



**Places of Sanctuary Ireland Limited**  
(Company limited by guarantee and not having share capital)

**Financial Statements**

**Year ended 31 December 2020**

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**Places of Sanctuary Ireland Limited**

**Directors and other information**

**Directors:** Philip Berman  
Veronica Crosbie  
Israel Eguaogie  
Gerry Hassett  
Corona Joyce  
Rosemary Kunene  
Kevin Mascarenhas  
Francis McEvoy  
Jacqueline Phiri  
Andy Pollak- Acting Chairperson

**Secretary:** Rosemary Kunene

**Banker:** AIB,  
Howth Road,  
Raheny,  
Dublin 5.

**Address:** 2 St Andrew St Dublin 2

**Registered Company Number:** 585268

**Registered Charity Number:** 20107369

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT,

2020 was a difficult year for Places of Sanctuary Ireland, as for all small voluntary organisations trying to continue their work during the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. However we have survived it strengthened and re-energised, with the burgeoning Schools of Sanctuary movement having spread rapidly to schools throughout the Republic, Universities of Sanctuary having gained vital recognition from the Irish government, and the important work of the Sanctuary Ambassadors' group of asylum seekers and refugees continuing despite the many problems caused by frequent lockdowns.

Financially, PoSI comes out of this pandemic year in relatively good shape. During 2020 we were able to raise money from a range of private donations, government Covid support schemes and small grants from charitable trusts and government agencies such as the Community Foundation of Ireland, the St Stephen's Green Trust, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and a number of religious congregations' trusts. In the end, in fact, we raised significantly more than we did in 2019.

At the end of 2020 we said goodbye to our founding chair, Philip Berman, who since 2015 has worked extraordinarily hard and selflessly to ensure the good health of the embryonic Sanctuary movement in Ireland, not least in ensuring significant funding from charitable trusts and generous individual donors to keep the work of POSI, and thus its local groups and 'streams', developing and expanding. Those who are not familiar with the time and brain-consuming processes of fund-raising for embryonic and idealistic NGOs like PoSI, will probably not appreciate what an extremely onerous task this is. We are greatly in Philip's debt for all his efforts to ensure that PoSI is the active and healthy organisation it is today.

We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to PoSI national coordinator, Tiffy Allen, and assistant coordinator, Homayoon Shirzad. Without Tiffy's peerless energy and unparalleled commitment to making Sanctuary in Ireland a reality, PoSI simply would not exist. Age and leisure seem to have no impact on her: she continues to be the tireless and inspirational leader of almost everything we do. Homayoon arrived as an asylum seeker from Afghanistan and within a short time put his great organisational abilities, people skills and knowledge of education into invaluable service with PoSI. We are truly blessed to have these two exceptional people working with us: paid for only two days a week but often working many days more without pay.

**Andy Pollak**

**Acting chair**

## **DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

The Directors present their annual report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020.

### **Directors' responsibilities statement**

The Directors are responsible for preparing the Directors' report and the financial statements in accordance with Irish law and regulations.

Irish company law requires the Directors to prepare the financial statements for each financial year. Under the law, the Directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the Companies Act 2014 and Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'.

Under company law, the Directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied they give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Company as at the financial year end date and of the profit or loss for that financial year and otherwise comply with the Companies Act 2014.

In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

select suitable accounting policies for the Company's financial statements and then apply them consistently;

make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and

prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Company will continue in business.

The Directors confirm that they have complied with the above requirements in preparing the financial statements.

The Directors are responsible for ensuring that the Company keeps or causes to be kept adequate accounting records which correctly explain and record the transactions of the Company, enable at any time the assets, liabilities, financial position and profit or loss of the Company to be determined with reasonable accuracy, enable them to ensure that the financial statements and Directors' report comply with the Companies Act 2014. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Directors are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the Company's website. Legislation in Republic of Ireland governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

### **Principal Activity and Review of the Business**

Places of Sanctuary Ireland is a network of groups in towns, cities and local communities which share the objectives of promoting the integration, inclusion and welfare of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants by encouraging every sector of society to make a practical commitment to becoming places of welcome and safety.

The Company is limited by guarantee, not having a share capital.

There has been no significant change in these activities during the year ended 31 December 2020.

### **Results and dividends**

The surplus for the year, after taxation, amounted to €6,587 (2019 – deficit €34,346).

The balance at the end of the year in the accumulated fund was €21,980 (2019 - €15,393).

### **State of affairs and events since the Balance Sheet date**

In the opinion of the Directors, the state of the company's affairs is satisfactory and there has been no material change since the balance sheet date.

### **Legal and taxation status**

Places of Sanctuary Ireland is a company, limited by guarantee, incorporated under the Companies Act 2014 and has charitable status under the Taxes Acts.

### **Principal risks and uncertainties**

The Directors are responsible for the company's system of internal controls and for reviewing its effectiveness. The internal control system is designed to manage, rather than eliminate risk of failure to achieve the company's business objectives and can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The Directors do not consider that the company has any significant exposure to financial risk, currency risk, finance and interest rate risk, liquidity and cash flow risk or credit risk. The Board continuously monitors the company's exposures to such risk and takes appropriate action should it become necessary.

### **Directors and Secretary**

The directors who served throughout the period were as follows:

Philip Berman

Colin Flinn

Gerry Hassett

Corona Joyce

Rosemary Kunene

Kevin Mascarenhas

Francis McEvoy

Jacqueline Phiri

Andy Pollak

The Secretary was Rosemary Kunene

### **Future Developments**

The Company plans to continue its present activities. Employees are kept as fully informed as practicable about developments within the business.

### **Post Balance Sheet Events**

There have been no significant events affecting the company since the period-end.

### **Accounting records**

The measures taken by the Directors to ensure compliance with the requirements of Sections 281 to 285 of the Companies Act 2014 with regard to the keeping of accounting records, are the employment of appropriately qualified accounting personnel and the maintenance of computerised accounting systems. The company's accounting records are maintained at the company's registered office at 2 St Andrew Street Dublin 2.

This report was approved by the board and signed on its behalf by:

Director

ANDY POLLAK

Date: 11 June 2021

Director



PHILIP BERMAN

Date: 11 June 2021

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

<b>Income</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
	€	€
Grant/Donations- Note 6	41,310	15,120
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>41,310</u></b>	<b><u>15,120</u></b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Wages and Salaries	23,813	36,048
Printing, Stationery, Phone,		
Travel, Postage	2,623	2,400
Bank charges	42	40
Secretarial Costs	456	628
Sanctuary Stream Expenses	3,385	7,766
Professional Fees	1,265	1,384
Computer Costs	2,459	-
Insurance	680	1,200
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>34,723</u></b>	<b><u>49,466</u></b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit for year</b>	<b>6,587</b>	<b>(34,346)</b>

**Statement of Financial Position as at 31  
December 2020**

	<b>31/12/2020</b>	<b>31/12/2019</b>
	€	€
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	21,680	13,178
Debtors & Prepayments	-	<u>2,215</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>21,680</b>	<b>15,393</b>
 Creditors: Amounts Falling due within one year	 -	 -



<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>21,680</b>	<b>15,393</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>	<b>21,680</b>	<b>15,393</b>
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
<b>Accumulated Fund</b>		
Opening Balance	15,393	49,739
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	<u>6,587</u>	<u>(34,346)</u>
Closing Balance	<b>21,680</b>	<b>15,393</b>
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The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with the small companies' regime.

We, as director(s) of (company name), state that:

(a) the company is availing itself of the exemption provided for by Chapter 15 of Part 6 of the Companies Act 2014,

(b) the company is availing itself of the exemption on the grounds that the conditions specified in s.358 are satisfied,

(c) the shareholders of the company have not served a notice on the company under s.334(1) in accordance with s.334(2),

(d) we acknowledge the company's obligations under the Companies Act 2014, to keep adequate accounting records and prepare Financial Statements which give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company at the end of its financial year and of its profit or loss for such a year and to otherwise comply with the provisions of Companies Act 2014 relating to Financial Statements so far as they are applicable to the company.

On behalf of the board:

Director

ANDY POLLAK

Director



PHILIP BERMAN

Date: 11 June 2021

Date: 11 June 2021

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## STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

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### STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	Profit and loss account	
	€	
At 1 January 2020	15,393	
Surplus/Deficit for the year	6,587	
	21,980	
At 31 December 2020		

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### STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019

	Profit and loss account	
	€	
At 1 July 2018	49,739	
Surplus for the year	(34,346)	
At 31 December 2019	15,393	

The notes on pages 12 to 14 form part of these financial statements.

Total

Total

(3)

**CASH FLOW STATEMENT**  
**for the year ended 31 December 2020**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
Cash flows from operating activities		
Surplus/Deficit for the period	6,587	(34,346)
Adjustment for:		
Decrease in Creditors	-	(2,923)
Increase in Debtors	<u>2,215</u>	<u>(2,215)</u>
Cash generated from operations	8,802	(39,484)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial period	13,178	52,662
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial period	21,980	13,178

## **Notes to the Financial Statements**

### **General Information**

Places of Sanctuary Ireland is a network of groups in towns, cities and local communities which share the objectives of promoting the integration, inclusion and welfare of refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants, by encouraging every sector of society to make a practical commitment to becoming places of welcome and safety. The company is limited by guarantee, not having a share capital, incorporated under Companies Act 2014 and has charitable status under the Taxes Acts.

The significant accounting policies adopted by the company and applied consistently are as follows:

#### **1. Accounting policies**

##### **1.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements**

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102, "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland" and Irish statute comprising of the Companies Act 2014.

The preparation of financial statements in compliance with FRS 102 requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise judgment in applying the Company accounting policies (see note 3).

##### **1.2 Grants**

Grants and sponsorship are received by Places of Sanctuary Ireland in respect of printing costs associated with specific volumes of the Review. Income is recognised in the accounts in the year in which it is received.

##### **1.3 Debtors**

Short term debtors are measured at transaction price, less any impairment. Loans receivable are measured initially at fair value, net of transaction costs, and are measured subsequently at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment.

##### **1.4 Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature in no more than three months from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Statement of cash flows, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Company's cash management.

## 1.5 Creditors

Short term creditors are measured at the transaction price. Other financial liabilities, including bank loans, are measured initially at fair value, net of transaction costs, and are measured subsequently at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

## 1.6 Financial instruments

The Company only enters into basic financial instrument transactions that result in the recognition of financial assets and liabilities like trade and other debtors and creditors, loans from banks and other third parties, loans to related parties and investments in non-puttable ordinary shares.

Debt instruments (other than those wholly repayable or receivable within one year), including loans and other accounts receivable and payable, are initially measured at present value of the future cash flows and subsequently at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Debt instruments that are payable or receivable within one year, typically trade debtors and creditors, are measured, initially and subsequently, at the undiscounted amount of the cash or other consideration expected to be paid or received. However, if the arrangements of a short-term instrument constitute a financing transaction, like the payment of a trade debt deferred beyond normal business terms or financed at a rate of interest that is not a market rate or in the case of an out-right short-term loan not at market rate, the financial asset or liability is measured, initially, at the present value of the future cash flow discounted at a market rate of interest for a similar debt instrument and subsequently at amortised cost.

Investments in non-convertible preference shares and in non-puttable ordinary and preference shares are measured:

- at fair value with changes recognised in the Income and expenditure account if the shares are publicly traded or their fair value can otherwise be measured reliably;
- at cost less impairment for all other investments.

Financial assets that are measured at cost and amortised cost are assessed at the end of each reporting period for objective evidence of impairment. If objective evidence of impairment is found, an impairment loss is recognised in the Income and expenditure account.

For financial assets measured at amortised cost, the impairment loss is measured as the difference between an asset's carrying amount and the present value of estimated cash flows discounted at the asset's original effective interest rate. If a financial asset has a variable interest rate, the discount rate for measuring any impairment loss is the current effective interest rate determined under the contract

## 2. Judgments in applying accounting policies and key sources of estimation uncertainty

The preparation of these financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the applications of policies and reported amounts of assets and liabilities, income and expenses.

Judgements and estimates are continually evaluated and based on historical experiences and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

The company makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates, will be by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. There are no estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of the assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

### 3. Employees

The Company has had three employees other than the council members. Total Salary costs in the period were €23,813.

### 4. Cash and cash equivalents

	2020 €	2019
Cash on deposit	21,980	13,178
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	<u>21,980</u>	<u>13,178</u>

### 5. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	2020 €	2019 €
Trade Creditors	-	-
	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

### 6. Income

Income for 2020 is detailed as follows:

Private Donations	€10,250
TWSS Scheme	€5,990
Pobal Stability Fund	€4,300
DCYA Integration	€4,770
Community Foundation	€5,000
Schools of Sanctuary Funding	<u>€11,000</u>
Total Income	<b>€41,310</b>

### 7. Approval of Financial Statements

The Board members approved these financial statements for issue on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## REPORT OF ACTIVITIES: JANUARY 2020 – JANUARY 2021

The City of Sanctuary movement began in Sheffield in 2005 and now has over one hundred local groups across UK and Ireland, as well as several very strong 'streams of sanctuary'. Ever-changing global events have added a fresh urgency to the desire of grassroots communities to explore practical ways of welcoming and including refugees and migrants. In Ireland, we have been working across society to develop this culture of welcome, while continuing to enjoy a close affiliation with our sister organisation, City of Sanctuary UK.

Ireland has a strong and deep-rooted sense of identity with the idea of sanctuary and hospitality. 'Cead Mile Failte' is a phrase embedded in our sense of who we are; welcome is something we treasure and value highly. Ancient monastic settlements had a venerated 'tearmann', an honoured space in the community specially reserved for unexpected strangers, often fleeing for safety, and early Irish hymns speak of finding Christ in the guise of the stranger. Our more recent history is layered with tale after tale of Irish people seeking sanctuary in America, Britain and other corners of the world, escaping famine, hardship and unemployment. The troubles in Northern Ireland led to hundreds seeking sanctuary in other parts of our own island.

So there is a readiness here in Ireland to embrace the concept of sanctuary; we believe our task is to help channel, equip and crystalize that readiness so that it is translated into a hundred thousand tangible acts of welcome and inclusion to those who most need it today- people who are fleeing war and persecution and have come here in the hope of a new start to their broken lives. Our vision is for society across Ireland to develop a 'culture of welcome'; for sanctuary to become the norm in communities, places of learning and organisations up and down the country, and for new arrivals to feel welcomed and included wherever they go. We are committed to doing this in close partnership with other groups that welcome refugees and migrants wherever possible. We work through a network of local groups and streams all committed to our vision and all working in appropriate ways and partnerships to ensure the development of a culture of welcome.

## SANCTUARY DURING LOCKDOWNS

Our work from early 2020 to the present time has been severely hampered by the COVID 19 pandemic and the lockdowns that have closed much of society, including schools and universities. The impact of lockdown on people in Direct Provision has been devastating, with opportunities for integration and language learning closed completely. Many families share one room where two or three school students have to jostle for study space and internet access for online classes, while cramped living conditions making 'social distancing' virtually impossible.

In times like this, care for those in the greatest need is vitally important, and many groups and streams have made quick adjustments in order to continue to reach out to people whose lives are already precarious because of the uprooting that comes with being a refugee. We are proud of the commitment and resilience of our team and volunteers, especially that in such a difficult environment initiatives such as Schools of Sanctuary and Sanctuary Ambassadors have started and grown.

Details of activities are available in our newsletters and on the website. But this snapshot of streams and local groups gives some of the highlights of the past year.

## STREAMS OF SANCTUARY

### Universities of Sanctuary

Universities of Sanctuary is our most established and successful stream. Four years ago, it was almost impossible for an asylum seeker to continue to 3rd level education, and scores of young people left school with high scores in Leaving Cert but became idle and depressed as all doors for work and further study were closed to them.

Now, as a result of the wildfire success of the Universities of Sanctuary project, we have eight recognized universities of sanctuary, with others gearing their activities towards the values embodied therein. Recognized Universities of Sanctuary are now:

Dublin City University – 2016

University of Limerick – 2017

University College Cork – 2017

Athlone Institute of Technology – 2018

University College Dublin – 2018

NUI Galway- 2019

Maynooth University– 2019

Trinity College Dublin - 2020



In 2020, there were over 80 scholarships available for Undergraduate, online and Postgraduate courses. The department has responded positively, opening out a government funding programme for asylum seekers and refugees who have been in Ireland over 3 years, and mentioning Universities of Sanctuary in the latest programme for government.

During lockdown we have worked with Irish Refugee Council and DCU to deliver four zoom seminars to inform people in International Protection and their supporters about the scholarship programme, with many representatives of HEs and FEs attending. In addition, we have organized many individual meetings for people we know who are hoping to access a scholarship.

A notable achievement towards the end of 2020 was the recognition of Trinity College Dublin as Ireland's eighth University of Sanctuary. A short film, Flight, has been produced by their vibrant sanctuary team. and widely acclaimed in many sectors.

<https://ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/2021/03/02/trinity-college-dublin-university-of-sanctuary-ceremony>

## Schools of Sanctuary

**Learn** – about the experiences of refugees globally and locally, and about diversity in your school community

**Take Action** – plan actions to ensure welcome and inclusion for all students and families, whatever the background, home language, or religion

**Share** – share your learning with other schools and your welcome with the wider community

These are the cornerstone commitments made when a school signs up to become a School of Sanctuary, and students, teachers and boards work together to make a lasting culture change towards welcome and inclusion at deep and sustainable levels. In spite of many months of school lockdown closures, this important initiative has now taken off right across Ireland. With over 40 awarded schools in Northern Ireland, the Schools of Sanctuary programme has taken root in schools in Galway, Dublin, Cork, Monaghan, Wexford, Waterford, Tipperary, Laois, Kilkenny, Kildare, Roscommon and Wicklow, with others pledging to start in September 2021. The help we offer includes a resource book which works in conjunction with a new Schools of Sanctuary Ireland website, with curriculum tips, lesson plans, guidelines and news <https://schools-ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/> One of the key factors is the involvement of refugees in all aspects of the work. As more and more schools joined the programme, we trained a team of monitors to go into schools to do assessments. Schools ready to be considered for national recognition were invited to submit a portfolio and a team was selected to visit the school for assessment. To date, all such visits have happened by zoom.

Towards the end of 2020 Mount Sion CBS Secondary School in Waterford became the first nationally recognized school in the Republic of Ireland to be awarded the status of School of Sanctuary under the newly formed national committee. The school was assessed by a team of monitors from Places of Sanctuary Ireland and people active in refugee support work, refugees and asylum seekers, and was judged to be “outstanding” in terms of its commitment and activities for welcoming and including young people from a refugee or asylum-seeking background. A few days later, it was followed by the equally impressive Bunscoil Loreto, a Primary School in Gorey that is pioneering this all-important message of sanctuary for all.

This stream is thriving north and south of the border and carries the promise of sanctuary and the message of welcome and inclusion becoming much more sustainable as significant young people discover and act on the truth about refugees.

## Sanctuary Ambassadors

Sanctuary Ambassadors are refugees and asylum seekers who build bridges of understanding across Irish society. Sanctuary Ambassadors join a training programme to help equip them to use their voice and explain their story to decision makers. During the training they find out how Irish society and politics works, they have an opportunity to meet politicians and media personnel and they develop their skills in public speaking, awareness raising and advocacy. Ambassadors often spend many hours every week giving time and attention to helping their peers through advocacy, interpreting, signposting and general support, a service that is unpaid and unacknowledged but valued very highly.

Sanctuary Ambassadors come from different cultures, nationalities, religions and backgrounds, but they form community and work together, united by the aim to give a voice to their peers and build a more united and integrated Ireland.

The initiative began in Dublin in 2016 under the name Sanctuary in Politics. From there it spread to Waterford, Galway, various places in Ireland, and UK. Early achievements included the publication of the Sanctuary in Politics Class Manifesto in 2017.

In November 2019 a new course was started in County Wexford, bringing together refugees and asylum seekers from three new emergency Direct Provision Centres and refugees from the Syrian resettlement Programme in Wexford. The course was run in partnership with Wexford Local Development. About 30 participants registered, and training included sessions on public speaking, media work and Irish politics. One memorable session involved Brendan Howlin TD giving a master class on the Irish electoral system, including a mock election.

Lockdown meant that the group could no longer meet after February, but meetings continued by zoom and the [Wexford Sanctuary Manifesto](#) was produced .

Thanks to the commitment of Brendan Howlin, other Wexford Oireachtas members, and Wexford County Council, the group was able to present the Manifesto in person at Wexford County Council at a socially distanced but very moving event in July 2020, where all Oireachtas members spoke out their support. A week later the group also presented to all councillors of Gorey District Council. Brendan Howlin and other Oireachtas members have proved themselves to be true friends of sanctuary and the manifesto has been presented to Minister Helen McEntee and Minister Roderic O Gorman.

In November and December, in addition to the training mentioned above, groups were involved in several consultations around the publication of the Catherine Day Report on the Direct Provision system, including meeting the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth,

Roderic O’Gorman and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. We had several online gatherings in preparation for this and to discuss our responses to the Day report and anticipated changes.

In December, Wexford County Council offered the ambassadors a shop in Gorey to host a two day exhibition of various handcrafts made during lockdowns. The exhibition was a great success and you can read about it here: <https://ireland.cityofsanctuary.org/2020/12/22/sanctuary-space-opened-in-gorey-main-street-for-2-days>.

During times of lockdown, we have been using our Zoom platform to meet ambassadors regularly for sharing, updates and encouragement. Everyone appreciates the support offered by the group, especially as there is a lot of stress and loneliness during these times of lockdown. Several from the Ambassadors group, have been participating in Know Your Rights training offered by IRC, and a reports have been prepared regarding the response to the government White Paper on reforming Direct Provision and barriers to accessing work. Individual ambassadors are constantly busy advocating for their peers, organizing Residents Committees in various DP centres, starting new initiatives and interpreting, all as volunteers.

## SANCTUARY IN NATURE AND HERITAGE

Paddy Woodworth and Muhammad Achour are the architects and leaders of *Sanctuary in Nature and Heritage*, a Dublin-based group aiming to create connections and sanctuary by organising outings for people in Direct Provision to experience some of the wonders in Ireland's landscape and heritage. They sent us this report of how they managed to keep the vision alive while meetings and outings were prohibited.

Throughout the pandemic we have wondered how to keep the Sanctuary in Nature & Heritage project alive, so that we can all gather again when circumstances permit. In partnership with our good friends at Sonairte National Ecology Centre, we had put in a grant proposal to Meath County Council for €400 for transport, and that proposal was successful. But what could we do with the grant when we could not invite people to travel with us?

Finally, we came up with the idea of preparing a special gift package, relevant to both nature and heritage information, and sending it to all the families who had come on excursions with us, or at least to all those we could still find. Meath Co Council happily agreed to this idea.

We put together a package including a card showing images of some of our previous outings, books, and a hand lens with LED light for observing flowers and insects, and we were able to distribute them to most of the families.

The response to date has been very warm, here are some of the responses we received:

*We were really grateful for the lovely book. Truly a beautiful book with marvellous illustrations and interesting facts about the wildlife around us. I'm thankful for the magnifying glass too. It is really handy. The activity book was also a wonderful addition, especially since it arrived during lockdown. Thank you for the gifts.*

*I love them and my daughter was so much in love with them. They are so lovely. Thank you a million.*

*Grand thanks to Mr. Paddy and Mr. Mohamad Ashour for their great efforts in helping and teaching Syrian asylum seekers about Ireland's nature, culture and history through the nice trips and books and gifts.*

*Thank you very much for this very valuable and special gift. You are doing a wonderful job. I truly appreciate your great efforts. All thanks to both of you.*

<https://www.facebook.com/SanctuaryInNature/>

## SANCTUARY IN FAITH

The concepts of Sanctuary and Hospitality are prominent in many different religions and expressions of faith. This new stream seeks to engage faith communities in helping to make our cities and towns places of welcome for those seeking sanctuary.

Within the Faiths Stream, we encourage local faith leaders and communities to become part of the Sanctuary network through a process of learning, embedding, and sharing. This process is intended to lead faith communities to engage in practical acts of friendship and solidarity.

The Faiths Stream steering group are happy to provide guidance and encouragement for faith groups ready to embark on the Sanctuary Journey and work towards the Places of Sanctuary designation.

This is a process that includes the following:

- Learn: become familiar with the legal terms and processes around seeking sanctuary, and other issues related to asylum and migration; explore and discuss as a community how hospitality and sanctuary towards those seeking refuge may be expressed in your context;
- Embed: ensure that this awareness becomes a dynamic part of the life of the faith community; look for ways to extend welcome, friendship and practical support; make this awareness part of the community's decision-making processes; find ways to include the voices of those seeking sanctuary;
- Share: document and share your experiences on your website and social media, via your newsletter, or other media; encourage other communities within your network/denomination to join in the Sanctuary Journey as well.

Hospitality and Sanctuary for All' discussion Guide <https://churchofsanctuary.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Hospitality-and-Sanctuary-for-All-2019-final.pdf>

## SANCTUARY IN BELFAST – Snapshot of a Local Group

In Northern Ireland, as well as pioneering Schools of Sanctuary, the Belfast group has been busy responding to the particular challenges of lockdown. There is no Direct Provision in Belfast, as they are under the UK system, but asylum seekers face isolation, poverty and sometimes, destitution. Here is a report of some of the ways the Belfast group responded.

The past year has been a difficult one for everyone. The pandemic has swept across Northern Ireland as it has every country around the globe, and here as elsewhere patterns have emerged. It became clear very quickly that the elderly and care home residents were the most vulnerable, and as the cases built up it became clear in country after country that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities have also had disproportionately high rates of infection and mortality. We have no way of knowing the numbers here as the Department Of Health has not published figures that show the incidence for the BAME population in Northern Ireland, but we know from our own networks that refugee and asylum-seeker households have been experiencing real difficulties.

The isolation that comes with Covid has disrupted the usual social and support networks, and refugees and asylum-seekers and Belfast City of Sanctuary has had to adjust quickly to meet the challenge. In previous years our main activities, like our flagship Great Refugee Picnic, have been very social affairs, but we have had to make the shift to events that allow for social distancing, and we have also had to work hard to get resources to those isolated in their own houses. A collection among friends and supporters in the first Covid surge provided sufficient funds to allow a team of volunteers to distribute food vouchers to members of various communities including Nigerian, Zimbabwean, Syrian, Somali, Iranian and Sudanese households. The Big Lottery, which has been a great supporter of our work, agreed to allow us to use resources originally allocated for the summer picnic to be re-allocated to help ease hardship in this period, and to support outdoor exercise activities. A second boost came when the Comic Relief fund, administered by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, provided us with funding to get computers to households that needed them to allow children to keep up with remote schoolwork, and to provide vital communication for those experiencing loneliness and isolation.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

There can be no doubt about the scale of the challenges we have faced in 2020, a very difficult time for everyone but especially for people seeking International Protection, many of whom are in crowded Direct Provision Centres or facing isolation, fear and poverty. A report on the details and extent of our work around the country in responding to this crisis with our valued partners is beyond the scope of this report, but we want to note that we have been working hard with our local groups and with the Asylum Support Network, which we have joined since 2019, to ensure that residents of Direct Provision are kept properly updated and vulnerable people are helped to self isolate if needed. This is a clear and strong example of the importance of our key values of networking and working in partnership.

We would like to conclude this report with thanks to all board members as well as staff and volunteers, current and previous. Special thanks to Assistant Coordinator Homayoon Shirzad, who has worked tirelessly on Schools of Sanctuary and Sanctuary Ambassadors programmes as well as supporting local work in Waterford and elsewhere. Many thanks also to our newest volunteer Catherine O'Brien who brings valuable Social Media and report-writing skills to our team. We also want to extend a hand of thanks and good wishes to our website volunteer Rania Elamin, who has now got an exciting full-time job in Dublin so is not so available, but whose heart is still with us. Our thanks also go to all our local groups and streams, all our valued partners especially Irish Refugee Council and Immigrant Council of Ireland, and our sister organization, City of Sanctuary UK.

*Tiffy Allen, National Coordinator,*

The Board members approved these Financial Statements and Annual Report for issue on 11 June 2021.