

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 05018587 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1102433

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023
FOR
SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**

Haysmacintyre LLP
10 Queen Street Place
London
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SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

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SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

TRUSTEES	Allan Blake Clara Clint (resigned 1.12.22) Marion Edge (resigned 30.3.23) Claire Gilbert (resigned 1.12.22) John Linwood (resigned 30.3.23) Sarmad Qureshi Simon Tinkler Sarah Towler (resigned 30.3.23) Nimmisha Aslam (appointed 1.12.22) Sarah Bergstrom (appointed 1.12.22) Susan Field (appointed 1.12.22) Bernd Halschka (appointed 1.12.22) Keith Alastair Livingston Boak (appointed 1.12.22) (resigned 23.3.23)
COMPANY SECRETARY	Stacey Edgar
REGISTERED OFFICE	5th Floor Davis House Robert Street Croydon CR0 1QQ
REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER	05018587 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER	1102433
AUDITORS	Haysmacintyre LLP 10 Queen Street Place London EC4R 1AG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE	Patrick Marples
BANKERS	CAF Bank Ltd 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Objectives and activities

Purposes and aims

The objects of the Charity are: the relief of poverty, suffering and distress by the provision of legal advice, assistance and representation, and the advancement of education for those resident, working or in full time education in South West London, including the London boroughs of Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton and Wandsworth and, in exceptional circumstances, residents from other areas; and the promotion of other such purposes which are exclusively charitable according to the law of England and Wales as the Trustees may from time to time determine.

The main activities undertaken in relation to those purposes are:

- Activity 1 - Delivery of professional services in casework and representation in various areas of social welfare law
- Activity 2 - Delivery of the housing court duty solicitor scheme in housing cases in Croydon, Wandsworth and Kingston County Courts.
- Activity 3 - Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic service.

Public benefit

The Trustees referred to guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the law centre's aims and objectives and in planning and reviewing all our activities. South West London Law Centres (SWLLC) is a community based, legal practice working to relieve poverty, suffering and distress for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our communities, in need of help at difficult times in their lives to resolve legal problems. We broadly help those who cannot afford a lawyer to access social welfare law. Public benefit is delivered by the provision of free legal advice or affordable charges for services and representation at court in social welfare law. The professional services and the housing court duty scheme are funded by legal aid, grants, and donors, and operates from four branches in, Battersea, Croydon, Merton, and Kingston. The Kingston Branch closed in March 2023. We will continue to deliver the court duty scheme at Kingston County Court with other services that used to be delivered from Kingston being delivered from other offices. We continue to charge for some services in employment and immigration where funding through legal aid is no longer available. Our Pro Bono legal advice clinics are free and staffed by volunteer advisors.

By these means, the Charity aims to improve access to justice to vulnerable members of the community in South West London.

The 'Cost of Living Crisis'

There were many highlights to 2022/23 framed by the continuing impact of increase in the cost-of-living, the restriction in our resources and therefore our ability to deliver our services. The majority of our clients have always been in a cost of living 'crisis' situation: this is nothing new. The prolonged wider national impact is affecting greater numbers and highlighting the situation on a national basis that our clients have consistently lived in. There has been no significant policy change to use social welfare law services to relieve the effects of this 'crisis'. We can see through the long history of our work that we do have an impact on those in urgent need. Our project work that runs alongside our legal aid work has always been focused on this. We were able to assist an additional 117 individuals and families compared to the previous year bringing the total number helped in 2022/23 to 6,778.

All Case Studies use fictitious names to protect the identity of staff and clients.

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Volunteers

The use of hundreds of volunteers alongside our 42 employed staff (32 average FTE) has been at the heart of our law centre operations for a long time. SWLLC runs one of the largest Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic services in the UK delivered through a team of around 400 volunteer lawyers. This service empowers clients by encouraging them to take better steps to resolve problems themselves, where necessary with some follow-up by advisers (e.g. drafting documents or writing letters on clients' behalf).

We continued to operate our pro bono programme remotely through booked appointments held over the telephone or through video conferencing. In a survey of our service users and volunteers we received positive feedback on the way the service operates. In the current environment we recognise that the service may not be meeting the needs of everyone in our community and that there is a need to widen its scope. We have therefore approached a number of supporters for assistance to adapt and streamline the remote pro bono clinic services to make them easier to use. Our longer-term aim is to move to a system of more flexible advice times. We continue to see if we can adapt the pro bono offering so we can develop specialisms to carry out some casework. During the year we established an innovative new partnership with BPP Law School - Employment Law For London: this service offers a free 30-minute telephone advice appointment for all London residents needing legal advice about a workplace issue. We continue to look at the feasibility of bringing back an element of a face-to-face pro bono clinic service.

Volunteers also help us in every aspect of our work: from supporting reception during the daytime and in the evening with administrative tasks, to working as casework assistants to support our casework teams. The work includes undertaking legal research, assisting with creating bundles of documents, note taking and drafting letters. Following the pandemic, we have started to reintroduce volunteers to undertake these tasks although in smaller numbers. We continue to use internships in our immigration and employment teams; through these placements some interns have gone on to successfully gain paid employment. We want to expand this programme. Typically, our volunteers have been those seeking new skills/experience to get back into the job market or students wishing to further legal careers. On average daytime volunteers stay with the law centre between 3 - 6 months.

"Volunteering at SWLLC has greatly developed my understanding of legal aid and its scope in asylum and housing law. I have also gained exposure to various other areas of law through triaging clients for pro bono clinics. This has given me invaluable experience in the legal sector, and it has been immensely rewarding to be part of the process of providing equal access to justice." (Volunteer)

We estimate the value of daytime volunteering to be £37,500. An estimate of the value of pro bono work provided by evening volunteers is in excess of £1.4 million, calculated on the basis that each client (including follow up work and supervision time) can on average take a combined total of 3 hours of volunteer time at £164 per hour. This is a high street rate, higher than the legal rates that the law centre staff recover for professional services in casework and representation.

"My drive to volunteer comes from seeing a small difference that my time can make to others. Some people lose hope by the time they come to me because they have had no joy anywhere else. A conversation of only 10 minutes sometimes makes a huge impact upon their life and motivates them and gives them the direction they need to resolve their issue. It's almost like a buzz from seeing people coming out of their dark places and into the light as a result of only a few minutes of my time which makes me want to continue in giving whatever I can for as long as SWLLC want me!" (Pro bono lawyer)

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Achievement and performance

The Table below summarises our principal Activities in three main areas. Overall, in 2022/23, we assisted 6,778 clients (6,664 in 2021/22) with direct services.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs
Housing Team: Six solicitors, including one who undertakes community care and welfare rights cases, plus two paralegals attached to the team one of whom qualified post year end. Debt Team: Five caseworkers. Immigration Team: Four solicitors and two OISC registered caseworkers, including one undertaking public law. Employment Team: Two caseworkers. Cost of Living: Two crisis navigators and two welfare rights caseworkers supporting the work of the housing and debt teams. A Community Engagement Manager promoting the law centre work.	Activity 1 - Provision of representation in social welfare law covering community care, debt, discrimination employment, housing, immigration, asylum, public law and welfare rights	2,925 cases (2,655 in 2021/22) We carried forward 539 cases at the start of the year.
Housing Team (as above)	Activity 2 - Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme	899 cases (806 in 2021/22)
Pro Bono Team Client Services Manager, daytime and evening reception staff, and pro bono lawyers	Activity 3 - Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic delivered remotely since March 2020	2,954 clients seen (3,200 in 2021/22).

Activity 1: Provision of representation in social welfare law

Outcomes - full specialist casework service in a broad range of social welfare law in the areas of community care, debt, discrimination, employment, housing, immigration and asylum, public law and welfare rights, collectively referred to as 'social welfare law'. Our legal work has a broad range of outcomes

Impact Report

There are a range of impacts from our casework as illustrated in the examples below.

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1. Community Care

We help people obtain the appropriate community care assessment and services that they are entitled to. Casework enables people with mental illness, learning disabilities or other care needs to get the support they are entitled to. This also helps to reduce isolation for these often very lonely individuals struggling to cope alone in the community.

2. Debt

We help people with a strategy for dealing with debts as early as possible in the process as well as challenging unenforceable debts. Work is focussed on reducing debt and finding affordable and manageable debt solutions. We work with individuals and families to calculate an affordable budget, so that they can get back on track. We also help people to apply for grants from a variety of sources to support their everyday needs.

Our debt team, funded through Debt Free London, supported 1,749 people last year. We continue to see high demand and saw 538 clients through our Cost of Living/Welfare Rights team.

Our funder Debt Free Advice has awarded the team a Trustpilot score of 4.9 out of 5 based on feedback from 172 of our clients.

"I liked the service, the adviser listened carefully tried to get into the problem, I somehow even calmed down, she consoled me and said not to be upset, then they can and will help. I hadn't asked anyone for help before and in my situation, it was embarrassing to ask." January 2023, 5 Stars

Nirmay's Story - A Debt Case Study

"Ten years ago, I was a victim of fraud from a member of my family who took advantage of me by using my credit card. They took out loans in my name of over £50,000. It was very stressful, and I ended up with depression and then lost my job."

Although Nirmay told his credit card company in 2014 about the fraudulent loan, it was only after he contacted the Law Centre for help with his case that they finally agreed to write off the account balance and sent a goodwill payment. They have also now reimbursed him for the payments made, plus interest.

"Getting this money will make a huge difference to me after ten years of struggling. I was put in a situation I couldn't get out of until I contacted South West London Law Centres. They helped me out and all the members of staff worked extremely hard for me throughout. They used so much of their energy and got me out of the dark hole I was in and into the bright light."

3. Cost of Living

We support people to maximise their income; claim the right benefits and get further assistance such as claim grants for individuals in need. We continued to develop our service based on external evaluation and through new grants from the Lottery Community Fund and London Legal Support Trust/Greater London Authority. We now have team of four - two Crisis Navigators and two welfare rights caseworkers. Our Crisis Navigators support the work of the whole organisation by:

- a. Being the consistent point of contact for those accessing multiple services;
- b. Securing additional funds for the client to enable them to stabilise their short term crisis;
- c. Channelling clients through to our specialist caseworkers/ legal staff so that their time is prioritised on providing necessary expert advice and representation; and
- d. Acting as case manager to ensure all internal and relevant external services are working together and the client understands how they all fit together to resolve their issues.

Denise's story - Cost of Living - Debt case study

"I was living in a women's refuge due to domestic violence. The council pointed me to the Law Centre for help with debts, but I had too much on my plate to focus on it."

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'A money adviser, discussed different financial scenarios with me. She also mentioned unclaimed support funds for my autistic son. I knew about these, but with the domestic violence situation, I hadn't acted on it.

'After a while, when I was rehoused and felt more settled, the money adviser connected me with a caseworker to apply for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for my son. She patiently helped me fill the lengthy form over the phone. When I received the full DLA amount, it marked my journey to financial stability. With a clear calculation on balancing work and childcare, I adjusted my work hours. Using the DLA wisely, I arranged a tutor for my son. He's flourishing now.

'I've significantly reduced my debt and stopped relying on credit. The support from the Law Centre has been instrumental. The Caseworker's persistence and the DLA funds have been pivotal in confronting my debt and rebuilding my life. I'm deeply thankful.'

Denise was living in emergency accommodation following domestic violence and was referred to us for help with her debts. We gave her debt advice and referred her to our crisis navigator who helped her successfully apply for Disability Living Allowance for her son. Following the advice and support she received she is now in a much better position financially and she is able to build a new life with her children.

4. Employment

We help people on a wide range of issues including; dismissal, suspension, discrimination, unpaid wages and failure to pay the minimum wage; notice or redundancy pay, holiday pay, breach of contract, grievances, appeals; and settlement agreements. We also specialise in discrimination cases funded through our legal aid contract. Through this work we help people to remain in their jobs and where appropriate obtain redress for bad employment practice.

This work is funded through grant funding, legal aid and various methods of affordable charging. We now have two caseworkers. This year we worked on 36 cases and increased our reach through volunteers to support weekly employment advice clinics along together with our general pro bono clinics where we advised 595 people.

Employment Case study - Matha's Story

'When Covid came along, given my heart condition, I made the decision to shield. I'm a single mum and have had financial struggles in the past. It's important to me to be working. I was still waiting for a shielding letter when I spoke to my GP. I let my employer know their recommendation. Two days before my May pay date, I received a letter saying I was absent without leave and faced disciplinary action. The country was in lockdown!'

'I had a mental breakdown, diagnosed with depression and anxiety. The fear of leaving my job without any support loomed large. Financial difficulties mounted, leading to rent delays and dependency on neighbours and family ... My employer then deducted from my pay.

'I reached out to Citizens Advice, and they directed me to the Law Centre. The tribunal lasted five days. When the judgment arrived, I was overwhelmed with relief. The compensation I received was beyond my expectations. I'm deeply grateful for all the support I received during this ordeal.'

*Matha started working for her employer in 2019. Her medical condition, which affects her cardiovascular health, prompted her to request work-from-home accommodations in early 2020 due to Covid-19. The relationship with her employer deteriorated, impacting Matha's mental health. We pursued legal action for disability discrimination on Matha's behalf and won a week-long hearing at the Employment Tribunal, being awarded £45,000.

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5. Housing

We work with people on a wide range of different housing issues covering possession, unlawful eviction, homelessness, disrepair and anti-social behaviour, all helping people keep or gain a home. We also act for the homeless by ensuring local authorities accept their statutory duties to provide housing. We worked on 242 cases and 899 clients were assisted as part of the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme.

Judy's Story - Housing Case Study

Judy works as a carer and was living with her partner and adult daughter. When her partner died, she contacted the Housing Association to have the tenancy changed to her name. They replied saying she had no right to succeed and should vacate the property. Our housing solicitor took on her case under legal aid and began legal proceedings against the Housing Association, providing evidence and witnesses to prove the relationship and therefore the right to succession. Judy won her case and has taken over the tenancy meaning she and her daughter can stay in their home.

'At the trial, the judge said I would get the tenancy. I just felt elated. I knew I was right. At one stage I'd felt like giving up on the whole thing because of the stress and anxiety it caused, but then I knew in my heart that what I was doing was right. The Law Centre's solicitor and the barrister who represented me in court were so supportive and compassionate and that meant a lot because it had been a very stressful situation - I work with vulnerable people and I'd constantly been thinking I may be homeless for no good reason.'

'Without the solicitor's help I think I would have lost the tenancy. He knew the process so well, that if it was anybody else, I don't think they would have fought as hard and possibly done so much work for me. I fully trusted him throughout the whole process, and I really believe that we would have lost this tenancy for no good reason if it wasn't for the Law Centre.'

'It's been quite a journey, and a long one, but it's ended very well, and I will be forever thankful to the Law Centre for that.'

Community Engagement and Housing

Over the last year our Community Engagement Manager has continued talking to the community about what they want from the law centre. As a result of a community survey, we continue to develop a series of themed workshops on using the law to support our community. These workshops evolve and have a series of case studies that are dissected as a group to find routes to remedy the situation using the same practice on each situation: Identify, Evidence, Report, Connect.

A major theme from our consultations are issues around access to, and the condition of, housing. We are assessing how we can further help beyond the current strictures of the legal aid scheme. Through new funding from Trust for London we have organised support groups for people to talk about their experiences of living in temporary accommodation and have been helping them to campaign for change. This has led to taking part in various consultations. We continue to use our community engagement work to ask the community about their needs and from this we have developed a series of pilots that have attracted grant funding.

6. Migrants and Asylum Seekers

This work is focussed on enabling clients to obtain Leave to Remain. With this 'gateway' status, they can work and earn an income legally, re-unite with family left behind and maximise their life chances. Many of the people who eventually come to us have failed to have their cases fully dealt with and were exploited by other lawyers. We also worked on the EUSS scheme.

Our small team specialises in dealing with unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and modern slavery, domestic violence and minority groups such as LGBTQ+. We worked on 206 cases. Our pro bono clinics advised 392 people on immigration issues. Through new funding from Greater London Authority we are working with South London Refugee Association in a London wide consortium to improve the immigration status of those who are street homeless as a way of helping them to move from being homeless.

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Inara's Story - Immigration Case Study

*Inara had an arranged marriage in her home country. Her husband was violent towards her, forced her to have an abortion and took a second wife. She managed to flee with a family member and they travelled to the UK on student visas. Fearing she would be subject to an honour killing if she returned to her country, as had happened to one of their relatives, they lodged separate claims for asylum in the UK. These were refused as were their joint appeals. Inara was represented by three different fee-paying solicitors during this process.

She eventually came to the Law Centre where our immigration solicitor took on her case. By this point, the family member was no longer able to support her, she became homeless and was suffering from various physical and psychological conditions.

Our solicitor submitted a fresh claim with new evidence, including a psychological assessment, background country evidence and witness statements. The case went to judicial review and Inara was finally granted refugee status earlier this year, eleven years after first arriving in the UK.

Inara said: *"You were there for me during a very difficult time. I will never forget what you have done. At this difficult time it's so nice to feel appreciated."*

7. Public law

We have the ability to litigate against public authorities, this includes dealing with Home Office delays and refusals to make decisions on immigration and asylum cases.

8. Welfare Rights

We assist people with cases including appeals to the second tier Tribunal. We can further litigate suitable cases beyond this. Most of this work is now undertaken by our Cost of Living team.

Activity 2: Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme

Outcome - Emergency housing representation across 3 county courts: Croydon, Wandsworth and Kingston for hearings listed that day. This helps clients to defend themselves against possession and home evictions in both rented and mortgage cases.

Our duty solicitors have provided emergency legal advice/representation to clients last year in three courts and saved many from eviction often providing pro bono benefit assistance to address underlying issues relating to the benefit cap and bedroom tax.

Impact - We continue to achieve a high success rate. In 2022/23 we represented 899 people.

Julia's story - Court Duty Scheme case study

Julia, a mother grappling with depression and alcoholism, found herself in the Croydon County Court's waiting area. With no one to turn to and a staggering £12,000 in rent arrears threatening her and her children's housing stability.

"I was very scared and nervous, while reading about being evicted. It was quite scary and I had no idea what to do or where to start."

When our County Court duty solicitor recognized Julia's dire need for legal help, we stepped in. Julia's case was complex. She had a four-month-old possession order, hadn't appealed or set aside the order, and was facing imminent eviction.

Upon investigating, we uncovered that her Housing Benefit had been unjustly terminated in 2001, leading to the arrears. Our Law Centre successfully cleared her rent account, negotiated a settlement where the council agreed to pay damage of £2,400 for inconvenience and distress, complete repairs of the property and restore her tenancy.

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"After hearing that I will keep my home and receive compensation as well, I got really happy. I was relieved. It felt like the stress on my shoulders had lifted and I could feel a sense of security. SWLLC really made a great impact in my life. I am in a secure and stable place at the moment, which would not be possible without the help of the Law Centre"

Activity 3: Pro Bono Legal Advice

Outcome - Our Volunteering Programme Our clinic programme has run remotely since March 2020 addressing legal problems in their early stages and covering a wide range of legal subjects: Crime, Criminal Injury, Consumer, Employment, Family, General Litigation, Housing, Immigration, Inquests, Motoring Offences, Personal Injury, Small Claims, Wills and Probate.

Impact - The impact of a timely, accurate legal advice through a personalised intervention can prevent a problem from escalating and becoming far more damaging for an individual, as well as costly to taxpayers. Our pro bono advice clinics not only provide an avenue for clients to seek legal redress; they also empower them with new knowledge of the law and their rights, thereby increasing their confidence and capacity to approach legal problems. Our advice also helps improve the efficacy of other public services such as education, health or social services by helping eligible people exercise their rights to access these services in a timely fashion.

From the feedback we receive, we know that this advice unlocks problems, helps people move on with their lives and builds confidence. Here are just a few of the comments clients have given:

"I have used the Law Centre on two separate occasions for housing matters. I cannot recommend them enough. On both occasions I felt that my issue was dealt with very efficiently."

"I spoke to two solicitors from your office. They were knowledgeable, informative and I got the outcome I hoped for thanks to their help. It's a brilliant service."

"Your law advisors are extremely professional and give appropriate and right advice for the situation a person is in. I would give your advisors ten out of ten. The advice is always spot on. Thank you so much for the service."

"I followed her advice and used the information she provided and I was able to reach an immediate resolution with the other party after about four months of going round in circles."

Other major achievements

Operational successes

Throughout this period, the Law Centre has taken various successful steps to secure its future:

Maintaining Financial Control - The Senior Management Team's work has been significant in maintaining our cashflow in a difficult operating environment where there is restricted legal aid and competitive grant funding opportunities.

Increased grant funding - We are grateful for the support provided by our funders that allowed us to continue to operate in these difficult times. Through the year we have been able to extend the reach of the law centre through new funding streams which now total 22. These have included:

Lottery Community Fund, Crisis Fund - has helped secure funding for our Cost of Living Team funding, a crisis navigator, part time welfare rights casework as well as embedding community engagement in the project.

London Legal Support Trust/Greater London Authority - funded a one year Cost of Living pilot for a further crisis navigator and welfare rights caseworker.

Greater London Authority - in partnership with South London Refugee Association funding for 1.5 new regulated immigration caseworkers to assist street homeless with their immigration status.

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Trust for London - in partnership with Citizens Advice Croydon funding a temporary accommodation project in partnership with to enhance our community engagement to campaign on the issues of those living in temporary accommodation.

We continue to apply and develop our grant portfolio with continuing success into the next financial year, developing partnerships and including new funding from the Legal Education Foundation to fund a new trainee solicitor post. We continue to look for funding and partnerships that can help us develop the next generation of lawyers working in social welfare law.

Maintaining quality - We continued to pass both our Lexcel and Legal Aid quality audits remotely with a positive audit assessment as detailed below:

Despite the current difficulties and challenges, SWLLC should be highly commended for sustaining an extremely high level of compliance against the Lexcel Standard. There will still be short term challenges around continuing to sustain those high levels of compliance in the face of continuing change and development both internally and externally. It was very clear, however, that compliance is a deeply embedded part of the culture and, in Lexcel terms, SWLLC remains an exceptionally efficient and exceptionally well run organisation!! The significant ongoing work, and influence, of the Head of Legal Practice/Lexcel SRO will continue to provide a stable platform from which to address those challenges.

Given the current context, one of the key critical challenges for SWLLC is to fully embed, its "new normal" in terms of the "post pandemic" context. This will enable the organisation to then regroup and continue to grow and develop. SWLLC will need to continue to proactively consider what that "new normal" will mean both for culture, working methods, funding, supervision and compliance. There is also a need "to continue to protect the culture" - it is the culture that, in large part, has both enabled, and will continue to enable, the successful development of the organisation. Integral to all of this will be the need to maintain a cost effective organisation structure, and the continued refinement of the culture which will need to remain proactively focussed on client care, development/growth, funding sources, agile decision making and agile working".

Lexcel Audit (April 2023)

External Awards

The Law Centre has been recognised in the following Awards:

- Excellence Award for Outstanding Achievement 2022
- Our immigration solicitor Rajitha Kumar was one of only three people this year to be awarded an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Law Centres Network. Rajitha has been with the law centre for over 15 years and has got status for many hundreds of people fundamentally changing their lives.
- Our immigration team was rated excellent in an independent peer review by the Legal Aid Agency. We are one of the few agencies across the country that achieve this highest rating

"An exceptional level of client care was provided to vulnerable clients. A large proportion of the files reviewed related to clients who were vulnerable as a result of their youth, mental illness, physical illness, or experience of trauma (sometimes all of these)."

- Employee Volunteer of the Year Award: Our pro bono volunteers, Sital Somaiya (Family Law) and Charlotte Pugh (Immigration Law) have both been awarded joint first place for Employee Volunteer of the Year Award in the Merton Partnership Civic Pride Volunteer Awards Celebration 2023!
- IMA Money Advice Awards finalists 2022: Our Money Advice Team, led by Roni Marsh, was shortlisted for the Debt Team of the Year in the 2022 IMA Money Advice Awards.

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Financial review

Financially, as for many in this sector, this year has been challenging.

Restrictions of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) continue to make it extremely difficult for the Law Centre to operate as fairly and effectively as it should. Legal Aid is now worth less than 50% in real terms than a decade ago. We continue to find ways to address the difficulties this causes to our funding, now supported currently by 22 grant funders to whom we are extremely grateful. We are considering ways we can further harness the legal profession's support as well as increasing even further the number of grant-funded projects we can undertake.

The charity's income for the year was £1,569,154 compared to £1,509,383 in 2021/22. The total expenditure in the year was £1,544,089 compared to £1,574,499 in 2021/22. The net result produced a surplus of £25,065 (2021/22 deficit (£65,116)). Restricted funds increased by £19,308 and unrestricted general funds also increased by £5,757.

SWLLC held funds of £640,620 at the year-end, of which £139,155 was restricted and £501,465 was unrestricted.

In 2022/23, South West London Law Centres' main source of funding was Grant Income, due to challenges around Legal Aid income. We received funding and grants from AB Charity, Access to Justice Foundation, Citizens Advice Croydon (Croydon Advice Providers Together), Croydon Relief in Need, Debt Free Advice, DWP (Kickstart), Greater London Authority (Homeless Immigration Project), Here for Good, Law Centres Network, London Legal Support Trust, London Borough of Croydon, London Borough of Merton, London Borough of Kingston, Lottery Community Fund, Merton Giving, Merton Social Prescribers, The Good Things Foundation, Tides Foundation (Blackrock), Trust for London and Wimbledon Guild.

SWLLC retained a number of donors and corporate sponsors as well as raising funds through various fundraising activities.

Reserves policy

The Trustees have considered the following factors when considering a reserves policy:

- The organisation's contractual obligations to its staff in terms of parental rights, sickness pay and redundancy provisions;
- The organisation's obligations to maintain a safe and clean working environment;
- That certain equipment is essential for our work; and
- That the timing of legal aid income is uncertain.

The nature of the law centre's business means that at any one moment in time it has very considerable work in progress. This is reflected in its material reserve position. The Trustees have adopted a target for unrestricted reserves of three months expenditure which is approximately £390,358. At March 2023, our unrestricted reserves stood at £501,465 (2021/22 £495,708). Because reserves are effectively held as work in progress rather than cash the Trustees continue to prioritise effective management of work in progress turning it into cash as well as looking for other means whereby cash reserves can be built up. This will continue to be a major focus of the Law Centre's work in the coming year.

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Going concern

The ongoing impact of the freezing of legal aid and limited alternative sources of funding available for the operational activities of South West London Law Centres has increased the focus on going concern. There is considerable impact on the ability of the Law Centre to earn Legal Aid income through an effective 20 year freeze on rates of remuneration. The Law Centre has expanded its share of grant income where we can. The Trustees continued measures to deal with this crisis, by undertaking a scenario-based budgeting exercise to quantify the potential deficit and put in place early savings measures.

Although the start of 2022/23 was recognised as being difficult, following work on pilot projects started in the previous year we have been successful in a number of longer three year commitments which provide more stability. New funding has been awarded from the Lottery Community Fund, Trust from London and Greater London Authority. As a result of this we ended the year making a small unrestricted surplus. In previous years the law centre has been successful in reducing the deficit and even ending the year with a surplus through effective cost management and seeking new grant and income opportunities.

This work continues into the current year 2023/24 by harnessing our community engagement work, listening to what the community wants and further developing pilots we have added to our portfolio by getting new funding from London Borough of Wandsworth, expanding our reach through funding by Surrey County Council and seeking funds to help train new solicitors through The Legal Education Foundation and Propel. However, we did lose grants from London Borough of Croydon due to the authority being placed in special financial measures.

A budget is being set for 2024/25, which continues to reflect the challenges that we face going forward. However, we are optimistic that the relationships that we have developed with new and existing funders, and the efforts put into diversifying our fundraising based on new areas of demand, will assist towards meeting our commitments as well as seeing our legal income grow.

The Law Centre will start the year 2024/25 with a smaller budgeted deficit than in previous years. The Budgets are regularly reviewed by the Trustees at Board level and through a Finance Sub- Committee.

Principal risks and uncertainties

Fundraising note

We are mindful of the code issued by the Fundraising regulator. We did not use any third parties in our fundraising activities and no complaints were received in the year.

South West London Law Centres undertook a strategic review and developed a revised three year strategic plan. The Law Centre undertakes a formal risk management review throughout the year. This forms part of the business plan cycle. It involves identifying the types of risk the charity faces, prioritising them in terms of potential impact and likelihood of occurrence, and identifying ways of mitigating the risks. The major risks are reviewed regularly by the trustees on a quarterly basis through a risk register covering governance, regulatory and compliance, financial, operational and external factors.

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Plans for the future: The Year Ahead - Our Strategic Objectives 2023 -24

Update - Impact of COVID-19 and last strategic plan

Our last three year plan was written before the pandemic. It was an ambitious attempt to modernise and drive our growth to meet ever increasing demand for our services. Covid-19 was so disruptive that we had to set aside plans for strategic growth and focus on survival. The impact of the pandemic will be felt for some considerable time and has been closely followed by a wide reaching cost of living 'crisis' impacting our clients, demand on our services and our ability to deliver them. The reality is that our clients have always been in 'crisis' mode: it is the extension of that distressed state to far more families and individuals and its public recognition that has heralded the term 'crisis'. Through concerned and generous funders we have been able to significantly increase the levels of our grant funding. However, our legal income has remained depressed, poorly remunerated and slow to recover from the pandemic. Recruitment at all levels has become substantially more difficult, but particularly for qualified legal staff in social welfare areas of law. The legal profession, Law Colleges and Universities are not generating lawyers with the skills and knowledge that our clients need.

Although we did not achieve all we set out in our last plan, we did establish some strong building blocks that are helping us move forward. These have included:

- Growing capacity and breadth in the management team with the establishment of the roles of Deputy CEO, Communications Manager and Community Engagement Managers. These roles have enabled the Law Centre to reach out to more communities, develop new projects that they have helped us to identify and succeed in convincing our funders to support them. This approach has helped us to weather the financial storm and at the same time expand the scope of our community work for those in greatest need.

- We have introduced new IT and case management systems to support these initiatives, enabling us to work with greater flexibility and report back to our sponsors on our achievements.

- Staff expertise has increased in breadth with the development of our Crisis Navigation service, enabling us to focus our expert legal help where it is most needed. With the failure of the legal profession to deliver enough lawyers with social welfare law expertise we are developing our own focused legal apprenticeships.

The overall direction of the plan and the goals for the next three years has not changed significantly. We have set out the actions for the next year only as the environment continues to change rapidly.

How we measure success and the vision for the previous iteration of the strategic plan are set out below.

Success is Unlocking Justice through....

- Growth with enhanced funding to match our clients' needs, both geographically and in areas of legal need
- A good employer developing staff and recruiting and growing our own
- Working smarter with technology in a smarter working environment
- Convincing more funders and sponsors that funding SWLLC is the right thing to do in order to meet the legal needs of the most vulnerable in our society: we have to succeed in this.

Where do we see the Law Centre in 3 years' time 2026 SWLLC is....

- An established voice in London and nationally; a cutting-edge legal advocate for those in most need with professional external communications developing and promoting policy and campaigns developed from casework and strategic cases
- Financially stable, attractive to more and varied funders
- A One Stop Shop for our clients delivering holistic and integrated advice and casework: we deal with the whole of the problem, not just the symptoms
- Pro Bono clinics maintaining and diversifying their work;
- Attracting and retaining staff including 'home grown' qualified staff through innovation in our staff offer and development opportunities
- A better working environment is established

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, we believe we have made considerable progress towards these objectives. We now need to consolidate what has been achieved and re-focus on our strategic growth in order to maintain the current trajectory.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our many sponsors and funders. They have stuck with us and expanded in number during a very difficult period for the sector.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution and Organisational Structure

South West London Law Centres (SWLLC) is a Charitable Company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated under a Memorandum and Articles of Association which were amended 15 December 2017, and was granted charitable status on 2 March 2004.

The overall responsibility of SWLLC belongs to the Trustees (board of directors) which meets bi-monthly. The Board is supported by a Finance and Human Resources Sub Committees who are responsible for setting salaries. Day to day responsibility for managing the law centre is delegated to the charity's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Patrick Marples and the Senior Management Team, comprised of the Deputy CEO, Stacey Edgar, Head of Legal Service and Housing Solicitor, Katy Forkah. The remuneration for key management staff is determined by following a criteria of consistency with the responsibilities assigned, and alignment and success in achieving the organisation's overall strategic aims and prevailing market trends.

Appointment of trustees

SWLLC is a charitable company managed by a board of voluntary trustees comprised of local groups and individuals. Voluntary organisations from SWLLC's catchment area, representing vulnerable individuals and groups in need of our services, are encouraged to become members of the organisation and stand for election to the board as are concerned individuals from across the six boroughs. The amended articles changed the way that trustees are appointed. The size of the board is now restricted to 12 and trustees are eligible to stand for up to 2 terms of 4 years before a break. Trustees due for re-election retire from office at the AGM and those eligible can stand for re-election.

Induction and training of new trustees

Skill gaps on the Board are regularly identified and as a result efforts are made to identify new Trustees capable of filling any gaps. Induction and training of trustees is currently carried out on an ad-hoc basis as and when the needs arise. The Trustees have developed an induction programme and are reviewing training policies as part of its current review.

Related parties

There are no related parties' transactions.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of South West London Law Centres for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES - continued

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

Report of the trustees, approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on

13 December 2023 and signed on the board's behalf by:

Allan Blake

.....

Allan Blake
Trustee

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE MEMBERS OF SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

Independent auditor's report to the members of South West London Law Centres

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of South West London Law Centres for the year ended 31 March 2023, which comprise the Statement of Financial activities, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of the charitable company's net movement in funds, including the income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the Charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Trustees' Report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Trustees' Report (which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law) for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the Trustees' Report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE MEMBERS OF SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Trustees' Report (which incorporates the directors' report).

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept by the charitable company; or
- the charitable company financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 15, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

Based on our understanding of the charitable company and the environment in which it operates, we identified that the principal risks of non-compliance with laws and regulations related to the regulatory requirements of the Charity Commission, and we considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements. We also considered those laws and regulations that have a direct impact on the preparation of the financial statements such as the Companies Act 2006, Charities Act 2011, and Payroll and Sales Taxes.

We evaluated management's incentives and opportunities for fraudulent manipulation of the financial statements (including the risk of override of controls), and determined that the principal risks were related to the posting of inappropriate journal entries or the manipulation of accounting estimates, such as the recognition of work in progress. Audit procedures performed by the engagement team included:

- Inspecting correspondence with regulators and tax authorities;
- Discussions with management including consideration of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulation and fraud;
- Evaluating management's controls designed to prevent and detect irregularities;
- Identifying and testing journals; and

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS TO THE MEMBERS OF SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

- Challenging assumptions and judgements made by management in their critical accounting estimates.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an Auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Lee Stokes (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Haysmacintyre LLP
10 Queen Street Place
London
EC4R 1AG

Date: 13 December 2023

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
INCOME FROM					
Grants and donations	3	230,148	928,271	1,158,419	1,141,992
Legal and advice services	4	409,863	-	409,863	367,373
Investment income	5	<u>872</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>872</u>	<u>18</u>
Total		<u>640,883</u>	<u>928,271</u>	<u>1,569,154</u>	<u>1,509,383</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON					
Raising funds	6	42,149	-	42,149	38,573
Charitable activities	7				
Legal and advice services		<u>592,977</u>	<u>908,963</u>	<u>1,501,940</u>	<u>1,535,926</u>
Total		<u>635,126</u>	<u>908,963</u>	<u>1,544,089</u>	<u>1,574,499</u>
 NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		5,757	19,308	25,065	(65,116)
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>495,708</u>	<u>119,847</u>	<u>615,555</u>	<u>680,671</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u><u>501,465</u></u>	<u><u>139,155</u></u>	<u><u>640,620</u></u>	<u><u>615,555</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

BALANCE SHEET
31 MARCH 2023

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2023 Total funds £	2022 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	14	11,604	-	11,604	11,951
CURRENT ASSETS					
Work in progress	15	316,801	-	316,801	422,249
Debtors	16	453,366	-	453,366	393,599
Cash at bank		<u>189,051</u>	<u>139,155</u>	<u>328,206</u>	<u>233,840</u>
		959,218	139,155	1,098,373	1,049,688
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	17	(469,357)	-	(469,357)	(446,084)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>489,861</u>	<u>139,155</u>	<u>629,016</u>	<u>603,604</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>501,465</u>	<u>139,155</u>	<u>640,620</u>	<u>615,555</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>501,465</u>	<u>139,155</u>	<u>640,620</u>	<u>615,555</u>
FUNDS	19				
Unrestricted funds				501,465	495,708
Restricted funds				<u>139,155</u>	<u>119,847</u>
TOTAL FUNDS				<u>640,620</u>	<u>615,555</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 13 December 2023 and were signed on its behalf by:

Allan Blake

.....
Allan Blake
Trustee

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	<u>103,863</u>	<u>(109,501)</u>
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		<u>103,863</u>	<u>(109,501)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(10,369)	(645)
Interest received		<u>872</u>	<u>18</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		<u>(9,497)</u>	<u>(627)</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		94,366	(110,128)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>233,840</u>	<u>343,968</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u><u>328,206</u></u>	<u><u>233,840</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2023 £	2022 £
Net income/(expenditure) for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	25,065	(65,116)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	10,716	7,260
Interest received	(872)	(18)
Decrease/(increase) in work in progress	105,448	(29,899)
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(59,767)	174,862
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	<u>23,273</u>	<u>(196,590)</u>
Net cash provided by/(used in) operations	<u><u>103,863</u></u>	<u><u>(109,501)</u></u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1.4.22 £	Cash flow £	At 31.3.23 £
Net cash			
Cash at bank	<u>233,840</u>	<u>94,366</u>	<u>328,206</u>
	<u>233,840</u>	<u>94,366</u>	<u>328,206</u>
Total	<u><u>233,840</u></u>	<u><u>94,366</u></u>	<u><u>328,206</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

BASIS OF PREPARING THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

GOING CONCERN

The trustees consider there are no material uncertainties about the Charity's ability to continue as a going concern. The financial position, reserves levels and future plans gives the trustees confidence the Charity remains a going concern for the foreseeable future.

INCOME

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities when the company is legally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy and receipt is probable.

Legal Aid Agency income is accounted for on a receivable basis when the income is measurable and certain. In the case of Legal Aid, the Legal Aid Agency income is usually recognised once they have confirmed the payment. Legal Help income is recognised under the Unified Contract when SWLLC has closed the cases and is entitled to claim the fee.

Voluntary income is received by way of donations and covenants and is included in full in the statement of financial activities when receivable.

Grant income is recognised in full in the statement of financial activities in the year in which it is receivable or received whichever is the earlier.

EXPENDITURE

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expense categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular activities they have been allocated on a basis consistent with the use of the resources.

Overheads have been allocated on the basis of staff time.

Fundraising costs are those incurred in seeking voluntary contributions and do not include the costs of disseminating information in support of charitable activities.

Support costs are those incurred directly in support of expenditure on the objects of the company. Any irrecoverable VAT is written back to general expenditure.

Governance costs are those incurred in connection with enabling the company to comply with external regulation, constitutional and statutory requirements, and in providing support to the Trustees in the discharge of their statutory duties.

TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

Assets costing more than £100 are capitalised, where the benefits of capitalisation are material.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on the following basis:

Furniture, fittings and equipment - Over 3 years

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

WORK IN PROGRESS

Work in progress represents the value of all open legally aid funded cases. These cases had been opened but were not yet completed, as at 31 March 2023. Work in progress has been valued at the lower of cost and net realisable value taking into account payments that have already been received.

TAXATION

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its charitable activities.

FUND ACCOUNTING

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Directors in furtherance of the general objectives of the company and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the company for particular purposes. The cost of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

HIRE PURCHASE AND LEASING COMMITMENTS

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

PENSION COSTS AND OTHER POST-RETIREMENT BENEFITS

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

2. CRITICAL ACCOUNTING JUDGEMENTS AND KEY SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances. Although these estimates are based on the trustees' best knowledge of the amount, events or actions actual results ultimately differ from these estimates. Estimates have been used in the calculation of the pension liability and valuation of the contribution by volunteers. The valuation of our work in progress is normally looked at on a quarterly basis, to assess the value of time earned but not billed. A provision is held against legal casework where it has been determined that the likelihood of recovery of costs is low.

3. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

	Total Funds 2023 £	Total Funds 2022 £
General donations	12,658	19,483
City solicitors donations	178,025	116,863
Pro bono volunteers	14,686	37,500
London borough of Merton	56,000	56,000
London borough of Croydon	57,342	38,551
Other grants	839,708	873,595
	<u>1,158,419</u>	<u>1,141,992</u>

The charity received no donations in kind in 2023 (2022: NIL).

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

3. GRANTS AND DONATIONS - continued

The charity has benefited during the year from pro bono legal volunteers, whose professional services had we paid for would have been valued at £1.6m (2022: £1.6m).

We have calculated the financial benefit provided to SWLLC, by the volunteers by estimating the cost of day time volunteers only. At a conservative estimate, daytime volunteers provide the equivalent of £37,500 in added value (£7.50ph administration/reception and £15ph casework support).

We estimate the value of pro bono work provided by our evening volunteers at around £1.6 million pounds - on the basis that each client (including follow up work and supervision time can take a combined total of volunteer 3 hours at a cost of £168p). We have used an estimated high street rate, which is higher than the legal rates that the law centre staff recover, and also assumed that rates have stayed fixed since last year.

4. LEGAL AND ADVICE SERVICES

	2023	2022
	£	£
Legal and advice services	<u>409,863</u>	<u>367,373</u>

5. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2023	2022
	£	£
Interest receivable	<u>872</u>	<u>18</u>

6. RAISING FUNDS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Support costs - staff	33,041	31,122
Other support costs (see note 8)	<u>9,108</u>	<u>7,451</u>
	42,149	38,573

7. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Legal and advice services		
Direct staff costs	822,151	812,895
Direct activity costs	47,332	76,431
Support costs (see note 8)	<u>632,457</u>	<u>646,600</u>
	<u>1,501,940</u>	<u>1,535,926</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

8. SUPPORT COSTS ALLOCATED TO ACTIVITIES

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

	Fundraising £	Charitable £	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs	33,041	372,733	405,774	387,075
Premises costs	4,689	119,637	124,326	116,372
Office and administration	4,419	106,874	111,293	154,182
Insurance costs	-	10,713	10,713	6,115
Governance costs	-	22,500	22,500	21,429
Total	<u>42,149</u>	<u>632,457</u>	<u>674,606</u>	<u>685,173</u>

Overhead costs have been allocated on the basis of staff time.

SUPPORT COSTS ALLOCATED TO ACTIVITIES – PRIOR YEAR

	Fundraising £	Charitable £	2022 £	2021 £
Staff costs	31,122	355,953	387,075	277,828
Premises costs	3,134	113,238	116,372	113,993
Office and administration	4,317	149,865	154,182	118,067
Insurance costs	-	6,115	6,115	29,374
Governance costs	-	21,429	21,429	-
Total	<u>38,573</u>	<u>646,600</u>	<u>685,173</u>	<u>539,262</u>

9. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	2023 £	2022 £
Auditors' remuneration	15,000	15,000
Depreciation - owned assets	10,716	7,260
Hire of plant and machinery	<u>25,843</u>	<u>32,408</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

10. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2023 nor for the year ended 31 March 2022.

TRUSTEES' EXPENSES

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31 March 2023 nor for the year ended 31 March 2022.

11. STAFF COSTS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages and salaries	1,118,754	1,053,777
Social security costs	107,131	106,151
Other pension costs	<u>2,040</u>	<u>43,838</u>
	<u>1,227,925</u>	<u>1,203,766</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2023	2022
Legal service and advice	22	26
Support and fundraising	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
	<u>32</u>	<u>37</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

12. STAFF COSTS - continued

No employee received remuneration amounting to more than £60,000 in either year. The remuneration of the Charity's key management personnel in the year was £56,038 (2022: £54,975).

Redundancy payments were £NIL (2022: £2,690) in the year.

13. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
INCOME FROM			
Grants and donations	307,219	834,773	1,141,992
Legal and advice services	367,373	-	367,373
Investment income	18	-	18
Total	<u>674,610</u>	<u>834,773</u>	<u>1,509,383</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON			
Raising funds	38,573	-	38,573
 Charitable activities			
Legal and advice services	<u>679,251</u>	<u>856,675</u>	<u>1,535,926</u>
Total	<u>717,824</u>	<u>856,675</u>	<u>1,574,499</u>
 NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	(43,214)	(21,902)	(65,116)
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	<u>538,922</u>	<u>141,749</u>	<u>680,671</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>495,708</u>	<u>119,847</u>	<u>615,555</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

14. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £
COST	
At 1 April 2022	128,867
Additions	<u>10,369</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u>139,236</u>
DEPRECIATION	
At 1 April 2022	116,916
Charge for year	<u>10,716</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u>127,632</u>
NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2023	<u>11,604</u>
At 31 March 2022	<u>11,951</u>

15. WORK IN PROGRESS

	2023	2022
	£	£
Work-in-progress	<u>316,801</u>	<u>422,249</u>

16. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023	2022
	£	£
Trade debtors	148,035	58,205
Other debtors	191,144	208,673
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>114,187</u>	<u>126,721</u>
	<u>453,366</u>	<u>393,599</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

17. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2023 £	2022 £
Clients' funds held	149,238	109,916
Trade creditors	232,503	239,889
Social security and other taxes	37,319	30,729
Other creditors	7,258	21,083
Accrued expenses	<u>43,039</u>	<u>44,467</u>
	<u>469,357</u>	<u>446,084</u>

18. LEASING AGREEMENTS

As at 31 March 2023, the charity had annual commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	Land and buildings		Other	
	2023 £	2022 £	2023 £	2022 £
Within 1 year	51,958	58,700	17,706	17,706
Between 2 and 5 years	<u>-</u>	<u>51,958</u>	<u>38,662</u>	<u>56,368</u>
	<u>51,958</u>	<u>110,658</u>	<u>56,368</u>	<u>74,074</u>

19. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1.4.22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.3.23 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	473,388	16,473	489,861
Fixed asset fund	<u>22,320</u>	<u>(10,716)</u>	<u>11,604</u>
	495,708	5,757	501,465
Restricted funds			
General fund	<u>119,847</u>	<u>19,308</u>	<u>139,155</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>615,555</u>	<u>25,065</u>	<u>640,620</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

20. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Income	Expenditure	Movement in funds
	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	640,883	(624,410)	16,473
Fixed asset fund	-	(10,716)	(10,716)
	640,883	(635,126)	5,757
Restricted funds			
General fund	928,271	(908,963)	19,308
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>1,569,154</u>	<u>(1,544,089)</u>	<u>25,065</u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1.4.21 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.3.22 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	520,356	(36,599)	483,757
Fixed asset fund	18,566	(6,615)	11,951
	538,922	(43,214)	495,708
Restricted funds			
General fund	141,749	(21,902)	119,847
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>680,671</u>	<u>(65,116)</u>	<u>615,555</u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Income	Expenditure	Movement in funds
	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	674,610	(711,209)	(36,599)
Fixed asset fund	-	(6,615)	(6,615)
	674,610	(717,824)	(43,214)
Restricted funds			
General fund	834,773	(856,675)	(21,902)
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>1,509,383</u>	<u>(1,574,499)</u>	<u>(65,116)</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023**

Fixed Asset Fund

This represents the net book value of fixed assets held within unrestricted funds.

RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Brought Forward	Income	Expenditure	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£
AB Charitable Trust	-	20,000	(20,000)	-
Citizens Advice Croydon	-	34,211	(34,211)	-
London Borough of Croydon	8,932	23,131	(32,063)	-
Debt Free Advice	-	230,412	(230,412)	-
GLA Homeless	-	26,421	(26,421)	-
Grant to Clients	-	1,980	(1,676)	304
Here for Good	-	42,457	(42,457)	-
LCN Crisis Grant	-	28,000	(28,000)	-
Locality	7,500	-	-	7,500
London Legal Support Trust – Cost of Living	-	58,333	(58,333)	-
London Legal Support Trust - Surrey	34,471	14,259	(34,114)	14,616
Lottery CF – Crisis Project	-	160,966	(82,490)	78,476
London Legal Support Trust	5,000	-	-	5,000
Merton Council	-	56,000	(56,000)	-
Merton Giving	-	7,744	(1,405)	6,339
Merton Social Prescribers	-	20,000	(18,750)	1,250
London Borough of Merton (EUSS)	24,777	-	(24,777)	-
The Access to Justice Foundation	-	79,672	(79,672)	-
The Croydon Relief in Need	-	7,500	(7,500)	-
The Good Things Foundation	-	2,000	-	2,000
The Tides Foundation - Blackrock	-	7,602	(7,602)	-
Trust for London (ELAN)	-	6,564	(6,564)	-
Trust for London – Employment	2,667	16,000	(18,667)	-
Trust for London Temporary Accommodation	-	25,000	(21,788)	3,212
Trust for London - London Community Response Fund	12,500	-	(12,500)	-
Wandsworth Council – Crisis Fund Projects	-	15,958	(14,736)	1,222
London Borough of Wandsworth - EUSS	24,000	21,473	(32,531)	12,942
Wandsworth Rent Subsidy	-	12,588	(6,294)	6,294
Wimbledon Guild	-	10,000	(10,000)	-
Total	119,847	928,271	(908,963)	139,155

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Purpose of restricted funds:

AB Charitable Trust – a grant towards the cost of a part time Communications manager post

Citizens Advice Croydon - Croydon Advice Providers - a partnership grant with Croydon Citizens Advice under Croydon Council's Community Fund for the provision of a pro bono clinic service in Croydon

London Borough of Croydon - a grant received towards rent of the office at Davis House

Debt Free Advice – a grant received from Toynbee Hall in consortium with other London advice agencies, funded by the Money and Pensions Service to provide face to face debt advice across South West London

Greater London Authority (GLA) Homeless – a grant to provide immigration advice and casework to rough sleepers as part of a pan London partnership, working alongside South London Refugee Association in the South West Region.

Grants to Clients - grants received from various sources for direct payments to clients.

Here for Good- a grant to fund a EU Settlement Scheme caseworker seconded to Here for Good.

Law Centre Network Crisis - a partnership grant with Law Centres administered by the Law Centres Network to provide welfare rights and immigration support to Crisis Hubs. A further grant was received to fund support core costs.

Locality - a carried forward grant towards refurbishment cost of the Merton office

London Legal Support Trust – Cost of Living - a new grant to fund a specialist welfare rights and crisis navigation service. This is part of a wider pan London partnership funded through the GLA

London Legal Support Trust - Kingston & Surrey - grants to continue to support development of work in Kingston and Surrey.

London Legal Support Trust - a grant carried forward for the refurbishment of our offices in Merton

Lottery Community Fund - Crisis Project – a new grant to fund a specialist welfare rights and crisis navigation service as well as management and community engagement costs

Merton Council – a grant to fund specialist advice and casework in Merton.

Merton Giving - a grant to fund additional training and supervision costs for volunteers working on the Cost of Living project

Merton Social Prescribers - a grant to provide debt advice to referrals from Merton Social Prescribing team

London Borough of Merton - EUSS - a grant towards the funding of part of an immigration post specialising on helping those needing support with EUSS applications

The Access to Justice Foundation – grants under wave 3 of Cost of Living and Help Accessing Legal Support to support access into law centre services.

The Croydon Relief in Need – a grant towards crisis navigation support for people in Croydon.

The Good Things Foundation – a grant to fund digital training for clients coming through our Cost of Living projects.

The Tides Foundation – Blackrock – a grant towards developing a complaints clinic on welfare

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

rights decision making.

Trust for London (Elan) - a grant to support a coordinator for the Employment Legal Advice Network, a forum for employment advice agencies across London

Trust for London Employment – a grant towards the cost of an employment caseworker.

Trust for London – Temporary Accommodation Project - a new grant to develop coordination and campaigning for better conditions of those in temporary accommodation through community engagement work.

Trust for London - London Community Response Fund – a continuation grant towards the cost of a community engagement post,

Wandsworth Council – Crisis Fund Projects – grants towards specialist welfare rights/ crisis support and towards additional training and supervision for volunteers working on the Cost of Living project

London Borough of Wandsworth - EUSS - a grant towards the funding of part of an immigration post specialising on helping those needing support with EUSS applications

Wimbledon Guild – a grant towards welfare rights support

21. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

The aggregate of donations received from the Trustees in the year was £NIL (2022: £360).

There were no other related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2023 (2022: NIL).