



Annual Report 2021 - 2022

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WHO ARE WE?

OUR VISION

Refugees families reunited.

OUR MISSION

Facilitating refugee family reunion.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLE

All families should be able to live together if they choose.

We want all refugees in the UK to have access to family reunification support, from when they first seek asylum to when their family has arrived and are settled into life in the UK.

HIGHLIGHTS

This year we are proud to have been able to expand to answer growing numbers of referrals, and to respond to ever-changing needs, supporting more than 1200 people. As families arrive to increasingly difficult circumstances, facing long delays with housing and benefits, we have offered more post-arrival support and longer term involvement with families. This has been particularly beneficial for those arriving in Scotland, where they have been supported to access government funding.

We are also very pleased to have been able to meet the targets set out to date in our 'Front and Centre' strategy with the aim of transferring ownership of Together Now to those with lived experience, and embedded clients' voices in our delivery. We believe, more than ever, in reuniting refugee families. We aspire to make Together Now even more resilient and responsive, keeping the expertise of those with lived experience at the heart of what we do.



"The most difficult year"

A client, M, shares his family's experience of waiting for visas:

"My family spent a long time dealing with the family reunion process at the British Embassy in Egypt: 8 months in total. According to British immigration rules at the time, we thought it would only take 3 months.

Everything was difficult. My daughter lost a year of school - she could not study because she was not a resident, and her passport was at the British Embassy. 3 months after their arrival their Egyptian visas expired and they could not extend them because their passports were still at the embassy. I was sending them money for expenses and rent every month and I wasn't working at that time. I'm still struggling with those debts.

Finally we received a visa in December, but were shocked to find two visas inside - one had already been issued in July and expired in October. When my family wanted to travel the Egyptian authorities asked them to pay a \$100 fine because they had not extended their visa there."

M and his wife and daughter were reunited in January, with flights donated by Miles4Migrants.

OUR WORK:

Travel & other assistance

By the end of 2021 there were 21.3 million people forcibly displaced worldwide*, many of whom were forced to flee their homes without their families.

According to UNHCR, as of mid-2021 in the UK there are 135,912 refugees and 83,489 people with pending asylum cases*. Oftentimes refugees now living in the UK hope to be reunited with their loved ones, but do not have the means to fund the necessary travel, assistance or other reunion costs. This is where Together Now steps in to help.

This year we supported families from over 20 countries - predominantly Eritrea, Sudan, Syrian, Iran and Yemen - and accepted referrals from sponsors living all around the UK. 404 families were supported in total, 278 of which (amounting to 843 people) received travel assistance to bring loved ones to the UK through our partnership with Miles4Migrants.

In addition to our travel assistance programme:

- 58 families received visa support. The costs involved in securing visas continue to be prohibitive for some families, with one father requiring over £5,000 to complete the application process for his two sons.
- 33 families received support with travel in the UK. For many families living in regional towns or cities, travel costs can be high and unaffordable on top of other expenses.
- 46 families received arrival grants. This is already a larger number than in previous years, but we are acutely aware that all families arriving to England and Wales are facing extensive delays in benefits, and that we therefore need to be in a position to offer this support to every family we work with.

We continue trying to reach families earlier on, to avoid them reaching us or other agencies at crisis point, and hope to increase our capacity in the coming year to do this more effectively.



"I would like to say that being with your family is so great a feeling. It makes you feel strong after weakness.. I need days or months to just see my wife's eyes and let myself believe that she is by my side and I am not dreaming. Just looking at her in front of me means I have everything. Really thanks to everyone who helped me to get my wife and my life back again."



"I was always worried and stressed"

We supported Michael to be reunited with his wife, who was living in Eritrea. They had not been able to see each other for 8 years. He said:

"In Eritrea we have had a dictatorship for 30 years, which forces you to join the military service - even when you are a student - and to spend the rest of your life in the army. If you refuse to join, you will be detained for life or killed. There are only these two options. Over 15 000 people have been detained in Eritrea without the opportunity to go to court, including Muslim scholars, a Christian priest, politicians, diplomats, intellectuals and journalists. We don't even know if they are alive or dead. This is why we flee our country.

I was separated from my wife in 2013. It feels very very bad and hard to be apart from your wife, especially far away in Europe. I was always worried and stressed about it. Because of me leaving the country, she was always threatened by the local authorities and even forced into prison a couple of times.

Thankfully we're reunited now, and very happy to be together. The visa application process was good and very quick to be honest, except for the expensive fee for the solicitor and the time-consuming procedures. My wife is going to start college and we are planning to find her some work, whether it's volunteer or paid. We're also planning to have a child."

"I love Glasgow and Scottish people"

We worked with Miles4Migrants to book flights for Soha to fly from Iran to join Hadi in the Scotland. Hadi said:

"I worked in a real-estate company in Iran, and Soha works in the beauty industry. I was pressured into leaving the country because of my religion - I'm Christian. The government confiscated all of my property, and wanted to execute me.

Soha and I were apart for 20 months due to visa and travel restrictions before Miles4Migrants, in partnership with Together Now, booked flights for Soha. The journey was great, without any problems. Our feelings were amazing and unbelievable after two years. You can't imagine. We have been in a relationship for more than eleven years and in that time we had never spent two years separated. I have never ever felt like this.

I love Glasgow and Scottish people. Glasgow is a very nice and historic city, with old customs and a nice culture a kind people. We decided to stay and live in Glasgow forever: we plan to have a baby and start our own business. We want to thank Glasgow and Scottish people and show them that the kindness and special support they have given us has not been in vain. Finally, I want to thank the Together Now community for your support. God bless you."



“

"While we were separated, they weren't safe: they were really struggling. Before, I was in stress with much pain. But now I have joy and happiness and a safe, comfortable life."

”

FRONT & CENTRE STRATEGY:

From lived experience to leadership

Together Now is supporting more clients than ever before, using informal peer mentors, interpreters and local community networks to ensure that clients receive the best support possible. Our Front and Centre strategy sets out our ambition to transfer 'ownership' of Together Now to those with lived experience of the UK asylum system or family reunion.

Aware of the increasingly difficult situation facing those arriving to the UK, we invited reunited families from the North West to a feedback and social event in Manchester. Our 46 attendees included Iranian, Yemeni, Syrian and Sudanese families, and the session focused on introducing families to others with a shared experience. Attendees spoke about the difficulties they face, and we listened. In response we are now developing our service to provide a clearer pre- and post-arrival support offer.

Thank you to all the clients who attended and participated and to Rainbow Haven for hosting the event. A key priority for next year is forming an advisory group of former clients. Their input will shape our service development and advocacy, hold the board to account and ensure we continue to meet the needs of families effectively.

OUR WORK:

When the dust settles

We have partnered with Maria Abranches, a researcher from the University of East Anglia, for a project on the post-arrival experience. Maria and Nihaya, a research assistant with lived experience of the UK asylum system, will be working with families who have been reunited for a period of over six months and are willing to share insights into their post-arrival experiences.

Using a narrative research approach Maria and Nihaya will conduct walking interviews with participants in the areas in which they live, taking photographs as they go. They will also conduct group workshops.

We are grateful to the British Academy for funding this research, and hope to be able to share our findings in mid-2023.

Prepare, plan, reunite

With support from a consultant specialising in refugee finance, we have also created a set of guidance materials for people looking to reunite with family members in the future. These materials - guidance information and shareable short films - will be published on our website along with additional translations.

Thanks to Choose Love for funding this work.

"An indescribable feeling"

F shared his experience of coming to the UK from Syria and reuniting with his family:

"I left Syria because of the war the country is going through. I left behind my three children, my wife and my father, who 75 old. I went in search of a better life for their future. I arrived in the UK and, after obtaining the right of residence, started the procedure of family reunification, which was a little tiring due to the global pandemic.

Eventually my wife and children obtained a visa to enter the UK, but unfortunately my father's visa application was rejected by the Home Office. Hopefully we can find some way to bring my father here to all live together in safety. Now, after the arrival of my wife and children to the United Kingdom, the first step is that we must learn English and look for a job through which we can live and secure daily expenses. We hope that the situation will improve enough after that for me to start my own business.

After a separation of 4 years, meeting my family again in the UK - with the help of Together Now - was an indescribable feeling. We found everyone to be very helpful and very quick to respond, and Together Now understand what you need if you have special requests. They try as much as they can to meet my needs."

F's father has now received his visa and is booked to travel to the UK next month.



“

“I found you through one of my friends. You helped me and my family a lot and I am very happy to meet you. I wish you all the best and thank you again for everything.”

”

OPERATING CONTEXT

Demand has continued to rise this year. We are receiving a growing number of referrals through word of mouth, where we are the only agency involved in the reunion process on arrival. This, and the limited capacity of local organisations supporting refugees, has driven us to focus even more on our post-arrival support offer.

Access to long-term housing is the most pressing issue for newly arrived families: those eligible for social housing are facing months - and in some cases years - in temporary hotel accommodation. In some areas, couples do not qualify for social housing and sponsors are forced to choose between the situation their partner lives in outside the UK and being street homeless in the UK. For many, the risks their family face mean that they choose to bring them to the UK even without having secured housing, relying on the support of charities and the community.

The impact of Covid-19 restrictions has lessened over the year, but there continue to be some requirements for testing to exit countries and for transit.



ASPIRATIONS

1

Delivering our Front and Centre strategy to bring those with lived experience to the heart of everything we do.

2

Increasing our impact by investing in our organisation and team.

3

Raising our voice to make sure we are representing our clients and their needs effectively in our advocacy and creating platforms for them to share their thoughts.

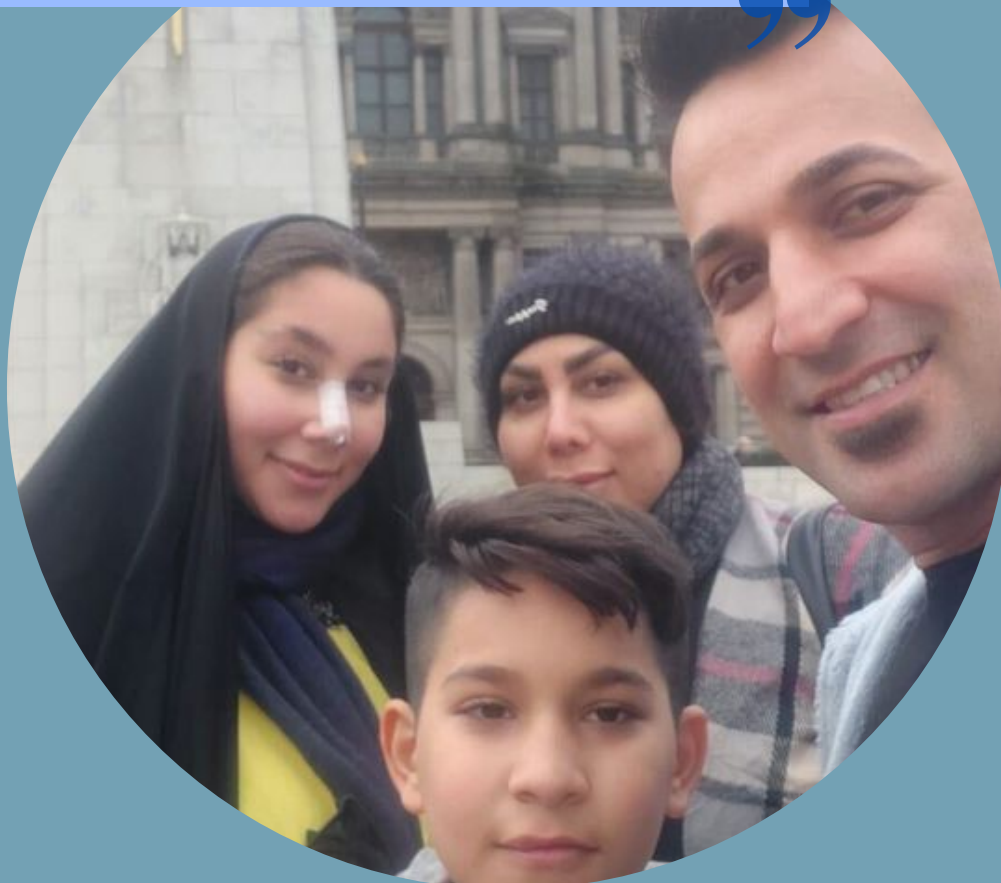
Our plans for the coming year focus on these three key areas. We will continue to ensure that our service is agile, responsive and effectively and creatively meets need.



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"To other people starting the family reunion process I would say that I hope that each of them will meet their family. I hope that they will communicate with Together Now because they will help them seriously and quickly."

”



THANK YOU!

We are overwhelmingly grateful to all our supporters, who have allowed us to continue delivering our volunteer-run service.

As always Miles4Migrants have shown amazing dedication, commitment and creativity in meeting the needs of our clients: we are thankful for the effort and good will of their staff, and their genuine desire to do whatever they can.

We continue to be appreciative of those who support our clients along the way: those who go above and beyond in providing legal advice, those working in stretched and underfunded charities offering post-arrival support, and friends, family and community members who offer so much to make each reunion happen.

We also thank all the clients who have taken the time to give their feedback and help us improve, in particular those who have joined our board of trustees. This year we saw the resignation of Alex Smith from our board after 10 years, and would like to thank him for his amazing support in getting us to where we are today.

Our final thank you is to our incredible funders:

Allen Lane Foundation; Blue Moon; Choose Love; Foyle Foundation; Hilden Charitable Fund; Leigh Trust; Matrix Fund; Sir James Reckitt Charity; Stone King Foundation; Sydney Black Charitable Trust; Thomas Sivewright Catto Charitable Trust.

Governance

Trustees

H Slee (Chair)
A Lythgoe
C Shentall
J Aspden
F Mbila Mouaya
O Long

Address

3 Delacourt Road
Manchester
M14 6BU

**Independent Examiner
& Accountants**

Stacy Mason FCCA
HGA Accountants & Financial Consultants Ltd
t/a Chittenden Horley – Chartered Accountants
The Wesley Centre
Royce Road
Manchester M15 5BP

Charity number 1183639

Structure, Governance and Management

Type of Governing Document: Constitution

How the Charity is Constituted: Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustee Selection Methods: Trustees can only be appointed by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.

Together Now Annual report and accounts 2021/22

Statement of assets and liabilities as at September 30 2022

Objectives and Activities

The charity's objectives, for the public benefit, are: "The relief of refugees, and their family dependents who are in conditions of need, hardship and distress, in such ways as are exclusively charitable under the law of England and Wales".

The Trustees have complied with section 2(1)(b) of the Charities Act 2011, having due regard for the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

Financial review

The charity had a cash deficit for the year on unrestricted funds of £3,712.

Reserves policy

Background

Together Now has no ongoing financial commitments and since our conception has maintained a flexible model allowing operations to grow or contract in relation to income. This has been core to our sustainability.

In the event of no further funding being received service delivery would temporarily contract and there would be no threat to the ongoing viability of the organisation.

Service delivery

Any long-term financial commitments, for example staff appointments, will be only entered into where there is funding allocated for the lifetime of the contract. Any change to this policy will require a full review of the Reserves Policy.

The Casework Policy states that cases will only be accepted if there is adequate financial backing to complete the requirements with appropriate contingency. Each case will be financially risk assessed on its own merit in the current financial context.

Agreed reserves

Reserves will be maintained to allow all current cases to be completed. This figure will vary depending on the characteristics of the current casework commitments.

Triggers for review of reserve policy

- I. Acquisition of commitments that do not have funding secured to cover the lifetime of the contract.
- II. Recruitment of staff into long term or permanent posts where ending a contract would adversely impact service delivery.

Currently unrestricted cash reserves stand at £3,183.

Together Now Annual report and accounts 2021/22
Statement of assets and liabilities as at September 30 2022

Approval

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Trustee: Caitlin Shentall

Trustee: Joshua Aspden

Date: 17/11/2022

Date: 17/11/2022

Responsibilities and basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the period October 1 2021 to September 30 2022, set out on pages 13 and 14.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- a) accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- b) the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Stacy Mason

Stacy Mason FCCA

HGA Accountants & Financial Consultants

t/a Chittenden Horley -Chartered Accountants

The Wesley Centre

Royce Road, Hulme

Manchester M15 5BP

Date: 6 January 2023



Together Now Accounts



Registration no. 1183639 Period start date 01/10/2021 Period end date 30/09/2022

CC16a

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants		51,765		51,765	44,106
Personal donations	6,805			6,805	8,999
Casework income				-	3,178
Gift Aid				-	788
Fundraising	-			-	-
				-	-
Sub total(Gross income for AR)	6,805	51,765	-	58,570	57,071
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	6,805	51,765	-	58,570	57,071
A3 Payments					
Case expenditure	10,063	40,584		50,647	43,330
Staffing costs		11,374		11,374	5,553
Core costs	454	210		664	
Project costs (Front and Centre)		597		597	
Project costs (other)		202		202	
			-	-	-
Sub total	10,517	52,967	-	63,483	48,883
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	10,517	52,967	-	63,483	48,883
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 3,712	- 1,202	-	- 4,913	8,188
A5 Transfers between funds			-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	8,487	688		9,175	
Cash funds this year end	3,183	1,079	-	4,262	8,875

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds		3,183	1,079	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	3,183	1,079	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
		Caitlin Shentall	17/11/2022	
		Joshua Aspden	17/11/2022	