

Birmingham International Student Homes

Annual Review
2022



Supportive

Caring

Safe

Friendly

Comfortable



Birmingham International
Student Homes

Chairman's Message



As I reflect on the last twelve months with BISH, although there is much that has changed in our day to day business, the way we view and value our residents and staff alongside our core mission of providing a “**Home Away from Home**” remains all the more important and pertinent in the shadow of the Pandemic where we relied so heavily on each other's assistance for comfort and safety.

When the world started to open back up in late 2021 and the Pandemic began fading into the background and confidence slowly started returning for overseas students. With UK travel restrictions first easing and then being removed completely in early 2022 making travel much easier, the enquiries for accommodation began to increase. Both houses continued to be in recovery mode for the majority of this period with most universities deciding to keep the hybrid teaching model in place at the beginning of the academic year.

With overseas students continuing to return to the UK for their studies, this meant that occupancy levels at both of our houses started to rise with the easing of travel restrictions and have remained consistently high for the latter part of the year. As we experienced the influx of more students returning, the income from accommodation rebounded, along with a sense of stability of month on month cash flow and this in turn meant less reliance was placed upon the reserves to ensure the business could sustain the return to normal, including increasing staff levels again.

The lessons learned during the pandemic and the significant changes made in our operations, particularly service levels and efficiencies, have helped to streamline and improve the experience for both our residents and staff going forward and our philosophy of creating a “**Home Away from Home**” is still at the heart of everything we do.

Chairman's Message

The Board continues to meet in person, but on a quarterly basis, as life has continued to return to normal and although expenditure is still closely watched, plans for future refurbishment and improvements are now being formalised with some essential maintenance to the electrical system at Asbury already undertaken in May 2022.

Changes to the website application forms and our booking system, along with our dedicated Lettings Co-ordinator Susie (appointed in January 2022) have allowed us a greater insight into our residents' accommodation needs and what they want from us in terms of information and assistance. Susie has helped tremendously in streamlining our systems and improving the application process to be more efficient.

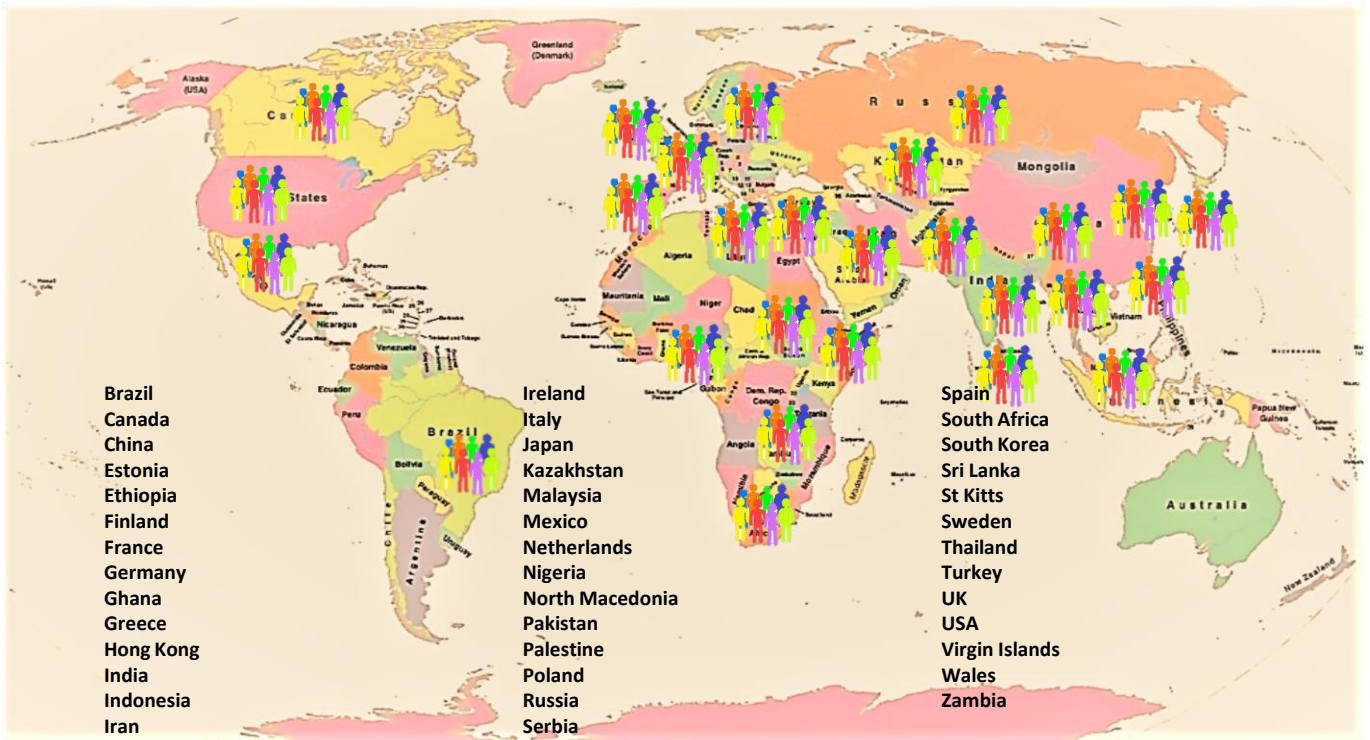
The main challenge for the coming year will be utility prices and the uncertainty of a volatile market since the War in Ukraine along with high inflation and the cost of living crisis in the UK are a source of concern for many people including students and we will endeavour to support our residents through this difficult time.

As we continue to improve our online presence and social media profile, we still see recommendation of our accommodation by previous residents and colleagues as one of the main ways in which new residents come to us. We take this as a huge compliment in such a digital world and our success in our mission to provide a "**Home Away from Home**" environment to support our guests is once again underpinned by our amazing dedicated staff - our BISH family.

I and the Directors wish to record our appreciation to all the staff and supporters of the Birmingham International Student Homes for their continuing hard work and dedication to our purpose and we look forward with confidence to the future.

Andrew Steel

Where are our resident's from?



The Chairman's Report details how we saw the effects of the pandemic begin to fade as the world started to open up and more students came to Birmingham and to stay at BISH. Whilst the number of nationalities living with us has not quite reached the pre-pandemic levels, we are delighted that our residents have come from 41 different countries over the past year. Furthermore, the factors detailed by our Chairman about growing levels of occupancy towards the latter part of the year has resulted in us having 219 people staying with us. Once again, our flats have enabled us to accommodate a number of families and we have had the pleasure of hearing the voices of 22 children in our accommodation.

Our residents

In the past year we have seen:



41 nations



219 residents
112 at Asbury
85 at Wesley



22 children

Life at BISH

Thank you for an unforgettable experience at **Wesley International House**.

I have felt like this was really my home. I felt safe and respected in my house. In all honesty, I did expect a different demography when I moved in – undergrad/postgrad Erasmus students that are all excited about travelling and looking to meet new people and make new connections.

I found that people in this house are a bit more reserved and solitary which I found hard at times. I would have maybe liked to know that there are a lot of postdocs/professors/PhDs in this house that are further in their studies before moving in, just as expectation management.

That being said, I met amazing people here and really did have a wonderful time. I loved the beautiful garden, the common areas and our massive kitchen that has everything you need. I will really miss having my morning coffee with Emma and talking to her about the funniest things. Thank you for everything. I will never forget this place and the wonderful people in it, I will miss BISH.



**Marleen
Wilborts
(Dutch)
July 2022**

I enjoyed **Asbury Overseas House** as my home for the last three years.



**Rizwan Ahmed
(Pakistani)
August 2022**

Recently, I received a job offer for the University of Kent and that is why I am leaving and moving to Canterbury.

I am very much thankful for your kind gestures and consideration during my stay and I will definitely be the best word of mouth for **BISH** and **Asbury Overseas House** for prospective tenants and I highly recommend this place within my peers.

Many thanks and best regards.

Life at BISH

We had a wonderful time at **Asbury Overseas House**.

Anita assisted in settling us in quickly during the pandemic situation when we were new and in need of lodging. She gave us important information about the school, the city council, GP registration, and so on.

We found staff are always available to assist. Errol performs any necessary repairs. Gemma was always willing to help with apartment-related issues. Susie from the letting services always provided rapid responses to our queries.

Our children go out to play with the other kids after school because the apartment is in a quiet and wonderful location with a beautiful landscape. The location is convenient and well-equipped.

All of the residents are eager to assist one another, and we had a wonderful time here!



Diana Jimson
(Indian)
June 2022

I felt as if **Asbury Overseas House** was my home.



Worku Asratie
(Ethiopian)
August 2022

Thank you so much, we have managed to return home last Wednesday. Thank you again so much for your hospitality.

I am personally delighted to inform you that during my stay at Asbury Overseas House I felt that I was at home.

Keep on doing it.

Please pass my greetings and best wishes to Susie, Anita and all the other staff.

Our team – 2022 news

Gemma Harris - General Manager



Following the decision of the previous General Manager to take early retirement, the Board agreed to promote Gemma Harris, Team Leader for the Domestic Team to the position of Interim General Manager as the business emerged from the Covid pandemic.

After a successful probationary period, the Board were pleased to make Gemma the General Manager of BISH on a permanent basis. Gemma has worked for BISH for over 12 years having joined initially as a domestic cleaner.

In addition to her extensive experience, she brings to the role an engaging personality and an enthusiasm for hard work.

The pandemic had a major impact on the routine running of the business and put it into survival mode with heavy emphasis on the safety of the residents that stayed with us and our staff who gradually resumed their work having been on furlough for some time.

The consequence of this was that some new domestic members of staff had to be recruited and we are very pleased to introduce Carol Haywood and Rebecca Usher who join the team at Asbury Overseas House.

They tell us a little about themselves overleaf.

Directors

Andrew Steel - Chairman
Peter Johansen - Hon. Treasurer
Carolyn Humpherson- Secretary

Stuart Burgess
Robert Dauncey
Malcolm Evans

Our team – 2022 news

Welcome to the BISH team **Carol Haywood, Emma Ling & Rebecca Usher**



Carol - I am a positive person. I love to draw digitally and I'm working on a book for my granddaughter Isla, whom I am lucky to have living with me. I like reading thrillers and spending time in nature walking my fur babies. I love anything to do with history.



Emma was a medic in the Army in the 1990's and she has recently bought her first house. She has three children and one has a master's degree in archaeology and was filmed on Country File during a dig near Stonehenge.

She loves her dogs, one of which was rescued from Romania and was found to be pregnant. When the pups arrived, they were rehomed via a charity. Emma is also passionate about gardening.



Rebecca - As a mom of 4 daughters I enjoy cooking and baking. I also enjoy going on nature walks and I am a bit of a movie buff especially horror or thriller. I enjoy my classic rock music and also a bit of 80's pop.

Following Gemma's promotion it was necessary to appoint a new Domestic Team leader and Monika Brzozowska, one of our longer serving staff, has taken up that role.



A key area for the Board is that we continue to invest in the training of our staff. This year has seen four people, Gemma, Anita, Monika and Elzbieta undergo First Aid Training. All domestics plus Gemma and Susie (Lettings Coordinator) attended a Food Hygiene Course.

Our team – 2022 news

Staff Fire Safety Training at Wesley

All staff and nominated fire marshals attended Fire Marshall training at Wesley House. Pictures of some of the activity are shown below.



On lighter notes Emma became a grandma for the first time and Elzbieta continued her sense of adventure when she climbed Crib Goch Ridge on Snowdon and Croagh Patrick in Ireland this year.



Work carried out this year

The company supplying our WiFi facilities in both BISH houses specialise in supplying universities and other educational establishments and during this year have upgraded our systems to fibre optic cables. This ensures that our residents are able to fully utilise many elements of IT.

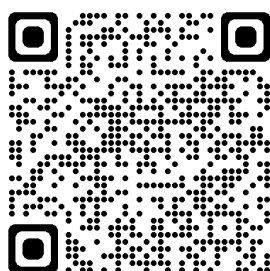
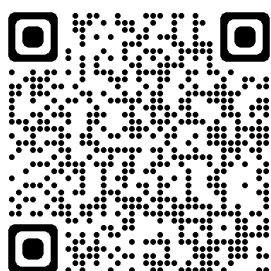
The fire equipment at Wesley International House has been upgraded with a new control panel, 35 detectors and 17 call points.

A number of new fridges and freezers have been installed at Wesley and a number of rooms have been redecorated. One part of the house, an annexe which has not been used since before the pandemic has seen two rooms totally redecorated and new furniture installed.

During the year we carried out a detailed and extensive review of our Health and Safety policies and procedures and are currently updating our letting agreements to align with the latest legal regulations.

We continue to seek better ways to connect with our potential and existing residents. Through the channel of this review we ask that you let us know what you would like us to focus on whether it is local information or more interactive content with recipes and quizzes.

We would welcome your comments on what you love about Selly Oak and Birmingham and if you have any tips for our new residents. Click on the links below to contact us or email us on info@bish.org.co.uk



Future developments and finance

Following the abatement of the Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lifting of UK restrictions, no matters have come to the attention of the Trustees which might suggest that the Charity will not be able to maintain its current activities for the foreseeable future. The Trustees have therefore considered that it is appropriate for the financial statements to be prepared on the going concern basis.

Our challenges in the future are significant but remain little changed. Our prime purpose is the support of people from overseas who are here to develop themselves and gain vital knowledge to take back to their own countries.

We will continue to invest in our accommodation in keeping with the demand for rising standards and to reduce our environmental footprint. Our attitude to reserves reflects that we are conscious that our infrastructure is aging and may need significant work in the future.

The Trustees will continue to seek to broaden our client base within our prime purpose of caring for the stranger in our midst. We will also continue to invest in staff development to strengthen the work that we undertake to support our guests and equip ourselves for a new future. In short we will do all we can to continue to offer a *“Home Away from Home”* for all nations, all cultures and all creeds who seek to come to the Midlands to improve themselves and the lot of others back in their home countries.

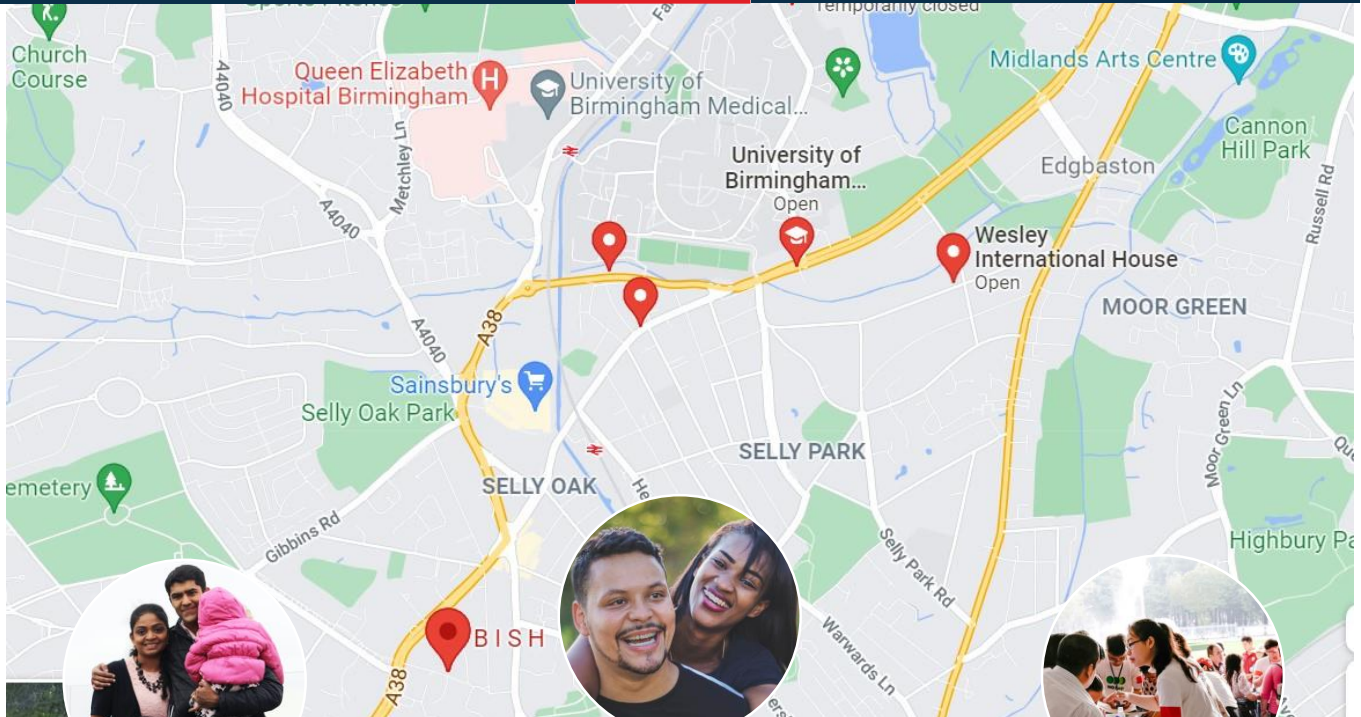
Birmingham International Student Homes' financial year runs from 1st September to 31st August. A complete copy of the statutory accounts can be obtained by writing to the Company Secretary at 52, Oakfield Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 7EQ

Where to find us

The 3 word address for Asbury
Overseas House is
/// rocks.intend.asking



The 3 word address for Wesley
International House is
/// gloves.skinny.mini



Get in touch

We promise that staying with BISH for your education in Birmingham will be life enriching, providing an experience that will never be forgotten.

Our homes are in easy reach of the universities in Birmingham with short rail and bus connections to the City Centre.

For flats, double and single rooms at Asbury Overseas House and for single rooms at Wesley International House get in touch



+44 121 472 0109



enquiries@bish.org.uk

Visit our website
www.bish.org.uk

Company limited by guarantee no. England 4428382

A Home Away From Home