseley bog
celebrating easter + eid
and talking to journalists
first aid training
Refugee Week
performance @ the exchange
mac Birmingham
welcome march
refugees welcome
the Rep
home is where we belong
our play
kintbury residential
jam making day
strawb & apple July 25
trustees vision day
CELEBRATING SANCTUARY
discussions + support around protests
thinktank visit
music project
making lavender bags
liverpool hope university
music + dancing
MUZIKSTAN
APPROVED
grant decision making panel
NEW ORGANISING CONFERENCE



The journey continues ...

Participants say:

Every participant who completed our evaluation could identify positive impacts of the charity on their lives.

Identified benefits included improved mental well-being, more confidence, ability to access support, a sense of belonging, feeling able to make a difference, and developing new skills.

Why it matters

"Stories of Hope and Home gives me a sense of belonging where I can be myself. I love socialising with the group and perfecting my writing and speaking. It gives me confidence and hope. I learn about culture and what is happening at the moment."

"Stories of Hope and Home is a place where you can discover yourself again and unleash your skills. It is a place where you truly feel home, a place where you can put your stress away."

"Stories of Hope and Home is my first and closest family in the UK where I feel free to share my worries without being judged."

"It is very hard when you move to another country and being an asylum seeker makes it harder, having people to support and guide you makes a big difference."

"It is good for me because I learn English and speak better. Also I understand English people and culture. It makes me feel happy."

"This group means so much to me. When I share my story with them I feel relief."

"This group gave me a family where I feel accepted as I am. I no longer feel alone. I have been able to build my confidence and know my rights."

"Stories of Hope and Home has been more than just a group for me, it has been a true community that made me feel understood and at home."

We asked participants to describe the project in three words. This is the result:



"Our performance at the REP made me feel incredibly proud and happy. It was an unforgettable experience that gave me more confidence, strength and joy as I saw the positive impact we created."

"It is a safe place where our stories are heard and our voice matters, a place where we keep our hope alive despite the struggle, a place where we transform our tragedies into something beautiful."

Schools say:

"Ensuring that our children and staff hear real stories to counter the bias in media is vital for us to build a community that is confident and well informed."

"It was wonderful to see the way in which our children connected with the speakers in such a short space of time. The children's empathy and understanding was greatly enhanced."

"The team do a truly remarkable and inspiring thing by bringing the stories of asylum seekers and refugees to children and staff who too often only hear inaccurate and biased information through media. It takes a huge amount of courage to share such difficult histories, but their work will inspire others to speak up against injustice and intolerance."

"A really powerful visit showing the reality of the life of refugees. Stories left us all with a deep understanding and the ability to share and tell the truth of what is happening in the UK."

100% of schools and groups who completed our evaluation were able to identify actions they had taken or planned to take in response to the encounter

"Meeting people face-to-face helps students understand global issues in a human, relatable way. Hearing personal stories helps children replace assumptions with genuine understanding, promoting a more inclusive school culture."

"Getting to meet real asylum seekers and refugees and learning about their journey and life in the UK is invaluable in educating our pupils. There is no single more important issue at the moment and hearing and seeing first hand is the most powerful and effective way of fostering understanding and empathy."

"The impact of Stories of Hope and Home has been significant. Hearing authentic stories and engaging with a real-life audience has deepened pupils' understanding and empathy. Since the visit, children have been actively discussing their learning, sharing their poems, and reflecting thoughtfully on the experiences and feelings of others."

We asked schools / groups to sum up the project in three words. This is the result:



Financial Summary

approved by the independent examiner

Income

	restricted	unrestricted	Total
Grants	£23500	£9950	£33450
Donations and gifts	£100	£15295	£15395
Other	£410	£1760	£2170
Total Income	£24010	£27005	£51015

Expenditure

Staffing	£28518
Travel and Subsistence	£5031
Equipment, materials, resources and refreshments	£1596
Activity Costs (including room hire)	£4882
Other	£1068
Total Expenditure	**£41095**

Balance at 31/03/2026: £50,293

(Includes reserves of three months running costs)

Our full financial report is available separately on request.



Contact Details

info@storiesofhome.org.uk

07598922095

Social Media

You can find us on Facebook, Instagram and BlueSky.

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Stories of Hope and Home	1195224

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	Period start date 01-Apr-25	To	Period end date 31-Mar-26

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	23,500	9,950	-	33,450	20,000
Donations and Gifts	15,295	100	-	15,395	12,756
Gift Aid	-	-	-	-	1,755
Payments for participation in Festivals of Encounter	-	1,290	-	1,290	1,170
Payment of expenses for workshops / encounters	-	471	-	471	97
Book sales	105	-	-	105	190
Interest	305	-	-	305	1,167
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	39,205	11,811	-	51,015	37,135
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	39,205	11,811	-	51,015	37,135
A3 Payments					
Staffing costs	26,218	2,300	-	28,518	28,249
Travel	4,434	597	-	5,031	2,051
Equipment, material and resources	246	267	-	513	405
Refreshments	633	450	-	1,083	1,507
Room Hire	-	410	-	410	405
Activity costs	2,717	1,755	-	4,472	5,754
Public liability insurance	303	-	-	303	303
Wesbite, email, domain name	102	-	-	102	78
Other / miscellaneous (inc DBS checks)	663	-	-	663	230
Sub total	35,317	5,779	-	41,095	38,982
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	35,317	5,779	-	41,095	38,982
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,888	6,032	-	9,920	- 1,847
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	37,170	3,203	-	40,373	42,220
Cash funds this year end	41,058	9,235	-	50,293	40,373

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Current Account	466	-	-
	Instant Access Savings	28,592	9,235	-
	Fixed term savings (Reserves)	12,000	-	-
	Total cash funds	41,058	9,235	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

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

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees

Charity Name: Stories of Hope and Home

On accounts for the year ended: March 31st 2026

Charity no (if any): 1195224

Set out on pages: 13-14 (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 31/3/2026.

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

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination 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.

Signed: 

Date: 15/09/26

Name: Chris Clements

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Address: 49 St Bernards Road
Solihull

B92 7AX

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.	