



ANNUAL 24 REPORT 25

THE
HARBOUR
PROJECT

Rebuilding lives through advice, hope and humanity

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Whilst 2024/25 has seen challenges, changes and triumphs, we are so proud of the safe and welcoming atmosphere that continues to exist at our home within Broadgreen Community Centre.

There have been some significant changes within the team at The Harbour Project this year. After a careful recruitment process, we were delighted to appoint long-term employee and Advisor, Tom Bain to the position of Joint CEO in April 2024. Tom and Claire Garrett worked together as Joint CEOs in an extended handover period until the end of 2024. Claire has been a tremendous leader for The Harbour Project over many years, and we are thankful for all she has done as the charity's first CEO. We were delighted that she accepted the position of Ambassador for the charity in January 2025.

Soon after Tom was appointed as Joint CEO, David Rowlands expressed his wish to stand down from the Chairmanship of the charity. As the newly elected Chair, I was thankful that David agreed to remain as Vice-Chair and we thus continue to benefit from his experience and wise counsel on the Trustee Board.

We were also very sorry to see Mindy Sandhu leave the team in November 2024 for a well deserved retirement. Although the Advice Team had lost a key figure, Mohmed Yahya had already joined Micael and Giles as an Advisor in July 2024.

A positive and welcome development this year has been the creation of our Lived Experience (LEX) Panel. This is a group of dedicated Visitors who are responsible for offering key suggestions to improve The Harbour Project's service delivery

and give advice on our work as we move forward. We are delighted with the commitment, enthusiasm and eagerness of Panel members. It is fundamental that our Visitors' voices are heard and recognised, so that decisions are made with their needs considered and consulted throughout. With their input, we are better placed to continue being relevant and responsive to Swindon's asylum-seeking and refugee community. We look forward to working with them as we move into 2025/26.

My heartfelt thanks go to each and every one of our funders, individual donors, incredible staff members and our generous volunteers for their vital contributions to ensure that The Harbour Project can continue to be the vital place for so many. It is only with their support that we are able to rebuild lives through advice, hope and humanity.

Emma Graham
Chair of Trustees





WARM + WELCOMING

We're a warm, welcoming community that offers professional, effective, and reliable support. We provide a safe and friendly environment to help our Visitors successfully integrate into Swindon life.



VISITOR-FOCUSSED

We make decisions with our Visitors, prioritising their interests and building on their strengths to help them rebuild their lives.



INCLUSIVE + EGALITARIAN

We offer non-judgemental, equal access to support and advice. We value the diverse skills of our staff, trustees, and volunteers, and build strong partnerships with other organisations.

2024/25 has been one of the busiest years at The Harbour Project, with the demand on our services continuing to grow. Guided by our **values** (listed on the left-hand side), we have sought to provide a comprehensive and holistic service for our **Visitors** (the people we support).

Our Advice Centre responded to the daily challenges and crises faced by our Visitors, offering key support with finding solicitors, health-related matters and ensuring people have access to their financial entitlements.

We continued to work with our young cohort, with the weekly Youth Group facilitating trips to a rock climbing centre, picnics in the park, and museum visits. A key highlight from our Women's Group was a textiles project where women designed and sewed together to create a '**Solidarity Skirt**' which was put on display at the Museum and Art Gallery at Swindon.

The Steps2Work Programme was bolstered by the contributions of Libby Shaw and Evie Smith, who joined the team on two separate internships from September - November 2024, and January - March 2025.

We were able to provide **627** SIM Cards so our Visitors could stay connected, **69** bikes so they would have the freedom of travel, **172** food bags for those that needed it most, and **1,202** hot meals throughout the year.

Reflecting on the the past year, Mia O'Sullivan, our Women's Engagement Lead, said it best: "**The Harbour community shows such resilience and hope, it's incredible to be a part of it**".

The Harbour Project exists to compassionately and effectively respond to the needs of our Visitors; they are at the centre of everything that we do. In 24/25, we helped people from **74** different countries, which made Harbour a melting pot of cultural diversity.

We ended the year with **1,497** Visitors registered and engaging with our services. This included **564** people who had recently arrived in Swindon throughout 24/25 (either being new into the country, being dispersed into Swindon by the Home Office, or having moved into the town after being granted Leave to Remain).

Our Visitor composition is made up as follows:

- **687 people seeking asylum**
- **810 people with refugee status**
- **880 adult men**
- **293 adult women**
- **324 children**



1,497

**PEOPLE REGISTERED
WITH THE HARBOUR
PROJECT**

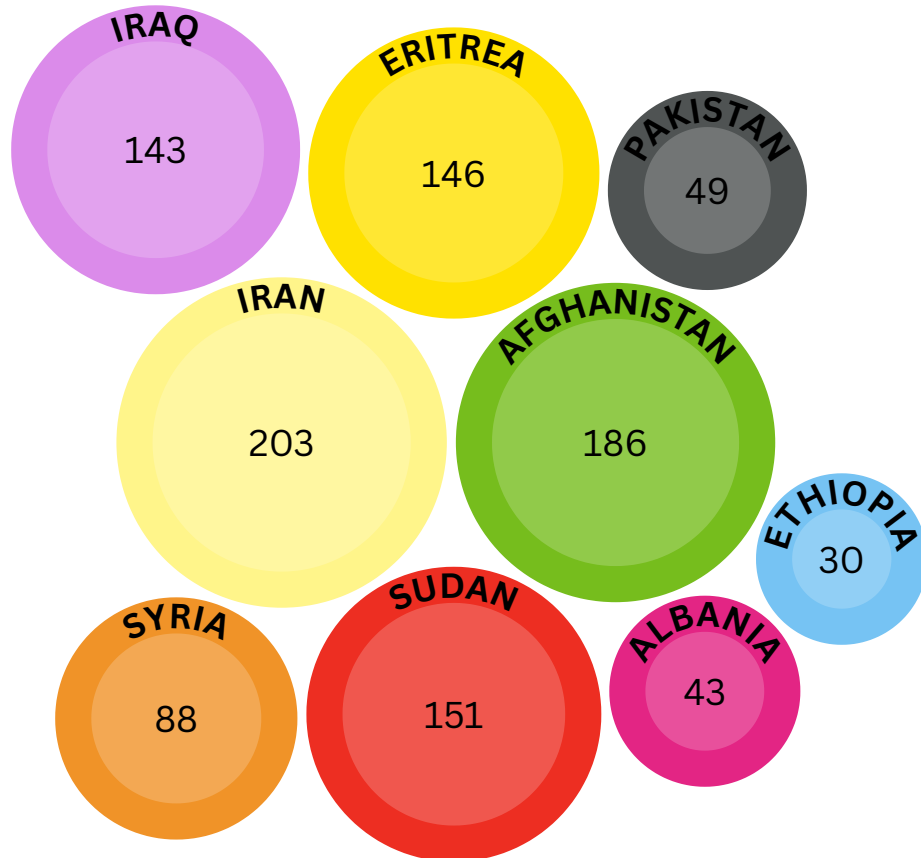
**TOTAL NUMBER OF
ATTENDANCES AT
THE HARBOUR
PROJECT THIS YEAR**

17,275

223

**VISITORS
GRANTED LEAVE
TO REMAIN IN
24/25**

**69% OF OUR VISITORS
COME FROM 9 COUNTRIES**



“It is extraordinary to me that the Visitors manage to stay sane, polite, considerate and capable in spite of everything. I often find myself feeling overwhelmed by the thought of what they have been through and I am in awe that they are able to keep going, appearing to live “normal” lives, within the confines of the restrictions of the living conditions, limited money, the stress of going through the asylum process. Not to mention the thoughts in their head concerning families and friends they have left behind.

As a place to work as a volunteer, it is constantly interesting, meeting fascinating people both as colleagues and Visitors, varied and fun. Seen in the broader context of daily life, it gives a wonderful view of so many different lives, ways of life, living history, eye-opening view of the wider world. To be exposed to differences is a benefit to everyone. Being involved with The Harbour Project opens ones eyes, broadens the mind, stretches the brain dealing with and learning about the rules and processes of asylum and learning about the ways of others from all over the world.

It's exciting to see a mix of people, races, modes of dress, babble of languages, different behaviours, all together in such close quarters, there is a feeling of high energy and purpose (often for sad or difficult reasons, but still a positive energy) around the place. Being there does help us all, Visitors and staff, see things in a different perspective and help to foster tolerance in the world. There are far-reaching effects associated with The Harbour Project”

**Susan Lowry,
Volunteer**

110

**NUMBER OF
VOLUNTEERS WHO
SUPPORTED US THIS
YEAR**

6,616

**HOURS SPENT
VOLUNTEERING AT
THE HARBOUR
PROJECT IN 24/25**

Listening to the needs of our Visitors is integral to ensuring our services remain responsive and effective. We have always done this through regular **‘Visitors in the Lead’** sessions, where we asked for feedback about our services. This year, we decided to adopt a new approach by creating our first **Lived Experience (LEX) Panel** in August 2024. The LEX Panel is an advisory group made up of Visitors who are diverse in nationality, age, and gender. Having all engaged with Harbour’s services, they are best placed to offer suggestions for effective operational and strategic change.

Funding from **Justice Together Initiative** allowed us to form the LEX Panel. It was important to provide Panel members with the relevant tools and training to succeed in this project, as well as ensuring its long-term sustainability. We therefore sought external consultancy support from **Expert Link** (with funding from **Lloyds Bank Foundation**) to come in and help Panel members take ownership of the group. Training was completed between September 2024 - December 2024, and gave Panel members the tools needed to hold open and honest conversations, agree upon the Panel’s values and purpose, as well as give them the confidence to share their opinions.

The LEX Panel, led by **Mohamed (Chair)** and **Erlinda (Vice-Chair)**, have since met once per month, sharing experiences and ideas, which have been fed back to the leadership team and Trustees to make changes where necessary.

We are so thrilled to have this thriving, dynamic, and engaged group of Visitors who all want to make sure The Harbour Project can maximise its impact.

9

**NATIONALITIES REPRESENTED BY
THE PANEL (ALBANIA, SYRIA,
UKRAINE, SUDAN, IRAN, EL
SALVADOR, CAMEROON, CHAD +
INDIA)**



**MEETINGS HELD BY THE LEX
PANEL BETWEEN DECEMBER
2024 AND MARCH 2025**

4

“Being part of the Lived Experience Panel is such a great thing – it is a powerful platform for change. It’s about seeing the strength in one’s journey and realising that by sharing it, you’re shaping a better world for others. Members came together, told their stories, offered suggestions and overcame barriers.

We are going to continue to listen, learn, and most importantly, to act”

Mohamed Yahya
Chair of the LEX Panel

WITH SPECIAL
THANKS TO:



**LLOYDS BANK
FOUNDATION**
England & Wales

“Being part of the Lived Experience Panel since its very beginning has been a meaningful journey for me. From the start, our goal has always been clear: to share our experiences as immigrants in the UK so that the organisation can better understand our challenges and improve its services. Over time, the Panel has changed in numbers and faces, but the purpose has remained the same, and that consistency has made our work impactful. Personally, I feel proud to have contributed to shaping services that truly respond to people's needs.

Looking ahead, I hope the Panel continues to grow stronger, bringing together even more voices and perspectives so that our collective experiences can keep driving positive change and making a real difference in the lives of others”

Erlinda Barjamaj
Vice–Chair of the LEX Panel



We have spent large parts of 24/25 developing mutually beneficial relations with other asylum-support charities. We have always had existing relations, but this year, we wanted to take that further - by dedicating time to visiting other organisations to share ideas and understand how we respond to similar challenges in different ways. It has been fantastic to solidify connections, both in terms of operations and strategy.

Developing our relations with these organisations has been hugely influential. Examples of operational changes that we have adopted include introducing Visitor ID cards (**Bristol Refugee Rights**), simplifying our Visitor Consent Form (**GARAS**) and introducing staff Wellbeing Days (**Refugee Support Group**). In return, we have inspired organisations to think about their initial triage process (**GARAS**) and their data capture (**The Gap**). Closer relations with leadership allows for more in-depth strategic discussion, both in terms of structure, fundraising, and future plans, whilst closer relations between frontline staff allows for questions to be asked and ideas shared when faced with similar challenges. We will continue to build and solidify our relations with these other organisations moving forward.



Refugee Support
Devon



August 2024 saw the culmination of growing anti-immigrant sentiment with riots erupting across the UK. It was a scary time for everyone who comes from a migrant background, and those working within this sector. We worked closely with Swindon Borough Council and the police to stay informed of any unrest happening locally, and to prepare accordingly. Thankfully, we saw an incredible outpouring of love, compassion and solidarity nationwide in response to division and hate, and we are extremely grateful for this.

The riots were a stark reminder of the danger our Visitors face, just for being who they are. It also was clear that our team can experience increased stress due to this work. It was therefore necessary to explore additional ways to better support our staff team. With initial funding from **Blagrove Trust**, we were able to offer external 1-to-1 supervision for staff. These sessions were provided by **Trauma Foundation South West** who offer guidance and training on avoiding vicarious trauma and ensuring self-care for staff.

We then successfully applied for a grant from **Wiltshire Community Foundation** which enabled us to continue offering the external supervisions, but to also introduce Wellbeing Days throughout the year (inspired by conversations with Refugee Support Group). This is an opportunity for the team to be away from the office and experience something different. Our first Wellbeing Day was in February 2025, where the team completed a wellbeing workshop and a nature walk with **One Life**.

The feedback from the team for our first Wellbeing Day was really positive, and we will continue to do them to maintain wellbeing and avoid burnout.

**WITH SPECIAL
THANKS TO:**



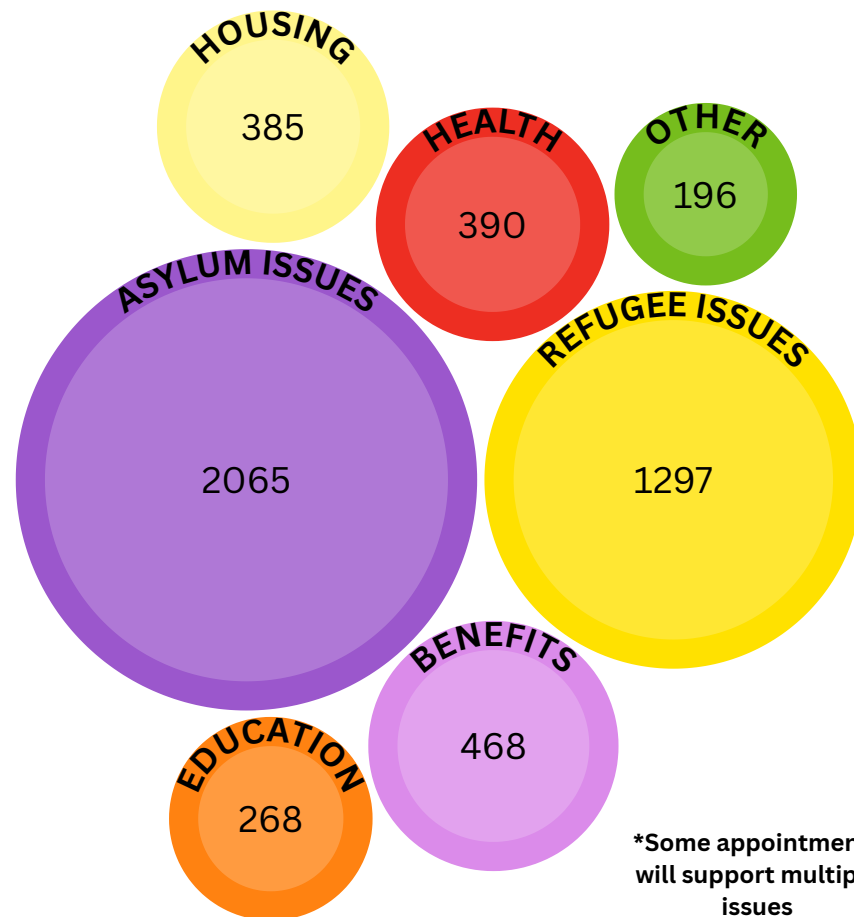


We continued to be the only organisation in Swindon that delivered frontline support services specifically for the asylum seeking and refugee population. In 24/25, our Advice Team team consisted of **Ann (Advice Coordinator)**, **Fouad (Receptionist)**, **Mindy (Advisor)**, **Giles (Advisor)**, **Micael (Advisor)** and **Mohamed (Advisor)**. They are responsible for listening to the needs of our Visitors and responding as effectively as they can.

For someone who is still waiting for an outcome of their asylum claim, their needs can include: health-related matters, access to education, accessing asylum support, contacting immigration solicitors, Migrant Help, and the Home Office.

For those that have been granted refugee status, questions often revolve around: applying for mainstream benefits, accessing housing, family reunion, applying for Travel Documents and Driving Licences.

4,784 TOTAL ADVICE APPOINTMENTS*



*Some appointments will support multiple issues

910

SOLICITOR
LIAISON
APPOINTMENTS

UNIVERSAL
CREDIT SUPPORT

319

BANK ACCOUNT
APPLICATIONS

231

390

HEALTH-
RELATED
APPOINTMENTS

206

NURSERY, SCHOOL
AND COLLEGE
ADMISSION SUPPORT

EVISA
APPLICATION
SUPPORT

413

LIAISON WITH
THE HOME OFFICE
OR MIGRANT HELP

194

600

HOURS OF
TRANSLATION
PROVIDED

We are committed to giving our Visitors the opportunity to learn and expand their horizons whilst they are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. This includes daily English classes, weekly maths classes, and for the first time in 24/25, a computing class.

The other core focus area for Personal Development is through our **Steps2Work Programme**. Over the past year, we have provided 399 Steps2Work appointments to help people on their way to finding meaningful employment. Our relationship with **Key Performance Training** meant that **4** Visitors achieved their Level 2 forklift licence, whilst our relationship with **Hercules Construction** meant we could host a 'Mock Interview Day', attended by **14** job seeking individuals. The Programme has helped **28** people into employment, and an additional **115** volunteering placements within local charities and non-profit organisations including: **The Great Western Hospital, Prospect Hospice, Carfax Medical Practice, The Old Town Festival, The Festival of Tomorrow**, and **The Mechanics Trust**.

ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 63
MATHS CLASSES

211

3,536

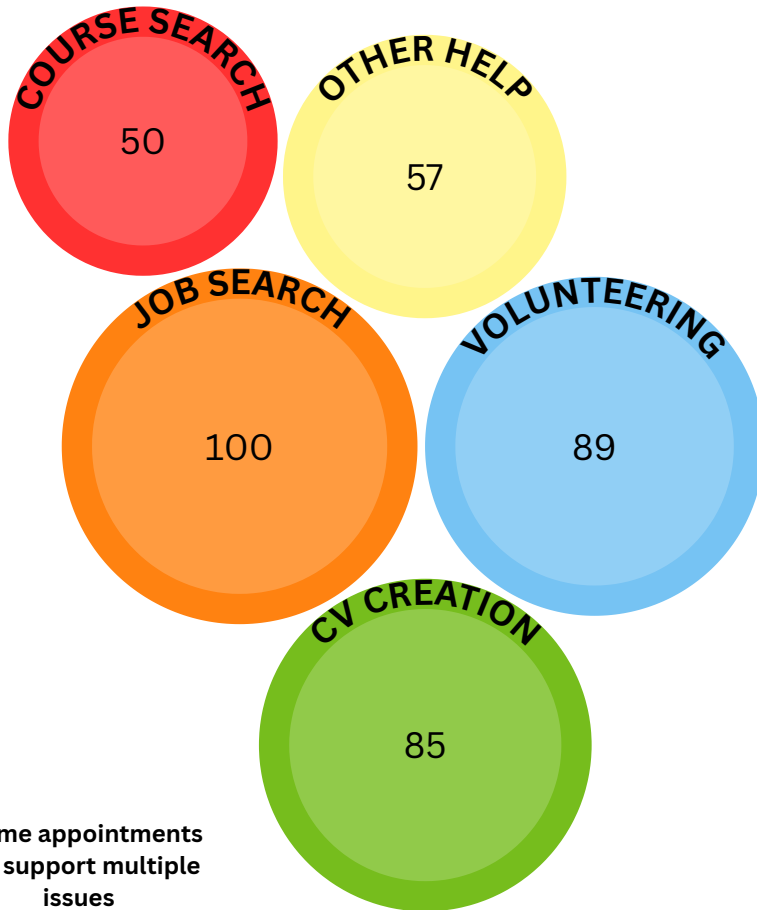
ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 521
ENGLISH CLASSES

ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 21
COMPUTING CLASSES

47



399 TOTAL STEPS2WORK APPOINTMENTS*



*Some appointments
will support multiple
issues

“As Steps2Work Coordinator, I love that I get to meet amazing people from all over the world and feel privileged to be able to support them as they build new lives here. Helping to alleviate the boredom and stress of their situation by finding volunteering and educational opportunities is very rewarding and supporting them on their career journey, and to see so many achieve their ultimate goal of finding work, gives me great personal and job satisfaction”

Stella Mortazavi,
Steps2Work Coordinator



563

ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 45 WOMEN'S
GROUP SESSIONS

ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 44 YOUTH
GROUP SESSIONS

383

ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 25
LGBTQ+ SESSIONS

67

1,405

ATTENDANCES
ACROSS 89
FOOTBALL SESSIONS

1,604

HAIRCUTS
GIVEN BY OUR
BARBERS

VISITORS
VOLUNTEERED
AT HARBOUR

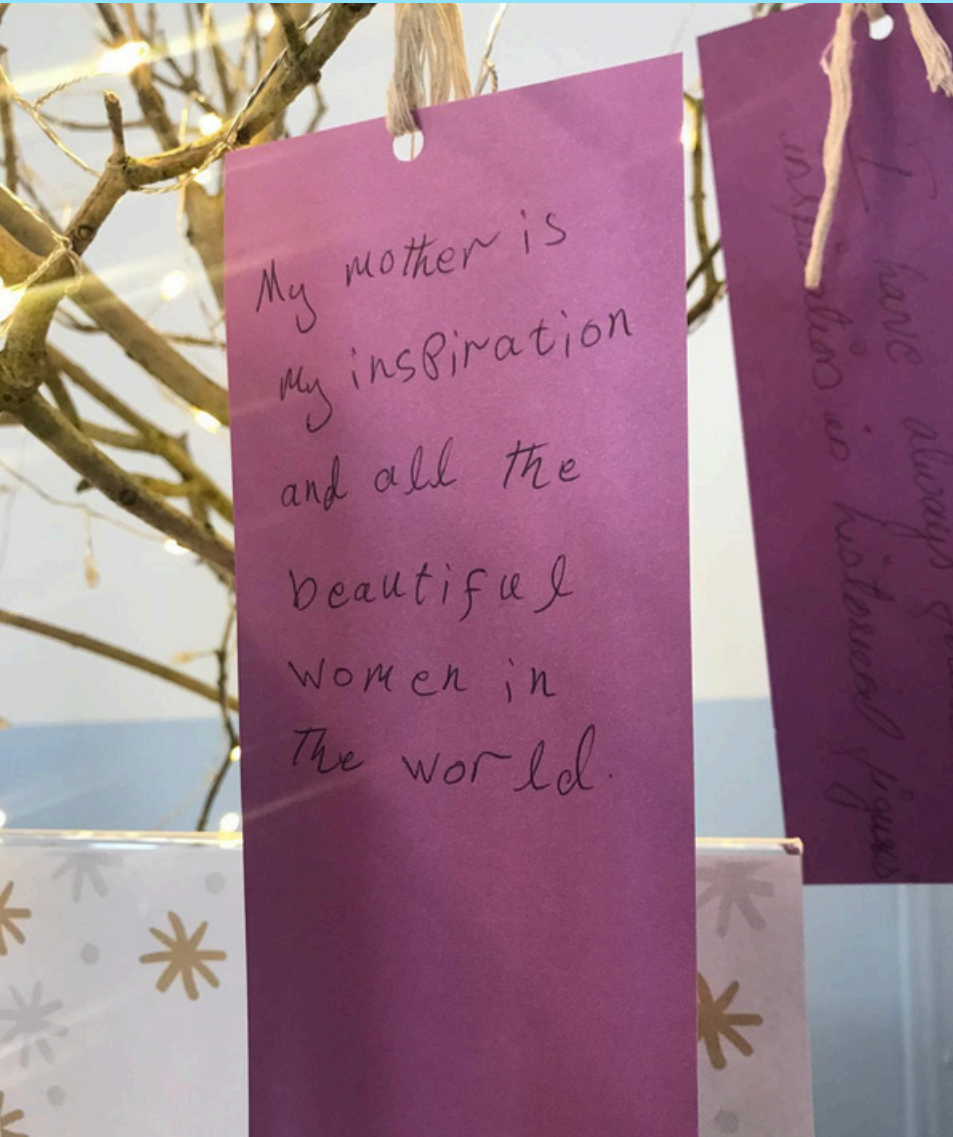
43

COUNSELLING
SESSIONS
DELIVERED BY IPSUM

73

104

TIMES WE HELD
OUR SOCIAL
CAFE



“I enjoy getting to know our incredible young people and I feel privileged to be part of their lives. I'm lucky to be able to offer them experiences where they can have fun and just be young, as well as to helping with the more weighty matters.

I love seeing our young people grow in confidence, skills and independence, and helping them on that journey. The work is worthwhile and important, which is greatly satisfying”

**Rebecca Chick,
Youth Engagement Lead**



TRUSTEES

Emma Graham - Chair
David Rowlands - Vice-Chair
Ian Robertson - Treasurer
Mari Williams - Clerk
Hadiza Mahuta
Farzin Rahmini-Shirazi
Neda Krishnan
Housam Al-Housami
Gurpreet Singh Nijjar
Isabella Harte (joined April 2024)
Nabi Mohammed Duski (resigned January 2025)

STAFF

Giles Matthews - Advisor
Micael Rostami - Advisor + Youth Lead
Ann Meeus - Advice Coordinator
Fouad Khashah - Receptionist
Mia O'Sullivan - Women's Engagement Lead + Positive Mental Wellbeing Coordinator
Rebecca Chick - Youth Engagement Lead
Stella Mortazavi - Steps2Work Coordinator
Jaz Sumal - Business Manager
Nan Bains - Operations Manager
Tom Bain - CEO
Mohamed Yahya - Advisor (appointed July 2024)
Mindy Sandhu - Advisor (retired November 2024)
Claire Garrett - CEO (retired December 2024)

LIVED EXPERIENCE PANEL

Mohamed Yahya - Chair
Erlinda Barjamaj - Vice-Chair
Valentyna Velyka
Micael Rostami
Fouad Khashah
Shela Nkwasu
Majid Mohamed
Mahamat Djaafar
Dorin Chikka Dcruz (joined March 2025)
Itza Benitez (left February 2025)

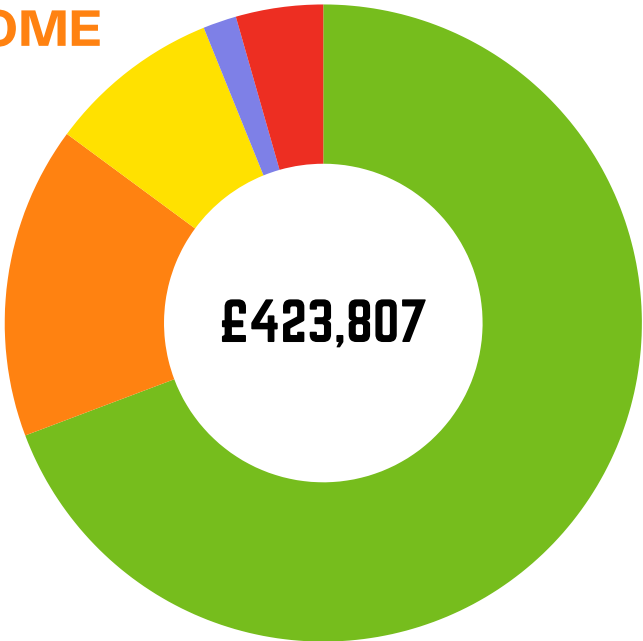
REPRESENTATIVES

Lord Michael Wills - Patron
Nicky Alberry, DL - Patron
Sir Robert Buckland - Patron (appointed July 2024)
Bishop Vivienne Faull - Patron (appointed October 2024)
Claire Garrett, DL - Ambassador (appointed January 2025)

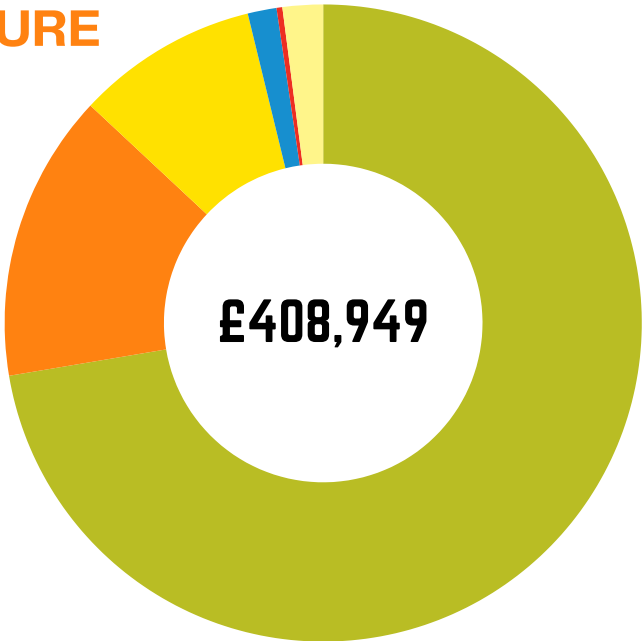
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Rachael Taylor, Simply Bookkeeping - Bookkeeper
Robert Raynes - Independent Examiner
Kerry Marsh, IPSUM - Counsellor
Albano Abrantes, ASA Sports - Coach
Libby Shaw - Intern (September - November 2024)
Evie Smith - Intern (January - March 2025)

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



TRUSTS + FOUNDATIONS	£293,523
CONTRACTS	£67,189
INDIVIDUAL GIVING + DONATIONS	£37,147
FUNDRAISING EVENTS	£7,188
OTHER	£18,760

STAFF COSTS	£295,878
PREMISES + UTILITIES	£59,737
VISITOR COSTS	£37,761
BOOKKEEPING COSTS	£5,983
FUNDRAISING COSTS	£1,205
OTHER	£8,385

OUR FUNDERS

ANNUAL 24
REPORT 25



Charitable
Foundation



LLOYDS BANK
FOUNDATION
England & Wales



JOHN LEWIS
PARTNERSHIP



HARBOUR

To everyone who has enabled The Harbour Project to continue being a warm and welcoming space for people seeking asylum and those with refugee status in Swindon, a huge thank you! We are humbled by the incredible displays of compassion and solidarity that has been shown towards us and our Visitors over the past year.

Without the ongoing support from our funders, we would be unable to offer the essential services locally. Without the generosity of our regular individual donors, we would not be in the position to respond effectively to the needs of our community. Without the amazing contribution of our volunteers, friendships and lasting connections would not be forged.

As we celebrate our 25th year in 2025, we acknowledge that we are operating within a particularly challenging political climate. Love, compassion, patience and understanding is needed more than ever, and the support of so many becomes ever more important and cherished.



CONTACT US

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Swindon,
SN1 2AN**

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 **01793 611 682**

 **info@harbourproject.org.uk**

 **www.harbourproject.org.uk**

 **@swindonharbour**

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT



**Make a donation
online today!**



**Sign-up to
volunteer with us**

THE
HARBOUR
PROJECT

UK Registered
Charity Number:
1171368

