

# FRIENDS WITHOUT BORDERS (PORTSMOUTH) CIO 1194005



**Annual Report for the year 2022**

(Published August 2023)

# Annual Report of Friends Without Borders (Portsmouth) CIO for the Year 2022

## LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NUMBER- 1194005

### Trustees 2022:

Veronica Dunne  
and Bryony Whitmarsh -  
joint Chairpersons  
Coleen Le - Deputy Chairperson  
Sharon Brooks  
and Geoff Wilson - joint treasurers  
Charles Leddy-Owen Access to Justice  
Lia Deyal  
Yenga Ikuse

### Trustees 2023:

Coleen Le - named person with CIO  
Geoff Wilson - Treasurer  
Charles Leddy-Owen - Access to Justice  
Lia Deyal  
Yenga Ikuse  
Jan Probert - co opted  
Majid Dhana - co opted

## Aims and Organisation

The relief of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees who are suffering hardships or distress or in need, particularly, but not exclusively, in the city of Portsmouth, by the provision of financial and other assistance and raising the awareness of the general public.

Organisation, The organisation is managed by an executive committee, consisting of the trustees, which meets every two months. Day to day management is by Coleen Le.

### Public Benefit Statement

The trustees have paid due regard to the guidance issued by charity commission on public benefit.

a) Friends Without Borders has relieved poverty through the provision of payments to meet particular needs, granting allowances to destitute clients for limited periods and assistance with travelling expenses.

b) Friends Without Borders has also provided free legal advice, regulated by the OISC, on immigration matters through Access To Justice.

c) Public Benefit has also been served by the education of the general public through the use of social media, and with collaboration with local press and liaison and network with relevant groups in the city.

## **Chair's Report by the Deputy Chair.**

**2022 has been a positive year at Friends Without Borders. We had closed our drop in but kept telephone contact with our most vulnerable clients. When we reopened in 2022 we were only able to receive clients requiring 'casework' advice. By the end of the year, the sessions were thriving providing a full and expanded service with numbers of new clients increasing. Similarly, we were able to enhance and develop English classes and other resources for clients, including creative projects, art and board games. Sometimes the social contact and companionship is as important as the advice required. As well as support and advocacy we always stress befriending and enabling our clients to make the service more rounded. True to our name, we seek to befriend those in need despite any borders between us. We saw an average of 42 attendees at our drop in per week. 12 attended English classes. 18 engaged with Caseworkers. Most frequent represented countries were Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria, and in Total we supported clients from across 49 countries.**

**Case work is at the core of our mission and the support that we provide to our clients. Case work has become more complex and we have sought to deepen our help. The free confidential assistance given by trained volunteers is invaluable to clients who are often at their wits' ends. Their issues cover a large number of areas ranging from access to a GP or Dentists, to schools for children, housing and a number of other administrative problems which can be very hard to navigate for an English speaker but sometimes like a brick wall for someone without fluent English.**

**To free up more time for the case workers and help us to properly prepare for the drop in, in 2022 we took on a part time admin assistant which helped relieve some of the pressures on the volunteers. Our caseworkers are trained and keep up to date with relevant policies and concerns, a recent example is training on how to spot and deal with issues of modern-day slavery.**

**We have a network of organisations that we work with and to whom we can refer clients for more specialist support notably to Citizens Advice Portsmouth who frequently join us in our drop in and who can advise on debt and money advice, immigration advice which is an enhancement on what we can provide.**

**Our local MP Stephen Morgan remains supportive of Friends Without Borders and of a potential right for asylum seekers to work, a logical proposal and one that he is pursuing. In December the number of asylum seekers in Portsmouth was 561 up on 302 the year before. (Portsmouth.co.uk, The News 2nd March 2023). The need for support is self evident and we seek to support such people rather than see them as a problem to be dealt with.**

**Throughout the year we held a number of key events which were organised for the benefit of our clients including regular visits to a farm, allotment work and linking up with Action Asylum. In December we held our Christmas party for clients and their children. Our kitchen volunteers spent all morning and worked tirelessly to prepare a spread of chicken curry, dahl, rice, pakora, samosas and desserts. We were also provided entertainment by our talented volunteers which included clog dancing and music and approximately 100 clients attended.**



**We were able to distribute 120 £5 supermarket vouchers, one for every client. Donations from our supporters also enabled us to hand out 35 bags full of toiletries and toys for every one of roughly 40 children in attendance.**

**During 2022 the numbers of English teachers and English students increased substantially and we instituted a different way of working which clients have found much more approachable and popular. We work in small groups, often mixing nationalities and ethnic groups, this seems to work very well and clients often finding life experiences in common. We are fortunate to have been able to buy a full set of English texts which allow a variety of approaches. Of course, the English class is not just a way of increasing fluency in English, crucially it embodies companionship, support, befriending.**

**Many volunteers support groups whose aim is to improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees. For example "The Right to work" campaign which has had some success. Locally there is support for "no detention, no Haslar" campaign, as there are concerns regarding the opening of Haslar Immigration Removal Centre.**

**All of the above services, activities and support are only possible because of the generosity of our donors and supporters. Despite the disruption caused by us establishing Friends Without Borders as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with its new and different bank account, the majority of our donors have moved their donations into the new account and we thank them for that.**

**Finally I should like to take the opportunity to thank our previous Chair Veronica Dunne who resigned in October 2022. Her contribution to FWB was enormous and we will forever be indebted to her.**

**Colleen Le  
Deputy Chair**

## Who Are We And Who Are They?

Immigration to the UK is highly topical at the moment. Coverage is mixed but includes a slice of commentary and opinion along the lines of ... 'we take too many people, it's not our problem, they are illegal and not entitled to come here....'

When dealing with such issues, it is useful to consider the core principles - who 'they' are, why they are here and how they should be welcomed or otherwise processed. Some consider that 'we' are a separate group and so don't have responsibility for others, despite need. Alternatively, are we one people with moral or spiritual responsibilities to each other, on top of the international law requiring us to assist? Some religions would say we should help anyone in need.

Common narratives however are hostile and involve 'othering' ie treating people as in a separate group for which we have no responsibility, they often provoke and inflame opinions. The reality of the legal positions and stories of many who arrive, differ from those narratives though. Looking at asylum seekers - those seeking refugee status have right rooted in international law to seek asylum in any country if they are in fear of persecution. That right was established after the horrors of the Second World War. Once the asylum seeker has made their case they become a refugee.

This is not the same as the case of immigrants who arrive with permission or those that arrive without, who may be economic migrants but are undocumented; they are not fleeing persecution. These are the so called 'illegals' which is a pejorative term and misrepresents the reality.

The labels and the nature of the claims are often muddled including by the press, it almost seems that the mislabelling of asylum seekers even by the government is intended to confuse or inflame tensions. Brexit and the debates about European workers in the UK, presented politicians and the press with further opportunities to debate 'them and us' and the debates are well documented. It could be argued that this augmented the debate about fear of and anger towards the 'other'.



**Ukraine was dealt with differently, many people came to the UK but with Ukraine, the reasons for them leaving was obvious, it was on the TV, it was clear and recent - unlike some long, complicated wars which drive people away from their homes in the Middle East. It may be relevant that they were in Europe and they were white, meaning perhaps that more of the UK population could more easily identify with them. The government approach to the crisis was completely different and the public supported it, even though the backdrop was very similar to that of others arriving.**

**Government policy (as well as the media) in this area must be an influence on values; the label of the government policy towards immigrants is 'Hostile Environment'. The emphasis is on how to reduce numbers of all types of immigrants not how to protect those in need or welcome workers. Some sections of the press go further and coverage hypes up fears and prejudices, some of the same papers used similar language a lot in the past including in connection with Jewish people fleeing Germany in the 1930s. Lord Dubs has spent a lifetime campaigning for the needs of people seeking refuge after being a child in the 'Kinder Transport' himself.**

**Those that are new to our shores often have harrowing pasts. The narrative laid over the facts is that 'they' are a threat, scrounging and that we don't have any obligation to help, rather that they should leave. The portrayal of the situation is simplified and biased; alternatives or alternative analyses are rarely presented. Many asylum seekers have come from countries where the UK have been involved in war, bombing and political disruption where the UK/US were portrayed as rescuers and friends, hence asylum seekers believing that they would be welcomed.**

**Emotive language in the press invoking prejudice and fear and misrepresenting facts confuses the issue. To make progress we need to cut through that and revert to core principles of law and theology, which are complex. They resolve around who is included, who is welcome and who we will help and protect.**

**Alison Hunt**

## Compassion Tree Project

At Friends Without Borders we are continuing to promote art activities. For refugee week this year we have teamed up with John Ashlin from Action Asylum Portsmouth and two artists. When we found out that this year's theme was Compassion we decided to make a "Compassion Tree".

For the last few weeks visitors to our drop in have been tracing, drawing and cutting out leaves. Then we ask them to write on the leaves any words that conjure up the word "compassion", writing in their first language and also English. Our artists have linked up with Portsmouth Central Library to make a 3D tree in the main lobby of the library. Then we will add the leaves. I'm looking forward to seeing the finished artwork. Compassion is such a relevant theme for today's society.

Jan Probert



## *Every Life Matters*

*From war-torn countries  
These people have fled  
And you seem to say  
No roof over your head*

*All they want is a home  
Is that too much to ask  
Please do not tell us  
You have a more important task*

*Have some respect  
For your fellow humankind  
We all differ in appearance  
But our lives are intertwined*

*So open your heart  
Don't send them away  
Diversity did build  
The world of today*

*Natalie Peace aged 13*





# Gardening

**My name is Jan and I run the Moneyfields Community Allotment . We meet every Wednesday 10am -1pm. We are an international gardening community of local Portsmouth people and people from around the world that I have met at Friends Without Borders drop in where I am a volunteer.**

**We grow organic vegetables from seed and when it comes to harvest time we share all the produce. This year so far we are growing potatoes, raspberries, tomatoes, sweetcorn, asparagus, spinach, broccoli and rhubarb.**

**Usually there are 7-9 of us and at some point in the morning work stops and we sit around our large table and drink tea or coffee. Sometimes we will eat something from our allotment produce. For example rhubarb cake, which is delicious!**

**We also put the world to rights and although the predominant language is English we sometimes try and learn a little of each other's language.**

**Last week I asked people what the allotment meant to them. One of the refugee gardeners from Ethiopia said working on the allotment is a good use of his time as he is not allowed to do paid work. He wants to be doing something useful with his time. He said he is pleased to be learning new things, meeting new people and improving his English language skills. Being at the allotment also offers some relief from mental stress. It is good to be busy, he says.**

**One of our local born gardeners says she loves to come to the allotment, it is like another world. During the pandemic it was somewhere to be with nature in a safe way. She also said it was great to be part of an 'international community', and to be meeting people she wouldn't otherwise have met.**

**Working in nature and feeling part of a community is not only enjoyable but proven to be beneficial for mental health.**

**Email me at [janprobert@hotmail.com](mailto:janprobert@hotmail.com) if you would like to join us.**



## Green Wood Working Project

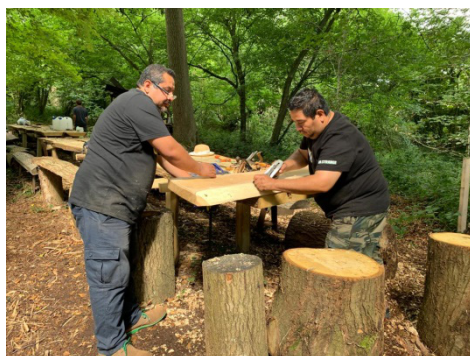
Since the summer of 2021, a group of clients from the Friends without Borders drop-in has been visiting a farm in Hambledon every month to learn about green woodworking. This is thanks to the Crossley family who own the farm, and Ivan Pigott, the skilled green woodworker.

Green woodworking is a craft that works freshly-felled, unseasoned timber into fashioned items. Green wood is much softer than seasoned wood, so it is easier to shape with hand tools. Initially the group learnt the basic skills and made spoons and stools. Then there was talk of a collaborative venture: making a bench.

First, the spindles for the back of the bench were made:



Then there was a lot of hard work:



And now it is almost finished:



**We are currently planning the next exciting project.**

**Although it is called the Green Woodworking Project, there is much more to our visits to Rushmere than only that. It is a very social day; George, the farmer, invites some local people so there is always a lot of conversation. And we have a walk together and learn about the natural environment. We also have a delicious lunch together, sometimes home-made pizza baked in George's home-made pizza oven. For the next visit, Norman and Alejandro are preparing an El Salvadorian lunch for everyone.**

**It gives everyone a break from city life and from their constant worries, as these quotes from participants show:**

***'We love this woodworking, it takes mind off everything...we can learn English with teacher, or speak about our problems.'***

***'Inside (points at chest) it is hard...everything here is good...first time I've been to the country after 2 years living in Portsmouth.'***

***'Some of us lost our families. For a moment we can forget, we create new connections to make a new life.'***

***'I really enjoyed woodworking, speaking with others... walking in the woods for relaxing, good for mental health...'***

***'Staying inside, it is so boring; sometimes we feel depression or anxiety.'***

**Sally Jones**

## Access To Justice

The Access to Justice project provides free advice on issues relating to immigration law. At present, Charles Leddy-Owen is our only qualified adviser.

The first half of 2022 was dominated by the refugee crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine causing tens of thousands of Ukrainians to seek safety in the UK.

While the government set up some dedicated routes for Ukrainians, these were riddled with Problems, both in set-up and execution, fostering an enormous amount of stress for already traumatised people. In these circumstances, Charles took on 32 one-off online advice cases as part of a nation-wide emergency legal advice scheme called the Ukraine Advice Project. To give some examples of the remarkable range of people Charles assisted, at one point he was simultaneously advising (i) the guardians of a Ukrainian child stranded in France trying to reach UK- based parents, (ii) an agricultural worker who had overstayed their UK visa, and (iii) an award-winning member of the fashion industry. More proof, if it were needed, of the diversity of refugees 'lives.

The rest of 2022 was (less frenetically) taken up by Charles working towards raising his advice level. For this he had support from Citizens Advice Portsmouth (CAP). Charles shadowed CAP's Sam Alves for over a year across 2021 and 2022 before finally, in December 2022, taking an Office for the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) level 2 exam.

It never merely rains at Access to Justice because, by unhappy coincidence, the Access to Justice offices were audited by the OISC the week after Charles' exam. Thankfully Charles passed both the exam and the audit (with 81% and 'no issues' results respectively) meaning that Access to Justice are now able to focus on complex immigration cases for the first time since John Bingham retired in 2017.

It will be the task of next year's report to cover the kinds of clients taken on since Charles' upgrade, but they include a domestic abuse case and complex human rights-based applications involving some of Portsmouth's most socio-economically deprived individuals and families. In late 2023 Access to Justice will be moving offices to the University of Portsmouth where they will sit alongside the university's existing Legal Advice Clinic. This will enable Charles, whose day job is as a lecturer at the university, to dedicate more time to the project, taking on new clients and training up new advisers. Three potential trainees have already volunteered, and it is hoped that within a couple of years the capacity of the service will be transformed from its current status as a one person show.

Friends without Borders would like to thank Phil Marshall and everyone at CAP for helping to set up the shadowing that made it possible for Charles to raise his level of advice. Particular thanks are due to Sam Alves for his patient, friendly and impressively knowledgeable support throughout the process (and since).

Charles Leddy-Owen



## English Mentor

Every Thursday the doors open at 10 am. We, the English mentors set to work to make the people coming through the door welcome. Some people have been coming to the Drop In for years. Coming to us shortly after arriving in Portsmouth. When people first arrive it can be very difficult. We call ourselves English mentors and our first task is to meet with new arrivals to help people to feel comfortable.

**What can we offer and more importantly what do people want?**

Some clients speak and write English well. Some were professional people in their countries of origin, now needing support with language to help them negotiate their way through the legal system. To help to find access to colleges, professional education and, to be able, once obtaining status to continue with their professional life.

There are those that come from countries that have been in a state of war and turmoil where there has been no opportunity at all for any educational experience. No books, no pens or paper, no colouring in.

Some of our students, usually those literate in their mother tongue enjoy the group learning getting to grips with theme based English learning. Some, especially those who know little English and whose mother tongue alphabet is different are more interested in learning the English alphabet and writing.

We have a lot of parents coming to the Drop In, mothers with school age children. The children have huge challenges to face when going to school. They don't understand the language or culture or the norms of an English school. The mothers are desperate to support their children and they need the language and skills to help them. The children can be arriving for their first day in an English school in any year of school and at any time during the school year. It's hard. It's amazing and wonderful how many refugee children do settle in and go on to achieve academically. But this is also very hard for the parents especially the mothers. The children learn so quickly and soon the children take on the role of parent to their parents in negotiating bills, doctors, hospitals, schools, immigration etc. Parents appreciate learning the words and workings of these systems. We sometimes have role play for talking to the doctor, the teacher etc. I am so fortunate to be an English mentor. I have the opportunity to to meet so many brave and wonderful people. My greatest hope is that the World and the UK will soon be kinder.

Lia Deyal

## Financial Report

During a year of considerable change in many aspects of our operation, it is pleasing to note that our finances remained under control throughout the year and our total funds showed a significant increase at year end 2022 over 2021.

We started the year with two Friends Without Borders Charities in place – our original Friends Without Borders organisation (charity number 1080187) and the newly established Friends Without Borders (Portsmouth) CIO (charity number 1194005) – and much of the financial focus for the year involved transitioning from the original entity to the new CIO organisation. The CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) status gives us a stronger legal basis under Charity Law and enables us to operate and consider options and actions with greater legal protection. We opened our new CIO Bank Account with Lloyds in March 2022 and moved our expenditure and the majority of our income to this new account over the coming months.

In 2022 we managed to operate with a positive balance between income and expenditure due to a very large extent, to the generosity and continued support from our regular donors and supporters. Despite the increasing financial pressures on us all, our regular donors again came up trumps maintaining their regular donations and, in most cases, moving their monthly contributions to our new bank account. In addition we had a number of one-off donations from organisations and individuals that are too numerous to mention each one in detail although we were especially pleased that Portsmouth High School chose us as their charity of the year and after a considerable effort they donated £10,150 to us. On behalf of our clients we wish to express our undying gratitude to all of you on behalf of our clients.

Our expenditure changed in a number of areas during the year. We were pleased to be able to increase our weekly “destitution” payments to clients who have no other access to public funds, from £25 to £35 plus through working with our clients in a number of areas, very much assisted by our partnership with Citizens Advice Portsmouth and our close liaison with the offices of Stephen Morgan and Penny Mordaunt, the number of clients receiving destitution payments decreased this year. Our rental costs at All Saints Church have increased compared to 2021 when the drop-in was closed for part of the year and energy costs were lower.

The biggest expenditure increase was in the area of administration. So in June 2022 the Trustees decided that the various administrative activities surrounding our operation had grown to such an extent that it was no longer practical for these to be carried out by Veronica Dunne and volunteers alone. It was therefore decided to recruit on a part-time basis a Co-ordinator who would carry out many of these tasks at an average monthly cost to the business of £700-800.

Please note that Sharon Brooks, Trustee joined Geoff Wilson in the FWB Treasury Office in August 2022.

Finally we are pleased to record that an Independent Examination of our accounts has been carried out by Trevor James and his report confirms that he has no concerns with these accounts. We should like to thank Trevor again this year for how he has supported us with his wise counsel.

**Geoff Wilson and Sharon Brooks – FWB Treasury Team**

## FWB: Receipts and Payments for the year

	CIO Account Charity No:1194005	Original Account Charity No:1080187	Total Funds	2021
	£	£	£	£
<b>Income Receipts</b>				
From Voluntary Sources				
Regular Donations	4,663	20,950	25,613	30,053
Unique Donations	3,439	9,653	13,092	9,332
Legacies and Major donations	-	-	-	38,026
Portsmouth High School	10,150	-	10,150	-
Gift Aid Tax Recovered	-	3,200	3,200	5,517
	<b>18,252</b>	<b>33,803</b>	<b>52,055</b>	<b>82,928</b>
Bank Interest	-	25	25	7
Transfer from FWB Original Account	90,016	-	90,016	-
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>108,268</b>	<b>33,820</b>	<b>142,096</b>	<b>82,935</b>
<b>Direct Charitable Expenditure</b>				
Grants and Direct Support				
Destitute Asylum Seekers	3,868	6,267	10,135	17,454
Client Travel	109	705	814	791
Social Activities	1,475	3,350	4,825	1103
Legal Fees	180	150	330	462
	<b>5,632</b>	<b>10,472</b>	<b>16,104</b>	<b>19,810</b>
Other expenditure				
Freelance Administrator	3,084	1,242	4,326	-
Volunteer Travel Expenses	886	1,055	1,941	1238
Rent	2,619	3,603	6,222	3244
Telephone and other administration costs	814	3,397	4,211	3,743
Independent Examiners Fee	-	450	450	400
Insurance	500	156	656	1164
	<b>7,903</b>	<b>9,903</b>	<b>17,806</b>	<b>9,789</b>
Fund raising costs				
Just Giving Fees	198	18	216	216
	<b>198</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>13,733</b>	<b>20,393</b>	<b>34,126</b>	<b>29,815</b>
<b>Net Receipts for the year</b>	<b>94,535</b>	<b>13,435</b>	<b>107,970</b>	<b>53,120</b>

**Friends Without Borders**  
**Registered Charity no 1194005**  
**This is a multi-purpose form. Please fill in such parts as are relevant**

## Count Me In As A Supporter

Please add me to your support list to receive the Occasional Newsletter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be contacted by Friends Without Borders by post and email for fundraising purposes.

I give consent to Friends Without Borders to keep my personalised information to keep my information (as above) for the purpose of administering our supporters mail list in accordance with our privacy policy.

I give consent to Friends Without Borders contacting me by post and email with, for example, the Occasional news and Annual report.

I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time by contacting [coordinator@friendswithoutborders.co.uk](mailto:coordinator@friendswithoutborders.co.uk)

## Gift Aid Certificate

- Donations from UK taxpayers are supplemented by a grant from the treasury.
- Our Treasurer will make the claim, the only thing needed for the donor is their address and signature below that they are paying income tax.

I am a UK taxpayer paying tax at least equivalent to this claim and claim Gift Aid on this and future donations to Friends Without Borders. I have given my address above and understand this information will be kept by Friends Without Borders for six years, from the date of my last donation.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_



## FRIENDS WITHOUT BORDERS

We are a completely independent charity which has served asylum seekers and refugees in Portsmouth for the last 28 years.

We have no Government contracts  
and rely entirely for support on the contributions of local people.

See our website for more information- [friendswithoutborders.org.uk](http://friendswithoutborders.org.uk)

### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

#### Become A Supporter

email: [chair@friendswithoutborders.co.uk](mailto:chair@friendswithoutborders.co.uk)  
and we'll send you an occasional newsletter.

#### Give Money For Grants

Asylum seekers still only get £39.63 a week enough to live  
any small emergency becomes a crisis.

#### Set Up A Standing Order

One of our strengths is a network of local supporters who pay small  
(whatever you like but £5 to £25 is typical) amounts each month.

Giving us staying power.

Friends Without Borders bank account is with Lloyds Bank.  
Sort Code- 30-98-97. Account number: 59923463.

#### Remember to add Gift Aid

Gift Aid adds 25p to every £1 you give, so anybody  
who pays income tax and donates should sign the form provided.

#### Leave a Legacy

Legacies enable us to plan for the future. They have helped us to run our drop in  
at which we see typically around 20 refugees requiring casework each week  
as well as many who come for a coffee and sandwich, destitution money, a chat  
or English lessons to name but a few activities.

#### Volunteer Yourself

Volunteering can be extremely rewarding. So if you would like to join us, whatever your  
availability please contact [Chair@friendswithoutborders.org.uk](mailto:Chair@friendswithoutborders.org.uk)  
FWB always needs willing volunteers and we have a variety of jobs and tasks to suit most  
people.

**For those who have supported us in the past we want to thank you  
for all your contributions!**