

**THE
HARBOUR
PROJECT**

We aid refugees and asylum seekers across Swindon.
We give friendship, advice, practical help and hope.
We are The Harbour Project.

Strategic Plan

2021-2024

Background & Context:

We first documented the strategy of the Harbour Project in May 2018 covering the period 2018 through to 2021. The Strategic Plan has been kept under review by the Board of Trustees with annual (or more frequent) updates to ensure that the Plan continues to shape the direction of travel of the Charity.

2021 not only marked the end of the original planning period, but also marked the ending of restrictions necessarily imposed as a consequence of the Covid19 pandemic. For most of 2020/21 and the first half of 2021/22, the Harbour adapted its services to keep everyone safe, whilst also recognising that the needs of Visitors did not diminish during this time. Shutting shop was never an option.

In earlier versions of this Strategic Plan we had anticipated that much needed development of St Luke's (our registered premises) would take place during 2020 so that the team could give sufficient time to explore and put in place longer term funding options contiguous with the end of the 5 year grant from National Community Lottery Fund (in June 2022). Clearly, Covid19 has significantly disrupted these plans. In the meantime, our volume of Visitors has doubled in 12 months (634 in June 2021 to 1194 in June 2022) prompting us to reconsider the suitability of our existing premises and the available floor-space, even after the proposed building work. At the time of updating this Plan (July 2022), we are currently exploring a move to an alternative location that offers a far larger footprint. Insufficiency of premises is probably the most pressing issue for Trustees in the period of this Strategic Plan.

The planning horizon for this Strategic Plan (2021-2024) is a critical time period for The Harbour Project with many external variables (such as new immigration law, recent crises in the Ukraine and Afghanistan, and establishment of IA (Initial Accommodation) in Swindon) along with known internal challenges (such as premises development, post-Covid organisation rebuild, funding diversification as well as responding to the recommendations of the 2020/21 independent evaluation). With sound planning, strong leadership and governance, we remain optimistic that The Harbour Project can build upon its organisational resilience and continue to support asylum seekers and refugees in Swindon for as long as there is a need for our work.

Our Mission:

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 provide advice, support, practical help and friendship, so 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.

Who we help:

We help asylum seekers and refugees.

Our Charitable Objects

1. To provide relief for asylum seekers and refugees and their dependants who are in conditions of hardship or distress
2. To preserve and protect the physical and mental health of asylum seekers and refugees
3. To provide facilities for asylum seekers and refugees for education, employment, volunteering, recreation or other leisure time occupations with the object of improving their conditions of life and assisting their inclusion into the wider community.
4. To support the needs of asylum seekers and refugees with appropriate information, advice and guidance.

We call the asylum seekers and refugees whom we serve 'our Visitors'.

We uphold our four charitable objects as interrelated and equally important, recognising that their relative importance to Visitors will vary according to their personal circumstances and position within the asylum process.

Our underpinning values are:

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 the 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 integration 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.

Looking back – how far we have come

The Harbour Project was started in response to the Kosovo refugee crisis of 2000, and formally registered as a charity in 2003.

The Harbour Project serves asylum seekers who have been dispersed by the Home Office to Home Office accommodation in Swindon while their claims for asylum are considered, and other asylum seekers who are in Swindon via other routes. We also support refugees who have been granted Leave to Remain in the UK and are living in Swindon.

2020/21 brought significant challenges with the entire year spent under the restrictions of the Covid19 pandemic. Nevertheless, that year we won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and were subject to an in-depth, independent evaluation which strongly endorsed our strengths and will help us shape our future. Working through the pandemic also led to some innovative approaches to delivering our services many of which will be incorporated into our future provision.

In 2021/22, The Harbour Project welcomed 589 new Visitors, and provided 5566 advise sessions: 3069 for asylum seekers and 2497 to refugees. At the end of the reported year we had 963 Visitors including 178 children, 104 families and 55 UASC's from 55 different countries.

The Harbour Project currently employs a total of 11 members of staff (some full and some part-time). It is supported by around 85 volunteers (including around 25 Visitor-volunteers) who commit to work regularly teaching English and maths, in the weekday drop-in centre or in related activities, as well as a large number of supporters, donors and fundraisers.

Our people

Our Patrons are:

Nicky Alberry, DL
Lord Michael Wills

Our Trustees are:

David Rowlands, Chair
Faisal Nawad Mayed, Vice-chair
Ian Robertson, Treasurer
Neda Krishnan
Hadiza Mahuta
Monica Potter
Mari Williams
Housam Al Housam
Emma Graham

Mari Williams also acts as our Board Secretary.

Our Staff team:

Claire Garrett - CEO

Nan Bains - Project Manager

Jasjeet Sumal – Business Manager

Giles Matthews – Drop In Manager

Mindy Sandhu – Deputy Drop In Manager

Ann Meeus – Advice Coordinator

Holly Grey – Young Visitor Engagement Lead

Mia O'Sullivan, Female Visitor Engagement Lead and Mental Wellbeing Coordinator
(2 roles)

Stella Mortazavi, Steps2Work Lead

Tom Bain – IA Liaison Officer

Monty Maneeus – Youth Worker

Strengths we will build upon

- 🌀 We have a unique role providing practical support and engaging with our asylum seekers and refugees in Swindon
- 🌀 We have good brand recognition in the local area, including connections with local influencers and ambassadors, as well as solid relationships with a myriad of organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors.
- 🌀 We have dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees with a wide range of experience and skills
- 🌀 Swindon benefits from a supportive Local Authority and civic community
- 🌀 We are proud of the trust that our Visitors place in us

External drivers

In delivering our operational work, we will remain flexible and aware of the following:

- 🌀 Changes in immigration law as well as other laws affecting the Harbour as an organisation
- 🌀 Changes in the benefit framework, as well as the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers and refugees.
- 🌀 World events - war and civil unrest, particularly the current situation in Afghanistan and Ukraine
- 🌀 Changes in the economic landscape such as increases in inflation and potential budget cuts – and the impact this has on The Harbour and other agencies with whom we work

- 🕒 A changing mix and growing volumes of asylum seekers in Swindon – remembering that the Harbour does not own the relationship with central government for Swindon being a designated dispersal town.
- 🕒 A need for a sharp focus upon protecting the personal data of our Visitors, volunteers and staff, recognising that much of the information that we hold is highly sensitive in nature.
- 🕒 Changes in public attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees
- 🕒 The importance of strong and trusting relationships with other agencies, funders and supporters, and
- 🕒 The recommendations in the 2021 independent evaluation.

Looking forward – the future is bright

The Harbour Project is facing an exciting new period of change, having grown from a small sized charity to an effectively-functioning charity with a skilled staff team and a significant visitor group. With success in securing grant funding, the charity has been able to expand and diversify the work that it does, both in breadth and depth of delivery, without losing sight of its core values. Specifically, the Harbour Project has benefitted from strong support of the Swindon Borough Council, Lloyds Bank Foundation the National Community Lottery Fund (NCLF), The Fore, Blagrove, AB Charitable Trust as well as a number of other funders. As some major awards either draw to a close or change in scale and purpose, the Harbour Project is diversifying its funding and supporter base, to include a mix of major and smaller awards and to increase funding from donations. Reassuringly, in recent times a number of funders have proactively approached us saying that they would be interested to receive funding applications from us. This is testimony to our reputation, organisation resilience, professionalism and impact.

In addition, substantial funding has been set aside for a significant project to update and remodel the premises to meet the needs of an ever-growing visitor base.

Recognising the Harbour Project's commitment to meeting the changing needs of Visitors the 2021 External Evaluation identified two main areas for potential growth: supporting Visitors' mental health and well-being, and helping Visitors into employment, training and voluntary work.

Its priorities from 2021-2024 are therefore to:

1. Continue to meet the ongoing and changing **needs of Visitors**. Keeping our Visitors safe through proactive safeguarding policies and practices is embedded in everything that we do. It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that, whilst our numbers may grow, each visitor will have his/her own needs and preference for how they engage with us as an organisation. Creating staff roles to focus on specific cohorts (such young Visitors, female Visitors, and Visitors in IA accommodation) helps to ensure that everyone has a voice and that we develop our understanding of each cohorts' rights and entitlements.

2. Focus on the **mental well-being** of Visitors and ensure appropriate resources and partnerships are put in place. We do so much more than merely responding to basic and immediate human needs.
3. Extend (through resource, structure and relationships) our programme to support Visitors in **building employability skills**, seeking and securing suitable employment, and training and volunteering opportunities.
4. Diversify and build our **funding base** to ensure our ongoing stability and success well into the future.
5. Ensure that our **structure, staffing and operational processes** remain fit for purpose for a growing organisation, building on new ways of working introduced during lockdowns. As the organisation grows and responds to greater complexity of support need, we have to create ways of being more efficient, scalable and replicable in our processes, without diluting our three core values. Our accreditation to OISC L1 (asylum and protection) is critical component of this.
6. Continue to attract, retain and value **volunteers**, ensuring that the experience that have with us is fulfilling and makes best use of their skills and experience.
7. Continue to meet **charitable governance** best practice as we grow and develop.
8. Remodel (or identify alternative) **premises** to meet the needs and wellbeing of our Visitors, volunteers and staff.
9. Work actively and with other agencies and influencers to **promote the value of our work** and how this benefits our Visitors, the town and the broader community.

Our approach

We use a combination of core activities, which are essential to our Visitors and our charitable objects, and discretionary activities, which may vary over time. This approach ensures that we endeavour to meet the needs of our Visitors while being able to respond flexibly and quickly to emerging or sudden needs. It also gives us the opportunity to trial innovative approaches which may later become part of our core.

To ensure that our support adapts to changing requirements and that we identify gaps and new needs, we learn from informal engagement in the Drop-In alongside periodic one-to-one conversations and focus groups, and the established forum of Visitors, 'Visitors in the Lead' where we are able to talk in more detail about the work that we do, how we could grow or develop our support. Visitors in the Lead also gives us an opportunity to explain how the organisation is funded and governed, setting this in Swindon-wide and UK-wide contexts.

We work in a structured way with other agencies to keep up to date with immigration law, and processes that support asylum seekers and refugees. We also have an effective network of connections across the local voluntary and civic sectors, with local employers, local influencers, along with relationships with other refugee support charities and migrant-rights organisations. These connections allow us to share best-practice, capitalise upon each organisations strengths and learn from each other. Increasingly, we are engaging with prospective employers so that we can help to develop work-ready individuals with a

strong grasp of English, an understanding of British work culture, who are able to make use of their skills and experience.

How we measure what we do

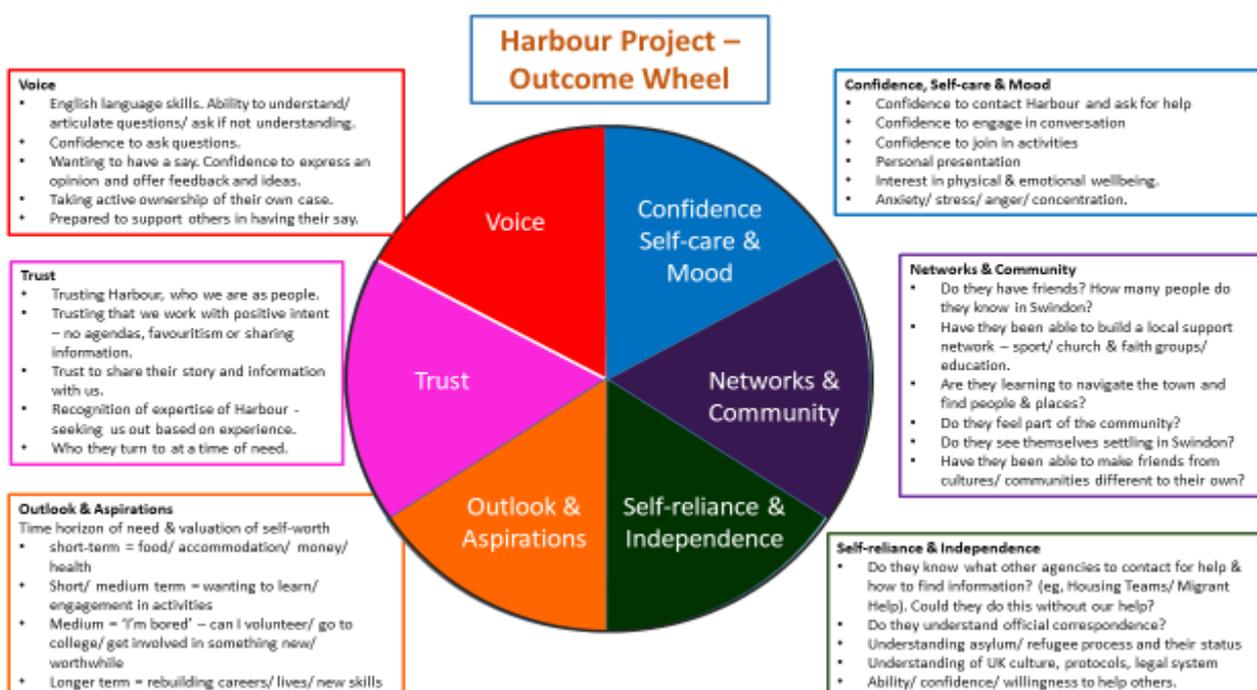
As well as 'Visitor in the Lead' sessions, our Groups also allow for informal conversations to find out what is of most value. We constantly listen, adapt and tweak our activities as the Visitor cohort churns and needs evolve.

Airtable, our main reporting tool records every interaction with Visitors – attendance, help requests and classes, allowing us to track changes in demographic mix and engagement, triggering us to re-evaluate aspects of our delivery.

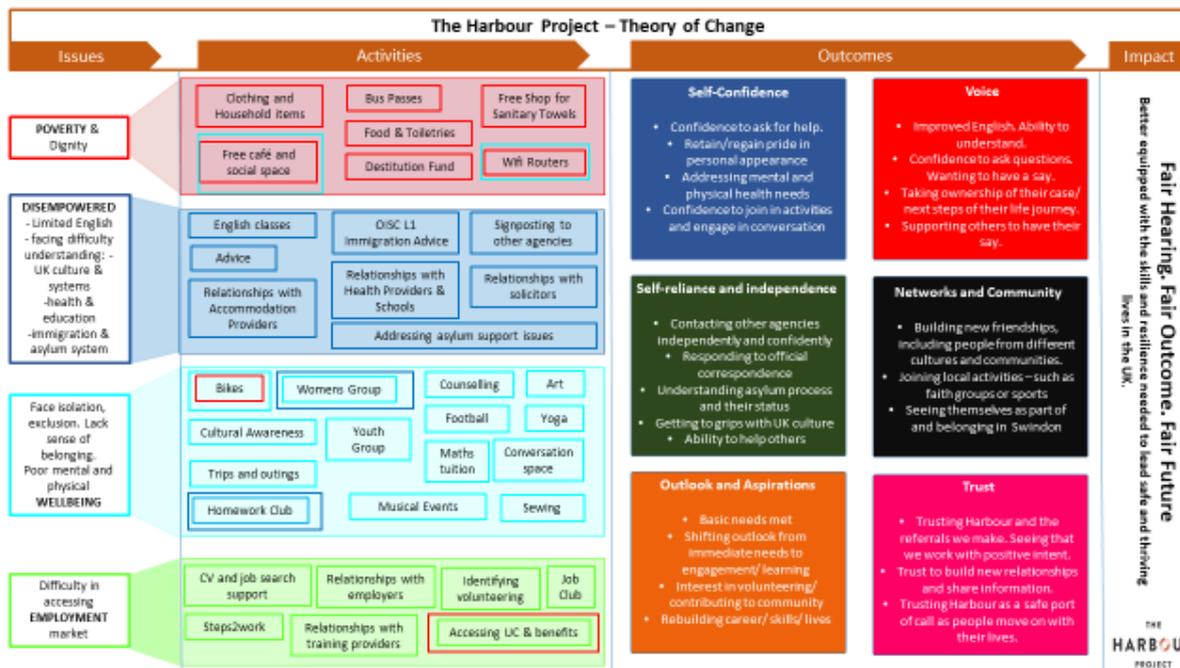
Case Studies are produced from time to time (Visitors and Volunteers) to capture the person-centric impact our work. We will construct the Case Study with the person, making sure they are happy with how their story is represented.

As well as periodic External Evaluations, we also complete Self-Evaluations (in 2016 and 2019 for example).

Formal Likert-based questionnaires do not work well for our Visitors. Very often, people are distrusting of authority, of being questioned and are unlikely to have a good command of English when they first arrive with us. We may be the first friendly face they have met since being in the UK. Recognising these challenges, in 2021 we have introduced an 'Outcome Wheel', adapted from the Warwick-Edinburgh model. The outcome wheel is completed observationally at Day 1, Month 1, Month 6 and Month 12 and creates a rolling case-study of the impact of our intervention as we support people on their journey to a new life.



Our Outcome Wheel fits within our 'Theory of Change'. This schematic bringing together the issues we are trying to address, the activities we deliver to support this, our outcomes (in line with the Outcome Wheel), and overall impact. This model has helped us to better articulate how specific activities that we deliver are components in a journey helping to equip our Visitors with the skills and resilience needed to lead safe and thriving lives in the UK.

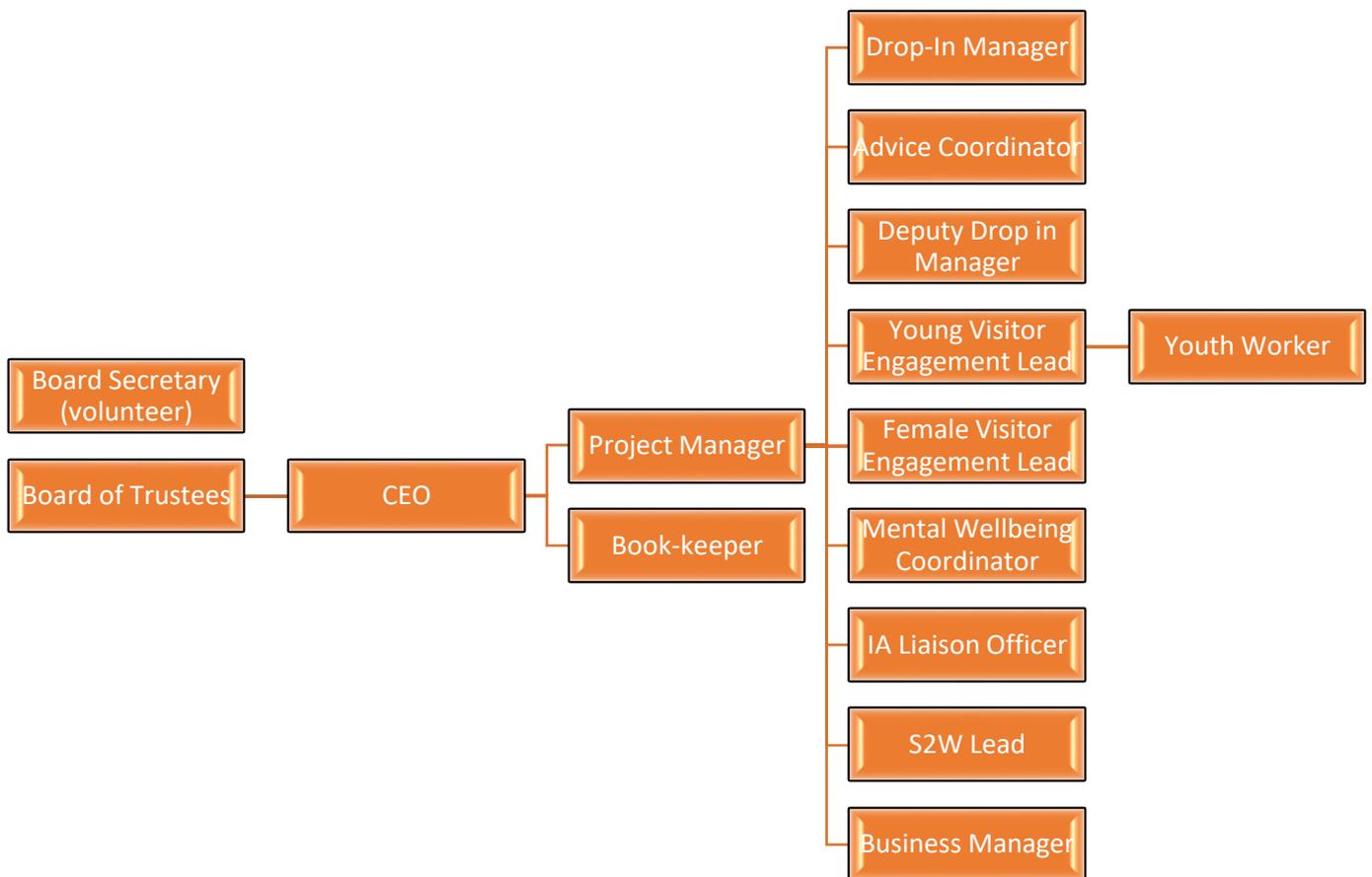


Delivering our priorities

To deliver our priorities, our resources are defined under an annual budget, which is connected to the activities in this strategic plan. Responsibility for implementing this plan and the budget is delegated to the operational staff. Progress against this strategic plan and the annual budget is measured by the Board at its bimonthly meetings.

Structure

Our structure for this strategic plan period is set out below.



Risk management

The Board of Trustees has established a risk register to ensure that the charity is fully aware of and prepared for any and all risks that face its ongoing success. This is reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees.

Contact details

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