



St.  
**Augustine's**  
Centre

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020

We offer a warm welcome and safe space to people seeking support and sanctuary; together we share food, stories and build relationships. We provide welfare and specialist immigration advice, English classes, training, campaigning, a pre-school nursery, cultural activities and volunteering opportunities.

sanctuary.  
community.  
diversity.  
collaboration.  
growth.



[www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk](http://www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk)



@infostaugs



@staugustinescentrehalifax



@staugustinescentrehalifax

Charity number: 1131784

# Introduction

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone across the world, not least for the community of people we work with. Many of our Centre Members have fled war and persecution and are now seeking sanctuary here in Halifax and Calderdale. Existing challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Did you know people seeking asylum are not permitted to work, placed in often poor housing and given £39 a week to live on? Some face ongoing mental health issues following trauma and dislocation, as well as language challenges and social isolation in a new country.

2020 gave us an accelerated opportunity to reimagine and reshape our services to ensure they get to the people who need them most. We didn't stop. We just did things differently. Safely. We digitalised a lot of our work, and provided rapid, WIFI connectivity solutions for our community.

**In the end 2020 was all about finding ways to connect.**

This report gives a strong, visual flavour of what we managed to achieve together with our community of centre members, volunteers and partners. It accompanies our audited accounts and full Directors' report.

Illustrations: Ruth Dyer  
Design: Jonathan Robertson

**In 2020 we are supporting**

**648** people\*  
\*as of May 2020

**from 57** countries

**who speak 54** different languages



**This includes**

**180**

**individuals**

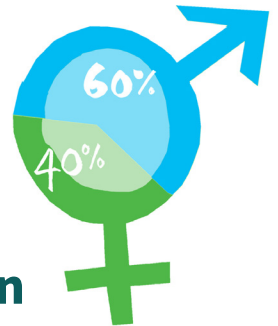


**and**



**120**

**families with children**



**They live in**

**188**

**households**



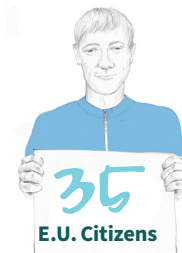
**A small number have no fixed abode**



**42**  
**British Citizens**



**35**  
**E.U. Citizens**



**146**  
**People with refugee status**



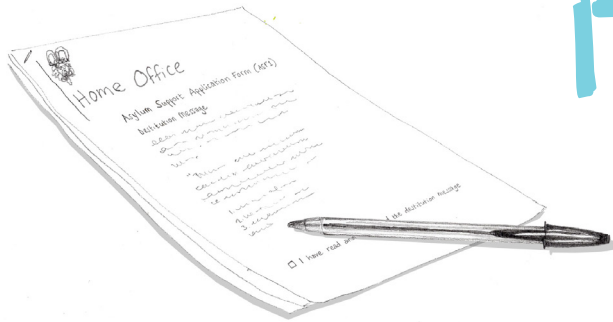
**96**  
**with other forms of Leave to Remain**



**332**  
**People seeking asylum**



## Casework and Immigration Advice



**1760** pieces of welfare casework

covering health, housing, debt, education, employability, benefits, legal issues, new arrivals, destitution, food poverty and Covid-19 related support. Demand grew as wider services stopped or changed during lockdown.



**54** specialist immigration advice cases

including Fresh Claims, Exceptional Case Funding, Leave in Line, Family Reunion, Biometrics Permits and travel documents.

**25** Welfare Volunteer callers called **200** people in periods of lockdown

We sent texts to everyone we support fortnightly to say hello and share information.

We improved ways of communicating rapidly through mass texting and new social media platforms. We became a first port of call for Coronavirus updates and advice, working closely with Public Health.



## Housing

**Supported**  
**22**  
**centre members**  
**who had become destitute**



We help with housing, food and emergency payments. In June, together with The Gathering Place, we took on the management of a house for people who had become homeless. We also regularly visited and supported people seeking asylum who were temporarily housed by the Home Office, at a Mears run hotel in Calderdale.

## Digital Inclusion

**A new digital inclusion project, put dongles with preloaded WIFI into**

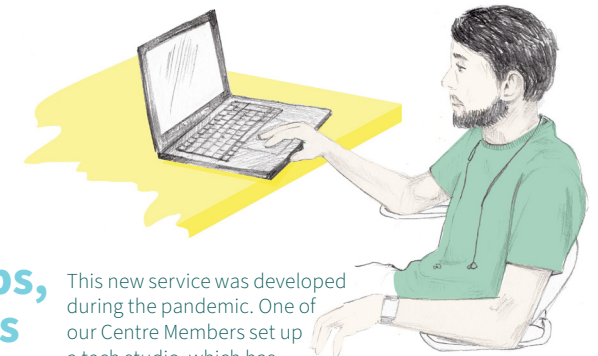


This was vital for people needing to contact family members or access English classes and training courses, and ensure children don't miss out on schoolwork. When you live on £39 a week, it is impossible to afford wifi.

**85**  
**households**

**69**

**refurbished laptops, tablets and phones were supplied.**



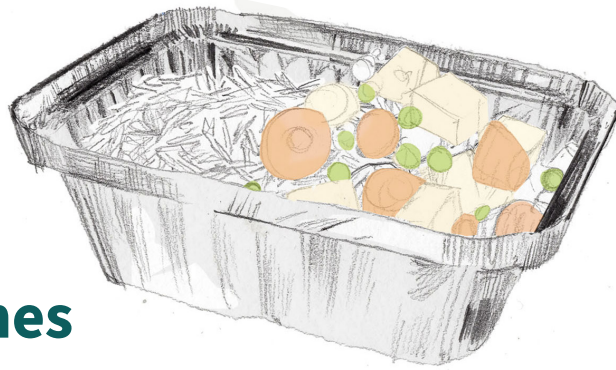
This new service was developed during the pandemic. One of our Centre Members set up a tech studio, which has now become an ongoing service.

## Food

# 7917

## free hot lunches

In April these became takeaway.



We set up a new food parcel service with Halifax Opportunities Trust and HIMMAT, providing **1644** packages in the first lockdown



*For me St Augustine's is an important social centre especially during this time of crisis with the Coronavirus. I'm currently unemployed so having somewhere to come like this is helpful as it helps me feel part of the community. I love the food and the atmosphere in the queue, especially the fact that it brings people from so many countries.*

Takeaway lunch recipient

Christmas and Ramadan Hampers and gifts were delivered to

# 129

households



## Clothing

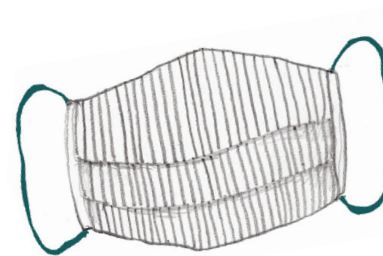
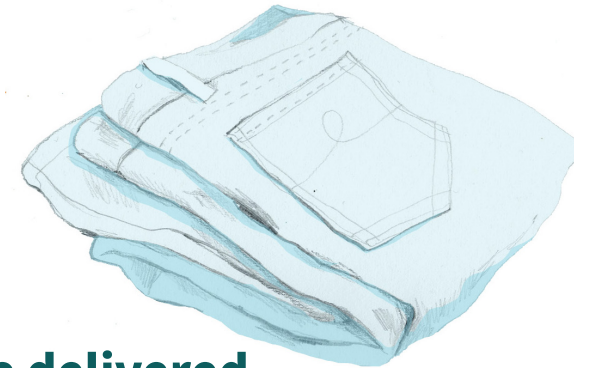
# 2000

people attended our 'FREE SHOP' outside, of donated items.



# 187

households were delivered free, donated clothing, shoes, bedding, toys and hygiene products



We also gave out **1800** masks, many of which were recyclable



## Learning and Culture

English Language was provided to

180



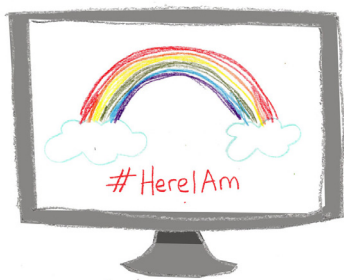
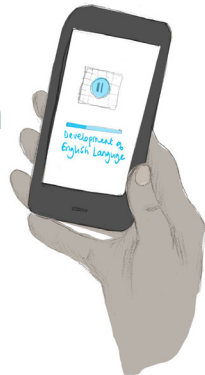
students, thanks to 62 voluntary tutors

In April this service went online, offering zoom groups and one to one support.

Our English for Life in the UK Podcast has gone from strength to strength with listeners from

110 countries

In 2020 38 new episodes had over 28000 downloads!



We ran a Covid-friendly summer programme of socially distanced art classes



Delivered art and activity packs to

234 homes

This new service was developed during the pandemic thanks to Arts Drop.

Online and in person cultural opportunities involving over

500 people



Pre lock down we went to see Lemn Sissay, Opera North, did some tree planting and visited the Dales. Once the pandemic hit we began online activity from May, with quizzes, bedtime stories and an online discussion about racism.

For Refugee Week, together with Artworks we helped create the digital 'Here I Am' artwork shown at the Piece Hall, involving 400 people from across Calderdale.

In the Summer we ran walking, DIY and gardening groups as well as small, outdoor classes and a live family show with Opera North.



45



refurbished bikes found new homes

New service in partnership with Active Calderdale and Happy Days UK.

50 volunteers, Trustees, staff and

Centre Members joined us to 'Walk the Calderdale Way', clocking up almost

5000

collective miles and raising £2.5K for our garden project.



## Volunteering

# 177

volunteers  
clocked up

# 9782

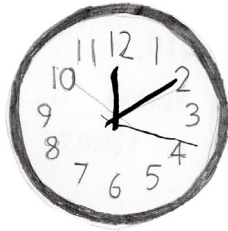
hours of their time,  
most from the safety  
of their homes.

They made welfare calls, ran our reception, cooked, delivered, gardened, helped with DIY, sorted donations, supervised lunch queues, taught English, took on casework and more.

# 28%

of our  
volunteers are also  
centre members.

As well as cooking, decorating and gardening, they refurbished laptops, interpreted, provided peer Covid advice, advised on service development, and told their stories to influence change within health and housing agencies.



## Covid Safe

# We changed the way we work.

In the office we use screens, masks, sanitisers, ventilation and an enhanced cleaning regime, with strict staff and visitor limits for each room.

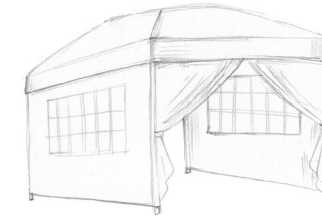


A lot of our support was done over the phone but we took essential appointments face to face and offered takeaway lunches twice a week as well as small outside group activities.



We now work up to 50% from home, implemented a new working from home policy with an additional bonus towards wifi costs.

We bought a large marquee and hired a portacabin to provide a safe 'triage' area.



*St Augustine's is a kind organisation with amazing human relations - on behalf of my son and I we say a big THANK YOU.*

**Refurbished laptop recipient**

*I got a good news! We have an internet now. Now we are able to learn online by visiting kids' school website. Kids are very excited and happy! Thank you very much to you all for your care and kind hearts! We love you.*

**Family receiving wifi**

*I don't have any family or friends in this country. I feel my confidence to talk in English is gone. I am so happy to join this class.*

**English student**

*St. Augustine's have been very helpful to me with my fresh claim. Before I used to tell myself, I'm done and nobody cares about me, I don't have any chances. But now, thanks to St. Augustine's I feel better. They are like my closest friends.*

**Centre Member receiving immigration support**

## Organisational Development

**A new Centre Lead started in March 2020. As well as responding to the pandemic, we managed to focus on stabilising our finances and reviewing our strategic objectives.**

**We revisited our identity and logo and started to develop a new website to be launched in Summer 2021 .**

## We refreshed our Mission, Vision and Values.

**We began the process of embedding a 'CRM' system so we can better capture data and articulate our impact.**

*St. Augustine's supported me to apply for a travel document. I am very grateful for this. My application was successful and now I am applying to bring my wife to the UK. I can't wait to visit my brother and family members in Ethiopia. This would not be possible without St. Augustine's.*

Centre Member

*This is the first time I receive an activity pack for my daughter and K was over the moon, she was really excited, this is a heart-warming gift. Something precious to do in lockdown.*

Arts pack recipient

**We secured the designs and resources to extend our support building and utilise an enlarged reception area. A DIY group of Centre Members beautifully redecorated our training room and IT suite in our new colours.**

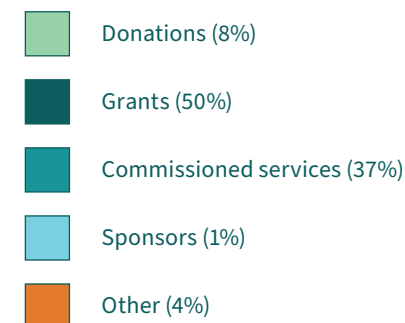
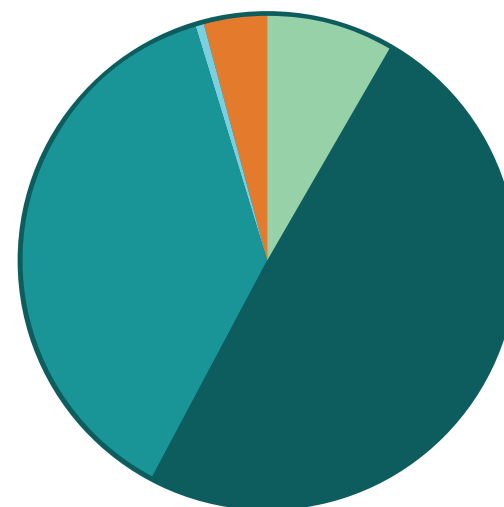
**We brought in a range of new income streams and ended 2020 (our financial year) with a surplus of £50K to build back our reserves.**

**We developed many more new partnerships; the pandemic has enabled organisations to work more effectively together.**

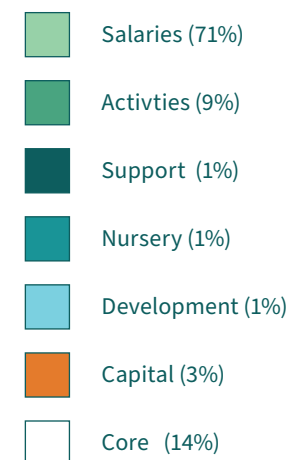
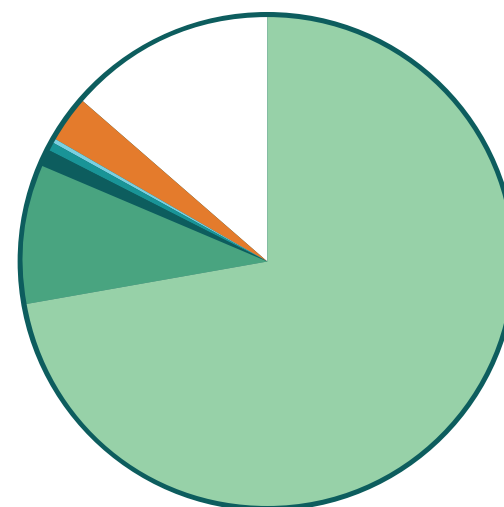
**We created three, new part-time staff roles and brought in our first Trustee with lived experience of the asylum process.**

## Finance

TOTAL INCOME £390K



TOTAL EXPENDITURE £333K



## Testimonials

*I have been a carpenter for thirty years, but I haven't been able to make anything for over a year. Last week I made a wooden seat around a tree at St 'Augustines that had been vandalised. To work again feels like freedom. I come alive again. It a beautiful feeling in my heart to find something I love. When I touch the materials and wood, and start shaping and cutting it, with my friend A, I enjoyed it so much. I don't see the weather or the time just my mind is in my work.*

**DIY Volunteer**

*Our partnership with St Augustine's came to fruition under lockdown. It is clear that we share similar aims and values as organisations and this has been evident in how smoothly we have worked together; it has felt like we are all part of the same team and family; surely the mark of a great partnership! We all look forward to exploring how we can work together in the future.*

**Kate Auker of The Gathering Place**

*As a volunteer, I'm proud to play a small part in making the Centre response to COVID 19 effective. It's not just Centre Members who benefit from their continuing work. For someone who has underlying health issues which limits the type of contribution I can make, keeping telephone contact with isolated single parents and others is extremely important to me; it makes me feel that I am doing something worthwhile.*

**Welfare caller volunteer**

*When you don't have internet you feel like you are nothing. [The Wi-Fi support] relieves me from finding £35 a month. I can use that to buy boxer shorts for my son and football boots for my daughter.*

**Family receiving wifi**

*MS was homeless until he got his refugee status. For the past three months St Augustine's Centre has supported him and two weeks ago he finally got his own place. He was so excited decorating the flat and buying new things. Anytime he gets something new he sends a photo to his housing support worker. He told me last week he's over the moon.*

**Befriender**

*Next year I want to go to college. I didn't know any English last year when I came to England. I come very week to St Augustine's classes and I have learned many words and feel confident*

**English student**

*Thank you very much, you are great people for helping us with food and presents. Good thing I got to know you!*

**Christmas Hamper recipient**

## Supporters and Funders

A huge thank you to our wonderful Trustees, staff, volunteers, partners, centre members, funders and many supporters. You make everything possible.



**The Respond and Adapt programme – a collaboration between Refugee Action, NACCOM and Migration Exchange.**

**Bearder Trust**

**Carling Foundation**

**Food for Life Foundation**

**Ghandi Foundation**

**Martin Lewis Fund**

**Wharfedale Foundation**

And the many businesses and individuals who have generously donated money and goods.

If you would like to donate our work, please visit our website [www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk](http://www.staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk) and scroll to the donate section.