



## Annual Report

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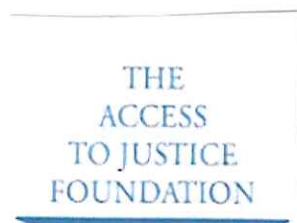
## Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2024

for

## Slough Immigration Aid Unit

funded by:



#OneSlough



BERKSHIRE  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION



The Ian Mactaggart Trust and  
the Mactaggart Third Fund



*The Louis Baylis*  
CHARITABLE TRUST

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**for the year ended 31 March 2024**

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**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**  
**General Information**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2024**

**CHARITY NAME:** Slough Immigration Aid Unit

**REGISTERED NUMBER:** 1064293

**ADDRESS:** 52 Chalvey High Street  
Slough  
Berkshire  
SL1 2SQ

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:** Ms PGrevett  
Grevett & Co  
Certified Accountants  
346a Farnham Road  
Slough  
Berkshire  
SL2 1BT

**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**  
**Trustees' Report**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2024**

The Trustees of the Slough Immigration Aid Unit (also known as SIAU) present their Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2024.

**Trustees**

Ms S M Shutter (Chair)  
Mr J R Barkley (Treasurer)  
Mrs M A Knibbs (died 8 May 2024)  
Ms P K Matharu (resigned April 2023)  
Ms N Shabir  
Ms S Saeed (appointed April 2023)  
Ms K Beddow (appointed April 2024)

The Trustees are appointed at Trustees' meetings.

The Charity is governed by the Trust Deed dated 18 December 1996 as amended by Special Resolution on 15 August 1997.

**Objects**

The objects of the Charity are to relieve hardship by the provision of free legal advice, assistance and representation to people who live or work or study in Slough and neighbouring areas, and their families, who have difficulties caused by immigration, nationality or refugee law and practice and who cannot afford alternative representation; and to collaborate with others to improve such advice for the people of Slough.

In addition other objects are to provide information and education on immigration, nationality and refugee law to those who are most closely affected by them.

This work is clearly for the public benefit, as required under charity law. The Trustees have had regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

**Financial summary for the year**

The Charity was funded through several grants, including £8,483 carried forward from a grant of £12,196 from the Access to Justice Foundation Community Justice Fund last year. We also received unrestricted grants from the Berkshire Community Foundation, the Louis Baylis Charitable Trust, UNITE, the Mactaggart Third Fund, the Ian Mactaggart Trust and the London Legal Support Trust from our participation in its sponsored walk. The #OneSloughfunding, administered by Slough Council for Voluntary Service, to provide immigration advice to Slough residents, continued through the year.

We continue to seek further grant funding for our work, and to maintain our aim of having at least three months' running costs in reserves. The Charity is also funded by cost recovery fees from some clients who do not qualify for a free service and by donations from individuals.

At the year end we held cash at bank of £22,494 which is unrestricted funding (including £10,000 from the Ian Mactaggart Trust for 2023-2024), held to meet the running costs of the Charity's office and related expenditure.

The Trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

**Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees**

.....  
*Susan M. Shutter*

**Ms SM Shutter (Chair)**

.....  
*7-12-24*

**Date**

## **SIAU's work during the year April 2023 to March 2024**

### **SIAU's work and aims**

SIAU is a charity which provides specialist legal advice, assistance and representation to people who live, work or study in Slough and neighbouring areas, and their families, who have difficulties with UK immigration, nationality or refugee law and practice. We have done this work for over 17 years.

We provide a free service to people on low incomes, or no income, and who would have qualified financially for Legal Help, when this still existed for immigration matters. Where people's income or savings are too high to qualify for Legal Help, we may operate a cost recovery process, charging a fee towards our costs only – we do not make a profit.

We work closely with other groups giving advice in Slough and provide information and support to them. For the past few years this was formalised through the Slough Community Network organised through Slough Council for Voluntary Service. This network is now called #OneSlough. We have helped other voluntary and community organisations to understand the law and to help their members or refer them on to appropriate advice and help.

This year our work largely continued in a hybrid way, because of the covid-19 pandemic and its after-effects. Since March 2000, the majority of our work has been done from home, through phone and email and zoom and post. We have got used to working in this way, explaining to clients about sending scans and photos of documents by email to us in support of their cases, and providing information on-line for us to be able to advise. One member of staff was working from abroad for part of the year. We now normally have a presence in the office once a week to collect and retrieve documents and to see some clients, but most of our work continues remotely. There are difficulties and advantages; we are considering our plans for the longer term.

### **Why our work is so important**

Immigration law is complex and can affect all aspects of people's lives. Access to competent immigration advice and representation can be vital, making the difference between, for example, a couple or family being able to live together in the UK or remain separated on different continents; an asylum seeker having more understanding of the complex process; relatives being able to visit for a family wedding or being refused a visa to come. It may enable people confused and worried by the complexities of the EU Settlement Scheme to understand what they may be able to do to secure their position; or elderly parents being able to live with their adult children here rather than left alone and in need of care abroad.

Ignorance of the law can lead to serious and unnecessary difficulties. Not understanding the basis on which immigration decisions are made, or the importance of using the right forms and providing all the right documentation to the Home Office or to British Visa Application Centres abroad at the right time, can result in applications which could meet the requirements of the immigration rules being refused. The fees for immigration applications were raised again in October 2023, to £2885 for settlement as a spouse or partner, £1048 for family extension of stay, £1846 for family entry clearance abroad, making the importance of preparing a case well and getting the application right first time of huge significance. Since April 2015, most immigration applicants also have to pay a 'health surcharge,' which rose from £400 to £624 per year in October 2020, and to £1036 in February 2024, for access to the NHS, for which most of them will already be paying through their taxes.

When immigration problems can be solved, people are able to continue their lives without this extra problem. Uncertainty about immigration status can cause and exacerbate poverty and exploitation. People who have at last been allowed to work and thus to support their family will be able to do so, and will have the security not to be exploited at work and to be able to access other rights. The basic security for people knowing that they are able to remain with their family and continue in their life enhances community cohesion and makes for a more unified and stronger society.

SIAU remains the only source of free specialist immigration and nationality law advice based in Slough. Such work is much needed in Slough; around half of its population is of minority ethnic origin, with the largest communities from Kashmir and the Punjab, but there are also significant African, East European, other Asian and Middle Eastern populations, as well as those from the Caribbean. There remains a large unmet need for immigration advice, information and representation.

## Changes in the law

The unbroken flow of new laws on migration continued. The Illegal Migration Bill was introduced to Parliament on 7 March 2023, including still more measures to stop “small boat” arrivals across the English Channel, and was enacted on 20 July 2023. The Supreme Court declared the Rwanda policy, in the Nationality and Borders Act 2021, unlawful on 15 November 2023. The Safety of Rwanda (Immigration and Nationality) Bill was introduced on 7 December 2023 and enacted on 25 April 2024. After the general election of 7 July 2024, the new government confirmed that it would not operate this policy but has plans for yet another bill, the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

The positive provisions on nationality, enabling people to register to become British citizens without charge if historical injustice in the previous laws meant they were not born British, are in effect. After some confusion on status, the British Nationality (Regularisation of Past Practice) Act was in force from 29 June 2023, confirming that children born in the UK to EU nationals between 1 January 1983 and 1 October 2000 were born British citizens, as had previously been believed. Migration and asylum issues have frequently been in the news.

There were six separate Statements of Changes in the immigration rules from April 2023 to March 2024, including several amendments to the EU Settlement Scheme and increasing the minimum income requirement for sponsoring family migration. There were four Supreme Court decisions relating to immigration matters, including the Rwanda case and cases on the interpretation of long residence.

The rules on family migration remain extremely complex and restrictive, and the cost of living crisis means many people are unable to meet them as they do not earn £29,000 per year, required since 11 April 2024, to be able to maintain their spouse, or cannot provide the very precise evidence demanded. The financial difficulties caused by the long-term effects of the pandemic have meant fewer people could qualify, even before this rise, and the Home Office's covid-19 concessions did not cover all issues. This has meant an increase in family members who cannot meet the financial requirement getting permission to stay on the ten-year route to settlement, meaning they will not have a secure “settled” status in the UK for ten years. More people have needed to apply for their immigration fees to be waived, or for their conditions restricting access to public funds to be amended. These applications are labour-intensive, as the Home Office requires extremely detailed financial evidence and explanations.

The ‘hostile environment’ created for people without immigration rights, officially renamed the ‘compliant environment’ by Sajid Javid when Home Secretary, continues and affects others who have the right to remain. The most extreme injustice affected many from the ‘Windrush generation’ – with people still fighting for slow and inadequate compensation. A similar situation has arisen for those who did not apply in time under the EU Settlement Scheme, for whatever reason, as late applications are continuing. From 9 August 2023, such late applications are much more likely to be rejected. The concentration on asylum issues and dealing with the backlog of asylum applications still drains resources from other immigration areas so that family human rights applications are still taking 12 months on average to process. The government's continued use of outsourcing to private sector providers to operate the immigration system, TLS Contact and VFS Global abroad, and now TLS Contact in the UK as well, makes the processes less transparent and harder to deal with, and it is more difficult to find out where responsibility for problems caused to individual applicants lies.

SIAU helps people to understand the immigration law and rules and how to satisfy the authorities that they can qualify, or advises them how they can do so, but also explains when they do not. SIAU's work empowers people by helping them to be aware of their position under immigration law and to access their rights and by reducing the need for people to pay often expensive and incompetent consultants.

British nationality law is complicated and people often need help in understanding it, collecting the documents needed and making their applications to become British citizens. Naturalisation is always discretionary and the Home Office changes its criteria for using its discretion without publicity. Again, the naturalisation fee of £1580, raised to £1630 on 10 April 2024, is non-refundable if the application is refused. SIAU's specialist workers are able to help people through this maze. We have advised and represented people on applying under the new sections of the law aimed at rectifying historical injustices, and for children's fee waivers.

## **SIAU's advice work and casework**

Our legal advice and representational work through the year continued. Our work is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, no. F200500137. OISC most recently audited SIAU's work in May 2016 and was fully satisfied.

During the year April 2023 – March 2024, SIAU records show we advised 366 people and families and took up 69 new cases to represent to the immigration authorities, with work continuing on many others. Our website had 1054 interactions, according to Google Business Profile statistics.

Our records show that the people we advised or represented were of 81 different nationalities - the largest numbers were again Pakistani (69) and Indian (32), but there were 82 from different African countries and 13 from the Caribbean. There were 75 inquiries from citizens of 18 other EEA countries this year, often those of minority ethnic descent; the largest numbers were Romanian (12), Polish (11), Italian (13) and Portuguese (9). Other nationalities include Ghanaian (26), Nigerian (23), Zimbabwean (14), Algerian (9), and fewer than 9 people from each of the other nationalities.

Many inquiries, 52, related to the EU Settlement Scheme, often including non-EU national family members. Many others related to establishing or acquiring British citizenship, 25 in relation to adult naturalisation, 15 in relation to children, either registering as British or establishing the status of children born here. The majority of the other issues raised were in relation to family matters, 53 about spouses, partners and children in the UK, 37 about entry clearance for spouses, partners and children currently abroad. 46 related to marriage breakdown and domestic abuse and the immigration law effects of escaping a violent relationship or the possibility of qualifying to remain in the UK independently. 22 were related to asylum or discretionary leave matters. 19 people inquired about qualifying to remain on long residence grounds. 13 people needed advice or help about their entitlement to benefits, or in trying to change the conditions on their stay that they cannot have recourse to public funds, and 15 about applying to waive the Home Office application fees and the immigration health surcharge. Other matters included 20 people wanting advice about family members coming to visit from abroad, and matters such as NHS charges, proving the right to work or to claim benefits and obtaining travel documents and biometric residence permits. Inquiries about setting up UKVI accounts, and accessing eVisas increased through the year, as all immigration records are planned to be online only from 2025.

In relation to the 69 people and families whose cases were represented, they were of 33 different nationalities; the largest numbers were Pakistani (12), Ghanaian (9), Gambian (4) and Bangladeshi, Indian, Italian, Nigerian (3 each). Many couples and families have more than one nationality between them, and non-EU nationals married to, or children of, EU nationals, may have most difficulty in establishing their EU SS status; we represented 8 such cases. Others included permission to remain with settled or British spouses or as parents of such children (25) or entry clearance to join family (3), applying to remain after experiencing domestic abuse (16), long residence applications (5), applying for change of conditions on stay, to be able to access public funds (2) and applying for British citizenship (10). We represented 12 people in successfully obtaining fee waivers for their family and human rights applications, or children's citizenship applications.

The majority of people we advised and helped were local. 164 came from Slough, 33 from Bracknell, 30 from High Wycombe, 18 from Reading, 17 from Maidenhead, 12 from Windsor, others from a bit further afield, such as Wokingham, Ascot, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, and west London, and a few from other areas, usually by email or phone. 52 people self-identified as having a person with a disability in the family, ranging from mobility difficulties to mental health issues, autism, HIV+, or had a medical condition such as cancer, stroke, diabetes or heart failure.

### ***A family we helped***

*SIAU has advised and represented one Ghanaian family since 2020, when we applied for a mother and her three UK-born children, then seven, six and one, for permission to remain on human rights grounds, as her oldest child had lived here for seven years. The family was supported by social services, so we applied for a fee waiver first. The application was successful, and we were then contacted by the father of her youngest child for advice in securing his own status, as a parent and step-parent. The family were granted permission to remain for 30 months, and then needed to apply again for another extension, with SIAU's representation. By that time, the two older children were over 10, so SIAU applied for fee waivers for them to register for British citizenship. The family has been able to remain here securely because of SIAU's support and help.*

SIAU's staff are highly skilled and experienced, and their expertise can make a significant difference to chances of success in an application. Shabana Bokhari, OISC level 3 regulated, has continued to work for one day a week for most of this year; Parveen Akhter, OISC Level 2 regulated, worked for four days a week. Sue Shutter, level 2 regulated, volunteered more frequently, dealing with advice queries and some casework from home. We have not been able to support admin volunteers, but Nazia Shabir continued to provide vital volunteer casework support, supervised by Parveen Akhter. There is a huge demand for our work, which we have continued remotely, through email and phone, throughout this year.

SIAU continues to work with and receive referrals from other local organisations and community groups doing complementary work in Slough and the surrounding area, including Citizens Advice East Berkshire, Slough Refugee Support, Hestia, The Dash Charity (Domestic Abuse Stops Here), SEWAK refuge, until it closed in July 2024, SHOC (Slough Homeless Our Concern), Slough Foodbank, neighbouring Citizens Advice Bureaux and others. The council, Slough Children First, and the Slough MP's office, as well as community groups, may also refer people to us for help and advice. We continue to be a member of the #OneSlough network of voluntary organisations, with regular zoom and in-person meetings facilitated through Slough Council for Voluntary Service. We are represented in their community decorating of a temporary hoarding in Slough High Street. As an OISC-regulated organisation, we hold their Slough Quality Protects Platinum level accreditation.

### **SIAU's information and lobbying work**

SIAU participated in lobbying on the Illegal Migration Bill and in raising issues of concern, such as about the EU Settlement Scheme and the minimum income requirement, through our membership of the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association. We participate in on-line discussion groups of immigration advisers and lawyers, sharing ideas and information.

SIAU expects to continue all our areas of work into the future, as we anticipate the need for it will remain and increase as more parts of the new immigration system and the ever-increasing legislation come into effect. The EU settlement and pre-settlement scheme and its June 2021 deadline, and people travelling in small boats across the English Channel and the Mediterranean keep migration in the forefront of public debate. We continue to advise many EU nationals and their families worried about their status, or applying late, along with others having difficulties caused by the family migration rules. The move to "digital by default" so that all immigration records will be online only after the end of 2024 causes many problems and worries, especially for people who are not digitally confident or do not have access to the internet. Domestic abuse remains a large proportion of our casework. Restrictions on eligibility to claim benefits, and the increased level of the Home Office fees have added to difficulties this year, and fee waivers and change of conditions applications remain a significant proportion of our work. We continue mainly working remotely, and rely on email, internet, phone and post, as well as meeting people in the office. We continue to attempt to mitigate some of the worst effects of the laws and practice for our clients and their families and to help them to achieve their aims.

### **SIAU's staff**

Parveen Akhter, Shabana Bokhari

### **SIAU's volunteers**

Nazia Shabir, Sue Shutter

### **SIAU's Trustees**

Sue Shutter (chair), Ray Barkley (treasurer), Nazia Shabir, Shabana Saeed, Keren Beddow



Slough Immigration Aid Unit

Independent Examiner's Report  
to the trustees of Slough Immigration Aid Unit

I report on the accounts of Slough Immigration Aid Unit for the year ended 31 March 2024, which are set out on pages 9 and 10.

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- 1\* examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- 2\* to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- 3\* to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

**Basis of independent examiner's report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

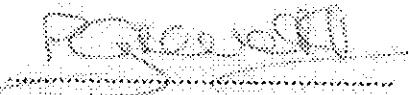
**Independent examiner's statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - \* to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act
  - and
  - \* to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met or

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

  
Ms P Grevett FCCA

  
Date

**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2024**

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2023 Total funds £
<b>Income</b>						
Grants	38,666	-	38,666	23,619	-	23,619
Donations	8,451	-	8,451	7,391	-	7,391
Fees recovered	3,870	-	3,870	6,785	-	6,785
Rents received	1,400	-	1,400	-	-	-
	<b>52,387</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>52,387</b>	<b>37,795</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>37,795</b>
<b>Other income</b>						
Deposit account interest	220	-	220	139	-	139
	<b>220</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>52,607</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>52,607</b>	<b>37,934</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>37,934</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>						
Rent	5,040	-	5,040	5,040	-	5,040
Wages	29,700	-	29,700	27,170	3,430	30,600
Cloud based data system & training	-	-	-	480	-	480
Professional services	-	-	-	1,750	-	1,750
Telephone & internet	1,837	-	1,837	1,634	-	1,634
Post & stationery	729	-	729	636	-	636
Professional indemnity insurance	251	-	251	235	-	235
Employers liability insurance	198	-	198	182	-	182
Sundry expenses	414	-	414	451	-	451
Accountancy	1,000	-	1,000	1,000	-	1,000
Membership fees	150	-	150	195	-	195
Professional fees	1,646	-	1,646	1,646	-	1,646
Bank charges	74	-	74	74	-	74
Nest pension	475	-	475	443	-	443
Computer equipment written off	1,710	-	1,710	-	-	-
	<b>43,224</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>43,224</b>	<b>40,936</b>	<b>3,430</b>	<b>44,366</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>9,383</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,383</b>	<b>3,002</b>	<b>3,430</b>	<b>6,432</b>
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>						
Total funds brought forward	12,062	-	12,062	15,064	3,430	18,494
Total funds carried forward	<b>21,445</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>21,445</b>	<b>12,062</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>12,062</b>

**Slough Immigration Aid Unit**

**Balance Sheet**  
**for the year ended 31 March 2024**

	2024		2023
	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Computer equipment		-	1,710
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors	405		665
Prepayments	159		150
Bank deposit account	18,478		14,159
Bank account no. 1	1,869		1,460
Bank account no. 2	2,147		3,900
	<u>23,058</u>		<u>20,334</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Grant received in advance	-		8,483
Creditors and accrued expenses	1,613		1,499
	<u>1,613</u>		<u>9,982</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		21,445	10,352
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>21,445</u>	<u>12,062</u>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>			
Restricted funds		-	-
Unrestricted funds		21,445	12,062
		<u>21,445</u>	<u>12,062</u>