



**WELCOME
CHURCHES**

NO REFUGEE ALONE

Annual Review

2022-2023

Our Vision

Welcome Churches' vision is for every refugee to be welcomed by the local Church.

There is a clear Biblical call to Christians to *Welcome the Stranger* in our midst. No matter where a church community is in the UK, we have the opportunity and responsibility to welcome those seeking refuge on our doorsteps. Welcome Churches exists to equip Christians across the country to offer a 'Welcome' to all those arriving who have been displaced.

Before reaching the UK, the majority of refugees are likely to have experienced severe trauma, loss and distress. It is vital that when they arrive in their new home, people are welcomed with love and care. Sadly many seeking refuge in the UK will not experience a warm welcome. Often extremely isolated and unsure of how to access help, refugees and people seeking asylum often experience further challenges when they arrive in the UK, hampering their efforts to rebuild their lives.

The local Church has many things that other organisations do not have, with a unique reach and capacity. In every town and city, churches are ready-made communities with people from different backgrounds and walks of life and many activities that can help refugees settle in a new location. Increasingly, refugees and people seeking asylum are being placed within local communities at very short notice and churches are needing to respond to help welcome those seeking refuge who have unexpectedly arrived near them.



AT WELCOME CHURCHES, WE HELP CHURCHES REACH OUT AND SUPPORT REFUGEES BY PROVIDING THEM WITH TRAINING, TOOLS, AND EXPERTISE: EQUIPPING THEM TO CARE PRACTICALLY FOR REFUGEES AND HELP THEM FEEL AT HOME IN A NEW COMMUNITY.



April 2022 to March 2023 was another year of opportunities and growth for Welcome Churches as we saw more people arriving in the UK seeking refuge in a number of ways. Throughout the year, we saw over 18,000 people being welcomed by their local church in a variety of ways. Through our work supporting newly-arrivals from Hong Kong, Afghanistan, Ukraine and many other nations seeking asylum in the UK we have been able to develop a range of resources for local churches to serve these communities. The Welcome Course, our wellbeing videos, Friendship Festivals, the launch of Welcome Homes, our first Welcome Conference and our new 'Find Your Welcome' website are just some of the achievements we have been most proud of over the past year. With over 1000 churches now in our Welcome Network, our investment into our online referral system this year means that many more refugees and people seeking asylum will easily be able to receive a 'Welcome' in the coming years as well. As people are welcomed by churches in our Network, they are helped in their spiritual journey too with churches running groups for those who are enquiring about the Christian faith and those who are already followers of Jesus and want to grow in their discipleship.

The nature of working with refugees and people seeking asylum means that local churches and communities need to be ready to respond to rapidly changing circumstances. The way that people arrive in the UK seeking refuge, and how they are supported upon arrival, has changed significantly in recent years. The war in Ukraine from February 2022 is just one example of this, and we have had the privilege of supporting 190 individuals as they have sought to welcome those fleeing the Ukrainian war in the UK, and churches in our Network distributed over 4,000 Bibles and scripture-based booklets to those arriving from Ukraine. We have also sought to mobilise churches to welcome those being accommodated in hotels across the UK – particularly people from Afghanistan in 'bridging' hotels and people seeking asylum living in hotels as well. It has been a privilege to support over 50 churches to welcome approximately 5,000 people living in hotels throughout the year as well as many others living in other accommodation in local communities.

The landscape for refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK continues to be a challenging one. Displaced people are now being housed in a whole range of communities across the UK, and it is no longer just multicultural city centres where people are housed. The need for local churches and communities to proactively say 'welcome' to all those arriving is arguably more important now than it has ever been.

Local churches often find themselves bridging the divide between the local community and refugee communities. This has been most obvious this year through the growth in protests outside hotels accommodating people seeking asylum. It has been a privilege to support local churches in these situations – who are acting in a key advocacy role to their wider communities to show compassion and mercy to all those arriving here. The Refugee Prayer Hour which we continue to host throughout the year is an important moment for us to continue to commit the injustices and needs we see our refugee neighbours face

We are also seeing our local churches being blessed through the refugee communities they are serving. This was most obvious at our first Welcome Conference in November 2022 where we sought to celebrate the contribution that refugees are making to local church life. As we welcome the nations to belong in our communities and our churches, we are all learning more about who our God is – the God of the nations – and can more fully reflect him to the communities we serve.

We are so proud of all that God has done through Welcome Churches this year. We continue to look to him for his provision, and to follow his lead to see every refugee welcomed by the local Church.

Sue Emily

Sue Butler and Emily Shepherd
Joint CEOs

Our Values



WELCOME

Christians are called to love and welcome the stranger, whatever their cultural background. Every church has the privilege and opportunity to welcome and care for refugees and people seeking asylum in some way.



EMPOWERMENT

Refugees are resilient and creative. We want refugees to grow in their gifting and leadership and churches to benefit from their unique contribution.



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Churches are well placed to provide community and care for those who have lost homes and family and are recovering from trauma.



RELATIONSHIP

We value relationships with other organisations, networks and individuals. We help churches to connect relationally with partners in their own communities to provide integrated support for refugees.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Refugees arriving in the UK should have the freedom and right to explore faith without fear of intimidation or persecution. Churches should be well equipped to help them.



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Churches are well placed to provide community and care for those who have lost homes and family and are recovering from trauma.

Our Purposes and Activities

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

1. The promotion of social inclusion among people who are refugees or seeking asylum who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position.
2. The advancement of the Christian faith in such ways as the Charity Trustees may from time to time decide.

WE CARRY THESE OUT BY:

1. Developing and delivering a range of training and tools to enable churches to welcome and support newly arrived refugees and people seeking asylum.
2. Helping refugees connect quickly to one of the churches in our network via the Welcome Network online platform.
3. Establishing and supporting Welcome Boxes projects in churches around the country, including running a bespoke online referral management system for Welcome Boxes projects.
4. Providing ongoing support, capacity building and training to churches working with refugees and people seeking asylum to aid social inclusion.
5. Developing and providing training and resources to churches for refugees who want to explore the Christian faith.
6. Assist churches to include refugees in all aspects of church life.

OUR STRATEGY AND ACTIVITIES

Our activities included:

1. Educating churches and other parties about the need to welcome and support refugees and people seeking asylum arriving in their communities,
2. Providing training, resources and ongoing support to churches to effectively welcome and support the integration of refugees and people seeking asylum, and
3. Networking churches together across the UK who are welcoming refugees and enabling refugees to connect with them.



HOW WAS THIS ACHIEVED?

At the heart of our work is the **Welcome Network**, a growing nationwide network of refugee-welcoming churches. These are churches that are seeking ways to support refugees and people seeking asylum that are arriving in their communities. Churches are included on our interactive map that allows refugees, agencies, churches and individuals to find a welcoming, local church for any refugee or person seeking asylum moving into a new area.

Welcome Boxes is run by churches in their local communities in partnership with Welcome Churches. Through Welcome Boxes, we train between one to three Coordinators so they can launch and run the project successfully. Trained volunteers understand the needs of refugees, visit them in their homes with a small box of practical items and support their integration into their new community.

Our **UKHK** project focuses on welcoming British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa holders from Hong Kong who recently moved to the UK. The project

connects people from Hong Kong with local churches, designs materials to provide BN(O) Hongkongers information about life and cultures in the UK, and supports and trains local churches to understand the needs of the incoming Hongkongers.

The **FindYourWelcome.org** website was launched to amalgamate information previously held under the Afghan Welcome and Ukraine Welcome initiatives. Find Your Welcome is a refugee-facing website, translated into numerous languages to enable new arrivals to receive information on life in the UK and to connect with local people through a local church referral.

Welcome Homes seeks to practically respond to the huge need for accommodation for those seeking refuge in the UK. The programme consists of two lines of support: connecting refugees with **hosts for short-term** accommodation in spare rooms and connecting refugees with socially minded landlords to provide **long-term** and affordable housing solutions.

Project Updates



BEFORE I FOUND THE CHURCH, I WAS REALLY STRUGGLING. ALL MY FAMILY WAS GONE. I FELT SO LONELY AND LOST. I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I VISITED MY CHURCH; I FELT SO WELCOME AND I FOUND A NEW LIFE. I WAS REALLY ENCOURAGED, ESPECIALLY WHEN PEOPLE PRAYED FOR ME. I HAD LOST MY WHOLE FAMILY, BUT WITH MY CHURCH I HAVE FOUND A NEW HOME AND A NEW FAMILY.'

Abbas – Kurdish Refugee



The Welcome Network

Our Welcome Network identifies churches around the UK who are committed to welcoming refugees.



As part of the Welcome Network, churches are:

- Visible on the Network map to other churches, organisations and refugees who want to find a welcoming church and community.
- Able to receive a log-in to access the Network – to view and manage any referrals of refugees who want to connect with their local church.
- Able to access the Resources Hubs in the Network which includes training, videos and resources for their church to be better equipped to welcome refugees.
- Able to receive regular emails about our latest news, training and new additions to the resources.
- Able to contact a Regional Coordinator about developing their church's work with refugees.

Year's achievements for the Welcome Network:

- This past financial year saw over 200 new churches join the Welcome Network helping us reach the significant milestone of over 1,000 churches in the Network!
- We partnered with the Bible Society to supply over 4,000 free Bibles for adults and children and the Beyond Disaster booklet in Ukrainian and Russian through our Network churches.
- We released the 'Looking after myself' video as part of our Trauma Awareness series made available in Ukrainian, Russian, Farsi, Arabic and Spanish.

- We appointed a Northern Ireland Church Engagement Officer in April 2022. This has led to a great expansion of our work there and a very significant response from churches in Northern Ireland. By the end of March 2023, 54 new churches in Northern Ireland had joined our Welcome Network.
- We developed new partnerships with Mears Northern Ireland, Mears Scotland, and

SBHL Hotels group through our partnership with London City Mission. We have seen real growth in our work connecting churches with both 'bridging' hotels accommodating Afghans and hotels housing people seeking asylum, with around 90 hotels supported by Network churches.

- We trained 1,087 new volunteers to help welcome refugees in their local communities.

SPOTLIGHT STORIES:

Ebu's Story

"I was born in Turkey and lived there all my life until my family moved to Iran 5 years ago. During this time, my father, who was previously a Muslim theologian, converted to Christianity after witnessing a powerful act of forgiveness. Inspired by my Father, I explored Christianity and eventually found my own faith. Becoming Christian, however, made my life in Iran very difficult- I faced many struggles as a result. As a family, we decided to try to immigrate to the UK in search of more religious freedom.



I faced many obstacles, including some failed attempts to cross by boat. I had difficulties with the authorities- but I was determined to get to the UK. Eventually my determination won out and I successfully crossed by boat into the UK.

I have found my life here to be both challenging and rewarding. I have challenged myself to learn English and spend a lot of time at the gym focusing on my physical fitness. I find both of these things rewarding, but overall I find life here to be quite lonely. It is difficult to establish new friendships.

I have found comfort in my church community. When I first arrived I connected with a church in Leicester- the people there were very kind and offered me their friendship.

It is very difficult being a refugee or someone seeking asylum. It is very important that there are clear and easy-to-navigate legal channels for immigrants.

It is also important to remember that we are human and need friendship and community – it is very easy to become very isolated and lonely as a refugee.

Later, I moved onto Ashton and there connected with another church- they were very supportive and again, my connection to them was key in battling loneliness. I find the people in my church to be very kind- they invite me into their home and give me a sense of belonging."

Northgate Church Chester

We were so thankful when we were introduced to Welcome Churches. Having an instant community of twelve Iranian asylum seekers join the church in one go, we felt rather overwhelmed. Welcome Churches has proven to be a rich resource for Northgate Church – especially in those early days. Being part of the Welcome Network was nothing short of miraculous. It linked two Iranian cousins in Chester, neither of whom knew that each other was a Christian – yet alone posted to the same city! The Welcome Churches team have been supportive when we've needed guidance. It is a valuable source of information when people seeking asylum get dispersed around the country. I'd urge any church involved with the asylum or refugee communities to join the Welcome Network.

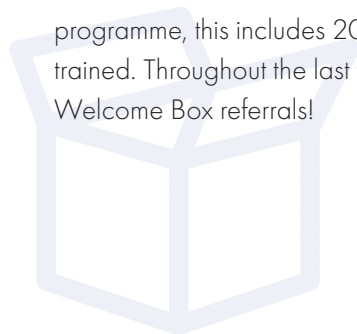
Welcome Boxes

Welcome Boxes is run by churches in their local communities in partnership with Welcome Churches.

Through Welcome Boxes, we train between one and three Coordinators so they can launch and run the project successfully. Trained volunteers understand the needs of refugees, visit them in their homes with a small box of practical items, and support their integration into their new community. The box contains new items such as toiletries, toothbrushes, stationery, gloves, hats and small toys. It might also contain a map of the local area, leaflets advertising local services and groups, and a welcome card from the person who made the box. Items are donated or purchased by members of the church.



In the last 12 months, 43 churches within the Welcome Network were running the Welcome Boxes programme, this includes 20 new churches recently trained. Throughout the last year we received 470 Welcome Box referrals!



SPOTLIGHT STORY:

Wakefield Baptist Church Church story

At Wakefield Baptist Church we run a weekly Bible Study (in English and Farsi), offering support and discipleship for between 25 and 50 asylum seekers and refugees. Many of them also choose to worship with us on Sundays. Most of those attending are recent arrivals in the UK and in either hostel or hotel accommodation, waiting to be transferred to asylum housing.

By providing a safe space where they feel welcome, find practical help and begin to make new friends, we are addressing some of those initial anxieties at being in a new place where they don't know the people, language or customs. We enable them to cook Persian food and eat together on a regular basis. Sunday services are mainly in English, but normally include Farsi scriptures on PPT and a song in Farsi. As a congregation we are learning to be multicultural – we also have Nigerians, Moldovans and Pakistani in the room!

It's a joy to watch new arrivals gradually settle in and relax. For some this takes longer than others, but it's always a good sign when we find someone is looking for a way to give back – whether it be by cooking Persian food, helping with little jobs around the building or volunteering at our twice-weekly homeless drop-in.

Sadly, sooner or later they are moved on to other cities. This second transition can be hard for some people, but thanks to Welcome Churches we are normally able to link them up with another church where they will find welcome and support. However, many churches are unable to resource Bible study in Farsi so we are finding that a number of those who move on choose to join us on Wednesday evenings for Farsi worship and Bible study via Zoom. We can still offer fellowship but sadly it's not yet possible to share Persian food online!

Supporting Hotels

Through our Welcome Network, we have mobilised and equipped churches across the UK to respond to the displacement crises of the last year. The largest groups able to access formal refugee resettlement programmes this year have been Afghans and Ukrainians.

As increasing numbers of hotels were being allocated as accommodation for people seeking asylum and for Afghan refugees, we developed resources to help churches to expand their support to these contexts. Our Church Engagement team has worked to broker relationships between churches and key stakeholders, and equip churches to complement the work of other organisations in the sector. Our resources include:

- a model Memorandum of Understanding;
- model risk assessments for activities run in hotels, and those run for hotel residents in church premises; and
- suggested activities with things to consider. These are available in our new Hotels resource hub.

We also held Hotels Connect meetings – an opportunity for churches supporting in hotels to come together, share good practice and problem-solve together.

- Hotels training (including Afghan and hotels for people seeking asylum): 9 pieces of training
- Number of volunteers trained: 440+
- Number of hotels supported: 60+

We developed 3 pieces of training specific to welcoming Afghans, with 25 attendees: Welcoming Afghans (hotels), Welcoming Afghans into your local community, and Afghan Connect meetings.

As the work with hotels increased, we developed better working relationships with accommodation providers, leading to referrals being made into our Welcome Network by those providers in some areas of the UK. In London, we have partnered with London City Mission and the SBHL group to link London churches with hotels housing people seeking asylum, resulting in supporting over 1500 residents by the end of March 2023.



9

Hotel training (including Afghan and hotels for people seeking asylum).



440+

volunteers given specialist training.



60+

Hotels supported.

WORKING WITH HOTELS HAS REALLY HELPED US TO LOOK OUTSIDE THE FOUR WALLS OF THE BUILDING. OVER 70% OF THE CHURCH ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING AFGHAN FAMILIES IN THE LOCAL HOTELS.

Andy, Christ First Church, Watford



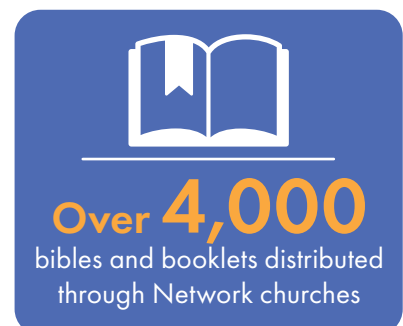
Welcoming Ukrainians

Churches responded quickly to the arrival of Ukrainians through government resettlement schemes.

We delivered 3 different types of training sessions: information sessions for church leaders; Ukraine Welcome training primarily for people who were hosting or planning to host Ukrainians; and Ukraine Connect meetings, where hosts across the UK could connect with each other to discuss challenges and share what was working well. Out of these connect meetings, we developed information resources about Ukraine culture and established our Ukraine Resource Hub. We also partnered with a psychologist who delivered resilience training for those hosting Ukrainians;

and for Ukrainians themselves, with translation. These recordings were also made available via our Ukraine Resource hub.

We also distributed bibles and booklets that the Bible Society provided to churches in the Welcome Network to give to Ukrainian Guests and new Ukrainian friends. From April to June 2022 we distributed over 1624 bibles, 1445 children's bibles and 834 copies of Beyond Disaster, a booklet providing spiritual first aid to people who've been affected by tragedy.



UKHK

UKHK is our programme that established a network of churches and organisations that work together and support each other in welcoming Hong Kongers.

This includes training and provision of information and support to Hong Kongers and churches alike, connecting Hong Kongers and local churches, and encouraging government and civil society more broadly to welcome new arrivals.

Like the Welcome Network, UKHK provides a web platform to connect people from Hong Kong and the UK churches. New arrivals from Hong Kong can easily find a 'Hong Kong Ready Church' in their neighbourhood through the UKHK National Map.



IT IS SO GREAT TO HAVE AN EVENT IN THE UK THAT WAS ESPECIALLY ORGANISED FOR PEOPLE FROM HONG KONG. THIS WAS SUCH A COMMUNITY-WIDE PARTY WHERE WE COULD MEET MANY HONG KONG PEOPLE, TRY THE FOOD WE MISSED AND PLAY GAMES.

Grace, Thatcham Baptist Church

FRIENDSHIP FESTIVALS

From May 2022 – June 2023, UKHK organised Friendship Festivals in 17 cities across the UK from Glasgow to Belfast to Cardiff and beyond, with the aim of gathering the local community to celebrate both Hong Kong and UK culture and build new friendships.



Each festival worked together with different churches, national and regional charities, Hongkonger civic groups, strategic migration partnerships and local councils. We also partnered with essential local services like the police, the NHS, and the fire service.

The Friendship Festivals welcomed around 14,538 visitors in total from Hong Kong and other countries! Many Hongkongers volunteered to provide games, activities, snacks and drinks or performances, and introduced newcomers to different kinds of support available to them.

The Festivals were a huge success in helping new arrivals to build new ties within and beyond their immediate communities, signposting them to relevant support services and resources, and connecting them with local churches. We were able to hand out over 30,000 copies of our bilingual Welcome Magazine. And, most importantly, everyone had great fun!



SPOTLIGHT QUOTE

Friendship Festival Partner:

"It was a fantastic experience preparing the event, there was strong support from the local community. The effort and commitment made by the Hong Kong community has also made such a positive difference in the city".

Friendship Festival Visitor:

One BN(O) visa holder said, *"I've not been able to get back to Hong Kong to see my family for nearly 950 days, so the sight of faces that looked like my family and hearing Cantonese around me was an emotional experience."*

One family arrived in Reading three days before the Reading Friendship Festival, not knowing anyone, staying in rented Airbnb and without jobs. We were able to point them towards the Migrant Help stall and encouraged them to attend our Skills to Work webinars.

An attendee of the West Midlands Friendship Festival shared that he met and built a friendship with a BNO holder who migrated to Coventry; and he was so thankful that the staff from Coventry Council booth had provided him with a lot of useful information about the services they offered, and suggestions on how to settle down in the UK. He agreed that the Friendship Festival has helped Hong Kong families develop genuine friendships with local British families, grow in their cultural confidence, feel welcome in the UK, and access services and volunteering. He said he would definitely recommend the UKHK Friendship Festivals to his friends.

An elderly attendee at the Sheffield Friendship Festival said that he was able to make new friends and broaden his social circle through the event, and got to know the local community better. He also felt valued by the welcoming speech of the Lord Mayor.

THE WELCOME COURSE



This past year the Welcome Course has been run 74 times and welcomed 1,419 attendees. The course is a tool designed to bridge the relational gap between new arrivals and the local community. It can be hosted by churches and attendees can develop English conversational skills and confidence, build friendships, learn about British culture, be signposted to services, and share their knowledge of their own culture. Six short professionally-produced videos provide light-hearted inspirational conversation and discussion starters. We have various translations of the course available.

SPOTLIGHT QUOTE

Running the Welcome Course at a church in Glasgow:

“We have built great friendships from hosting the Welcome Course. We started an English conversation cafe every Tuesday after the course ended and we now have people from other countries such as Ukraine joining the weekly cafe! Some Hong Kong participants have settled in our church as well and now they even bring their family and friends to help with church activities and community services.”



WE HAVE BUILT GREAT FRIENDSHIPS FROM HOSTING THE WELCOME COURSE.

THE WELCOME MAGAZINE

At the festivals we were able to distribute 34,877 Welcome Magazines.



The Welcome Magazine was produced as a bilingual resource to help primary-aged children arriving in the UK from Hong Kong feel welcome and learn more about British culture, including fun facts about life in the UK and signposting to local services and



groups to further assist the children's integration. In October 2022, we published the second edition of the Welcome Magazine with more information on the devolved nations and an update on the British Monarchy with King Charles' accession to the throne following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

EVERY CHILD WELCOME WEBINARS

The inspirational and practical Every Child Welcome national online event enables parents to work well with schools for the benefit of BNO children, helping families to understand the UK education system and integrate into our school communities. We designed the event in collaboration with recently arrived Hong Kong families, teachers, children and cross cultural education experts. Over the last year we hosted 135 attendees to our Every Child Welcome Webinars!



SKILLS TO WORK WEBINARS

Our Skills-to-Work initiative provided a series of webinars on job opportunities in the tech and data industry, writing CVs, cover letters, preparing for job interviews, finding jobs and networking on social media platforms, and on starting businesses in the UK. This series prepared BN(O) visa holders in different stages of looking for jobs, and encouraged them to ask questions and get help in areas needed. We hosted over 1,000 attendees within the last year.

WELLBEING VIDEOS

As shown in recent surveys, BN(O) status holders in the UK have a low mental health. We launched the Wellbeing Project, which is a series of 3 videos. 'Looking after myself' helps BN(O) visa holders to identify stresses that may have developed when they migrate to the UK, the impact these stresses can have on their everyday lives and ongoing wellbeing, and to suggest simple and practical steps individuals can take to look after their own mental health. Over the last year the videos have been viewed over 4,000 times! The videos can either be watched or with family/ friends to enable a conversation of things that are difficult in

the individual's life. We have also included a guide on how to use these videos in Session 4: Wellbeing of the Welcome Course.

YOUTH VIDEOS

The "Welcome to the UK: Youth" program provides resources at two levels: an online platform with 3 fun videos giving tips on understanding the British culture and school life, as well as making friends with people from different cultural backgrounds to engage young people at an individual level; and a youth group resources to help young people to integrate and interact with other young people their age from different backgrounds. These resources encourage Hong Kong youths to make friends in the UK, explore their community and make the UK their home. They have proved both popular and useful as the videos were viewed over 4,500 times within the last year!





Welcome Homes

In January 2023 we launched the Welcome Homes project. Building on the work of the Hospitality Pledge to engage Christians with the idea of hospitality towards refugees and people seeking asylum, Welcome Homes seeks to practically respond to the huge need for accommodation for those seeking refuge in the UK.

Welcome Homes consists of two lines of support: connecting refugees with **hosts** for **short-term** accommodation in spare rooms and connecting refugees with socially minded **landlords** to provide **long-term** and affordable housing solutions.

For the hosting side of the project, Welcome Churches partnered with NACCOM (the No Accommodation Network) to develop an online platform of local hosting projects across the UK. Our online platform enables users to connect with a local hosting programme, who will provide training and organise a guest placement. In partnership with NACCOM (The No Accommodation Network) Welcome Homes connects hosts with a hosting scheme based on what they are able to offer and the need in their area.

We have developed a series of resources for landlords and tenants that were published in January 2023, including

In March 2023, through a successful partnership between Welcome Homes, Cheshire East Council and a compassionate landlord, a family in need were connected with a home to rent. The landlord felt burdened by the ongoing crises and wanted to offer some support to a refugee family who needed rental property in her area. A Ukrainian family moved into their new home in Macclesfield. We were overjoyed to receive a photo of the family on moving in day. The Welcome Homes team worked hard to gather local information to give to the tenants, signposting them to services. The team also sent the tenants a plant to celebrate their new home!

SPOTLIGHT STORY:

It was great to see the successful match of a refugee family with a Welcome Homes landlord. The landlord approached us after learning about Welcome Homes and our aim to connect compassionate homeowners with refugees in need. The landlord felt burdened by ongoing crises and wanted to offer some support to a refugee family who needed rental property in her area. We connected the landlord with her local council who were quick to take action. Through a successful partnership between Welcome Homes, Cheshire East Council and our compassionate landlord a family in need found a home to rent for a longer period of time.





6

languages now available:
*Arabic, Farsi, French, Pashto,
Spanish and Ukrainian.*



4000

visited the *Find Your
Welcome* online hub.



133

individuals requested
to be welcomed
through a local church.

WELCOME



Find Your Welcome

In November we launched Find Your Welcome, an online hub and newsletter service designed to provide refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants information about life in the UK.

The website also gives them the opportunity to connect them with local churches themselves, rather than having to wait for a caseworker to make a referral on their behalf. This project features a guide to living in the UK, a referral service, and a newsletter. The

information is currently available in 6 languages: Arabic, Farsi, French, Pashto, Spanish and Ukrainian. Within the last year the website has had over 4,000 visitors!

Overall we have seen an increase in self-referrals this year with

133 individuals requesting to be welcomed through a local church. Building platforms for self-referrals such as Find Your Welcome means that individuals don't have to wait for a caseworker to make a referral on their behalf.

The Welcome Conference

Welcome Churches hosted our first two day 'Welcome Conference' in November 2022.



We were delighted to be able to provide a safe space for refugee and non-refugee Christians to worship together, attend talks and participate in workshops, build new connections, share stories, and learn from one another at this unique event. Of our 183 attendees, we were delighted to be able to offer 100 free places (all costs paid, including an overnight hotel stay) for attendees from

a refugee background. Those in attendance included people from Iran, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Venezuela, Sudan, Portugal, Brazil, Hong Kong, Pakistan and Bangladesh. We were very grateful for the funding we received to be able to do this. Eight charities were also represented and set up information stands about their work to support refugees in the community.

Our three main stage speakers each had lived experience of forced displacement; it was wonderful to have these speakers share their experience and encourage others with their testimonies. Our main sessions and workshops covered topics including mental health and wellbeing, discipleship, intercultural churches, and how to share your story. All seminars and topics were aimed at delegates



from all backgrounds, and interpreting via a smartphone App was provided to everyone who requested it increase accessibility. Many of the refugee delegates also signed up to offer to help with interpreting.

The conference also included 'interview' slots, in which refugees shared their own story of coming to the UK and being welcomed by a local church; for

example Alex shared how he has now become a welcomer of new arrivals in the church community he joined. One attendee from a refugee background said of the conference: *"I learned that I'm not alone"*. A particular highlight of the conference was the multilingual worship led by Songs2Serve. One attendee commented: *"I particularly loved the worship times where I heard my Iranian friends*

singing like never before." It was really encouraging to see attendees worshipping in their own language. Another attendee reported that he met others from his home country who now live in a nearby town, and will be going to visit them to encourage them.

Achievements: Our Year In Review

APRIL 2022

Launched The Welcome Course for Hong Kongers



Partnered with Bible Society to supply free Bibles in Ukrainian and Russian to our Network churches

'Looking After Myself' video as part of our Trauma Awareness series made available in Ukrainian, Russian, Farsi, Arabic and Spanish



483

Over 483 churches and individuals attended Ukraine Welcomer training since March

Appointed a Northern Ireland Church Engagement Officer



MAY 2022

1000th church joined our Welcome Network



UKHK release Welcome Magazine to introduce Hong Kong children to life in the UK

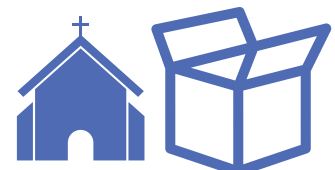
JUNE 2022

Refugee Sunday



4 Friendship festivals run (in addition to 4 in May)

Trained 1st Welcome Boxes Church in Northern Ireland



JULY 2022



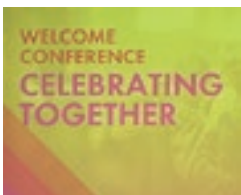
Through our partnership with Bible Society we provided 3,903 Ukrainian and Russian Bibles, Children's Bibles and Beyond Disaster trauma booklet to churches in our Network

AUGUST 2022

1 year on from Afghan evacuation



NOVEMBER 2022



The Welcome Conference

Launched the Find Your Welcome programme



DECEMBER 2022



Released the *Refugee King* animated video which outlined the parallels between the Christmas story and modern stories of forced displacement

JANUARY 2023

Launched the Welcome Homes Program



FEBRUARY 2023



The Year Ahead

2022

4



The long term change Welcome Churches wants to see is:

**Refugees thriving
in the UK**

**Refugees following
Jesus**

**Refugees fully
involved in Churches**

Our strategic priorities for 2023-24 are:

TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES WELCOMED IN THE UK

We will increase referrals through the Welcome Network (including Welcome Boxes) and ensure churches are actively welcoming those referred. Our goal is 1000 referrals, including 500 self referrals and 575 Welcome Boxes referrals, and 8000 people reached through hotels work.

We will actively grow partnerships with the Home Office commissioned housing providers to increase their referrals to Welcome Churches by local accommodation managers and develop our direct messaging to asylum seekers accommodated.

We will inspire, train and introduce churches into hotels and other accommodation for people seeking asylum and empower churches to become self-sustaining in their relationships with housing providers and other NGOs locally.

TO CONTINUE TO GROW THE WELCOME NETWORK IN EACH REGION

Our goal is to grow the Welcome Network to 1500 churches with 80 churches trained as Welcome Plus churches by March 2024. Welcome Plus includes historic Welcome Boxes churches, plus other churches

proactively welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum in their local community across a range of different types of accommodation.

To do this will communicate to churches the ongoing need to continue to welcome and support all refugees, via networks, denominations, conferences, media. We will research and engage with churches in key towns and cities to join the Network and then also run Welcome Boxes or Welcome Holidays or to support hotels.

We want to develop Network News emails to support and further engage meaningfully with churches in the Network and rework the Welcome Boxes model to make it accessible for churches to use in hotels, and to make it more sustainable for all churches.

TO GROW OUR REFUGEE-FACING WORK

We will fully develop and brand our refugee facing website **findyourwelcome.org** adding videos and resources and a clear pathway for refugees to self-refer to our Welcome Network.

We will advertise Find Your Welcome widely amongst churches so they can encourage refugees they know to engage with resources and opportunities in their language and understand how to refer others to the Network.

We will ensure that Find Your Welcome is widely used, not just by refugees in our Network churches, but also amongst refugees and asylum seekers in hotels and other accommodation, and for other providers to use!

TO IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND STORYTELLING

We will increase communication of the impact the Welcome Churches is having across the UK with supporters, sharing more stories of welcomes and the difference it makes to refugees and church communities.

TO CONTINUE TO SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORT AND ADMINISTER THE UKHK PROJECTS

We will continue to provide oversight and resourcing to the UKHK project and will seek to maintain our current support of those Hong Kong BN(O) visa holders. We will maintain and build our Hong Kong network and referral system. We will build on Wellbeing and Youth videos, Friendship Festivals, the Welcome Course and Welcome Magazine projects, giving HK BN(O) visa holders the best possible chance of a positive integration into this country.

TO GROW THE WELCOME HOMES PROGRAMME, CONTINUING TO CONNECT COMPASSIONATE HOMEOWNERS WITH REFUGEES IN NEED

We will develop a consistent flow of host referrals through our website, attracting benevolent landlords and linking them with tenants. We will refine the process of landlord-tenant relations and our role as 'connectors'. We will seek to gain more public attention for Welcome Homes, through regular webinars and social media content. We will grow new and existing partnerships with housing organisations and councils across the UK.

TO GROW OUR PARTNERSHIPS

We will continue to develop our partnerships with a variety of organisations to achieve our objectives and best serve the UK Church and people seeking refuge and safety in the UK. This will help us to develop best practice, and increase our learning and engagement across the Christian and refugee communities.

Financial Review

2022-2023

Income for the year was £472,558 (2022: £1,332,721).

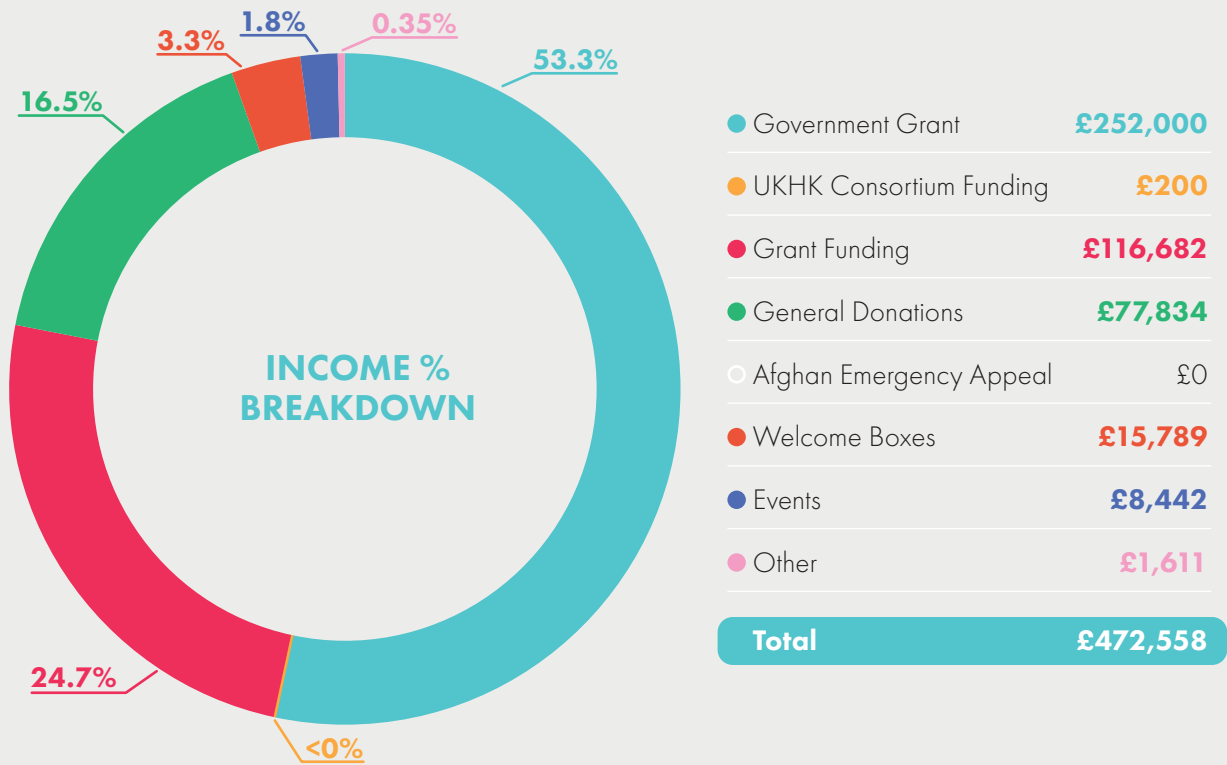
We are immensely grateful to our funders, supporters, and partners for the trust and generosity that they continue to show us. It is their

ongoing support that enables us to work alongside the UK Church to develop innovative programmes that provide the best possible

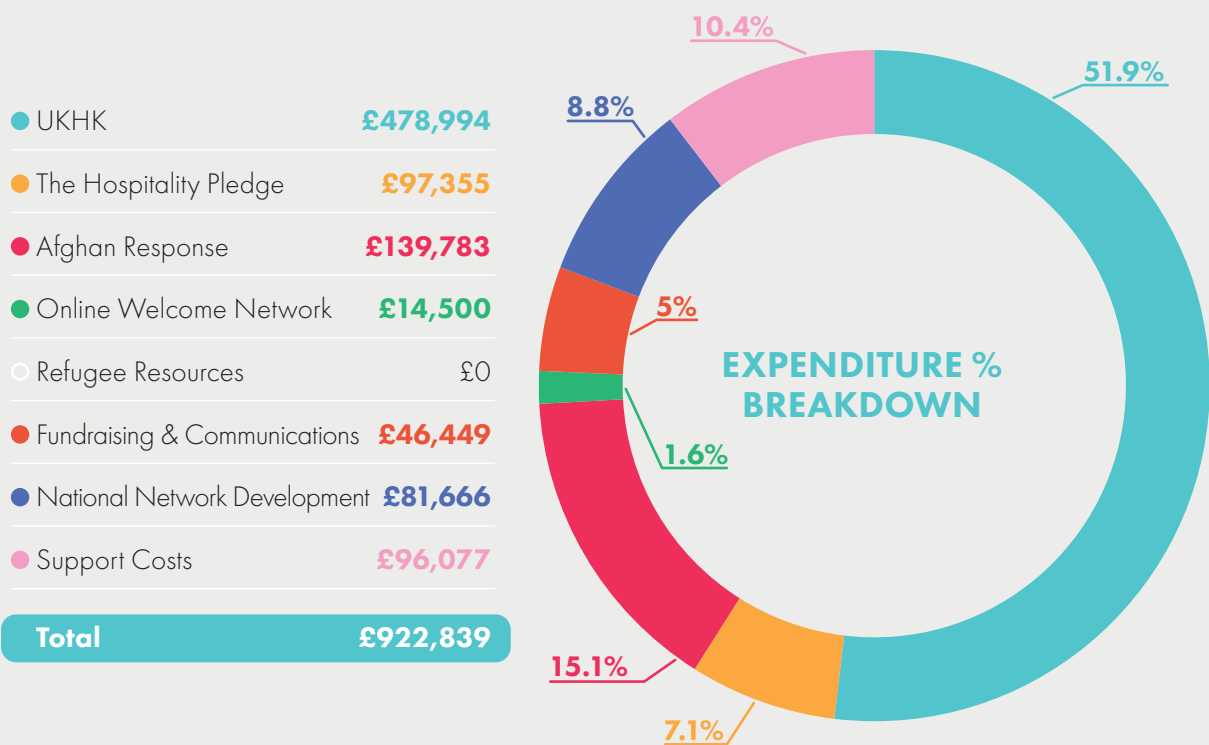
support to refugees as they rebuild their lives.



WELCOME CHURCHES INCOME 2022-23



WELCOME CHURCHES EXPENDITURE 2022-23





WELCOME CHURCHES

NO REFUGEE ALONE

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REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1177344