



31 January 2022
Annual Report
and Accounts

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Welcome

In order to care for ourselves, each other and our planet we need to feel the connections within and between us. Building communities around the experience of these deeper connections creates respect and compassion for all life and our entire ecosystem.



We find ourselves in a time of increasing disconnection. Isolation, loneliness, anxiety and mental and physical health issues have all been exacerbated by covid.

With our project we aim to offer people a respite from the challenges they face and give them a space to reconnect with their own bodies, their local community and the natural world they belong to. Studies have shown the therapeutic benefits of spending time in nature and coming together with a shared purpose. We are holding and creating a space for people to do just that.

For our first year operating as a charity, we could not be more pleased with the work we have managed to get done, the support we have received and the feedback from our participants and volunteers. Much of the work this year has been laying the foundation for future growth and development and there have been many lessons learned along the way.

We are enormously grateful to the supporters and volunteers who have helped fill our local refugee food bank with fresh organic produce, and create a true community space. We have been able to host sessions with the local refugee community cooking, growing and smiling alongside our volunteers and run a successful pilot programme teaching nutrition and food growing to local children from low-income families. This was all made possible thanks to the work of our supporters and volunteers.

Thank you to everyone who has been a part of our journey this year.

Nick Grist
Chair

Our vision and strategy

Vision:

People living deeply connected vital lives with a clear sense of their role and responsibility in the human and more than human world.

Mission:

To create spaces that allow for sharing of skills, knowledge and ideas along with the experience of connection, purpose and integration with all beings.

Values:

- Respect (for ourselves, each other and the natural world)
- Connection (with our entire being, each other and the natural world)
- Vitality (physical, mental, spiritual and ecological)

How we will get there

We achieve our mission through:

1. organic food growing for the community and local food banks
2. sharing traditional skills
3. cooking
4. storytelling
5. nature connection
6. activities that foster vitality

We run volunteering sessions open to anyone in the local community with volunteers coming from across East and West Sussex ranging in age from 18 to 80.

We host sessions for the local refugee and migrant community and run workshops for marginalised groups.

Our project gives anyone the opportunity to enjoy the space we are creating and be a part of our organic food growing community.

What we have achieved this year

Development

We cleared out the old dilapidated shelter we had inherited and built a wood store, and a tool shed.



With the help of our volunteers, we built seed tables from reclaimed pallet wood. For many it was an opportunity to use new tools and learn new skills. It has also prompted us to look at simple woodworking courses next year as there is a clear need and interest among our participants.



Sussex University Rugby team found themselves unable to train together at the start of the year so put their considerable muscle to work on our site. With their help and the support of our regular volunteers we put up rabbit proof fencing around the bottom of the garden to create a food forest - increasing the potential for greater harvests and more sustainable and efficient production in future years.



The team also helped us dig out a huge new pond to support a wider diversity of wildlife and flora.



Some of our first visitors to the new pond:



Refugee and Migrant Community



As restrictions lifted, we were delighted to start welcoming refugees to our garden, we started off in April with one participant who was desperate to work in a garden and he stayed with us until winter.

Voices in Exile gave us the green light and we ran **10 sessions over the Spring and Summer** giving people the opportunity to get involved and be outdoors together after all the national lockdowns. In all we hosted over 40 refugees at our site. We grew food together, cooked, painted herbs and flowers and laughed, a lot. **We had 8 people continue to come to volunteer sessions individually** after they built the confidence to come without the facilitator.



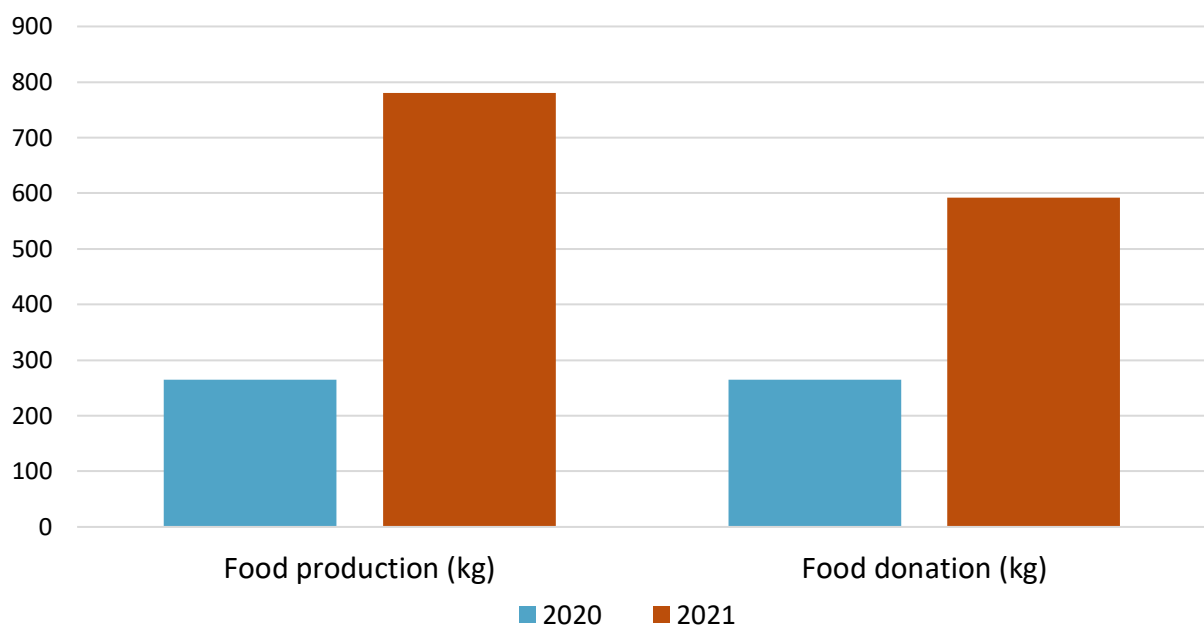
"Thank you so much for the time we spent together. I really enjoyed and learned how to take care of plants, also the delicious recipes we shared with each other. Thank you for touching my life in ways that you may never know"

Harvest

2021 posed some unusual challenges with almost no rain in March and April. We also experienced a series of late frosts at the end of April. These factors combined to wipe out some of the early crops and seriously impact yield for the sector as a whole. In spite of this challenging start, and some heavy losses of our own early seedlings, we still managed a significant improvement in food production from the previous year.



Food production and donation



Total food grown: 780 Kgs

An increase of almost 200% from the previous year.

Food donated to food bank: 592 Kgs

A 100% increase from the previous year.

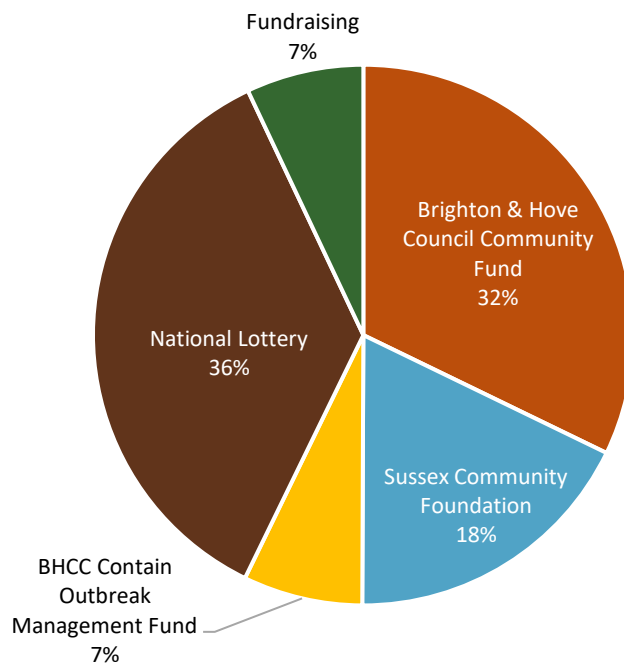
This year we were again donating harvests to the local food bank, but every other week instead of every week so that we had food to give to our volunteers and to use at our cooking sessions. We invited another local project and co-member of Stanmer Organics to donate in the weeks in between us and they agreed further increasing the supply of fresh organic produce to the food banks.

Financial summary 2021-22

Income

Amid the pandemic our first year as a registered charity was remarkably productive with the project going from strength to strength and building a platform for continued development.

Where our income comes from

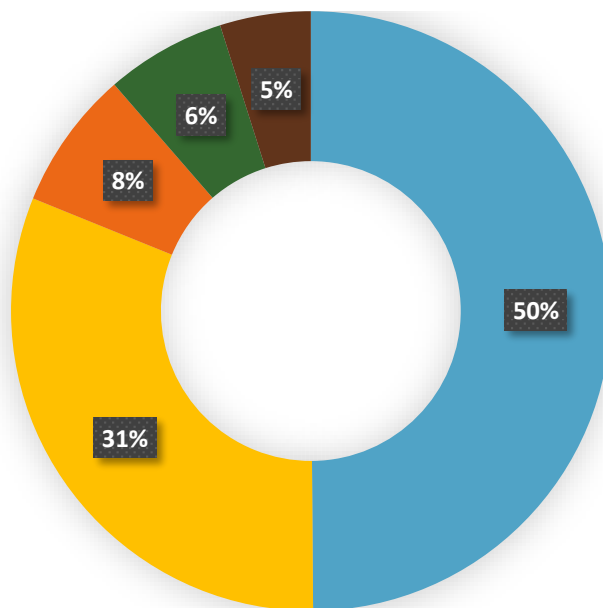


With this being our first year operating as a charity we were reliant on grants for much of our income and we are enormously grateful to the organisations that have supported us throughout the year and enabled us to achieve so much. To help us on our journey we were **awarded £26k in funding this year**, allowing us to develop our workshop and host sessions with the refugee and migrant community. Thank you to those funders who supported us this year:



There have also been many generous donations of materials, tools and time from our volunteers and supporters to whom we are eternally grateful for their generosity and their continuing support.

Where we spend our income



● **Session Costs:**

Session costs were the largest element of expenditure. We were keen to run pilots and launch sessions with the refugee and migrant community. Costs here include elements such as transport and food items brought in to cook meals with our participants. Session workers were able to receive some recompense but much of their time was donated to ensure the sessions could continue throughout the year. This is something we will be addressing. We ran 10 refugee sessions, a nutrition programme pilot and 70 volunteering sessions.

● **Building materials:**

This is a higher proportion than we would ordinarily expect due to the generous funding from the Sussex Community Fund which has enabled us to purchase the materials necessary to have solar power in our workshop.

● **Seeds and inputs**

As a certified organic grower, we can only use organic seeds and inputs such as compost. We save seed each year, and are increasing our capacity to produce our own compost. This year we have planted green manures and our food forest will be predominantly planted with perennials helping to keep these costs down.

● **Tools and utensils**

As our sessions grew and our volunteer numbers swelled, we needed to ensure we had enough tools for everyone to get stuck in. We also needed utensils for cooking and preparing food. Many of these were donated but some had to be purchased.

● **Rent, insurance and office costs**

These have been kept to the absolute minimum with a competitive insurance policy secured through social farms and gardens and the office costs restricting to printing promotional material for sessions.

Financial performance

With this being our first year of operations we knew we would have to rely on individuals donating their time and the use of their tools and equipment. We were delighted to secure the level of funding we have but recognise that the charity needs to generate more income to remain sustainable. We also recognise the need to grow our reserves to help us weather uncertain times and unanticipated challenges.

Income

Income for the year was almost exclusively in the form of one-off grants. We are looking at diversifying the income streams we have and ways in which the charity can generate income through courses and the sale of produce and products. We will still devote time and resources to securing additional grants but hope to reduce our reliance on grant funding as we develop the charity.

Costs

Our costs do not currently reflect the amount of time and resources that have been dedicated to the project in order to deliver the services we have. We have been heavily reliant on individuals devoting time, energy, resources and the use of their tools and equipment without financial recompense. Our intention is to significantly increase our income to enable us to fully remunerate all individuals working for the charity.

Net Assets

The charity's net assets position improved over the course of the year due to development of the site and the acquisition and development of crops and plants.

Reserves

The purpose of the reserves policy for the charity is to ensure the stability of the delivery of our mission, sessions, employment and ongoing operations of the charity.

Unrestricted general fund reserves are intended to provide an internal source of funds for situations such as a sudden increase in expenses, one-time unbudgeted expenses, unanticipated loss in funding or uninsured losses. The reserves are not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds.

The current target minimum for unrestricted general fund reserves is equal to three months' average operating costs, including all recurring, predictable and unavoidable expenses. It is our intention to build our reserves as we grow our expenditure and ideally increase the reserves to cover six months of operation.

Our principal risks and uncertainties

The board of directors identify risks, assess potential impact and review mitigating actions. The directors update the board of trustees on significant risks for the charity. The trustees have examined risks and established systems to mitigate the significant risks facing the charity.

Generating Income

This is an ongoing concern for the charity as it is currently heavily reliant on grant funding. Resources are being allocated to fundraising and the development of an income generation strategy that will diversify the sources of income for the charity.

Partnerships and external relations

We work cooperatively with other organisations to be able to support people and create impactful change. This can mean that we are sometimes managing different sets of expectations and that we are reputationally associated with other organisations. We will continue to carefully assess the potential consequences of entering into partnerships before doing so and ensure that key relationships are managed by an experienced team.

Loss of key personnel

As a small charity the loss of a senior team member would have a dramatic impact. Policies, process and information dissemination are all in place to reduce the requirement on any one individual. We are also prioritising funding for key roles within the organisation so everyone can be fully remunerated for their time and contribution to the project.

Relationship with local council

We operate on land rented from the local council and continue to work closely with them to ensure we are effectively communicating the value of our work and that our charitable objects are clearly seen and understood by them to align with their vision for the site and the local community. We are enormously grateful to them for their enthusiastic support for our project and continued funding.

Public Benefit Disclosure The trustees confirm they have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives, and in planning future activities. The trustees refer to public benefit throughout this report.

Plans for the year ahead

We start our second year of operations in a stronger financial position, with improved facilities, equipment and infrastructure. We are keen to build on the strong foundation created in our first year and expand our activities into new areas. We already have 15 new volunteers set to complete an induction and join the project in 2022 to help us with our work.

- We will continue to donate harvests to the refugee food bank to ensure they have a fresh supply of local, organic, nutrient dense produce.
- We have funding to ensure our refugee session continue until July at the least and we are looking to secure further funding for the rest of the year.
- There is a good deal of work that goes into maintenance of the site and structures as well as ensuring the production and harvest of our crops and we will be continuing this work with the help of our volunteers throughout the year.
- The project to provide solar energy to the workshop will be completed alongside additional furnishings and improvements to the structure.
- We are building a new website and have a new social media supporter to help share information and streamline our volunteering process enabling us to spend more time on the project.
- Our cooking sessions have proved immensely popular and thanks to the fundraising work of one volunteer we have the money aside for materials to build a cob oven.
- We of course need to continue to fundraise and will be putting time and resources into securing funds and opening new income streams.

Subject to securing additional funds we are hoping to:

- Improve rain water harvest and site irrigation reducing reliance on mains water and so reducing core running costs.
- Tree felling – necessitated by ash die back and recent heavy winds we urgently need funds to reduce the height of some trees and fell damaged trees to maintain the safety of the site.
- We are looking to plumb the workshop so we have running water for drinking and washing up rather than carrying drinking water to site and cleaning cooking equipment and utensils off site.
- We are hoping to develop the food forest bringing in additional plants to increase the site yield and diversity. The food forest is also filled with largely perennial plants meaning we will not need to plant out each year and reducing running costs in the future.
- If we can secure funding, we would love to create raised beds on the site. For some participants accessibility is an issue and these beds remove the need for kneeling and bending over while working as well as being accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Thanks to our supporters

It has been an incredibly successful first year of operations for us as a charity and much of that success is down to our incredible supporters. We have benefitted from the generosity, enthusiasm and expertise of many who have donated their time, tools, money and resources to the project. Be it chef's donating cooking utensils and sharing skills, permaculturists teaching fruit tree pruning or tree surgeons helping manage the site we have benefitted from a wide array of support.

Our promise to supporters

We care for each and every one of our supporters and in response to their generosity, we promise to:

- Safeguard their personal details
- Treat them with respect, honesty and openness
- Take into account the needs of individuals who may be in vulnerable circumstances or require additional care and support to make an informed decision
- Never put them under pressure to make or continue a gift
- Use their gifts for the purpose for which they are given, and spend donations so they have the most impact
- Respect their wishes and preferences
- Listen to them about how they want to be contacted and honour their choices
- Be receptive to feedback and use this to improve our processes and procedures
- Take appropriate action if they are unhappy with our services, and accept the authority of the Fundraising Regulator if we cannot resolve the issue

How we support our Volunteer Fundraisers

It is important to ensure that all our fundraising is conducted in an ethical way and we are committed to fair treatment of all our supporters. We work with our volunteer fundraisers who notify us that they are organising their own event in aid of Living Vital. We ensure they are provided with the appropriate information, support, resources, and acknowledgement. If we have not been notified in advance, we provide a receipt and acknowledgement after the donation has been made.

Volunteer fundraisers who are appointed by the charity must provide their contact details and two references before they are able to begin their roles. All volunteers have a designated point of contact with Living Vital and are supported in their role.

Our volunteers

We have been blessed throughout the year with a wide array of volunteers ranging in age from 18 to 80 and coming from across East and West Sussex. They are the wonderful people that have made our project possible and helped us host our refugee and migrant community and fill our food banks with a bumper crop of organically grown fresh produce. They have stood by us in the wind and the rain and humbled us with their dedication, enthusiasm and energy.



We welcomed over 80 different volunteers to the site with many now regular fixtures at our sessions. Thanks to the additional funding we secured we were able to host even more volunteer days and welcome more new faces.

Volunteering Days: 70

An increase of 33% from the previous year

Volunteering Hours: 2,220 hours

An increase of 56% from the previous year

“I love learning more and more with such an inspiring team. It’s a project that creatively inspires and creates a place of sanctuary for both plants and people. After working with other refugee charities I’ve learned that outdoor spaces (like this) are invaluable for a sense of belonging and community” - Sophie

Structure, governance, and management

Organisational Structure

Living Vital became a registered charity in England and Wales on 4 January 2021. Living Vital has been set up as a CIO using the foundation model.

Our constitution outlines the charitable purposes and the rules that govern the operation of the charity.

The charity's day-to-day activity is run and managed by the board of directors who report to the board of trustees. Trustees meet on a regular basis to set the vision, strategic framework, and discuss the budgets under which the charity operates.

The trustees set the strategic direction of the organisation and are regularly updated on grants, budgets, activities, and fundraising. New initiatives are normally developed by project managers in consultation with the directors, supported by an assessment of project needs. Trustees receive regular financial updates which form the basis of the routine financial monitoring. The charity works to ensure all stakeholders in the organisation are able to participate in its development. We listen to our client groups and many of the service delivery improvements come from our stakeholders.

Specific projects are managed by the directors who share regular project updates with stakeholders, including volunteers, staff, and trustees as appropriate.

Recruitment and appointment of trustees

The charity is managed by a board of five trustees selected because they strongly endorse the charitable objectives of the organisation and reflect its values. When selecting trustees, the charity aims to ensure there is a broad range of relevant skills.

Trustees are appointed after interviews with existing trustees and formal visits to the organisation to ensure that they understand our vision and values. Trustees are subject to Disclosure and Barring Service checks where applicable.

Our Details

Registered charity number:

1192957

Registered office:

Living Vital, Stanmer Organics, Stanmer Village, Brighton BN1 9PZ

Trustees:

Ms M Geere	(appointed 04 January 2021)
Mr N Grist	(Chair of Trustees from 04 January 2021)
Ms R Khan-Williams	(appointed 04 January 2021)
Ms R Limage	(appointed 04 January 2021)
Mr A Weston	(appointed 04 January 2021)

The trustees have not received any remuneration or reclaimed any expenses during the financial year for their work as Trustees. All members of the Trustee Board have given their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity.

In accordance with the conditions in, sections 185 to 188 of the Charities Act 2011, and in line with our Governing Document, Clause 6 one trustee Mr N Grist receives remuneration for services to the charity outside the services provided in his capacity as a Trustee. All remuneration is subject to the conditions set out in the Charities Act

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charity for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles outlined in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the latest guidance from the charity commission. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 02 August 2022

And signed on its behalf by:



N Grist – Chair of Trustees

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31 January 2022

As a CIO with gross income less than £250,000 our accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis.

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	Total Funds (£) 2022
RECEIPTS			
Grants			
Brighton and Hove Council	9,000		9,000
Sussex Community Fund		5,000	5,000
BHCC Covid Fund	2,000		2,000
National Lottery		10,000	10,000
Fundraising			
Just Giving - cob oven		309	309
General fundraising	1,655		1,655
Total	12,655	15,309	27,964
PAYMENTS			
Charitable Activities			
Session Costs	7,256		7,256
Building materials	1,080	3,466	4,546
Seeds and Inputs	1,090		1,090
Tools and utensils	763	180	943
Rent, Insurance and office	712		712
Total	10,901	3,646	14,547
Net of Receipts/(payments)	1,754	11,663	13,417
Cash funds last year end	2,143	0	2,143
CASH FUNDS AT YEAR END	3,897	11,663	15,560

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at year end

	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	
Cash Funds			
	3,897		
			11,663
Total Cash Funds	3,897		11,663
	Details	Cost (£)	Current value (£)
Assets retained for charity's own use	Buildings and Fittings	5,600	4,575
	Seeds, crops and plants	300	240
	Details	Cost (£)	When Due
Liabilities	Prepayments – rent	100	June 2022

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 January 2022

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015)'.

Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties regarding the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

Receipts

All receipts are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has access to the funds. Any income is only deferred when: - the donor specifies that the grant or donation must only be used in future accounting periods; or - the donor has imposed conditions which must be met before the charity has unconditional entitlement.

Volunteers and donated goods and services

The value of services provided by volunteers is not incorporated into these financial statements.

Payments

Expenditure is accounted for on a payments basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings, they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible Fixed Assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Buildings and structures	- 10%
Fittings and fixtures	- 25%

Fund Accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes. Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Contact Us

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 [@Living_Vital](https://www.linkedin.com/company/livingvital)

www.livingvital.co.uk

