



Trustees Annual Report; 1st April 2024 to March 31st 2025

Full name of charity; York City of Sanctuary

Registered Charity number; 1176094

Objectives and Activities

The summary of the purposes of the charity set out in its governing document states that the objects are;

- to advance the education of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum
- to advance the education and training of those seeking asylum and those granted refugees status and their dependents in need thereof so as to advance them in life and assist them to adapt within a new community
- the promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit by promoting activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds

A summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts

- Advocacy services provide support and financial aid, assisting asylum seekers and refugees to be provided with legal advice, to make applications for housing, other public benefits, student loans, and applications for UK citizenship.
- The 2 Ridings Foundation, York Minster Chapter, and the Gaza Appeal Fund enable purchase of household goods, including furniture and other items identified as basic needs for refugees and asylum seekers as they enter and adapt within the community. Grants are made to enable families to select their requirements. A discount is provided by York Community Furniture Store.
- Homestay programme identifies and provides short term safe and secure accommodation in York for asylum seekers and families awaiting the outcome of their application for refugee status.
- Public engagements include presentations and speaking engagements in schools, universities, faith communities, at civic occasions, and to a wide range of voluntary organisations. Matters raised by our speakers include equality and diversity.
- The public in general, and the charity's list of supporters, are informed about issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum through our website, regular newsletters, engagement with the local media, and social media presence, such as Facebook.
- The Trustees consider that they have complied with their duties to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

Achievements and performance in 2024-2025

A summary of the main achievements of the charity over the 12 month period, identifying the difference which the work of the charity has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries, and any wider benefits to society as a whole.

The Board of Trustees met 3 times during the year, and also held the AGM in November 2024. Officers of the Board meet informally on a frequent basis, to carry out the administration and oversee financial affairs of the charity.

The City of York Council receives funding from the Government's 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, which continues to run. From that, 2 grants totalling £40,000 provide major support to the York -Ukraine Support Team over the year, as they work with Ukrainian refugees who came originally to stay with hosts in York from April 2022 onwards. By March 2024 that number of 350 remains fairly constant. The 2 York Minster grants of £3000 in August 2024 and March 2025 assist the demands for support with housing, resettlement, integration, essential items for new asylum seekers in the city, emergency support, and specific programmes such as the York Refugee Week, and the Ukrainian National Festival of Vyshyvanka Day. The newly formed Heela Group, supporting Afghan women in York received a grant from the 1970 Trust of £1500 which greatly assists the running of the group. An appeal for Gazan refugees arriving in York since February 2025 raised £3305 from supporters and was a lifeline to those settling here with their families. We continued to draw funds from the generous grant from the 2 Ridings Foundation, although the award was made in September 2023, and is now almost depleted.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, asylum seekers continued to arrive and depart the city centre York hotel accommodation. Numbers vary between 350- 430. York City of Sanctuary has taken part in appeals to gather essential clothing, provided welcome packs for those arriving in the city, and other items identified as important to their well- being. Those accommodated in the hotel are monitored to ensure they are provided with a safe, healthy, and secure environment. Regular meetings have been held of all front line agencies. Hotels are not an ideal location for asylum seekers, presenting a clear target for far right agitators. There were no local demonstrations in York during the Summer of 2024. The welfare of those housed in York is greatly improved by the actions of our charity and our partners.

A further 34 individuals seeking asylum, leave to remain permanently in the UK, claiming benefits, or applying for UK citizenship were also supported by the charity. The Homestay programme provided supported emergency rental payments for families awaiting asylum claims and the right to work. They were assured of a local, safe and secure environment, at a time when Asylum Support housing was severely overcrowded.

The Ukraine war shows no sign of ending soon. Gaza, Yemen, Afghanistan Sudan are also amongst the generators of refugees. Climate change is driving people in sub-Saharan Africa to flee hunger and poverty. There is no likelihood of the flow of refugees reducing. Reductions of International Aid by wealthy nations are making the migration situation worse.

Because of the close links with our partners, which we have worked hard to create, we are confident of continuing to deliver the support developed over recent years. This will protect the well-being and safety of new and existing sanctuary seekers. There are around 850 asylum seekers and refugees living here at the time of this report, and York continues to live up to its national status as a City of Sanctuary.

Financial Review

The charity's financial position at 31st March 2025 was as follows. Income for the year totals £55,148 of which £6293 was donated by individuals and community groups; and £295 from fund raising events. Grants for restricted funds amounted to £47,900, of which the grant of £40,000 from the Government's 'Homes For Ukraine' funding was designated to the York-Ukraine Support Team (YUST). Over the year, 92.1% of payments were used to deliver support and assist the needs of individuals and families. 4.6% was spent on Administration, and 3.3% on events and fund raising. Reserve funds for 2025 were retained at £35,000, as agreed by the Trustees. The unrestricted funds at the end of the year were £53,415. Funding met the needs of those using our services over the year. It is to be noted that the non-financial support from our volunteers far exceeds the financial output we are able to offer.

We expect to meet all commitments on spending for the planned programmes budgeted for 2025-26. Continued demand on our services as a result of re-settlement work with refugees means the need to maintain our increased income for the year ahead. Applications for new sources of grants, fundraising and other donations will be needed to enable our other work to continue and develop in the way that our Business plan for 2025-26 outlines.

The Charity policy on holding reserves and why they are held

Maintaining a reserve enables us to guarantee continuity of work over the next 12 months. The amount of reserves held at 31st March 2025 was held at £35,000. The figure is subject to review by the Trustees, dependent on assessment of essential running costs of the charity.

The charity does not have a policy of holding zero reserves. There are no funds materially in deficit as of 31st March 2025.

Uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern

The Trustees are confident that there are no concerns about the charity going forward into 2025-26.

Structure, governance and management

A description of the Charity's trusts

The type of governing document is Association of Model Constitution

The charity is constituted as a CIO with voting members other than its charity trustees.

Trustee selection methods, including details of and constitutional provisions, including election to post and name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees.

Applicants to Trusteeship complete an application form, and provide a CV to the Board. Those interviewed and selected are nominated and elected at the Annual General Meeting. The term of office is a 3 year period. The Board may number up to 9 members, and three retire each year at the AGM. Trustees may seek re-election and serve three consecutive periods before retiring for at least one year. In the event of vacancies, Trustees may be co-opted to the Board and seek nomination and election at the next available AGM.