



Annual Report

and

Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 March 2025

for

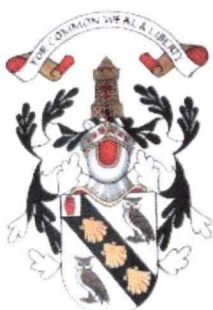
Slough Immigration Aid Unit

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 2025

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Slough Immigration Aid Unit
General Information
for the year ended 31 March 2025

CHARITY NAME: SloughImmigration 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 2025

The Trustees of the Slough Immigration Aid Unit (also known as SIAU) present their Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Trustees

Ms S M Shutter (Chair)
Mr J R Barkley (Treasurer)
Mrs M A Knibbs (died 8 May 2024)
Ms N Shabir (resigned 14 October 2025)
Ms S Saeed
Ms K Beddow (appointed 23 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 unrestricted grants from the Berkshire Community Foundation, the Louis Baylis Charitable Trust, the Foyle Foundation, the Mactaggart Third Fund, the Ian Mactaggart Trust and the London Legal Support Trust from our participation in its sponsored walk. The #OneSlough funding, from Slough council, 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 whose cases we represent and who do not qualify for a free service and by donations from individuals.

At the year end we held cash at bank of £12,533 which is unrestricted funding 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)

.....16-12-25.....

Date

SIAU's work during the year April 2024 to March 2025

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 19 years.

All our advice work is free. We provide a free representation 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, #OneSlough, organised through Slough Council for Voluntary Service. 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, following 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. We now normally have a presence in the office at least once a week to collect and retrieve documents and to see some clients, but most of our work continues remotely. There are advantages and challenges in this; 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 April 2025, from £2885 to £3029 for settlement as a spouse or partner, from £1048 to £1321 for family extension of stay, from £1846 to £1938 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 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 and proposals on migration and asylum continued, both before and after the July 2024 general election. The Safety of Rwanda (Immigration and Nationality) Bill was introduced on 7 December 2023 and enacted on 25 April 2024. The new government confirmed that it would not operate this policy but put forward yet another bill, the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, which was introduced on 30 January 2025 and enacted on 2 December 2025. An immigration White Paper, *Restoring control over the immigration system*, was published on 12 May 2025 and the Home Secretary proposed sweeping changes in November 2025. Thus migration and asylum issues have frequently been in the news.

There were three significant Statements of Changes in the immigration rules from April 2024 to March 2025, as well as proposals not yet implemented, causing huge distress and anger. There were three Supreme Court decisions relating to immigration and nationality matters.

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. 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, VFS Global abroad, and now TLScontact in the UK, 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, raised to £1735 on 9 April 2025, 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 Immigration Advice Authority (formerly 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 2024 – March 2025, SIAU records show we advised 438 people and families and took up 68 new cases to represent to the immigration authorities, with work continuing on many others. Our website had 1206 interactions, according to Google Business Profile statistics.

Our records show that the people we advised or represented were of 77 different nationalities - the largest numbers were again Pakistani (68) and Indian (47), but there were 136 from different African countries and 18 from the Caribbean. There were 68 inquiries from citizens of 15 other EEA countries this year, often those of minority ethnic descent; the largest numbers were Romanian, Polish and Italian (11 each). Other nationalities include Ghanaian (22), Nigerian (20), Zimbabwean (21), South Africa (11), Sri Lankan (10), Algerian (9), and fewer than 9 people from each of the other nationalities.

Many inquiries, 59, related to the EU Settlement Scheme, often including non-EU national family members. Many others related to establishing or acquiring British citizenship, 33 in relation to adult naturalisation, 19 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, 59 about spouses, partners and children in the UK, 34 about entry clearance for spouses, partners and children currently abroad. 47 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. 38 related to work rights in the UK, including many on the health and care worker visa. 30 were related to asylum or discretionary leave matters. 23 people inquired about qualifying to remain on long residence grounds. 21 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 17 about applying to waive the Home Office application fees and the immigration health surcharge. Other matters included 14 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 continued through the year, 33, as all immigration records are online only from January 2025.

In relation to the 68 people and families whose cases were represented, they were of 29 different nationalities; the largest numbers were Pakistani (13), Nigerian (7), Zimbabwean (5), Gambian and Indian (4 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 7 such cases. Others included permission to remain with settled or British spouses or as parents of such children (18) or entry clearance to join family (2), applying to remain after experiencing domestic abuse (12), long residence applications (12), applying for change of conditions on stay, to be able to access public funds (4) and applying for British citizenship (17). We represented 6 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. 202 came from Slough, 37 from Bracknell, 38 from High Wycombe, 18 from Reading, 37 from Maidenhead, 3 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. 60 people self-identified as having a person with a disability in the family, ranging from mobility difficulties to mental health issues, autism, dyslexia, or had a medical condition such as cancer, stroke, diabetes or heart failure.

A family we helped

SIAU advised and represented a Thai woman to apply to remain as the parent of her two young British citizen children. Her British citizen sister-in-law contacted us, concerned that her brother had abandoned his wife and children, and she had not applied to extend her stay. SIAU met her and discussed the events of her marriage. We found that she had been in the UK since 2012 but had not passed the Life in the UK test so had never applied for settlement. She had relied entirely on her husband to deal with bureaucracy and did not know how to find out for herself. She had overstayed her permission as a partner for over two years, so was not able to work or claim anything for herself and her children, relying on intermittent payments from her husband. SIAU represented her in applying for an immigration fee waiver, which was successful, and then for permission to stay to care for her children. After many months, she was granted that permission in December 2024, and was at last able to begin to rebuild her life.

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 until she left in June 2025. Ansa Khan, Level 3 regulated, started work in June 2025. 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, and Rachel Levy from November 2024 to June 2025, supervised by Parveen Akhter. There is a huge demand for our work, which we have mainly 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 IAA-regulated organisation, we hold their Slough Quality Protects Platinum level accreditation.

SIAU's information and lobbying work

SIAU participated in lobbying on changes in the law and rules 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. We advise many individuals about their situations and queries.

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. Huge changes are proposed for 2026. 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, and government announcements of huge proposed changes, 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 are now online only since 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 (to June 2025), Ansa Khan (from June 2025), Shabana Bokhari

SIAU's volunteers

Azhar Chohan, Nazia Shabir, Rachel Levy (November 2024 – June 2025), Sue Shutter

SIAU's Trustees

Sue Shutter (chair), Ray Barkley (treasurer), Nazia Shabir (to October 2025), 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 2025, 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.

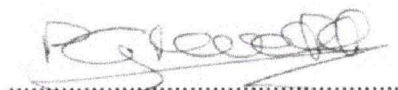
Independent examiner's statement

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

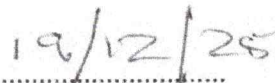
- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - * to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act
 - and
 - * to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the requirements of the 2011 Act

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 2025

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2025 Total funds £	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £
Income						
Grants	23,339	-	23,339	38,666	-	38,666
Donations	1,449	-	1,449	8,451	-	8,451
Fees recovered	3,915	-	3,915	3,870	-	3,870
Rents received	2,470	-	2,470	1,400	-	1,400
	31,173	-	31,173	52,387	-	52,387
Other income						
Deposit account interest	301	-	301	220	-	220
	301	-	301	220	-	220
Total income	31,474	-	31,474	52,607	-	52,607
Expenditure						
Rent	5,700	-	5,700	5,040	-	5,040
Wages	29,700	-	29,700	29,700	-	29,700
Cloud based data system & training	480	-	480	-	-	-
Professional services	-	-	-	-	-	-
Telephone & internet	2,078	-	2,078	1,837	-	1,837
Post & stationery	707	-	707	729	-	729
Professional indemnity insurance	241	-	241	251	-	251
Employers liability insurance	217	-	217	198	-	198
Sundry expenses	460	-	460	414	-	414
Accountancy	1,000	-	1,000	1,000	-	1,000
Membership fees	159	-	159	150	-	150
Professional fees	-	-	-	1,646	-	1,646
Bank charges	74	-	74	74	-	74
Nest pension	475	-	475	475	-	475
Computer equipment written off	-	-	-	1,710	-	1,710
	41,291	-	41,291	43,224	-	43,224
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	- 9,817	- -	9,817	9,383	-	9,383
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward	21,445	-	21,445	12,062	-	12,062
Total funds carried forward	11,628	-	11,628	21,445	-	21,445

Slough Immigration Aid Unit

Balance Sheet
for the year ended 31 March 2025

	2025		2024	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Computer equipment		-		-
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	520		405	
Prepayments	169		159	
Bank deposit account	10,203		18,478	
Bank account no. 1	198		1,869	
Bank account no. 2	2,132		2,147	
	<u>13,222</u>		<u>23,058</u>	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Grant received in advance	-		-	
Creditors and accrued expenses	1,594		1,613	
	<u>1,594</u>		<u>1,613</u>	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		11,628		21,445
NET ASSETS		<u>11,628</u>		<u>21,445</u>
REPRESENTED BY:				
Restricted funds		-		-
Unrestricted funds		11,628		21,445
		<u>11,628</u>		<u>21,445</u>