

THE  
**HARBOUR**  
PROJECT

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021

The Harbour Project for Swindon Refugees and  
Asylum Seekers (Registered Charity 1171368)



## SOME HEADLINE FACTS

In a year of monumental change and uncertainty, our absolute highlight and proudest moment was the award of Queens Award for Voluntary Service in June. We were able to hold a small event in October where Sarah Rose Troughton, Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire came along to present us with the Award.

Over the course of the year **551** Asylum Seekers and Refugees from **47** countries were reached by our services either by accessing help and advice, or by participating in a class or event. We welcomed 164 new Visitors, a decrease of **31%** on the number of new arrivals in the previous year. The main countries of origin for new arrivals were Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Albania, Sudan and Iran. The Home Office and immigration courts slowed their decision rates and many solicitors were furloughed. 87 of our Visitors were granted Leave to Remain (or other form of protection), a reduction of **30%** from **2019/20**.

The pandemic affected every aspect of work and life at The Harbour as well as exacerbating mental health issues, and feelings of abandonment, loneliness and isolation for our Visitors. Almost all of the social side of life at Harbour was paused. We were able to move many of our services online, meaning that the number of instances of in-person attendance onsite dropped by **87%**. Despite this, the volume of advice sessions increased by **11%** over the year, demonstrating that the need for our support never diminished.

New arrivals over the last year have predominantly been families with children. We have seen the number of children supported by The Harbour increase by **37%**, and the number of families by **52%**.

Supporting our staff team of **8**, Volunteers gave **4,367** hours of their time including **170** hours of translation provided by Visitor-Volunteers

The Report records the objectives, activities, and achievements of The Harbour Project from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. It has been compiled with due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefits guidance.

The Harbour Project is committed to openness and transparency.

[www.harbourproject.org.uk](http://www.harbourproject.org.uk) 01793 611682



## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Covid-19 pandemic dominated the entire period of this Report. The UK's first lockdown, with its 'stay at home' message, began on 26 March 2020. This, subsequent regulations, and another lockdown hit every aspect of our work. I am always immensely proud of The Harbour Project's work, but this year was exceptional. The commitment from all the Staff, Volunteers and supporters was phenomenal. Our ability to adapt, absorb and transform kept our Visitors at the heart of our work, and I thank them for maintaining their trust in us.

Much has been written about the economic impacts of Covid and detrimental effects of isolation on mental wellbeing, but acutely apparent to us, albeit less well documented, were the repercussions for asylum seekers and refugees. Among the poorest and at the margins of society, our Visitors were disproportionately affected. Without easy access to food, companionship, and public health information, many felt abandoned.

'Shutting up shop' was not a realistic option. We provided help and advice throughout. We did, however, close our drop-in for the first 3 months which we judged the minimum, commensurate with protecting our Staff, Visitors, Volunteers and all who engaged with us. During this time, we worked remotely to provide essential core services. On re-opening, we established a raft of new activities and ways of working. Some innovations, introduced as short-term fixes, brought unexpected benefits and efficiency savings, and have since been adopted permanently.

We could not have achieved what we did without the support of our major funders, patrons, civic leaders in Swindon and Wiltshire; the generosity of countless individuals, organisations, charities, and local businesses; official Covid-response funds from several bodies; and of course, our Staff and 'Harbour family'. I formally record our thanks to everyone who helped us maintain a reassuring presence and service to our Visitors when much of life seemed to be 'on hold'. Amidst all the challenges, we were honoured to receive the prestigious Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and to be selected as one of the Swindon Mayor's chosen charities.

We have begun to plan an external evaluation to inform our strategic planning in 2021. We face major challenges ahead regarding future legislation derived from the Government's New Plan for Immigration, (e.g., Nationality & Borders Bill of July 2021) and the end of Covid measures that provide accommodation for people who would otherwise no longer be eligible. We also need to reactivate our necessarily deferred plans to expand our premises.

David Rowlands, Chair of Trustees



## OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES

The Harbour Project is a registered charity in Swindon providing advice, support, practical help and friendship to Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the town. Our mission is to be a family for every individual who seeks asylum or is granted refugee status in Swindon and to help them to rebuild their lives. We hope that our Visitors have the best possible chance of a fair hearing, a fair outcome from their asylum claim, and a fair future in the UK.

Our Charitable Objects are:

- To provide relief for Asylum Seekers and Refugees and their dependents who are in conditions of hardship and distress
- To preserve and protect the physical and mental health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- To provide facilities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees for education, recreation and other leisure time occupations with the object of improving their conditions of life and assisting their inclusion into the wider community

Our strategic priorities for 2020-2021 were:

- Continuing to meet the ongoing and changing needs of Visitors as international and national events and changes impact upon their experience
- Diversifying and building our funding base to ensure our ongoing stability and success well into the future





- Ensuring that our structure, staffing and operational processes are fit for purpose for a growing organisation
- Continuing to attract, retain and value volunteers, ensuring that the experience that they have with us is fulfilling and makes best use of their skills and experience
- Meeting charitable governance best practice
- Ensuring our premises meet the needs and wellbeing of our Visitors and Staff
- Deepening the capabilities and professionalism of our organisation to better equip people for working life in the UK
- Working actively and building connections with other agencies and key influencers to promote the value of our work and how this benefits our Visitors, the town and broader community.

#### Our Values:

Visitor-focused: We prioritise the interests of our Visitors in the decisions that we make, and recognise the importance of their involvement in decisions that may affect them. We take a strengths-based approach to help people to rebuild their lives.



**Inclusive and Egalitarian:** We are non-judgemental and accepting. We seek to provide equality of opportunity to allow Visitors to access the help and advice that they need, specific to their circumstances. We do not probe or ask detailed questions about events leading up to someone making a claim for asylum unless the Visitor chooses to share this with us.

We value our diverse Board of Trustees and Staff team, and welcome Volunteers from throughout the community, making use of their myriad skills. We build connections and work in partnership with other organisations wherever possible.

We actively engage with stakeholders in our management and planning to ensure that our provision remains relevant, valuable and appropriate.

**Warm and welcoming:** We are proud of our warm, family-like atmosphere. We are informal and friendly, and aim to provide a safe, comforting environment for our Visitors to enable Visitors to integrate into Swindon life in ways that are beneficial for everyone in the community.

Underpinning the informality and friendship, we also pride ourselves on the effectiveness, professionalism, integrity, depth and breadth of the services and advice that we offer.





*"This is fantastic news. Congratulations to the Harbour Project for this award. They play a vital role in Swindon and they are one of the Council's key voluntary sector partners."*

*Cllr Cathy Martyn, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Safer Communities*



## WORKING IN COVID TIMES: OVERVIEW

Our role in Swindon is unique in providing advice and practical help to Asylum Seekers and Refugees. From April 2020, our work was driven by the recognition that we could be the only organisation checking to ensure that people were safe and coping with the Covid situation and, just as importantly, that they understood the evolving rules and guidelines. Many of our Visitors went for months without hearing from anyone in the UK apart from The Harbour Project.

Providing advice and help was always our top priority, closely followed by food security, connectivity (e.g., wifi) and English tuition. Inevitably, some other activities e.g., sports, trips, 'free shop', haircuts, and groups for homework, cooking and sewing had to be paused or stopped.

For the first 3 months, all Staff worked from home delivering advice and support. On-line and telephone working became the 'new normal' for everything from formal communication with The Home Office and legal advisors to problems of everyday living. Many previously routine tasks became harder: registering Visitors with GPs, for example, could take up to 2 hours compared with 20 minutes pre-pandemic.

*'I want to thank you so much for keeping in touch with us, checking on our wellbeing mentally with phone calls, supporting us with food stuffs and other necessities'.*

*Visitor*





# 903

WELFARE CALLS  
BY VOLUNTEERS

# 487

BY STAFF

# 16

WALK AND TALK  
SESSIONS



As people across the UK discovered, social conversations and just seeing other people, (albeit at a distance) assumed an importance that had previously been undervalued. One of our innovations was to establish regular Welfare Calls to Visitors most at risk of isolation. ‘Walk and Talk’ sessions, when permitted by the regulations, were another new venture, enabling people to get out into the fresh air, and re-connect with others. These simple, ‘low tech’ solutions to loneliness proved popular and much appreciated.

Encouragingly, we also found new ways to support each other, and we learned smarter ways of working, and how to fine-tune services for different groups e.g., young people and women, who had been distinctively impacted. As 2020 progressed, more activities came back to life, and we gradually increased staffing capacity, both to meet unprecedented demand and to seize the opportunities we had identified for greater effectiveness.

In February 2021, our Staff, being front-line workers, received their first vaccinations against Covid. Later in the year we helped Visitors to book their vaccinations, and we listened to any concerns they might have.

*‘The Harbour Project is not just a charity; it really is a family. They take care of you’.*

Visitor

## ADDRESSING FOOD POVERTY BECAME A CRITICAL ASPECT OF OUR WORK

### The Challenge:

Many of our Visitors faced food poverty, especially Asylum Seekers, and those with health problems or isolating because of symptoms. Regulations meant a) those without transport could not 'shop around' as supermarket shelves emptied; b) when schools closed, eligible children no longer received free meals; and c) when our drop-in closed those who had relied on us for 'top-up' food such as daily tea, coffee, and biscuits, weekly hot lunches, and frequent donations from churches, schools, and supermarkets, lost this support.

### The Solution:

From April 2020, we assembled and distributed food parcels, a process run almost entirely by Harbour Volunteers. Parcels typically contained rice, tea, milk, tinned tomatoes and chickpeas, breakfast cereal and fruit, plus non-food essentials such as toilet paper. Visitors living nearby collected parcels at appointed times: those in Asylum Support Accommodation received doorstep deliveries.

The parcels were greatly appreciated, as were the human contact and concern. We learnt quickly how people were coping and where extra support was needed and tweaked the contents of boxes accordingly. We extended this project far longer than originally planned because of ongoing need and generous donations from many local organisations which stretched our budget further.

### We gratefully acknowledge:

Grants from Wiltshire Community Foundation; Fulmer Charitable Trust; Greggs; Tesco plc; and Defra (via SBC). We also received generous donations from Connecting Communities; Jamia Masjid Mosque; Swindon Integral Yoga; Swindon Pulse Wholefoods; The Organic Farm Shop Cirencester; Swindon Metro Bank, Swindon Food Collective and many churches and individuals within the local community.

**2450** **FOOD PARCELS**

**77** **FAMILIES PROVIDED TO**  
**(273 ADULTS & 96 CHILDREN)**

*'You come from a different country, you are scared, all my family was killed in Iraq, so I was terrified. The most important thing in life is to feel welcome and they welcomed me'. - Visitor*



# BEING ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE HIGHLIGHTED THE WORLD'S RELIANCE UPON CONNECTIVITY

## The Challenge:

Visitors' lack of access to the internet has been a major issue: for example, almost all Asylum accommodation lacks wifi connectivity. Similarly, many refugees do not have the necessary devices for access. During our Lockdown-enforced closure of the drop-in people could not access services that had moved online (including ours, and much of the Government's information on Covid). Furthermore, Covid controls prevented people from coming to The Harbour for social interactions or group activities, exacerbating the sense of isolation.

## The Solution:

We quickly raised funds and purchased mobile wifi units which we then lent to Visitors as required. We coached Visitors on using their mobile phones to take, store and forward photographs of important documents. We used our Airtable database to send mass-texts informing people of our opening arrangements, and also enclosed information sheets with the food parcels.

We set up dedicated WhatsApp Groups for parents, young people, and the Women's Group. These proved popular and very effective in facilitating social engagement and communication in general. Where possible we replaced meetings with Zoom connections, and we provided laptops or Tablets for Visitors unable to use the small screens of phones for documents or Zoom.

The Harbour played a critical role in ensuring that Public Health information was disseminated and understood as well as possible by our Visitors. As well as helping them, these developments provided new opportunities for us: reducing need for some face-to-face contact, identifying areas where technical help was needed so that Visitors could become more self-confident with the technology, and unexpectedly revealing that 'on-line' was better for some individuals.

We gratefully acknowledge funding from a Local Giving Campaign, along with an anonymous donation that allowed us to purchase wifi routers and tablets for Visitors.

**20** **WIFI UNITS PROVIDED**  
(BENEFITTING 56 VISITORS)

**40** **TABLETS GIVEN  
TO VISITORS**

*'I no longer feel so lonely.'*  
*Visitor*

WE PROVIDED ACCESS FOR  
**103** **PEOPLE FOR REMOTE  
ENGLISH CLASSES**

**12** **PEOPLE FOR REMOTE  
MENTAL HEALTH  
COUNSELLING**

**11** **WOMEN TO JOIN A  
ZOOM-BASED  
MOTHER & BABY GROUP**

## PROVIDING HELP & ADVICE REMAINS AT THE CORE OF WHAT WE DO

Providing help and advice remained our most essential service and was delivered uninterrupted throughout the year. Technical advice on asylum procedures was given by those of our Staff accredited to OISC L1 (Office of Immigration Services Commissioner). An OISC Audit in February 2021 confirmed that our work is fully compliant with the Commissioner's Code. The main topics of advice related to: health appointments and GP registrations (634 times); liaison with schools and education (516 times); working with DWP (284 times); liaison with Migrant Help (138 times); and liaison with Clearsprings Readyhomes (125 times).

In April, May and June 2020, we responded to requests for help remotely, possible because we had ensured our records were up to date and could easily be shared by Staff. We re-opened the drop-in in July for emergency face-to-face advice sessions using an appointment system, something we had resisted hitherto, but which enabled us to limit the number of people on site at one time. Appointments proved so successful in avoiding disappointment for Visitors who turn up speculatively, and in preventing our team being overwhelmed, that we subsequently retained the system permanently. More effective triaging, and prioritising (including signposting to other agencies as appropriate) increased efficiency further, meaning we could absorb an increased workload without a pro-rata increase in staffing and with fewer on-site Volunteers, many continuing to work remotely.

Despite the increased demand and embedding of new practices, we maintained the customary relaxed and non-judgmental character of the drop-in, which in no way belies the underpinning professionalism, efficiency, and consistency – a combination we believe provides job satisfaction and facilitates growth and development for our team.





**5169** **ADVICE SESSIONS**  
(3133 FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS,  
2036 FOR REFUGEES)

**77** **FAMILIES PROVIDED TO**  
(273 ADULTS & 96 CHILDREN)

**20%** **WERE DELIVERED  
BY VOLUNTEERS**

**40%** **IN THE  
PREVIOUS YEAR**

**1878** **OVERALL INSTANCES OF  
ATTENDANCE ONSITE**



# WE ADAPTED OUR WAY OF DELIVERING ENGLISH AND MATHS CLASSES SO THAT VISITORS COULD CONTINUE TO LEARN

## The Challenge:

We had to stop our English classes in March 2020. This was a major problem because learning English is key to integration and independence. To compound matters, all colleges and schools moved online, which many Visitors could not access. Moreover, people arriving during the pandemic were unable to register at college.

## The Solution:

Our volunteer teachers quickly organised Zoom classes which could be accessed with some training and devices we were able to provide. The first on-line English classes took place on 14th April. Our Maths teachers discovered that WhatsApp was a great way to collaborate: the student sending a photo of their work, which the teacher could mark and return to the student in another photo.

Many on-line English classes were one-to-one or in very small groups. There were clear benefits from this approach: strong supportive relationships formed between teachers and students as they set their own timetables, being no longer limited to Harbour opening times. We were also able to recruit volunteer teachers who lived further afield and worked full-time. One-to-one tuition allowed individuals to progress at their own rate. This did mean, however, that we weren't able to reach as many people as a classroom-based approach.



Remote tuition also helped us to reach some Visitors who might otherwise have been reticent about engaging, for example women who find large mixed classes culturally challenging; single parents; and people with disabilities. It did not, however, work for everyone – teachers and students. Some people lacked confidence with the technology, and the format was not suitable for absolute beginners.

English classes provided a valuable opportunity for Visitors to ask questions about Covid, safety measures and vaccinations.





## ENGLISH

**25** TEACHERS

**95** PEOPLE  
LEARNING

**2519** CLASS ATTENDANCES  
(-37% ON PREVIOUS YEAR)

## MATHS

**2** TEACHERS

**10** PEOPLE  
LEARNING

**246** CLASS ATTENDANCES  
(-13% ON PREVIOUS YEAR)

*"When I first arrived in Swindon, I did not think I would like it, but I have come to love Swindon as home ...I was asked by Clearsprings if I would like to move out of Swindon, I said no as I would never find any organisation like the Harbour Project who I was able to turn to in my hour of need." - Visitor*

# STEPS2WORK: BUILDING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

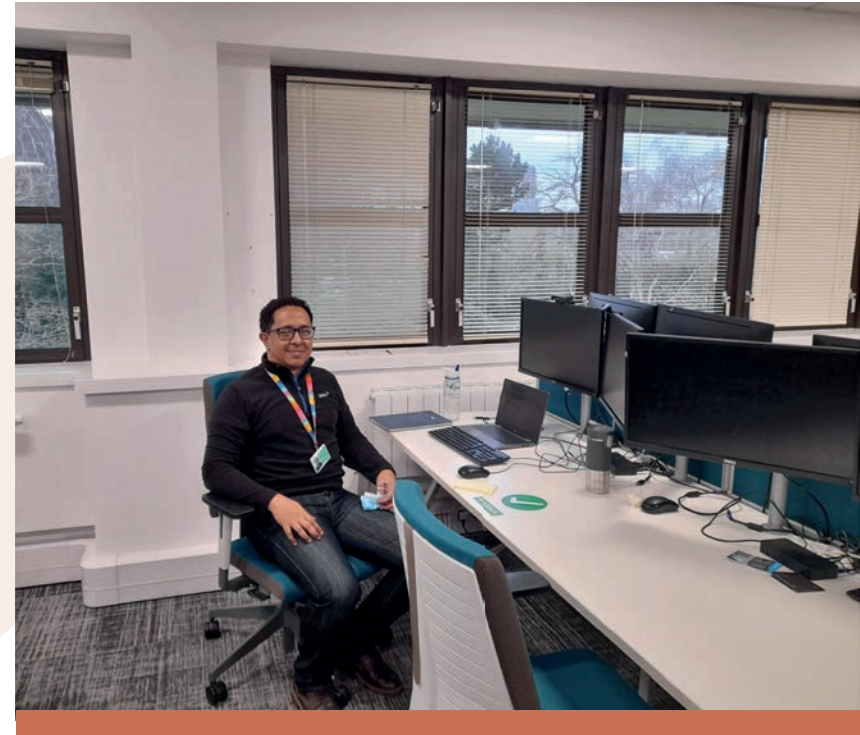
## The Challenge:

Our Steps2Work project helps Refugees find employment by providing help with CVs, job applications and interviews, and provides volunteering opportunities for Asylum Seekers whilst they are awaiting their decision. It was severely restricted by the loss of face-to-face meetings between March and August 2020, and the nationwide reduction throughout 2020 in recruitment, volunteering opportunities and courses, due to Covid restrictions and regulations.

## The Solution:

We continued Steps2Work as fully as possible. We also secured funding from the ESFA and European Social Fund to run a separate employability project (Stepping Forward) between September 2020 to August 2021. On this, we worked one-to-one with a small cohort of Visitors, with the aim of eventually securing employment or finding educational routes. This focused on 'upskilling' through enrolment on vocational courses, attending Intensive English classes, engaging mentors, and improving confidence. Recruiting for the programme was challenging, but we successfully engaged eleven Visitors by March 2021.

One of our ESFA participants secured a senior role within The Research Councils in Swindon. A further three Visitors also found permanent employment.



*'The first day I arrived in Swindon, someone mentioned the Harbour Project. I went there and they immediately welcomed me, they showed me the roads, how to go to the hospital, the post office, everything.'*

*Visitor*



**142** STEPS2WORK  
ADVICE SESSIONS  
(ENGAGING 53 INDIVIDUALS)

**22** CV WRITING

**48** ONLINE COURSE  
SEARCHES

**15** ONLINE COURSES COMPLETED  
& CERTIFICATES OBTAINED

**7** INTENSIVE ENGLISH CLASSES  
AT A LOCAL SCHOOL



## SPOTLIGHTING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN, CHILDREN, FAMILIES & YOUNG PEOPLE

New Asylum Seekers arrived and were housed in Swindon throughout the lockdown. This was an especially hard time for them: in a new country, new town and unable to leave their accommodation. We worked hard to support all to settle in, including some families housed several miles from the town centre.

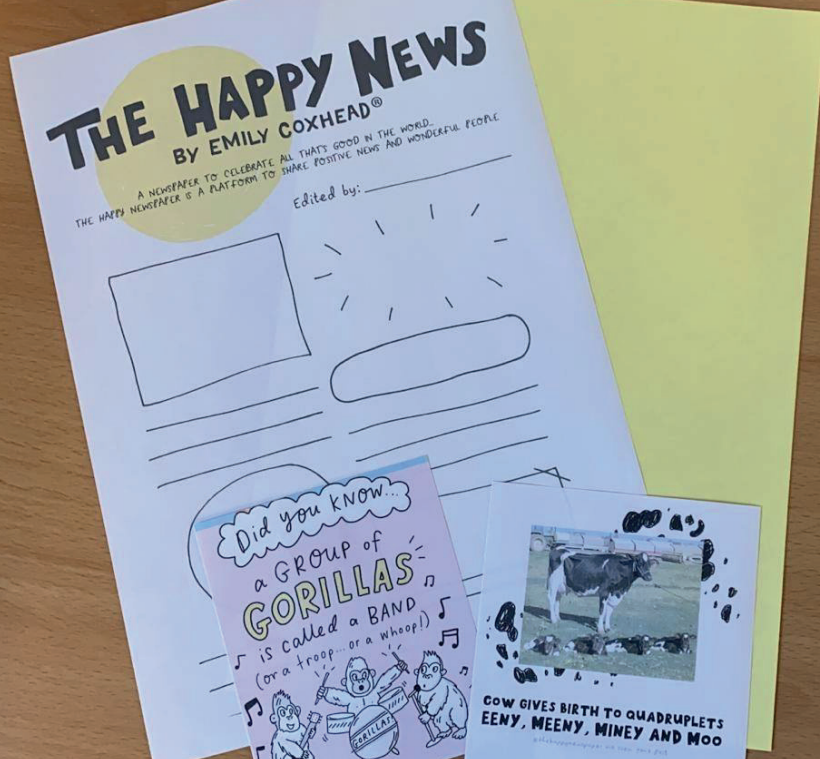
Using Zoom technology to replace meetings of our Women's group was far more successful than we had expected. It also covered a surprising array of topics, including guest speakers from Swindon Art Gallery (Refugee Artists/ Swindon Artists/ Female Artists); an Art Class led by one of the Visitors (we delivered paints and canvasses to everyone's home); and a Skin Care session with Lush. The new format seemed to empower the women to take ownership of the Group. An associated WhatsApp Group became a popular forum for people to chat and share news and information. We provided tablet computers to some young mothers, giving them access to a local Mother and baby group.

We were also pleasantly surprised by the good uptake when we moved our Homework Club to Zoom. Our 2020 Christmas Party took place over Zoom, with presents being distributed separately. At the height of lockdown, we supported 18 families who were struggling to apply for supermarket vouchers to replace Free School Meals.

We gratefully acknowledge a 3-year grant from Blagrave Trust to support young Visitors. This enabled us to create and advertise a new role of Young Visitor Engagement Lead, and to appoint in October 2020. We also secured a grant from Wiltshire Council to support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs). This has allowed us to focus on this cohort, probably the group we worried most about during lockdown, and can ensure we hear their 'voice'. We have also been able to strengthen our links to other agencies and organisations that support young people.

Towards the end of the reporting period, we used a grant from the National Probation Service (also gratefully acknowledged) to establish a new post of Female Visitor Engagement Lead and for an additional football project (both were delivered at the start of 2021-22, due to Covid-related delays).

From a wider perspective the need for, and opportunities to create, new roles has challenged us to deepen our understanding of different groups of Visitors and their respective rights and entitlements, and to consider our mechanisms for recognising these. This will be helpful as the number and diversity of Visitors continues to grow.



WE  
SUPPORTED

138 CHILDREN  
94 FAMILIES  
39 UASCs

24

HOMEWORK CLUB  
ZOOM EVENTS ATTENDED BY  
24 CHILDREN

14

Referring to Homework Club one parent told us 'it gives me a chance to sit down and have a cup of tea.'



## PAYING ATTENTION TO THE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING NEEDS OF OUR VISITORS

The Harbour Project is not fundamentally about managing processes. Providing and helping to facilitate lasting and empathetic companionship has always been important to support and help to protect 'the whole person'. Providing some social interaction to support our Visitors' mental wellbeing was, therefore, another major challenge, especially during lockdown.

During the year, all the Harbour team attended training in Trauma-Informed Care. We never interrogate Visitors about why they had to flee, nor do we ask detailed questions about their journey to the UK. We know, however, that many have complex and intersectional needs. For example, some are part of the National Referral Mechanism addressing slavery and trafficking; some have been tortured or have witnessed unimaginable atrocities; others have suffered Domestic Abuse. For many, being locked down and feeling 'hidden away' was re-traumatising; others became agitated in confined spaces or clashed with unfamiliar housemates.

This year we recorded a spike in Safeguarding concerns. We worked with several other agencies to ensure the right support was provided to help keep people safe. We gratefully acknowledge grants from Swan Mountain and The People's Postcode Lottery that enabled us to continue to offer confidential counselling for Visitors. Lisa Blaine (Therapeutic Counsellor and Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) offered up to 4 Zoom sessions a week.

In addition to welfare calls, and Walk and Talk sessions, we reintroduced football as soon as possible under the pertaining Covid regulations. Indeed, football has been a highlight of the year. Football is such an international language and something that people (especially young men) can immediately join in with, regardless of their spoken English. We are grateful for a grant from Sports England which helped us to continue to pay for pitch hire and a coach and assistant coach.





*"The kindness, hard work, and resilience by the Harbour Project staff and volunteers is the true definition of being human than just a human being."*

*Visitor*

*"From the bottom of my heart, I am thankful for everything."*

*Visitor*

**88**

**COUNSELLING  
SESSIONS**

**49**

**FOOTBALL  
PEOPLE ATTENDED**

**223**

**TIMES ACROSS**

**13**

**SESSIONS**

## CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

We maintained effective relationships with individual organisations and agencies, including immigration and public law solicitors. We maintained regular dialogue with refugee support charities and others in the voluntary sector, developing shared approaches to, where possible, e.g. on food and wifi issues. We continued to contribute to multi-agency fora and discussions. Covid regulations inevitably restricted some connections, however, we obtained free-meals voucher replacements and support for vulnerable children.

We ensured that the needs and care of our Visitors were considered with our partners at the Zoom Quarterly Refugee Forum: Swindon Borough Council (SBC) Commissioning Team; the Department for Work and Pensions; SBC Housing Options Team; Citizens' Advice; Migrant Help; The Home Office; SW Migration Partnership; Clearsprings/Readyhomes; Healthwatch; and other charities such as the Medaille Trust and Swindon City of Sanctuary.

In April 2020 we were awarded a contract with Migrant Help to support Positive Move-ons and applications for Asylum Support under its Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) Commissioning Framework as part of their strategy to use locally based third party organisations.





The need to provide appropriate support at a time of heightened concern about isolation and safeguarding, strengthened our relationships with housing providers such as Clearsprings/Readyhomes (the local provider of Asylum Support Accommodation), SBC Housing Options team, and Derventio, a housing association able to accommodate single people with recently granted Leave to Remain.

We are grateful to Swindon Food Collective for regular large donations to support our distribution of food parcels, and to Swindon Masjid Mosque, and everyone who donated foods.

We are grateful to Swindon Mayor Garry Perkins for choosing us as one of his charitable causes during his term of office. We were honoured to be presented with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service by Sarah Rose Troughton, Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire; and to the generous response of the local community and media to these awards.

*'I can't find words to thank and appreciate delivering food to our home. I hope one day to be useful for the community here like you.'*

*Visitor*



## HOW WE WORK

The Harbour Project stands on two feet: compassionate solidarity and professionalism. Both feet are essential to earn the trust of our Visitors and to be able to quickly and effectively help with their individual and often complex needs. The warmth and general camaraderie of the Harbour drop-in is immediately apparent and frequently cited by funders, donors or supporters visiting for the first time. This is underpinned, however, by our commitment to sound management practices including specialist skills development and ‘learning’, technical competence, and regular checking that what we do meets changing demands (particularly relevant this year).

Listening to our Visitors became harder as our formal ‘Visitors in the Lead’ sessions had to be paused and we also lost the spontaneous evolution of ideas from Visitors socialising together in the drop-in. As reported on other pages we offered Zoom sessions where possible, welfare calls, food parcel deliveries and other means to keep aware of Visitors’ needs and aspirations.

*“Thanks once again, for all your help when I was expecting my baby. Whoever came to my aid, I am forever thankful. From me and baby Liz Dorothy, we pray God may bless you all.”*

*Visitor*

The Harbour Project could not function without its Volunteers. Our Volunteers bring a diverse range of experiences and skills. Each is appointed after completing an application process, an interview and a DBS check. New Volunteers follow an induction process, receive regular training sessions (held over Zoom this year) and are invited to give their views in an annual ‘end of year’ survey. We keep in touch through occasional Volunteer meetings and a regular newsletter.

Over the year, 61 Volunteers supported us; including 24 volunteer teachers, along with some Visitor-Volunteers who provided valuable translation services, obviating the need for costly external interpreters. Volunteers unable to fulfil their pre-Covid roles in the drop-in, and often frustrated and feeling ‘disconnected’, helped in different ways such as delivering food, checking in on people through welfare calls, donating Christmas presents and sewing facemasks.

The annual Volunteer Survey revealed requests for more information about Visitors’ countries of origin, help with understanding the asylum process, and advice on answering questions from friends and acquaintances. We circulated a response to the Survey: ‘You said: We did’.

# 4367

**OF VOLUNTEERING HOURS**  
(60% REDUCTION ON PREVIOUS YEAR)

# 34

**NEW VOLUNTEER  
APPLICATIONS**

# 30

**DBS CHECKS  
COMPLETED**



## BEING IMAGINATIVE WITH USE OF OUR PREMISES TO ALLOW SAFE DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICES



Covid has definitely thwarted our plans for redevelopment of our premises at St Luke's. Towards the end of 2020/21, an architect had been commissioned and we were almost ready to seek planning and Diocese permissions, and starting to consider transition arrangements. All of this work came to a juddering halt as Covid kept us safely at home and stopped unnecessary human interaction.

Our premises have worked hard for us this year – we have had to be imaginative with how we make use of the available space, how to keep it ventilated, where screens and one-way systems need to be placed, diligent cleaning of doors and surfaces, and how to make space for our Food Parcel work, in parallel with face-to-face English classes. We undertook regular risk assessments to work through all safe-working considerations which were particularly important as we re-introduced and adapted face-to-face service delivery.

Our classroom had traditionally accommodated 22 people at one time. With a determination to re-start some face-to-face classes from September, we recognised that such a large amount of people in one room was no longer feasible to allow for safe distancing. Instead, we used the main hall at St Luke's, spreading people out at individual desks.

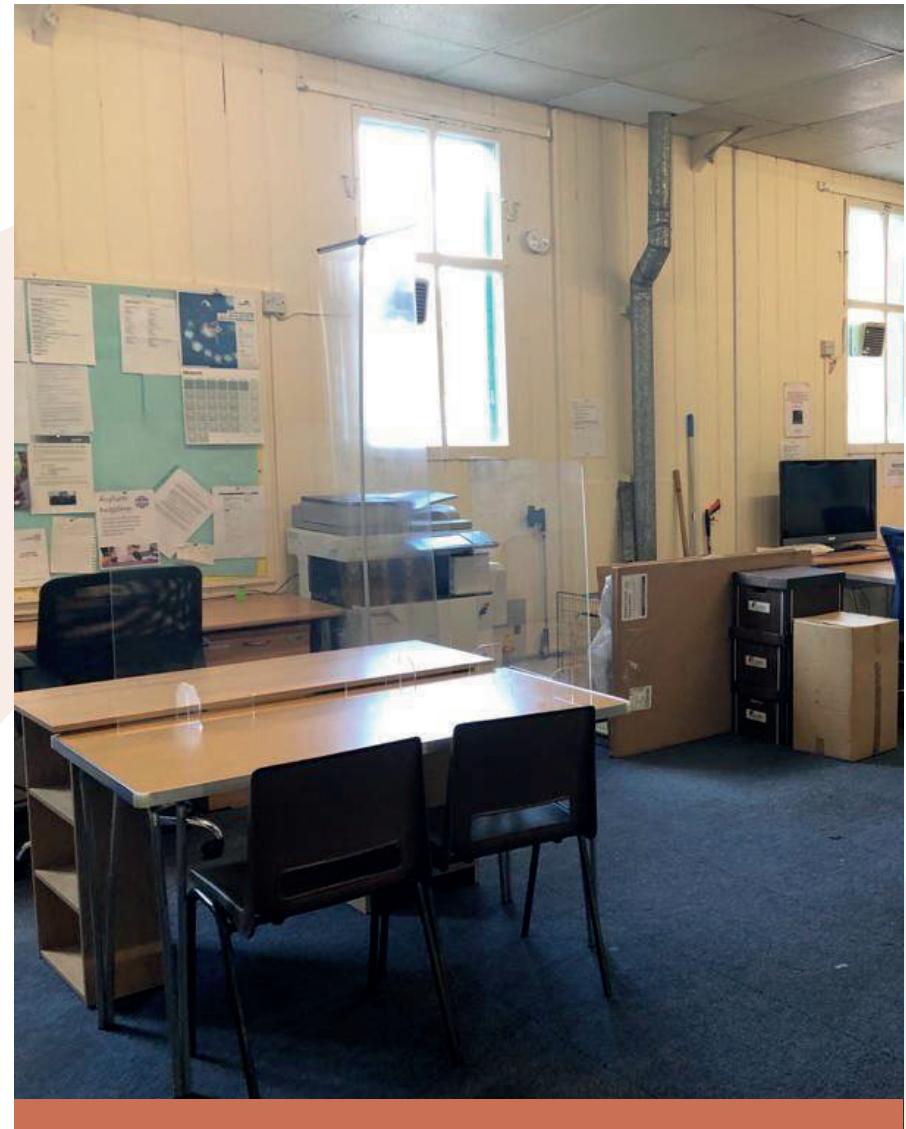


With new Asylum Support Accommodation in the west of the town (several miles from our base at St Luke's), we were able to work with Gateway Church to step up an outreach base once a week. Gateway Church is very close to the new Asylum Support Accommodation and has proven to be a great facility for us.

We were able to invest in screens for each desk, as well as barriers to create safe-passage through the building. We have also purchased (and been donated) large quantities of hand-sanitiser, cleaning products and paper towelling, and face-masks for staff, volunteers and Visitors.

Grants from Lloyds Bank Foundation (Covid Recovery) and Oakfield allowed us to have exclusive use of all of the building for much of the year and to invest in the PPE and equipment to allow safe working practices.

We thank St Luke's, our Landlord, for being so accommodating during this time and also Gateway Church for going out of their way to support us. With St Luke's we were able to secure half rent in Q1 when no-one was on-site and exclusivity of the main hall and other shared spaces from 1st Sept to 31st March. We have decided to continue with exclusivity of the Drop-in space going forwards. Exclusivity of the building helped establish confidence in the cleanliness of the space for our staff, volunteers and Visitors and also meant time taken to repeatedly set up and dismantle screens was minimised.



## OUR PEOPLE

The Harbour Project Trustees met virtually, through Zoom, seven times during the year. Trustees make an annual declaration of interests; and declare any pecuniary interests in any agenda item at each meeting. Meeting agendas are managed on an annual cycle, with standing items such as risk and financial updates at each meeting. Discussion focused largely on strategic planning in response to the evolving Covid situation, future fundraising strategy, safeguarding, and progress on Strategic Plan and Business Plan objectives and recommendations of the last External Evaluation. Compliance with the Charity Governance Code was addressed at the March 2021 meeting. All policies are reviewed annually on a rolling cycle. Trustees reflect a diverse range of experience and expertise, and are appointed following application, references, DBS and interview. The CEO and Project Manager attend Trustees' meetings in a non-voting capacity.

There is good two-way (typically daily) communication between the CEO and Project Manager and other Staff members, and between Drop-in Staff and Volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to report any concerns or issues immediately to a member of Staff or the Chair of Trustees.

Funding from the Blagrove Trust enabled creation of a new post: Young Visitor Engagement Lead.



Funding from The National Probation Service at the end of the year, was used to create another new role: Female Visitor Engagement Lead. Both roles will enable us to develop relationships and fine tune services and support for different groups.

|   |                    |                       |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>PATRONS</b>  | Lord Wills         |                       |
|   | Nicky Alberry DL   |                       |
| <b>TRUSTEES</b>   | David Rowlands*    | Chair of Trustees     |
|   | Ian Robertson*     | Treasurer             |
|   | Monica Potter*     |                       |
|   | Kirsty Johnson*    |                       |
|   | Heather Redington* |                       |
|   | Hadiza Manhuta*    |                       |
|   | Basel Esleem*      |                       |
|   | Faisal Nawaf Mayed |                       |
|   | Neda Krishnan      | Appointed 26/03/2021  |
| 7 Trustees indicated with * were re-appointed for a further 3 years of office on 31/03/21, in accordance with Charity Constitution. |                    |                       |
|   | Mari Williams      | Secretary to Trustees |

|  |                  |                                |                                   |
|--|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>STAFF</b>                                     | Claire Garrett   | CEO                            |                                   |
|  | Nan Bains        | Project Manager                |                                   |
|  | Sophie Boyce     | Business Manager               |                                   |
|  | Giles Matthews   | Drop-in Manager                |                                   |
|  | Mindy Sandhu     | Deputy Drop-in Manager         |                                   |
|  | Ann Meeus        | Advice Coordinator             |                                   |
|  | Holly Grey       | Young Visitor Engagement Lead  | Appointed 12/10/2020              |
|  | Sophie Peart     | Female Visitor Engagement Lead | Appointed to paid role 01/12/2020 |
| <b>NON-SALARIED INTERNSHIPS &amp; PLACEMENTS</b> | Sophie Peart     |                                | Joined on placement 12/10/2020    |
| <b>FREELANCE SUPPORT</b>                         | Lisa Blaine      | Mental Health Counsellor       |                                   |
|  | Stella Mortazavi | Steps2Work Lead                |                                   |
|  | Rachael Taylor   | Bookkeeper                     |                                   |



## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2020-21

|         | INCOME  | EXPENDITURE |
|---------|---------|-------------|
| 2019-20 | 209,584 | 206,216     |
| 2020-21 | 271,862 | 262,122     |

| MAJOR FUNDERS                        | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND      | 59,460  | 73,356  |
| SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL              | 33,000  | 33,000  |
| LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION               | 32,251  | 40,853  |
| BARROW CADBURY TRUST                 |         | 20,000  |
| SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (DEFRA) FOOD |         | 10,100  |
| WILTSHIRE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION       |         | 8,854   |
| BLAGRAVE TRUST                       |         | 8,003   |
| ESFA                                 |         | 3,422   |

| GRANTS & AWARDS             |
|-----------------------------|
| Swan Mountain               |
| Wiltshire Council           |
| National Benevolent Fund    |
| National Probation          |
| Sports England              |
| People's Postcode Trust     |
| Oakfield Community Response |
| Greggs Foundation           |
| Tesco's Bags of Help        |
| Healthwatch                 |
| Walter Guinness             |
| Fulmer Charitable Trust     |

|   | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|---|---------|---------|
| <b>STAFF COSTS</b>                            | 131,468 | 154,889 |
| <b>PREMISES &amp; RENT</b>                    | 15,734  | 17,550  |
| <b>IT &amp; TELEPHONY</b>                     | 8,029   | 7,115   |
| <b>OVERHEADS</b>                              | 6,072   | 6,905   |
| <b>VISITOR CLASSES &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>       | 21,105  | 14,415  |
| <b>DESTITUTION &amp; VISITOR TRAVEL</b>       | 8,736   | 2,837   |
| <b>FOOD &amp; CLEANING</b>                    | 4,355   | 1,880   |
| <b>COVID – FOOD PARCELS</b>                   | 0       | 19,432  |
| <b>COVID – ROUTERS &amp; DEVICES</b>          | 0       | 16,357  |
| <b>ACCOUNTANCY &amp; CONSULTANCY</b>          | 4,705   | 18,126  |
| <b>TRAVEL, TRAINING &amp; VOLUNTEER COSTS</b> | 2,940   | 1,886   |
| <b>FUNDRAISING &amp; PUBLICITY</b>            | 3,072   | 730     |

*“I visited the Harbour Project at the end of last year. I met some of the staff and volunteers there and I saw for myself the amazing support they offer to some of the most vulnerable people in our community. I hope they are able to continue this for many years to come.”*

*Cllr Cathy Martyn, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Safer Communities*



2020-21 was also a year of unpredictable costs and income.

Over the previous 2 years our cost base was held broadly flat at around £220k p.a, This year we had three significant exceptional areas of spend – Consultancy, covering the costs of the External Evaluation; Emergency Food Parcels and Covid response wifi and devices. Other areas of cost – such as our rent - also increased because of the pandemic. In other areas we spent significantly less than budget due to home working and limited social contact – such as stationery, day-to-day consumables and food, and Visitor trips and activities. It is also notable that there was no income from Fundraising activities and also that ad-hoc donations also fell (such as donations from churches and school events).

We were able to secure Covid-response grant funding to cover the areas of unpredictable spend – such as monies from WCF, Greggs and Tesco's for food parcels and Oakfield and Lloyds for additional rent, cleaning products and PPE. The External Evaluation was funded entirely by NCLF. Consequently, we did not need to furlough any of our team so we could continue to support our Visitors.

As we exit 2020-21, we are very aware that a number of our major awards come to an end in the next 18 months – most notably National Lottery Community Fund and also we expect recommissioning of our services with Swindon Borough Council. For as long as the need for our work shows no sign of diminishing and we are able to make a positive and demonstrable impact upon the lives of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Swindon, we will seek funds from grants, trusts and other income streams to continue our vital work.

As well as financial help, we also receive donations-in-kind and other types of support from many other organisations, businesses, schools and faith groups.

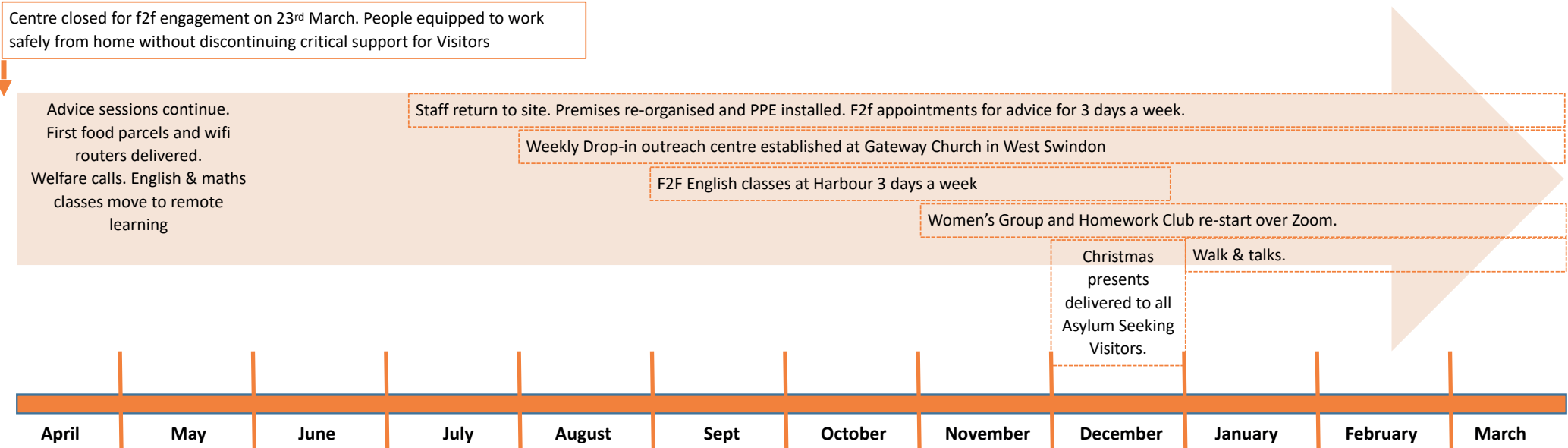
The Trustees are grateful to Ian Robertson and Rachael Taylor, and Independent Examiner Robert Raynes for preparing and examining the Accounts respectively.

|                              | 2019-20 | 2020-21 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|
| <b>MAJOR FUNDERS</b>         | 124,711 | 197,588 |
| <b>GIFTS &amp; DONATIONS</b> | 46,975  | 20,673  |
| <b>SMALLER GRANTS</b>        | 9,445   | 41,062  |
| <b>GIFTAID DONATIONS</b>     | 8,939   | 10,337  |
| <b>EVENTS</b>                | 18,829  | 0       |
| <b>OTHER INCOME</b>          | 685     | 2202    |

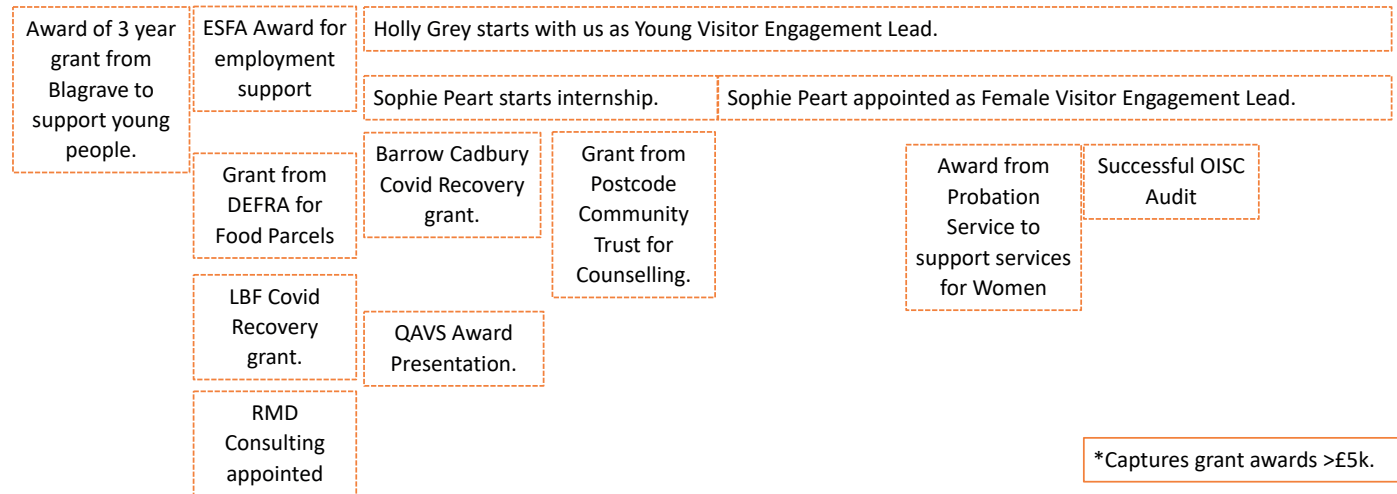


# Timeline of key events at The Harbour Project and our response to the Covid 19 Pandemic 2020/21

Covid Response



Sustaining and growing the charity





# THE HARBOUR PROJECT

St Luke's Hall, Broad Street  
Swindon SN1 2DS

Office hours: Mon-Fri 9am to 3pm  
Drop-in hours: Mon-Fri 11am to 2pm

Tel: 01793 611682

✉ [info@harbourproject.org.uk](mailto:info@harbourproject.org.uk)

🌐 [www.harbourproject.org.uk](http://www.harbourproject.org.uk)

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