



IMPACT REPORT: 2023-24



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WELCOME FROM OUR CEO

The last 12 months have been some of the busiest we have ever seen at Upbeat Communities. We have supported 927 refugees and asylum seekers from our Integration Hub in the centre of Derby this financial year, an increase of 304 valuable individuals from last year. Each person has fled unimaginable circumstances and arrives with their own needs, from help registering with a GP, to a place to stay so they can avoid sleeping on the street. I have been so inspired by the work of our dedicated team of staff, volunteers and trustees in responding to the diverse range of needs we encounter each day.

UNHCR figures for 2024 suggest there are 117 million forcibly displaced people globally, equating to more than 1 in every 69 people on Earth. Whilst these figures are hard to comprehend, Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees highlights that ‘Behind these stark and rising numbers lie countless human tragedies’.

In our efforts to continue to see and respond to each person’s unique situation, we have welcomed several new staff members to our team, bringing their expertise and lived experiences of the UK immigration system to serve our community. Our volunteer team, too, has grown immensely, meaning we have been able to support more people, visit more new arrivals with Welcome Boxes, and provide more meals in the great kitchen space provided by our venue.

A second year of our Thriving Places project has enabled us to regularly assess and respond to needs; our resettlement team has continued to welcome new arrivals rebuilding their lives in Lincolnshire; and our two social enterprises have continued to thrive, offering life-giving employment for the benefit of refugees in our city. I hope you enjoy reading about all this and more. Thank you for joining us on the journey!



Andrew Jackson
Chief Executive



WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Thank you for joining us to reflect on the impact of Upbeat Communities across another year of great need for those rebuilding their lives in Derby. The global landscape of 2023/24 has been marked by continued conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, directly increasing demand for Upbeat's services in the East Midlands. While these conflicts persist despite political pressure, refugees and asylum seekers continue to seek safety through established channels. We welcomed the government's decision to abandon the Rwanda policy in July 2024 and hope for a more humanitarian approach to asylum moving forward.

Upbeat Communities has strengthened its influence across Derby through partnerships with the New Arrivals Alliance, involvement in Refugee Week, and advocacy for Derby City Council to achieve Local Authority of Sanctuary status.

2023/24 marked a year of strategic growth for Upbeat, building on our post-Covid recovery. The dedication of our staff, volunteers, and trustees has been instrumental in establishing Upbeat as a regional leader. Our core mission remains focused on building thriving communities where refugees can fully contribute and embrace opportunities. Recent efforts to highlight individual participant feedback have added depth to our understanding of our impact.

We're looking to the future by extending our strategic planning to a 10-15 year horizon as our financial stability has improved. Our staff team grew to 46 members by year-end, with continued emphasis on mental health and wellbeing.

Service delivery has remained centered at our Integration Hub in Derby city centre, where spaces are continuously adapted to meet growing needs. The Integration Hub saw a remarkable 45% increase in participation during 2023/24. Our projects include Welcome Boxes, ESOL programs, 1-to-1 support, Upbeat Women, emergency accommodation through Host Derby, lunch provision, and resettlement schemes across Derbyshire & Lincolnshire, including support for the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We expect another year of increased numbers of people accessing our support; it is our privilege to remain a light for those who have arrived from very dark places.



Dave Priestley
Chair of Trustees

WHO WE ARE

Upbeat Communities has been supporting those seeking sanctuary since 2005. The organisation was founded in response to the needs of refugees arriving in the UK and the stories they shared of their lives and their journeys. Through building relationships with those from refugee communities we were able to identify their needs and the best ways to respond.

We believe that making those who are fleeing war, persecution, and conflict feel welcome will give the best possible chance of integration, support and opportunities to rebuild their lives. One of the best resources a refugee can have to help them settle in their new home is a good social network. Friendships and connectedness can help overcome the many challenges faced by those seeking refuge.

With this aim, we want to help connect refugees into community so that they can thrive as they rebuild their lives.

OUR VISION

To see positive thriving communities where every refugee can contribute and make the most of opportunities.

OUR MISSION

To empower refugees to thrive as they rebuild their lives.

OUR ETHOS

Upbeat Communities' Christian ethos is the driving force behind why we were started and the basis for the values that we hold as a charity. Jesus's primary message was to 'love your neighbour as you love yourselves'. We seek to embody this by showing love and compassion to refugees who have been displaced by war, conflict or persecution.

We support asylum seekers and refugees from all faiths or none and our staff team and volunteers are made up of people from many different faith backgrounds.



OUR VALUES

We work to **WELCOME**

We want to show a warm welcome to all those we meet, offering friendship, hospitality and acceptance at all times.

We create **COMMUNITY**

Our desire is to see genuine belonging and family established between those seeking sanctuary and local people, so that local communities might be diverse and inclusive.

We are inspired to act with **INTEGRITY**

In knowing the unconditional positive value placed on each of us, we want to live and work with honesty, humility, and transparency, and by honouring others.

We exist to **EMPOWER**

Our hope is every person we engage with recognises and embraces their potential, and is encouraged and equipped to achieve it.

We are committed to **CREATIVITY**

We seek to pioneer creative and innovative responses to the needs of those we work with, reflecting the unique creativity we each possess.

We run on **RELATIONSHIPS**

We are people-centred and are dedicated to loving and caring for each other with dignity, equality, respect, openness and trust.

We are proud to be **PROFESSIONAL**

We want give our best to all we do, and are committed to finding ways we can continually improve as an organisation.

We have **COMPASSION** at our core

At the heart of everything we do is the desire to see the love of God extended to all those we work with, communicated with warmth, kindness, and sensitivity.



OUR PROJECTS

Upbeat Communities works across the East Midlands supporting the welcome and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. We currently support over a thousand people a year through a range of projects and service provision, including:



daily
English
classes



free
lunches



social
activities
and trips



volunteering
opportunities



move on
support for
new refugees



cultural
orientation
sessions



peer
support
groups

1:1

one to one
advice and
guidance



befriending



activities
for kids &
youth

In addition to this work, we are commissioned to provide integration support for refugees arriving in Derbyshire and Lincolnshire through the government's resettlement schemes. This involves advice and support to families around housing, schooling, health, benefits, volunteering and employment.



We also run a hosting scheme that provides emergency accommodation for destitute asylum seekers and refugees who have been made homeless. Since 2022, we have supported Derbyshire County Council with Homes For Ukraine, providing rematching support for Ukrainian guests who need to find new host placements.

OUR 4 FOCUSES

We want our vision to be realised through four key 'pillars', into which our project work falls:

1

WELCOME

3

EMPOWERMENT

2

INTEGRATION

4

AWARENESS

1

Welcome is at the heart of who we are as a charity – we believe a good welcome is the first step towards empowerment and integration for those seeking asylum. Part of this work includes our **Welcome Boxes** project, where trained volunteers visit newly arrived families and individuals referred to us from various organisations across Derby.

“It was a warm welcome and massive love shown to me when I arrived which I will never forget. I now have a family in Upbeat Communities where I feel so much love.” – Patience, Upbeat Participant & Welcome Boxes Recipient

2

Our **Integration Hub** is part of our core offer for asylum seekers and refugees in Derby. We offer a place of safety and community for those newly arrived in the city, where individuals and families can be supported on their integration journey. We offer English classes, hot meals, access to the internet, social activities, peer support groups and cultural orientation sessions. We also piloted a Satellite Hub in Long Eaton for individuals being housed in hotels in the town.

This year saw the second year of our **Thriving Places** project, funded by the National Lottery.

The integration of refugees and asylum seekers is facilitated through the provision of one-to-one support and the development of individual support plans based on each person's self-identified goals.

“The English class is, I think the most important because, when I get my documents, I will need to talk and understand English well so I can get a job.” – Manuel, Upbeat Participant





Due to capacity and demand we have run fewer **Upbeat Kids** activities this year, however we secured some funding to pilot some youth work provision (**Upbeat Youth**) with teenagers who are part of some of the families we are working with, along with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

“Now that I have lived in the UK for a few years, I generally know where to go if I have an issue. But if ever there is something I have not come across before, I know that I can come straight to Upbeat and get the help that I need.” – Abdul, Upbeat Participant

3

We saw an increase in referrals to **Host Derby**, our local emergency hosting scheme. Most of these referrals were for newly granted refugees who, due to a lack of social housing and barriers to the private rental market, ended up street homeless. We are thankful to the incredible hosts we were able to recruit this year, who have opened their homes to support those in desperate situations.

Our support for the government’s **Homes for Ukraine** Scheme continued in Lincolnshire, providing advice and coordination of the voluntary sector response across the county; and also in Derbyshire where we saw the number of referrals for rematching support significantly increase.

“Thanks to the help of Upbeat Communities, I quickly found a new family to take me in. We were on the phone every week. I am very pleased with the whole process, from the beginning of the first letter to moving to a new family. Everything was clear, I was helped and supported, all my questions were answered.” – Homes for Ukraine Guest

We continued to support the resettlement of families through the government’s **Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy** (ARAP) and **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme** (ACRS) in both Derbyshire and Lincolnshire.

“You helped us to survive in this area, and we wish every Afghan family in other places to receive a similar level of support that Upbeat provided to us.” – Resettlement Family



Our original social enterprise, **Derby Language School**, providing language learning to individuals and businesses, continued to see growth, primarily through ongoing contracts with local authorities to deliver ESOL courses for those arriving through the resettlement schemes. Derby Language School also continued to provide classes for Hong Kongers newly arrived in Derby.

We're very proud of **Upbeat Clean**, our newest social enterprise, and its significant growth in staff, turnover and its client list this year. Upbeat Clean was established to provide flexible, real living wage employment for refugees (in particular, mothers who had additional barriers preventing them from accessing the job market).



“For me, I was excited to get my job because it’s my first job. One of my friends told me about Upbeat Clean. I called and they gave me the postcode. When I got there, I was like, ‘Oh! I used to learn English here!’. And now it’s where I got my first job! It was like a full circle.” – Amber, Upbeat Clean Staff Member

4

We've been privileged to work with schools, universities, churches and community groups to raise awareness about our work and the needs of those seeking asylum.

Our Chief Executive, Andrew, continued to chair **Derby City of Sanctuary Network**, which aims to create a climate of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers in Derby. The New Arrivals Alliance was also set up this year to help refugee arrivals to access support as early as possible.



CASE STUDIES

RAHWA'S STORY

Rahwa arrived in the UK in 2023. She experienced very bad conditions in her temporary accommodation, but was referred to our Welcome Boxes project and received the support she needed from Upbeat volunteers. Here's her story in her own words:

“When I arrived in the UK, I stayed in a hotel for two weeks before I was moved to a shared house. The house was in a bad situation. It was dirty, the carpet smelled and for me it was a shock. The carpet gave me an allergic reaction all over my skin.

I was not happy, I cried and cried. Nobody talked to me. I felt like nobody welcomed me. I tried to clean up the house, and I was standing on a chair to clean but I fell down and hurt my leg. I had to go to the hospital and use crutches. I was so depressed. I tried to contact my family but I don't have internet on my phone.

Then, I got moved to Derby. I was in another shared house, but my housing manager was a good man. He had contact with Upbeat Communities. He asked me if I could go out, if I have anyone to meet. I said no, I don't know anybody.

He told me to come to Upbeat Communities and that he will contact them now. Two days later, two ladies from Upbeat Communities came! They were volunteers and they arrived at my door. They said, ‘You must be Rahwa!’ and I said ‘yes’. They brought flowers, they came to my room and stayed with me and chatted to me. They were so friendly.

Before this, I didn't know anyone who was friendly. It was strange because in my home country, I'm very social. I came here and thought, ‘what's happened?’ But when I saw the ladies from Upbeat Communities, they saw my leg and the next day they brought a stool for me to rest my leg on. And they brought food to put in the fridge. They told me, ‘you must be active, don't sleep’, and they motivated me.

The next day, I went to Upbeat. I met Rama (Upbeat Staff) and she was so excited to see me, even though she had never met me before. She gave me a Welcome Box, and I said, ‘I already have one from the ladies!’ but she gave me one again. I saw some ladies, they asked me my name, where I was from. These people, this energy, I needed it because before I felt all alone.

Rama asked if I needed help with anything and I told her that I don't have a solicitor, so she contacted the Red Cross for me, and they contacted me to help me find a solicitor.

Honestly, now I am here, I really feel like I am in my place. It's like having a family. I have a family back home, but I can never contact them. Now, I have more friends, from all over the world: Morocco, Sudan, Eritrea. If I am absent one day, they message me: “Where are you Rahwa?” I feel I have people around me. I think this community is the best thing that's happened to me in Europe.



JAVID'S STORY

Javid arrived in Derby in need of English classes, community, and a place to volunteer and use his skills while he awaited the outcome of his asylum claim. He has since received permission to stay in the UK and has moved away from Derby to start a position at an engineering company. He shared how Upbeat Communities supported him during the wait.

“My name is Javid, I was born and brought up in Iran. I tried hard to achieve my goals. I studied civil engineering at university in Iran and I successfully completed my studies up to master’s level. I worked as a civil engineer and university lecturer and I had a good life. Unfortunately, because of events and conditions in my country, I had to leave there.

When someone becomes a refugee in another country it’s like being reborn and you have to start all over again. A new language, new knowledge, job, identification documents, friends...

I consider the UK a safe country with many opportunities for progress. Really, I feel safe in the UK but, as an asylum seeker, it doesn’t have many opportunities for me at the moment. I can’t work, I can’t apply at a university, and I am not allowed to take training courses. But life isn’t fair, and I hope for the future.




At this time, I needed to learn English to communicate with people and learn the culture of this country. So, one of my church family introduced Upbeat to me about five months ago. Upbeat was very helpful for me because I could improve my English language in the friendly place. Upbeat staff are so well behaved and lovely. I like to spend my time with them. Different nationalities come to Upbeat and it’s really good for everybody who wants to know about the culture or make friends. Currently, I spend a lot of my free time at Upbeat.

After some days, I decided to volunteer for Upbeat and fortunately they accepted my request. I chose to volunteer at Upbeat because I don’t like wasting my time and there are many things to learn, like communicating with other people. Maybe I can help someone and I like to be a useful person.”

WHAT WE ACHIEVED

In our last financial year (2023-24) we made the following impact:

We provided

51 


Welcome Box visits to families and individuals arriving in Derby.

A total of


197   

women engaged with our weekly **peer support sessions** engaging in a range of activities including arts, music, cookery, and therapeutic sessions.

We ran a total of

569 **English classes,** 

providing a total of 594 hours of learning for

686 individuals. 

We supported

927 

individuals through our **Integration Hub,** from 58 different nations.

We gave

358 

Welcome Packs to asylum seekers living in hotels or hostels. 

Across both **Host Derby** and our rematching work with **Homes for Ukraine,** we facilitated

66 placements, supporting 90 individuals with

8,296 nights of accommodation. 

We supported approx.

268



individuals as part of our **Thriving Places** project, supporting with health appointments (GPs, dentists, hospitals, opticians), through to finding an immigration solicitor.

We resettled 6 new families and supported a total of

✈️ 27

across Derbyshire and Lincolnshire through the various **resettlement schemes**.

Derby Language School delivered an average of 461 hours of teaching and interpreting each month, totalling over

5,500

hours of provision across the whole year.

Upbeat Clean started the year providing 634 hours of cleaning per month for 23 commercial customers, and grew to

1,836

hours by March 2024. During the year we employed 33 cleaners!

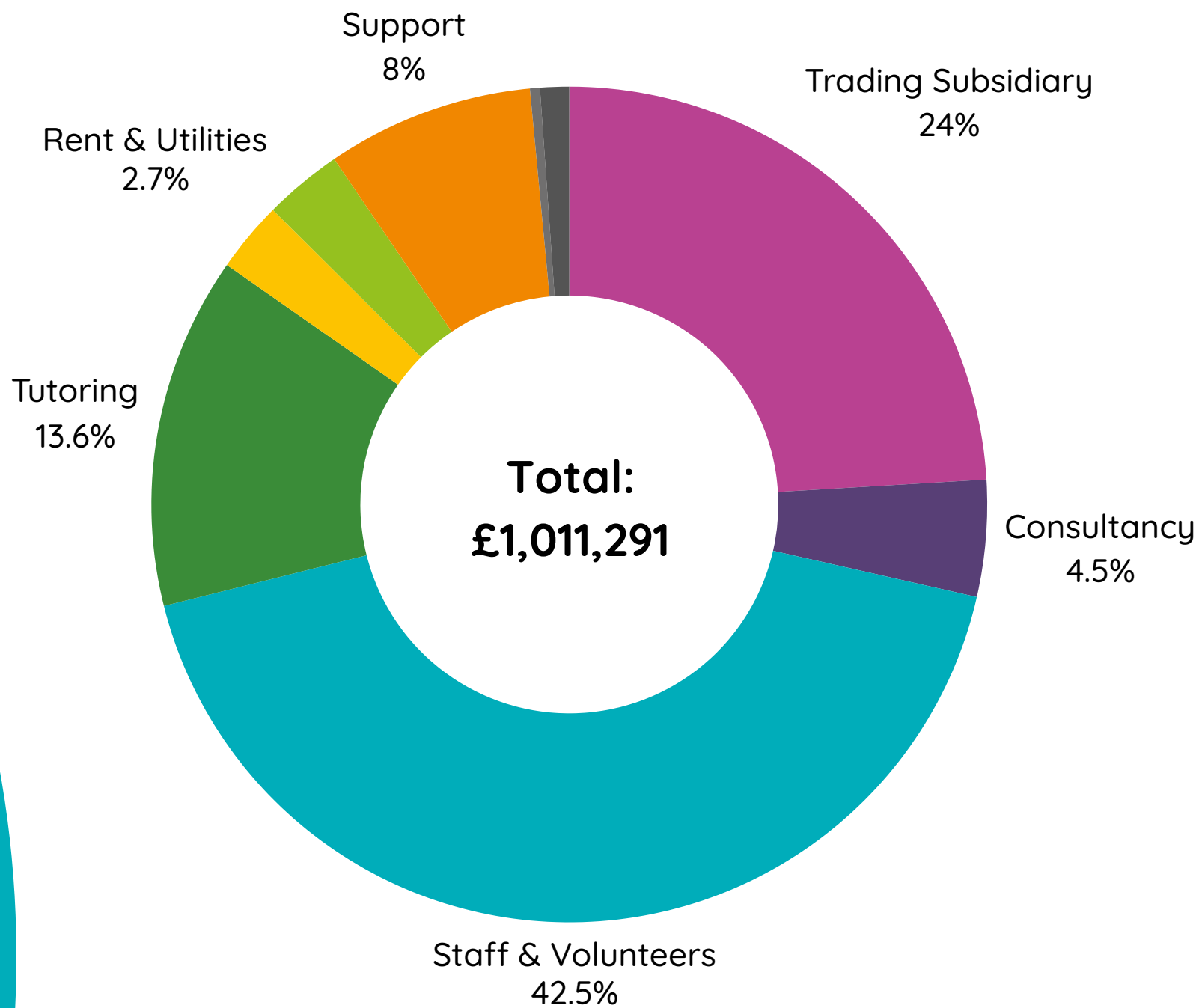


HOW WE'RE FUNDED

Upbeat Communities has a diverse range of income. During 2023-24 we received the following:

Income Type	Amount (£)	Income Percentage (%)
Local Government Contracts	397,479	35.9
Social Enterprises & Trading Subsidiary	499,287	45.0
Donations	60,443	5.5
Grants, Trusts and Foundations	149,380	13.5
Other	1,686	0.2
Total	1,108,275	100

HOW WE SPENT IT



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LOOKING AHEAD

We've set some key objectives to make us a better, more effective organisation in 2024-25 (and beyond). These include a focus on:

- Providing outstanding holistic support to asylum seekers and refugees, particularly focussing on **THE DISPERSED COMMUNITY** with increased efforts to ensure those in dispersal accommodation can access our services
- Continuing to provide **LIFE-GIVING EMPLOYMENT** through our social enterprise, Upbeat Clean.
- Working towards the establishment of a sustainable, scaled solution to address at least one **MAJOR ISSUE** affecting refugees and asylum seekers in Derby: legal advice, housing and/or employment.
- Continuing to be recognised as an **EXCELLENT PLACE TO WORK** and volunteer, with emphasis on creating opportunities for people with lived experience of forced migration.



SUPPORT US

Follow us on social media



Sign up to our mailing list

Visit upbeatcommunities.org/supporter-signup or scan the QR code to hear the latest stories and updates from us each month.



Donate

Make a one-off or monthly donation at upbeatcommunities.org/donate to sustain our projects into the future.



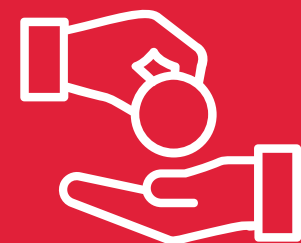
Volunteer

Find out more about volunteering opportunities, from helping activities to run at our Integration Hub, to providing emergency accommodation for homeless refugees, at upbeatcommunities.org/volunteer



Fundraise

There are countless opportunities to fundraise for our work, from running a bake sale, to taking part in a marathon. Visit upbeatcommunities.org/fundraise to start your journey.





upbeatcommunities.org

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