

## TRIPS

We are really proud to have contributed to the design of the Leicester City in the Community Fox - part of a trail of fox statues at Fosse Park. For our first trip of 2021 we took a small group involved in the design to see Filbert and the other foxes. It was very interesting to see how the various ideas had come together in the final statue.



We've enjoyed several visits to Leicester Museums, one with the English Conversation group and another visit for the families, where the children enjoyed an animal making workshop. A further visit to Newarke Houses involved a tour and a craft and photography workshop.

Mike Drucquer took us on an enlightening tour around Leicester's Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel. With over 300 years' worth of history, it was fascinating to see its beautiful architecture and hear about how many of its members have shaped the city. For some of our tour members, it was also their first experience of hearing an organ!

## ENGLISH CLASSES AND UNIVERSITY OF SANCTUARY

Classes have been running since May 2020 on Zoom, five days a week at a range of levels. A separate group has been set up to cater for asylum seekers who are not UK residents, following requests from asylum seekers in the Netherlands and other countries. Whereas the ESOL classes would normally take a break over the summer, this year they have continued. The Google classroom has been very popular, with students reporting that this online space has opened up new opportunities for them to study at their own time and pace.



## SEWING

After going back on Zoom following the autumn lockdown, Mandy worked really hard delivering two sessions a week, as well as keeping the group supplied with fabric and materials. The Zoom sessions really helped the ladies keep in touch. Catching up, and having a chat with each other during the sessions, was so important in lockdown. The group was finally able to return to Booth Hall on 20th May, and whilst very appreciative of the Zoom classes, all agree it's much, much nicer to be in the same space together. A grant from the Coop has kept the group well equipped with both fabrics and materials. The group is currently running "The Great Sanctuary Sewing Bee" where the women choose something they want to make that will challenge themselves to do something new, rather than it being about competition with others.

## FOOTBALL

The football group went back briefly face-to-face from September, closing during the various lockdowns, then popping back up again when restrictions eased. The football group remains ever popular, with large numbers wanting to play each week. Phil has worked very hard running an appointment system to control numbers and to keep the information required by Track & Trace. Thanks to Carling we've been able to buy new kit for our football group - including boots, footballs, gloves, socks and more. This funding has also allowed us to provide refreshments of fresh fruit during half-time, as well as some toiletries for the players.

## NEW EVIDENCE SEARCH TEAM (NEST)

NEST helps refused asylum seekers to understand the reasons for their refusal and helps them gather new relevant information. NEST has been operating via Zoom since April 2020 and handled 12 cases since August 2020. This is lower than normal because the Home Office hasn't been processing cases in the usual way, and appeals were not being held for a large part of last year. As a result, the number of refused asylum seekers requiring help on their fresh claims was down.

Sherri is stepping down as group leader, but will continue as a caseworker in the NEST team. A huge thanks to Sherri for so much work over many years.

## MULTI AGENCY FORUM (MAF)

We have continued to chair the MAF, hosting the bi-monthly meetings online via Zoom. We have also encouraged wider involvement from the community, adding new participants. Enabling the MAF to continue to run during the various lockdowns via Zoom has provided continuity of this vital forum where groups can meet up and exchange news on the asylum and refugee sector.

## AND FINALLY...

We're really grateful for the support from our volunteers who have helped us keep things going during this difficult year, and also to partners and the local community. We've benefited from goods donations from local schools, churches, supermarkets, other groups and individuals, which have really helped us to keep distributing essential goods to those in need.

We've adapted to the changing situation week by week over the past year, and will continue to do so, whatever the coming months may bring.

**Shali Bullough** - LCoS Coordinator

If you would like to know more about Leicester City of Sanctuary, contact us via:  
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# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



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

# LEICESTER CITY OF SANCTUARY

## CHAIR'S REPORT

**Trustees** for the past year have been: Pete Hobson (chair), Jenny Dnes (vice-chair), Hagara Al-Katheri, Sadiq Ahamed, Cllr Danny Myers, Eric Nkundumubano, Ajay Aggarwal, Margaret Bonney and Golden Ngwenya. The last three step down at this year's AGM, and we're looking for the right people to replace them – though there is no absolute requirement for trustee numbers, above a minimum of three.

**Work pattern** - Our last report was presented in September 2020 when it appeared that the first waves of covid-19 had subsided, but in fact further waves were shortly to emerge. This has again had a significant impact on the sort of activities we have been able to maintain, and I'm so pleased with all that our staff and volunteers have in fact still been able to achieve for and with our users. Indeed, volunteers remain key to much of our work, but understandably the pandemic has made some cautious about resuming activities, especially those who are themselves in more vulnerable groups. We're so grateful that many volunteers have been able to provide invaluable support during the past year, and also that we have excellent staff who can oversee a safe return to more face-to-face working.

**Staffing** – Shabana Momin, our wonderful assistant coordinator, took maternity leave from November, and shortly after her return left us for other, more full-time work in July. We were very sorry to see her go, whilst wholly understanding the reasons. Fortunately, we have been able to recruit not one, but two new part-time assistant staff – Chloe Woods, who started in February, initially as maternity cover but since extended to the end of the financial year, and then Anna Goodman, who began work in mid-June on a 6 month contract. The relative strength of our financial position (in part due to covid-19, ironically), combined with the ever-increasing demand for support, has made this possible, and we keep staffing levels and needs under constant review.

**Future thinking** – we're nearing the end of the period covered by our Strategic Plan 2019-22, and will be reviewing how we've done early in the spring. The uncertainties of the pandemic have impacted just about every organisation in the world and it will also be challenging to see what the future holds. But it does appear that the combination of aggressive government policy on asylum and immigration, combined with the ever-increasing impact of climate change and global political pressures on patterns of migration, mean that we can expect no lessening of the needs we exist to meet.

**Pete Hobson – Chair**



## FINANCIAL REPORT / COORDINATOR'S REPORT

### FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-2021

At the end of the 2020/21 financial year, our funds stood at just under £70,000, an increase of over £30,000 compared with the end of 2019/20. This increase is due to a number of factors. Firstly, it was a strong year for income. This was the first year of a National Lottery grant of £30,000 which we were awarded early in 2020. It was also the final year of a long-term grant from the Red Cross. Donations held up well and we raised over £8,000 from the Big Give Christmas fundraising campaign. Secondly, expenditure was lower than expected due to the restrictions of the pandemic. We continued with limited outdoor activities when possible, but many of our normal fixed costs such as room hire and food were much lower than in previous years.

However, despite the restrictions, the needs of our service users were still our priority and we made many more discretionary payments from our emergency fund than in previous years. We also employed an additional part time assistant co-ordinator specifically to develop our case work activities and to work with new asylum seekers who are being housed temporarily in hotels in Leicester.

Overall, we ended the year in a stronger financial position than we expected. At the time of writing, the situation with the pandemic is still uncertain, but the position is improving and we are able to start to open up more activities. Our expenditure for 2021/22 is therefore likely to return to more normal levels. The Lottery grant continues until 2024, but we need to continue to look for other funding sources over the coming year in order to sustain our levels of activity going forward.

**Jenny Dnes – Trustee with Financial Oversight**



### LOCKDOWN

Along with the rest of the world, we've had a very strange year. Soaring Covid rates in the autumn of 2020 delayed our return to The Bridge, as we felt it was safer to continue running from the garden of the Unitarian Chapel, distributing essential goods.

However, we were able to start a small English conversation group, and both the sewing and football groups were able to return to face-to-face activities from September until the autumn lockdown. This was a period of stop-start. The lockdown in October meant a return to activities on Zoom. But the day after the lockdown ended, we returned to the garden, and had a bumper giveaway before Christmas, including the delivery of presents to 33 children.

During the January to March lockdown, we provided weekly supplies of toiletries and PPE to the foodbank at TREC, so that our service users could pick up essentials there. We delivered 80 food parcels directly to local asylum seekers and refugees, including fresh fruit. We also supplied 230 essential hygiene packs, with facemasks, hand sanitizer and other toiletries, to asylum seekers in local hostels and hotels.

ESOL, sewing and soccercise continued online via Zoom. Maggie worked really hard to support the families, including helping them to apply for the council's Winter Grant Scheme. We kept in regular contact with the group and our emergency fund continued to support people. We developed a new partnership with British Red Cross to increase access to our fund, making it possible for people to pick up small payments, for phone credit and other essentials, from their office in town.

To encourage vaccine take up by asylum seekers and refugees, we also ran a health initiative, offering information about the Covid vaccination via our Whatsapp group. We've continued to send regular information on drop-in vaccination clinics and have seen a great take up of the vaccine amongst our group, which is really encouraging.

We delivered craft packs to 33 children over the February half term and to help lift spirits and welcome the spring, we worked with the British Conservation Volunteers to provide seed packs so that people could grow some flowers and herbs on a windowsill.

### IN THE GARDEN

When lockdown finally lifted on 29th March, we returned to the Chapel garden, relishing the spring sunshine and delighting in seeing each other again after three long dark months of isolation. We continued meeting outside every week until the end of June. We introduced various activities, as well as the distribution of essentials, but were always at the mercy of the weather. Luckily the sun shone during Refugee Week, when we had both a craft session with Linda and Sadiq from Leicester Museum, as well as a growing activity with Sam from the Conservation Volunteers.

A particular success that started in the garden was a new Women's Wellbeing Group inspired by conversations with various women, who felt they had put on a few extra pounds during lockdown. The women themselves have been active in deciding on the direction of the group. Led by Sarah from LCitC, the group has covered healthy eating, looking at food labelling and exercise.

With the complete lifting of all restrictions on 19th July, we've moved back to The Bridge. We're really grateful to the Unitarians for hosting us for a year in the garden, providing a safe space and new experiences for us there.

### BACK TO THE BRIDGE

It's good to be back at the Bridge, benefiting from the synergies that it brings us. We've been running an English conversation group inside in the morning, as well as the distribution of essentials, including food, toiletries, clothing, children's toys and other items, outside. To provide activities for the children over the summer, Maggie's been leading regular visits to Abbey Park with play activities. The families have all been provided with a park pack containing sun cream, hand sanitizer and wipes, and the older children have become quite expert in collecting the play equipment at the end of the session and ticking it off the check list for Maggie.

As we can't host the large numbers of people at the same time as we used to, we are now doing more in depth casework on an appointment basis. In the afternoon we have a social time where people can enjoy a snack, games and a quiz. Things will develop as the Covid situation evolves over the autumn and winter, but for now, it's good to be back indoors with the flexibility that offers.