



Cohesive Society CIC

Annual Report

PART 1 – GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY'S ACTIVITIES AND IMPACT

Introduction

Cohesive Society CIC, a beacon of hope, inclusion, and empowerment, serves communities across Northamptonshire and beyond. As a not-for-profit social enterprise, our mission is to foster cohesion, alleviate hardship, and create opportunities where they are most needed. We are a bridge between communities and institutions, a safety net for vulnerable groups, and a platform for personal growth and collective advancement, ensuring that all voices are heard and all needs are met.

The financial year under review has been one of both significant challenges and considerable achievements. In a period marked by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, rising demand for welfare and health support, and the need for the integration of diverse diaspora communities, Cohesive Society CIC has responded with unwavering resilience, innovative solutions, and a deep sense of compassion, inspiring hope in the face of adversity.

Our programmes have spanned philanthropy, health and well-being, employment, skills training, housing and immigration support, cultural enrichment, legal and advocacy services, and education. In all cases, the guiding principle has been to meet people where they are, to recognise their dignity, and to provide practical solutions that lead to longer-term empowerment.



We have worked closely with local and national partners—including Voice4Change England, Public Health Northamptonshire, Sports England, the National Lottery Community Fund, West Northamptonshire Council, the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, and others. These collaborations have led to successful initiatives such as our mental health awareness sessions, the 'Walk to be Healthy' programme, and our employment workshops, ensuring that our grassroots interventions are amplified by policy alignment and structural collaboration.

In this report, we set out in detail the activities undertaken and the significant impact achieved, a testament to the effectiveness of our efforts and the difference we have made in the lives of many.



Philanthropy and Charitable Support

Charitable and philanthropic action remains at the heart of Cohesive Society CIC's ethos. Over the past year, we have supported families in crisis with emergency grants, food parcels, and monetary assistance. With energy bills soaring and essentials becoming unaffordable for many, our small but vital contributions have enabled households to keep the lights on, feed their children, and maintain dignity in the face of adversity.

A notable aspect of our charitable work has been its **cultural sensitivity**. For Muslim families, we have ensured halal food provision; for Hindu, Sikh, and other communities, we have respected dietary needs; and for indigenous British families, we have provided familiar staples. Such thoughtfulness reinforces trust and ensures inclusivity.

Beyond immediate needs, our philanthropy has extended to **community spaces**. For example, we have donated defibrillators to local centres, organised health awareness sessions, and offered book donations to support literacy.

Community Cohesion and Integration

Community cohesion is both our name and our purpose. In Northamptonshire's multi-ethnic environment, we have consistently worked to break down barriers and bring communities together.

- **Dialogue and cultural exchange forums** have enabled people from Bangladeshi, Indian, Arab, Somali, and indigenous backgrounds to share experiences.
- Our **Book Clubs** for non-English-speaking diaspora communities have encouraged reading in both English and native languages, blending cultural pride with linguistic integration.
- We have supported diaspora communities in **celebrating their heritage** while engaging with mainstream society—ensuring that culture becomes a bridge, not a barrier.

A highlight of this year has been our **heritage storytelling sessions**, where elders from Bangladeshi and Arab backgrounds shared migration histories with young British-born audiences. Such intergenerational work has deepened understanding and reduced cultural isolation.

Health and Well-being

Our work in health and well-being has been expansive, covering both physical and mental health.

- In partnership with **Public Health Northamptonshire**, we delivered culturally sensitive sessions on **mental health awareness**, especially targeting communities where stigma prevents open discussion.
- Through **Sports England funding**, we expanded our "Walk to be Healthy" programme, particularly encouraging women from BAME backgrounds to engage in physical activity.
- We have supported individuals in **navigating the NHS system**, including GP registrations, translation at appointments, and assistance with hospital access.

The measurable outcomes include improved health literacy, reduced isolation, and increased community confidence in engaging with health services



Employment Help and Job Skills Training

Employment remains a pathway out of poverty, and Cohesive Society CIC has prioritised job readiness.

- Working with the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** and **Universal Credit advisors**, we have assisted claimants with determining their benefit entitlements, addressing sanctions, and appealing decisions.
- We have delivered **job skills workshops** on CV preparation, interview practice, and digital literacy.
- Our **computer training classes for adults** have helped older migrants develop essential IT skills, enabling them to engage with online services and apply for jobs.
- For young people, we have provided **career guidance**, connecting them with apprenticeships and training.

One notable success story involved a single mother from the Bangladeshi community who, after attending our IT and CV workshops, secured a part-time administrative role that fitted around her childcare responsibilities.

Immigration and Housing Support

Given the significant number of migrants and refugees in Northampton, our role in **immigration and housing support** has been crucial.

We have:

- Assisted individuals in completing immigration forms, visa applications, and family reunion paperwork.
- Provided **advocacy in housing matters**, including liaising with West Northamptonshire Council housing officers and landlords to secure safe accommodation.
- Supported asylum seekers in understanding their rights and navigating the complex Home Office procedures.

Where required, we have drawn upon our network of **legal advisors and volunteers** to represent or guide individuals in immigration hearings or housing disputes.



Representation and Legal Advocacy

Many community members face daunting encounters with institutions. Cohesive Society CIC has stepped in to provide **representation in courts and tribunals**, ensuring that vulnerable individuals are not left voiceless.

We have:

- Assisted with benefit appeals.
- Supported in immigration tribunals.
- Helped families with tenancy issues.

Our **legal volunteers and advisors** have played a key role, offering their expertise pro bono and ensuring fairness in processes where language, culture, or resources might otherwise disadvantage community members. As a result of their work, we have seen successful benefit appeals, positive outcomes in immigration tribunals, and families securing their tenancy rights.

Cultural and Artistic Initiatives

Culture and art are integral to community cohesion, and Cohesive Society CIC has proudly promoted creative expression.

- We have facilitated **painting and visual arts classes**, led by artists such as Abu Jafar, enabling young people and women to express themselves through creativity.
- These sessions have provided both therapeutic value and skill development, opening pathways into artistic practice and creative industries.
- Our cultural events have celebrated the richness of diaspora traditions while engaging the wider public.

By incorporating art into our community work, we have fostered confidence, pride, and a sense of cohesion.



Volunteer Engagement and Student Placements

Our volunteers are the backbone of Cohesive Society CIC. They have delivered leaflets, arranged meeting spaces, provided administrative support, and assisted at events. Many have done so while overcoming personal challenges, and we have ensured that their contributions are recognised and valued.

We have also strengthened ties with higher education institutions:

- The **University of Northampton** and the **University of East London** have provided student volunteers for **placements during session breaks**. These students have brought fresh energy and skills, while also gaining practical experience in community development.
- Their involvement has expanded our capacity, enabling us to reach a broader audience and deliver a wider range of services.

This symbiotic relationship between students and our organisation exemplifies the spirit of shared growth.

Case Studies

To illustrate the impact more vividly, we include anonymised case studies:

- **Case Study 1: Employment Support**
- A young Somali man, recently unemployed, attended our CV workshop. With tailored guidance, he secured a logistics job within weeks. He has since reported an improvement in confidence and stability for his family.
- **Case Study 2: Housing Advocacy**
- A Bangladeshi widow facing eviction approached us in distress. Our volunteers liaised with the council and secured temporary accommodation, preventing her from becoming homeless.
- **Case Study 3: Mental Health Support**
- An Arab mother suffering from depression was referred by a GP social prescriber. Through our women's well-being classes, she built friendships, improved her mental health, and now volunteers with us herself.



Partnerships and Collaborations

Our partnerships have multiplied our impact. Highlights include:

- **Voice4Change England:** influencing national dialogue on racial equality.
- **Public Health Northamptonshire:** joint delivery of culturally appropriate health services.
- **Sports England:** enabling grassroots sports and physical activity projects.
- **National Lottery Community Fund:** supporting mental health and cultural initiatives.
- **West Northamptonshire Council:** collaborating on cost-of-living relief.
- **Home Office:** Working with Migrants and Asylum Seekers.
- **DWP and Universal Credit:** helping claimants navigate the welfare system.



Forward-Looking Vision

Looking ahead, Cohesive Society CIC intends to:

- Expand its **arts and cultural programmes**, showcasing community creativity.
- Develop a **dedicated advice hub** for immigration, housing, and welfare.
- Strengthen collaborations with universities, offering more placements and research opportunities.
- Scale up our **mental health and well-being projects** to ensure sustainability.
- Launch digital literacy initiatives to ensure that no one is excluded in an increasingly online world.

Conclusion

The year under review has demonstrated both the necessity and effectiveness of Cohesive Society CIC. From philanthropic aid to legal advocacy, from health promotion to arts, from skills training to immigration and housing support, we have provided holistic assistance to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Our work has not only **alleviated hardship** but also **fostered cohesion**, enabling communities to thrive together. By combining grassroots empathy with structured collaboration, we have established ourselves as a cornerstone of support and empowerment in Northamptonshire.

Cohesive Society CIC stands as proof that when communities come together, guided by compassion and commitment, they can overcome adversity and build a future rooted in dignity, opportunity, and shared belonging.



PART 2 – CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Introduction

Consultation with stakeholders is an essential part of Cohesive Society CIC's governance, delivery, and sustainability. As a Community Interest Company, we are accountable not only to our directors but also to the wide range of beneficiaries, partners, funders, and collaborators who shape and inform our work.

During the financial year under review, Cohesive Society CIC has maintained a strong ethos of **listening, engaging, and responding** to its stakeholders. Stakeholder consultation has taken place formally through structured meetings, workshops, and evaluation processes, as well as informally through ongoing dialogue and feedback channels. In every instance, feedback has been treated not as a formality but as a vital source of guidance, enabling us to refine services, address unmet needs, and strengthen community trust.

The following sections set out who our stakeholders are, how they have been consulted, and the actions we have taken in response.

1. The Directors

The directors are the principal decision-makers of Cohesive Society CIC. They are formally consulted before any relevant issue or decision is considered.

Methods of Consultation

- **Regular Board Meetings** are held quarterly, with additional extraordinary meetings convened as needed to address urgent issues.
- **Written Reports and Briefings:** circulated ahead of meetings to ensure informed decision-making.
- **One-to-One Consultation:** where specialist expertise is required, directors are individually consulted by the Chair.

Response to Feedback

The directors' guidance has directly shaped strategic choices. For instance:

- Approval of new projects funded by the National Lottery or Sport England.
- Agreement to expand services to include immigration and housing support, based on emerging demand.
- Strategic decisions on entering into partnerships with universities for student placements.

Directors' Consultation ensures that decisions are **collective, accountable, and compliant** with the CIC's governance requirements.



2. Beneficiaries and Service Users

Our **primary stakeholders** are the individuals and families who benefit from our services, ranging from Bangladeshi, Arab, Indian, Somali, and Ugandan diaspora communities to mainstream indigenous British citizens.

Methods of Consultation

- **Community Forums:** open meetings where beneficiaries share concerns and suggestions.
- **Feedback Forms:** distributed after workshops, training sessions, and well-being programmes.
- **One-to-One Support Sessions:** informal conversations often reveal service gaps or emerging needs.
- **Digital channels, including** email, social media, and WhatsApp groups, enable rapid Consultation.

Response to Feedback

Beneficiary feedback has led to tangible changes:

- **Mental Health Stigma:** feedback from Bangladeshi women highlighted reluctance to attend mainstream mental health services. In response, we launched culturally sensitive well-being classes with female facilitators.
- **IT Barriers:** Older adults expressed difficulty accessing online services. We introduced adult computer training workshops.
- **Housing Needs:** repeated requests for assistance with housing insecurity led us to strengthen our advocacy with West Northamptonshire Council housing services.
- **Language Support:** Arab and Bengali beneficiaries requested bilingual materials. We produced translated leaflets and used bilingual volunteers in advice sessions.

These actions show that we actively adapt our services to community needs.

3. Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of our organisation and a key stakeholder group. They range from local community members to students undertaking placements.

Methods of Consultation

- **Volunteer Induction Sessions:** include structured feedback opportunities.
- **Regular Team Meetings:** Volunteers meet with staff and directors to discuss challenges and offer suggestions for improvement.
- **Anonymous Surveys:** allow volunteers to voice opinions without hesitation.
- **Informal Conversations:** day-to-day discussions provide insight into operational issues.



Response to Feedback

- Volunteers requested more structured roles. We introduced more explicit role descriptions (leaflet distribution, meeting arrangements, admin, translation).
- Some volunteers asked for skills recognition. We introduced **certificates of appreciation** and letters of reference.
- Students on placement from the University of Northampton and the University of East London requested exposure to real-life casework. We arranged supervised participation in advice sessions, enriching their experience.

By consulting volunteers, we ensure mutual benefit: their development as well as the organisation's growth.

4. Funders and Granting Bodies

Our funders, including the **National Lottery Community Fund**, **Sport England**, **West Northamptonshire Council**, and **Public Health Northamptonshire**, are significant stakeholders.

Methods of Consultation

- **Formal Reporting:** Quarterly and annual reports submitted as per grant agreements.
- **Review Meetings:** funders often meet with our staff to discuss progress.
- **Joint Planning:** Some funders, like Sport England, engage in collaborative programme design.

Response to Feedback

- A National Lottery officer encouraged us to document case studies for evaluation; we implemented an anonymised case study collection.
- Sports England advised us to include more women in physical activity projects; we responded with the "Walk to be Healthy for Hima" women's group.
- West Northamptonshire Council feedback highlighted the need for more cost-of-living support; we expanded food and monetary aid services.

This demonstrates responsiveness and accountability to those who fund our work.

5. Local Authorities and Statutory Bodies

We maintain strong ties with statutory bodies, including **West Northamptonshire Council**, the **Home Office**, and the **Department for Work and Pensions**.

Methods of Consultation

- **Formal Consultations:** through council committees and policy forums.
- **Joint Casework:** with DWP and Universal Credit advisors on claimant issues.
- **Feedback Loops:** where statutory partners share service gaps for us to address.



Response to Feedback

- Housing officers asked us to support tenants in understanding tenancy rights; we developed simple guidance leaflets.
- DWP staff requested more advocacy for non-English speakers; we increased interpreter availability.
- Home Office engagement highlighted the need for asylum seeker support; we expanded our immigration guidance service.

By aligning with statutory bodies, we ensure complementarity rather than duplication.

6. Partner Organisations

Our partnerships extend to **Voice4Change England**, **Stunited.org**, the **British Bangladeshi Association UK**, and various grassroots community organisations.

Methods of Consultation

- **Joint Planning Meetings:** to align project aims.
- **Community Roundtables:** where multiple organisations discuss shared challenges.
- **Collaborative Reporting:** partners provide feedback on joint initiatives.
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Response to Feedback

- Voice4Change England stressed the importance of influencing policy. We increased our advocacy role in national forums.
- The British Bangladeshi Association requested collaboration on mental health awareness; we co-hosted events in London.
- Grassroots organisations highlighted the need for translation support; we provided bilingual outreach.

7. Universities and Educational Institutions

Our stakeholders include the **University of Northampton** and the **University of East London**, which provide student placements.

Methods of Consultation

- **Placement Planning Meetings:** with university supervisors.
- **Student Feedback Sessions:** during and after placements.
- **Evaluation Reports:** to assess student contribution and organisational benefit.



Response to Feedback

- Students requested broader experience. We involved them in casework, cultural events, and research.
- Universities asked us to provide structured supervision. We designated senior volunteers as placement mentors.
- Placement evaluations suggested stronger links between academia and practice. We now share anonymised community data for student projects.

8. Community Leaders and Faith Groups

Local imams, priests, and community elders are influential stakeholders.

Methods of Consultation

- **Faith-Based Meetings:** held in mosques, churches, and community halls.
- **Advisory Roles:** leaders consulted on sensitive topics such as mental health stigma.

Response to Feedback

- Faith leaders advised culturally respectful framing of well-being programmes. We adjusted terminology, focusing on "well-being" rather than "mental illness."
- Community elders stressed intergenerational gaps. We launched storytelling sessions linking elders with youth.

9. Wider Public and Indigenous Communities

Though our primary focus is diaspora groups, indigenous citizens are also stakeholders.

Methods of Consultation

- **Public Cultural Events:** Open to all; feedback forms are available.
- **Cross-Community Forums:** promoting integration.

Response to Feedback

- Some local residents expressed curiosity about diaspora culture. We arranged multicultural exhibitions.
- Feedback emphasised the need for inclusivity. We broadened invitations beyond BAME groups.



10. Methods of Consultation – Cross-Cutting Themes

Our consultation methods are diverse but share common principles:

- **Accessibility:** Utilisation of translation services, interpreters, and culturally sensitive formats.
- **Transparency:** clear communication of organisational decisions.
- **Accountability:** prompt action based on feedback.
- **Inclusivity:** ensuring all voices, from directors to service users, are heard.

Actions Taken in Response – Key Examples

1. **Expansion of Services**
 - Feedback from service users on immigration challenges led to the formalisation of immigration guidance support.
 - Housing feedback led to stronger advocacy on tenancy rights.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity**
 - Adjusting language and delivery of well-being programmes following community leader feedback.
 - Providing bilingual resources following requests from Arab and Bengali speakers.
3. **Youth and Education**
 - Developing student placements into structured roles after university consultations.
 - Introducing creative arts projects following youth feedback.
4. **Cost-of-Living Crisis**
 - Expanding monetary and food aid following council and beneficiary consultations.
5. **Volunteer Development**
 - Introducing certificates and references in response to volunteer feedback.

Challenges in Consultation

While we strive for inclusive Consultation, challenges remain:

- Some beneficiaries hesitate to give feedback due to cultural norms.
- Language barriers persist despite bilingual volunteers.
- Limited resources restrict the scale of formal surveys.

We continue to refine our methods to overcome these barriers.



Conclusion

Stakeholder consultation is not a peripheral activity for Cohesive Society CIC—it is central to our identity as a community-rooted organisation. By listening to directors, beneficiaries, volunteers, funders, statutory bodies, universities, partners, and the wider public, we ensure that our work is **responsive, accountable, and effective**.

Directors are always consulted before any relevant issue is considered, ensuring compliance with governance. At the same time, community voices and partner feedback drive service innovation and adaptation.

The actions described demonstrate a consistent pattern: feedback leads to reflection, which leads to change. This dynamic process has strengthened Cohesive Society CIC's ability to deliver meaningful impact, embodying the principles of community interest and social responsibility upon which the company was founded.



PART 3 – DIRECTORS' REMUNERATION – if you have provided complete details in your accounts, you need not reproduce them here. Please clearly identify the information within the accounts and confirm that, "There were no other transactions or arrangements in connection with the remuneration of directors, or compensation for director's loss of office, which require to be disclosed" (See example with full notes). If no remuneration was received, you must state that "no remuneration was received" below.

"There were no other transactions or arrangements in connection with the remuneration of directors, or compensation for director's loss of office, which require to be disclosed"

"no remuneration was received"



PART 4 – TRANSFERS OF ASSETS OTHER THAN FOR FULL CONSIDERATION.

In accordance with the reporting requirements for Community Interest Companies, Cohesive Society CIC confirms that during the accounting period under review, **no transfers of assets, property, or resources were made to any external bodies, individuals, or organisations other than for full and proper consideration.**

All financial transactions and asset management have been conducted in line with the company's constitution, governance framework, and the principles of transparency and accountability that underpin our status as a Community Interest Company.

Where donations, grants, or in-kind support were made to beneficiaries—such as the provision of food parcels, well-being equipment, or emergency monetary support—these were categorised strictly as **project-related charitable activities** funded by external grants or community funds, and were entirely in keeping with the company's stated social objectives. These items did not constitute asset transfers to outside bodies but rather represented direct programme delivery to our service users.

Accordingly, for the purposes of this statutory return:

"No transfer of assets other than for full consideration has been made in the accounting period."