

Year end 31 July 2021

Annual Report

MERTON HOME TUTORING SERVICE



MHTS
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Registered charity No: 1139126

A message from the Chair and the Director

The year to 31 July 2021 was quite a rollercoaster. The COVID pandemic hit hard globally, affecting all of us but impacting disadvantaged communities the most and exacerbating existing inequalities. In the UK we went through several partial or complete lockdowns and the changing restrictions inevitably affected MHTS service. However, as a result of rapidly transitioning our classes to online platforms and working remotely for a large part of the academic year, we managed to maintain the continuity of our service and make an important impact in the lives of our learners.

Attending online classes presented multiple challenges for our learners. Many of them have childcare responsibilities and with the schools being closed for a part of the winter, they found it very difficult to reconcile learning with family life and childcare. Other difficulties were related to accessing and using IT equipment and remote platforms. We responded to these challenges in many ways: we mapped our learners' digital skills and access to equipment; we offered extra training and development to our volunteers and teachers so that they could teach online more confidently; we improved our IT infrastructure; and we obtained funding from Merton Council to deliver digital access classes to the most excluded of our learners. We delivered a flexible schedule of online classes to accommodate as many learners as possible.

Despite the difficulties, we managed to achieve impressive results, detailed in the pages of this report and exemplified in the high learner uptake throughout the year (2020/21 marked a 30% increase in learner numbers in comparison with 2019/20 and a 22% increase in comparison with 2018/19), the high levels of learner achievement, and our impact in areas such as health and well-being. Staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to make this happen and learners showed their commitment and dedication to their education: We can't thank them all enough for this.

As we came out of lockdown in stages during spring 2021, we returned to face-to-face delivery for most of our classes. Our learners, volunteers and staff were delighted with this. This was reflected in the increased uptake during the summer term, which gave us renewed confidence for the new academic year.

The future will no doubt pose more challenges. The difficulties and uncertainties connected to the COVID pandemic are far from over, and rising unemployment, deprivation and poor health outcomes affect the most vulnerable in our communities. Recent statistics point to a 158% increase in unemployment across the whole London Borough of Merton and show health inequalities between the affluent and deprived areas within the borough.

As we emerge from this difficult period, we are more resolute than ever in supporting our migrant communities to face the challenges ahead and make sure that no one is left behind. We were thrilled to have welcomed back our learners in our new venue at Vestry Hall in Mitcham for the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year and the high enrolment rates have been very encouraging. We have a few exciting projects and developments in progress, including re launch of the Learn English in Merton project, funded by Merton Adult Learning, which offers a pan-borough assessment and referral service for ESOL learners. We will keep on working so that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the English language skills they need to thrive in the UK and have their voices heard.

Anne Worlledge - Chair

Viola Brisolin - Director (to 11 February 2022)

Dated: 10th May 2022

Who we are and what we do

Merton Home Tutoring Service (MHTS) was registered as a charity on 7 July 2010 and is governed by a Constitution, as amended on 16 February 2011. We are a registered charity in England and Wales (No: 1139126).

Our objective is to advance the education of adults living in the London Borough of Merton and neighbouring boroughs who do not speak English as their first language and who find it difficult to attend formal classes. To do this, we provide free English language tuition in people's own homes and in community classes.

Our strategic objectives

- Integration and community cohesion: supporting migrant communities and individuals to acquire the linguistic and cultural competences they need to improve their life prospects in the UK. Demonstrating the value that migrants bring to the UK, favouring mutual cultural understanding and cohesion.
- Accessibility and increased learner reach: Supporting people most in need and least likely to receive support elsewhere. We want to provide a holistic and individualised approach to our learners, strengthening both the quality and reach of our services.
- Resilience and wellbeing: Empowering individuals and communities to acquire the social and cultural capital they need to face adversity, combat isolation, and thrive in society.
- Excellence: Developing and supporting our staff and volunteers to deliver the best possible outcomes for learners.
- Partnership and collaboration: working proactively with communities and other service providers to bridge gaps in services for the benefit of our learners and the sustainability of their long-term outcomes.

Our Activities

- We provide ESOL tuition and support to learners in their own homes. To do this we recruit and assess volunteer tutors and train them to teach practical English one-to-one to learners, at appropriate levels. Home learners are taught for a minimum of 6 months, but often longer, and if they wish to progress further in their English studies they are invited to move to our informal classes. Some learners move on to formal college classes, to further vocational training, or to begin the process of applying for work – voluntary or paid – and to take part in community activities.
- We provide weekly community classes in English at various levels, from beginners up to Level 1. These are taught by qualified teachers. A creche is provided for some of the classes, so that those who would not normally be able to attend because of their childcare commitments are able to join our courses. This is an important part of making our service available to all who need it.
- We hold two conversation groups each week, one in Mitcham and one in Morden, run by volunteers, to give MHTS learners, or other learners in the community, a further opportunity to practise speaking English, to meet others and learn new skills.
- In 2020/21 we ran the Gaining Access digital inclusion programme, funded by Merton Adult Learning. The Gaining Access programme was created in Summer 2020, as a response to the need for learning IT skills during the pandemic. It was offered as a set of 5 short courses running throughout the academic year 2020/21. Our priority was to reach those learners in disadvantaged wards in Merton, especially learners who have little or no access to computers.

During the year 2020/21 all one-to-one tutoring sessions took place online due to Covid restrictions.

From September to November 2020, we taught all our community classes face-to-face. From November 2020 to April 2021 all our classes took place online due to Covid restrictions. We resumed face-to-face delivery in May 2021, until the end of the academic year in July 2021. We also delivered a range of training sessions to support our teachers and tutors in their transition to online teaching

Who we are and what we do

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees and Officers (the Chair, Secretary and the Treasurer) are appointed by the members at the Annual General Meeting. The Board of Trustees meets formally at least 4 times a year, with a further Strategy meeting to reflect on the effectiveness of the service and set the operational strategy for the following 3 years. The trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no benefit from MHTS.

The trustees who served during the year to 31 July 2021 were:

Dr Ruth Dawson (Chair; retired on 7 November 2020)

Anne Worlledge (Chair; from 7 November 2020), Ngozi Nwaejike (Treasurer; from 7 November 2020 to February 2022), Mary Moody (Secretary), Dr Robin Goodchild, Rozina Kader, Cathy Newbury, Pauline Rozario, Dr Daniela Wilks, Andrew Hight (from 10 February 2022 - Treasurer from 28 February 2022)

Staff

MHTS operations are run by a small and dedicated core team. The staff employed during the year to July 31 2021 were:

Viola Brisolin (Director), Sophie Johnstone (Education Coordinator, job share), Linda Ulrich (Education Coordinator, job share), Nicola Kennedy (Office Administrator)

In December 2021, after many years of invaluable service to MHTS, Sophie Johnstone, Linda Ulrich, and Nicola Kennedy stepped down from their roles as Education Coordinators and Office Administrator respectively. We want to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation for the exceptional contribution they have made to MHTS over the years. Linda Ulrich has retained her role as a sessional teacher and from January 2022 continued overseeing the Merton Adult Learning classes.

In 2021 we welcomed new staff members. Emma Cale joined us in September 2021 as Administrative Assistant. Chris Paul joined us in November 2021 as ESOL Project Coordinator to deliver the Learn English in Merton project. Finally, Angela Naughton joined us in January 2022 to take over from Linda and Sophie as Education Coordinator and Candice George joined as Office Administrator.

In February 2022 Viola Brisolin stepped down as Director. We thank her for the valuable contribution she has made to the charity. Viola joined us in August 2020 and despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, she has improved and developed the administration and management of the charity, making it more efficient and integrated. She has worked with the staff and trustees to put in place systems and processes that will stand us in good stead for the coming years and enable us to provide a better learning experience and outcome for our learners.

We are delighted to welcome our new Director. Heidi Shrimpton joined us on 19 April 2022. She is a Merton resident and has a 25-year background in the charity sector working for a range of different sized charities. Heidi was previously at SPEAR Homeless Charity for nearly 8 years where she led the fundraising, communications and volunteering department.

Who we are and what we do

Teachers and Crèche Workers

We also employ a team of experienced sessional teachers and crèche workers

We are immensely grateful for the dedication shown by our teachers during the difficulties created by the COVID pandemic.

Catherine Abley, Claire Hayles, Linda Ulrich and Claire Wadie , Iulia Berdos, Mary Brodrick and Lisa Schulkind also joined us as employed sessional teachers.

The creche workers who provided this valuable service for our learners are:

Lizzie McCarthy, Zahida Bashir, Aziza Qureshi, Misbah Qureshi and Subhaginie Srikanan



Our Activities at a glance

Home Tutoring

In the year 2020/21 we worked with a total of 23 home learners and 18 volunteer home tutors.

We delivered 67 one-to-one sessions in term 1; 76 one-to-one sessions in term 2; and 113 one-to-one sessions in term 3, totalling 256 one-to-one sessions.

All the sessions took place online.



Classes



In the year 2020/21 we ran 9 weekly classes in term 1; 13 weekly classes in term 2 (including online sessions); and 14 weekly classes in term 3 (including online sessions), totalling 360 sessions over the full academic year.

Classes were taught by 4 qualified sessional teachers and by 3 volunteers and attended by 126 learners.

Sessions covered levels from E1 to L1 and included 1 accredited exam class (accredited by the English Speaking Board), 5 short digital skills courses for ESOL speakers funded by Merton Adult Learning, and 2 open level conversation groups.

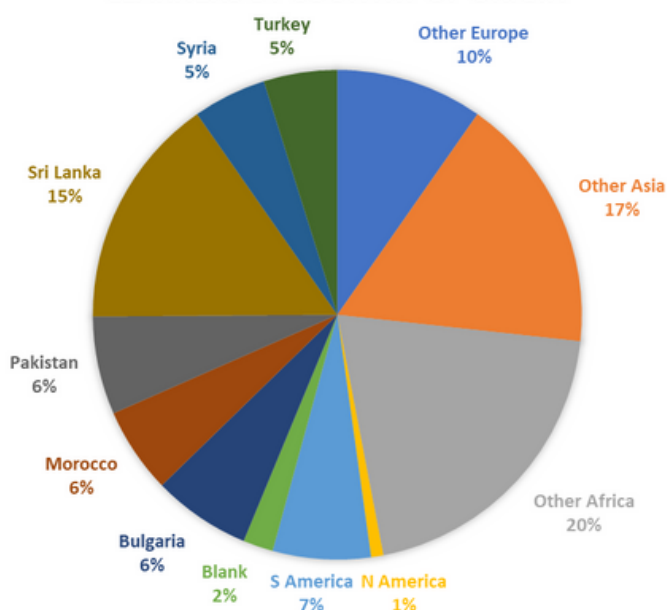
Our impact at a glance

In the year 2020/21 we worked with 149 learners.

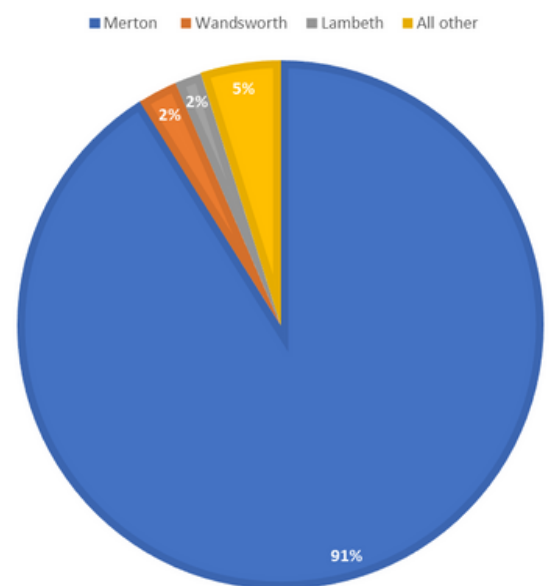
- Of these, 88% achieved their learning outcomes, improving their spoken and written English.
- 8 learners gained accreditation in both Speaking and Listening and in Writing from the English Speaking Board
- 5 home learners progressed to group classes
- 59 class learners progressed to higher level MHTS classes
- 14 learners progressed to external accredited learning or higher-level courses
- 13 learners progressed to paid work or volunteering.
- 96% of surveyed class learners and 95% of surveyed home learners reported increased confidence and better health and wellbeing.
- 83% of surveyed class learners and 80% of surveyed home learners reported improved social life and communication skills



LEARNERS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



LEARNERS BY BOROUGH



Learners' voices, learners' stories

We are reminded every day of the difference we make in people's lives. Learners are full of praise and appreciation for their tutors and teachers, showing how crucial MHTS work has been especially in the last year, when isolation and difficulties were exacerbated for many of our learners. For example:

"Thank you so much for everything and for all the help and to be there when I most need."

"We can't thank enough my tutor, S., and everyone at Merton Home Tutoring for providing these lessons at home. My mother has severe arthritis in both her knees and finds it very hard to walk. It is great that my mother can learn English sitting at home in one-to-one session. Keep up the good work."

"I am very grateful to her for the way and affection L. (teacher) has in all classes, she made me lose the trauma and the block that I always felt and today I go to the GP and I can take my exam and schedule it myself and a very big achievement and I feel very happy and grateful to her and you for your help."

"I don't get shy when I'm speaking to anyone in English. [...] Teacher is teaching with love and kindness."

"I like that we didn't stop the courses in the pandemic. The course is perfect [...]. Every day I learn any different, I have one year taking in this course. I realized my grammar and understanding improve. I have one year in your course and I feel very happy and confident, when I arrived to London I was frightened and shy."

"Now I became a confident person, this course it's wonderful"

"These English classes are life saving for me"



Learners' voices, learners' stories

F's story:

F is from India and arrived in the UK in 2013. In her own country, F taught Commerce, History and Maths in a High School for 17 years. She also did private tutoring.

F entered the MHTS exam class in January 2019 and has now achieved certificates in Speaking, Listening and Writing at level L1 (upper intermediate). She will be taking the L1 Reading exam this month. She was awarded a Teacher's Assistant certificate in 2020, as well as Accountancy at Level 3. As F wanted to continue her career in the classroom, we asked her if she would like to volunteer in the new MHTS Literacy class. This class helps those who have excellent speaking skills but struggle to read and write. It requires individual attention for each learner and is therefore time-intensive: the teacher was happy to have a teaching assistant with her. F has been successful both in gaining classroom experience and in supporting the Literacy learners.



Manal's story:

Manal and her family were the first Syrian family to be settled in Merton under the community settlement programme.

We first met Manal in 2017. At the time she was an Entry level learner, with very little English: Manal needed an interpreter and could not write her name.

In the years since then, she has made such amazing progress. Part of the reason has been the ESOL package that MHTS were able to provide: 3-4 classes a week, plus a home tutor for several years. Another reason is the support she received from members of the Salvation Army, from daily contact to several times a week.

However, the main reason is that Manal has great motivation. At times, this has been difficult because of her daughter's health and regular hospital appointments. Since Manal left MHTS in 2021 she has had success at College. She is now Entry 2 ESOL and is taking a Level 1 Maths class, which she is really enjoying.

Manal has recently contacted us to ask us to sponsor her for a 10K run. Manal is running to raise funds for the Salvation Army to help others. It is fantastic to see how far she's come and that she is now fundraising to help others.

As well as running, Manal excels in the kitchen and is a talented chef. She has catered for MHTS events and introduced us to the delights of Syrian cuisine.



Organisational developments

Despite the many challenges, 2020/21 was a year of positive changes and growth for MHTS. Staff and Trustees worked tirelessly towards MHTS's strategic objectives.

In 2020/21 we worked to achieve these objectives in the following ways:

- We developed an MHTS quality framework and a curriculum based on key competences, mapped on the ESOL adult curriculum and encompassing our key themes: work and volunteering; active citizenship; health and wellbeing; digital inclusion. We developed a “learner journey map” with clear progression routes and learning pathways for our learners.
- We reviewed our processes and procedures and put in place a robust quality system to improve our learner experience.
- We increased and enhanced the support offered to staff and volunteers via a structured programme of training and supervisions. This included training on remote teaching, new lone working training and procedures, and improved teacher and volunteer handbooks.
- We have introduced a new database which will give us the tools to better keep track of and evidence the outcomes and impact of our work. From February 2022 we have the first “live” version to develop further, and build in our current and historic data.
- We started our Matrix accreditation journey, working towards our self-assessment; we are planning to become accredited by summer 2022.
- We secured funding from Merton Council/Merton Adult Learning to run a single access point (assessment and referral) for residents seeking ESOL classes in the borough. The service, called Learn English in Merton, builds on the success of our previous Learn English Together project. We are working in partnership with local ESOL providers to coordinate their offer, create a seamless experience for learners, and to run a best practice and capacity building forum.
- We are also contracted by Merton Adult Learning to run ESOL classes incorporating Digital Skills, Employability, and Citizenship in 2021/22.

Our Funders

We are extremely grateful to all our funders: by supporting our work they are contributing to changing the lives of our learners and improving local communities.

City Bridge Trust



National Lottery



Garfield Western Foundation



Merton Adult Learning, London
Borough of Merton



The Henry Smith Charity



Our Volunteers

A massive thank you to our volunteer tutors who supported us during the year to 31 July 2021

Amal Al Natour, Catherine Abley, Deborah Anthony, Helen Atkin, Julia Berdos, Claire Bolt, Sophie Booth, Mary Broderick, Nudrat Chagtai, Anjala Cooppan, Dr Ruth Dawson, Claire Denning, Margaret Donaldson, Ann Doyle, Olivia Ford, Sandra Fox, Barbara Harris, Paul Hockley, Cecelia Hue, Lucy Ismail, Sorayya Khan, Nicola Kennedy, Judith Kidd, Anna Link, Suzanne Lyse, Marion Maniura, Tim Maskell, Elaine McCormack, Marion Maniura, Bridget Middleton, Clare Miller, Mary Moody (Moreton), Jema Norman Smith, Sue Phelan, Sue Robertson, Pauline Rozario, Alieu Sagnia, Julia Semmer, Angela Shaw, Susan Stacey, Ann Stephenson, Michael Thornton-Hanks, Claire Wadie, Dr Daniela Wilks, William Wilson, Christine Wright.



Financials

Finance Report for the year ended 31 July 2021

Funding

The year to 31 July 2021 was an exceptional and uncertain year, but with the support of our funders we were able to deliver online ESOL classes and one to one tutoring to clients throughout the year and were able to retain staff in post. We are immensely grateful for the support given to us by our funders – The National Lottery, City Bridge Trust, the Henry Smith Charity, Garfield Weston Foundation and Merton Adult Learning. All of the funders worked with us to ensure that we had sufficient funds to enable us to continue to deliver our service, despite the changes we had to make to meet the restrictions and to ensure the health and wellbeing of our learners and staff.

With specific funding from The National Lottery we have been able to take time in the financial year to 31 July 2021 to design and develop a client database/ recording system. This system will allow us to record a clear picture of the progress the learners are making and demonstrate how the improvement in English has impacted on their lives. This project is almost complete and will go live in January 2022. We have also been able to improve our IT systems allowing for better sharing of management and teaching resources by staff and volunteers.

The National Lottery is also providing funding for strategic projects which we were not able to undertake in the year to 31 July 2021, or to date, but will hopefully be able to progress in the latter part of the year to 31 July 2022, or the following year, restrictions permitting.

At 31 July 2021 we had secured funding to cover our expected operating costs for the financial year to 31 July 2022. We continue to work with our funders, and with new funders, to secure our financial stability for the coming years.

We were successful in securing renewed funding from Merton Adult Learning to provide a series of short courses for ESOL learners, based on employability, digital skills and citizenship. These courses started in September 2021.

Learn English Together project

The Learn English Together project, in partnership with Merton Council, continued at a reduced level during the year. In July 2021 we were able to secure future funding from Merton Adult Learning and the project has been re-instated as Learn English in Merton.

The project is now underway, the project staff are in place, and we look forward to working with other ESOL providers in Merton to provide a “one-stop” assessment and referral service for those wanting to learn English, and also look forward to working in partnership with other ESOL providers in creating and sharing teaching resources and good practice.

Financials

Finances

We started the year with a bank balance of £173,500 and closed the year on 31 July with a balance of £122,983. This closing balance includes £64,677 (2020: £116,993) in respect of restricted funds which we have carried forward to meet costs in this new financial year, and £58,306 (2020: £56,459) of general funds, which we can use to meet any unexpected costs.

Our total costs in the year were £121,055 (2020: £133,606). The reduction in costs is due to the decrease in face-to-face activity (principally, room hire for classes and creche) and the significant reduction in activity in the Learn English Together project (staff costs and operational costs). We were able to access government support (through the Furlough Scheme) to allow us to retain the creche staff during the continued uncertainty.

Restricted funds

	Balance at 1 August 2020 £	Income in the year £	Expenditure £	Balance at 31 July 2021 £
Henry Smith Charity	17,975	12,500	23,037	7,437
Merton Council (LET)	25,243	5,000	12,259	17,984
Viridor		3,937		3,937
Merton Adult Learning		3,068	2,581	487
City Bridge Trust	31,968	10,750	33,537	9,181
The National Lottery	31,492	33,425	39,831	25,086
Garfield Weston Foundation	10,315		9,750	565
	<u>116,993</u>	<u>68,680</u>	<u>120,995</u>	<u>64,677</u>

Reserves Policy

The trustees of MHTS have agreed that we should aim to have general reserves equivalent to 25% of the annual running costs. These reserves are to allow the charity to continue as smoothly as possible when funding is uncertain. General reserves are funds held by a charity that are not restricted for a specific purpose and can be used to meet any of its costs.

At 31 July 2021, a reserves policy of 25% of our expected operating costs for the year to 31 July 2022 would represent general reserves of around £63,800. The reserves at 31 July 2021 were £58,306. We also had secured funding in place to meet our expected operating costs for the year to 31 July 2022.

The trustees will continue to review the level of reserves needed in the light of the increased level of activities.

Ngozi Nwaejike C.A. (Hon Treasurer to 28th February 2022)

Andrew Hight FCA (Hon Treasurer from 28th February 2022)

Financials

Independent Examiners Report

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Merton Home Tutoring Service

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Merton Home Tutoring Service (the Charity) for the period ended 31st July 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charities accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Mark Blackwell ACMA
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Chartered Management Accountant
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Whitton
TWICKENHAM
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TW2 7LL

Financials

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 July 2021

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted funds £	Year to 31 July 2021 £	Year to 31 July 2020 £
RECEIPTS				
Grants received	-	68,680	68,680	230,168
Donations	1,676	-	1,676	6,130
Fundraising income	-	-	-	3,584
Other income	214	-	214	226
Interest	16	-	16	124
TOTAL INCOME	1,906	68,680	70,586	240,233
PAYMENTS				
Fundraising costs	-	-	-	1,068
Staff costs	-	95,910	95,910	103,277
Room rental for classes and creche, and expenses for creche	-	5,036	5,036	7,778
Training of home tutors	-	400	400	1,374
Books, stationery and teaching aids	-	300	300	1,218
Events with learners	-	126	126	765
Attendance at conferences and subscriptions to other organisations	-	200	200	265
Commissioning booklets	-	-	-	325
Website and IT costs	-	2,603	2,603	1,499
Volunteers expenses	-	-	-	33
Insurance	-	833	833	805
Telephone and postages	-	215	215	196
Sundry expenses	60	1,756	1,816	255
Payroll costs	-	942	942	-
Equipment	-	2,806	2,806	3,965
Independent Examination and AGM	-	720	720	42
Staff training	-	2,934	2,934	1,770
LET Marketing materials	-	-	-	1,523
LET Website development	-	-	-	1,845
Room hire - LET sessions	-	209	209	2,886
Staff travel -LET	-	-	-	1,955
Payroll Services- LET	-	-	-	762
TOTAL PAYMENTS	60	120,995	121,055	133,606
NET RECEIPTS IN THE YEAR	1,846	(52,316)	(50,469)	106,627
Cash funds brought forward	56,459	116,993	173,452	66,872
Cash funds at the year end	58,306	64,677	122,983	173,500

Statement of Assets and Liabilities at 31 July 2021

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Year to 31 July 2021 £	Year to 31 July 2020 £
Cash balances at HSBC	58,306	64,677	122,983	173,500
Liabilities	-	-	-	-
Net Assets	58,306	64,677	122,983	173,500