

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

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024
FOR
SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES**

Berringers LLP
Lygon House
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Bromley
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SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

TRUSTEES	Allan Blake Sarmad Qureshi Simon Tinkler Nimmisha Aslam Sarah Bergstrom Susan Field Bernd Halschka (resigned 19.2.24) Melanie Felten (appointed 19.3.24) Theodore Watkins (appointed 19.3.24) James Waugh (appointed 19.3.24) David Jackson (appointed 19.3.24)
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	Berringers LLP Lygon House 50 London Rd Bromley BR1 3RA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE	Patrick Marples
BANKERS	CAF Bank Ltd 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

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 2024. 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 three branches in, Battersea, Croydon and Merton. 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 2023/24 framed by the continuing impact of increase in the cost-of-living, the chronic 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 since 1974, 50 years ago, 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 5,868 clients in 2023/24. This was 910 less than the previous year (2022/23 to 6,778) due to a number of factors including the loss of some of our court duty schemes and a funder wanting more in depth work.

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

Volunteers

The use of hundreds of volunteers alongside our 39 employed staff (36.8 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 are providing 60 appointments a week through our clinic programme.

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. We have introduced some flexibility into our remote appointments having some held during the day as well as in the evenings. We continue to see if we can adapt the pro bono offering so we can develop specialisms to carry out some casework. At the end of the year we started working closer with some partners to deliver more in depth housing casework through targeted training and supervision of a number of clinics. We recruited a part time Housing Pro Bono Supervisor.

Volunteers also help us in every aspect of our work: 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. We recruited nearly 50 new volunteers during the year.

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; 54% of those that left went onto gain paid employment furthering their careers. Some took up paid roles at the law centre when these became available. There was much positive feed back from our volunteers

"I think the law centre has helped shape my opinions on what fields of law to enter into and has developed my customer service skills significantly which helped me get my new job."

"I was able to bolster my CV and in the interview for my job I referenced the work I had done in the law centre and this was very useful. Having obtained real experience in legal practice has been crucial to me finding a job."

We estimate the annual value of daytime volunteering to be £72,929. An estimate of the value of annual pro bono work provided by evening volunteers is in excess of £1.4 million. This is calculated on the basis that each client (including follow up work and supervision time) takes an average 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.

"Pro bono work is invaluable; it forms the backbone of our justice system by ensuring that everyone, regardless of financial means, has access to legal support and representation. It is a vital commitment that I have made and will continue to make to uphold the integrity of our legal system. I believe pro bono work also strengthens the communities we serve, providing hope and a fair chance for those who might otherwise be left without a voice!" (Pro bono lawyer)

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Achievements and performance

The Table below summarises our principal Activities in three main areas. Overall, in 2023/24, we assisted 5,868 clients (6,778 in 2022/23) with direct services.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs
<p>Housing Team: Six solicitors, including one who undertakes community care and welfare rights cases, plus four paralegals attached to the team.</p> <p>Debt Team: Five caseworkers.</p> <p>Immigration Team: Four solicitors and one OISC registered caseworkers, including one undertaking public law.</p> <p>Employment Team: one caseworker.</p> <p>Cost of Living Two crisis navigators and two welfare rights caseworkers and a team leader supporting the work of the housing and debt teams. A Community Engagement Manager promoting the law centre work.</p>	<p>Activity 1 - Provision of representation in social welfare law covering community care, debt, discrimination employment, housing, immigration, asylum, public law and welfare rights</p>	<p>2,505cases (2,925 in 2022/23) We carried forward 572 cases at the start of the year.</p>
<p>Housing Team (as above)</p>	<p>Activity 2 – Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme</p>	<p>563 cases (899 in 2022/23)</p>
<p>Pro Bono Team Client Services Manager, daytime and evening reception staff, and pro bono lawyers</p>	<p>Activity 3 - Pro Bono Legal Advice Clinic delivered remotely since March 2020</p>	<p>2,800 clients seen (2,954 in 2022/23).</p>

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.

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.

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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 989 people last year. We continue to see high demand and saw 790 clients through our Cost of Living/ Welfare Rights team.

Our funder Debt Free Advice has awarded the team a Trustpilot score of 4.8 out of 5 based on feedback from our clients.

"My advisor Lana, is amazing she listened and helped me in every way possible and was very patient which helped as I was suicidal prior to speaking with Lana at SWLLC. I wasn't eating and very mentally unwell, Lana explained my options every step of the way making sure I fully understood my options and have given me the advice tailored to my needs to help me go forward and try to resolve my debts with the help and support I needed to deal with this and without them I would not be here today!!! I am so grateful for there service they literally saved my life without the service I would not be writing this review today so THANKYOU LANA and SWLLC you do amazing hard work." 5 Stars

Fara's Story – A Debt Case Study

Fara, a 51-year-old stroke survivor, lost her social care from Wandsworth Council due to an alleged £21,000 debt, leaving her without essential support. Isolated and fearful of bailiffs, she reached out to our Money Advice Team, where adviser Andrew Boba discovered that the council's actions were unlawful, as they could not withhold care due to debt. With Andrew's guidance, Fara successfully applied for a debt relief order, which cleared her debt and restored her access to necessary care. Today, Fara feels more secure but remains impacted by the trauma of her experience.

"What the council did was illegal, they took my care away and left me to suffer on my own. I asked myself: How is this my life? How are the people that are supposed to be helping me, causing panic attacks and seizures that make my health conditions worse."

"I felt so much better. I felt relieved. I felt calm. I felt good that someone finally helped remove this burden from me. Andrew's kind support has helped ease my mind. I finally feel like I am safe enough to leave the house and get the medical help I need."

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 grants from the Lottery Community Fund, London Legal Support Trust/Greater London Authority and London Borough of Merton. We now have team of five - two Crisis Navigators and two welfare rights caseworkers together with a team leader. We have added some one-off short term funding from Wimbledon Guild. 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.

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Robert's story - Cost of Living – Debt case study

At 67, Robert faced escalating financial hardship as the cost of living rose, complicating his life with disabilities. When an unfair parking fine and conflicting advice from other organizations left him feeling hopeless, he turned to our Law Centre. Robert connected with Ash, a Money Advice caseworker, who crafted a tailored plan to address his needs and helped him access benefits that increased his income by £16,000 annually. With Ash's guidance, Robert now feels empowered and more secure, with renewed hope for his future.

"I had seriously started panicking. Even thinking about how I felt back then makes my heart race. I kept thinking, what if the bailiffs came to take my wheelchair? I was stressed... and felt like I had no options."

"My first conversation with Ash significantly eased my anxiety. He was incredibly knowledgeable, and it was obvious that he knew what he was doing. Each question I asked had a clear, immediate answer."

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 26 cases and increased our reach through volunteers to support weekly employment advice clinics along together with our general pro bono clinics where we advised 655 people. Our pro bono work has been boosted through Employment Law for London partnership with BPP Law School offering a 30-minute telephone advice appointment for all London residents needing legal advice about a workplace issue.

Employment Case study – Tammy's Story

Tammy, a mother of three, was offered a senior fundraising role with a salary of £70,000, only to have the offer rescinded after being inappropriately questioned about her children's ages by the company's Vice President. Following this, the company claimed a hiring freeze, but Tammy suspected gender discrimination based on assumptions about her childcare responsibilities. Devastated, she sought support from our Law Centre, where employment caseworker Sarah Forsyth guided her through a successful gender discrimination claim. The tribunal ruled in Tammy's favour, awarding her £90,000 in compensation, restoring her confidence, and setting a precedent for others facing similar challenges.

"I was in a state of financial and emotional crisis as I was the main breadwinner for the family... I felt less competitive. I was in a tough situation."

"After the verdict, the result was incredible. My original pursuit wasn't just for myself, but to seek justice for other women in similar situations... The burden was lifted."

5. Housing

We work with people on a wide range of different housing issues covering possession, unlawful eviction, homelessness, disrepair and anti-social behaviour. They all help 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 267 cases and 563 clients were assisted as part of the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme. Our pro bono clinics advised 724 clients on housing issues.

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Kiera's Story - Housing Case Study

At 19, Kiera became homeless after her family rejected her upon learning she was pregnant and bisexual. Faced with threats to her safety and inadequate support from the council, she was left to sleep in unsafe places and experienced severe anxiety. Desperate, she reached out to our Law Centre, where housing solicitors Jeinsen and Florence intervened. They pressed the council to fulfil its legal obligation, securing safe accommodation for Kiera. Today, Kiera lives in secure housing with her newborn, feeling hopeful and safe, thanks to the Law Centre's unwavering support.

"I had no idea where I was going to go... The fear of not knowing was absolutely crushing."

"The Law Centre was more than helpful. I wouldn't be where I am today without the law centre, you've been absolutely fantastic."

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 for support. Through these we help people to recognise when they have a legal problem. These workshops evolve and have a series of case studies that are dissected as a group to find routes to remedy a situation using the same approach in each situation: Identify, Evidence, Report, Connect.

A major theme from our consultations are issues around the cost of living crisis and access to, and the condition of, housing. This work is currently being funded through Trust for London and the National Lottery Community Fund. Our work has involved organising events and training sessions with the community. We have also been able to bring people together and engage with policy makers on both a national and local level covering council tax, fuel poverty, benefit take up, cost of living, rights to repair, facilities in temporary accommodation and allocation of housing. This has enabled us to feed in some of the conversations we've had with our clients that are impacted by the increase in cost-of-living and to be privy to in-depth conversations with policy makers pushing for changes in the law and practice. We continue to see important outcomes through teaching community members to escalate their cases themselves where there isn't the capacity or scope within the advice sector to tackle these problems. This has included work around the allocation of permanent housing. We are continuing to work with the community to pilot a citizens inventory, so that people can check that temporary accommodation is safe and they understand their rights to challenge this effectively.

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.

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 351 cases. Our pro bono clinics advised 460 people on immigration issues. Through new funding from Surrey County Council we are working with those fleeing domestic violence to resolve their immigration issues. We continued our project 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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Harold's Story - Immigration Case Study

Harrold, facing deportation after a 39-month prison sentence, sought help from our Law Centre and discovered life-changing support. Our immigration solicitor recognized that Harrold was a victim of child trafficking, forced into domestic servitude and denied an education by his family. With careful legal representation, Harrold's appeal was upheld under Articles 3, 4, and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, recognizing the severe risks he faced if deported and the trauma he endured. Today, Harrold is safe, stable, and optimistic about his future, thanks to the compassionate, dedicated advocacy he received.

"I was in a state of... I had just given up. I had no one to turn to. Before I met Paul, I was really struggling. My personal life was a mess, I was out of money, and on top of that, I was facing deportation. I felt like I had hit rock bottom."

"The challenges I faced were not just legal; they were deeply personal... Today, I am not only in a stable situation but also optimistic about my future—something I couldn't have imagined before SWLLC took on my case."

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 2 county courts: We currently provide this service at Kingston and work as agent for Hammersmith and Fulham Law Centre in Wandsworth. Our duty solicitors have provided emergency legal advice/representation to clients at court and saved many from eviction often providing pro bono benefit assistance to address underlying issues relating to the benefit cap and bedroom tax. We are available to help clients to defend themselves against possession and home evictions in both rented and mortgage cases.

Unfortunately, during 2023/24 we lost part of the court duty scheme in Croydon in a Legal Aid Agency tender round meaning that we were able to help fewer people this year. Court duty has been an important entry point into the law centre into the housing and other law centre teams. However, we reapplied in the new tender round from the Legal Aid Agency to cover Croydon, Kingston and Wandsworth County Courts, and were successful and provide services at all these courts from September 2024..

Impact - We continue to achieve a high success rate. In 2023/24 we represented 563 people.

Activity 3: Pro Bono Legal Advice

Outcome – Our Volunteering Programme Our clinic programme addresses legal problems in their early stages and covers a wide range of legal subjects: Crime, Criminal Injury, Consumer, Employment, Family, General Litigation, Housing, Immigration, Inquests, Motoring Offences, Personal Injury, Small Claims and Wills and Probate.

Impact - The impact of 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.

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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 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:

"The questions I was asked were extremely detailed and thorough, I have been really impressed with the details of the advice received"

"I just needed some advice regarding a small claim I have submitted. The response helped me have some confidence that I was doing the right thing"

"The adviser has been very helpful and understanding, he pointed me in the right direction and allowed me to strengthen my legal case. I am still waiting for some time to pass and after that I will raise the matter to Court, I am sure the chances of a positive outcome have increased since I have spoken with the adviser"

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.

Maintaining 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 23. These have included:

London Borough of Wandsworth – Crisis Project to provide support with housing and immigration casework

Surrey County Council – funded immigration advice to those staying in refuges fleeing domestic violence

Legal Education Foundation - funding for a trainee solicitor

Propel (Law Centres Network) – This funding has enabled us to recruit an apprentice solicitor to join our housing team.

We continue to apply and develop our grant portfolio with continuing success into the next financial year, developing partnerships

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 again continue to 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 remains very clear, however, that compliance remains a deeply embedded part of the culture and, in Lexcel terms, SWLLC remains an extremely well run, and extremely well managed organisation!! The significant ongoing work, and influence, of the HOLP/Lexcel SRO, plus the ongoing positive impact of the CEO and Deputy CEO, continue to provide a very stable platform from which to address those challenges.

Given the current context, one of the key challenges for SWLLC is to continue to build upon the "new normal" in terms of the "post pandemic" context. This will enable SWLLC to then continue to grow and develop. SWLLC will need to continue to proactively consider what that "new normal" will mean both for

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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 SWLLC. 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. Other key challenges are the need to develop a Premises Strategy in the event that the Croydon office is closed by the Local Authority. There is a need to continue to proactively monitor performance, continue to ensure prompt and effective billing, and ensure that the support functions can continue to meet the challenges of increased casework volumes/complexity. In addition, SWLLC will need to continue to proactively address the critical need to secure additional funding streams and/or protect its current ones in order to both sustain, and further improve, its financial resilience. Some significant progress has been made on these issues, but more can, should, and is, being done!!

Lexcel Audit (April 2024)

Entering 50 years of service to our local communities

We are coming to the end of our 49th year and will start celebrating our 50th year from the date the first law centre opened in Balham in a dilapidated shop in June 1974. Shortly afterwards in the mid 1970s there were three law centres in Wandsworth. Sadly, that is not the case now. The law centre has gone through many changes but despite this has continued to thrive and survive through thick and thin. Many of the problems that were being tackled in 1974 are still being dealt with by the law centre today. We are incredibly proud of being able to help many thousands of people to improve their lives by getting them access to legal advice and support. We are proud to be part of a movement of law centres that has developed the concept and areas of social welfare law that are so important to making justice and access to rights a reality. We are thankful to the staff, volunteers, trustee board and funders who have enabled this all to happen.

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 23 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 £1,774,272 compared to £1,569,154 in 2022/23. The total expenditure in the year was £1,725,837 compared to £1,544,089 in 2022/23. The net result produced a surplus of £48,435 (2022/23 surplus 25,065). Restricted funds increased by £92,496 and unrestricted general funds decreased by £44,061.

SWLLC held funds of £689,055 at the year-end, of which £231,651 was restricted and £457,404 was unrestricted.

In 2023/24, South West London Law Centres' main source of funding was Grant Income, due to challenges around Legal Aid income.

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We received funding and grants from:

AB Charitable Trust, Debt Free Advice, Greater London Authority Homeless Immigration Project, Law Centres Network – Propel' Legal Education Foundation, Locality, London Legal Support Trust (Cost of Living and Surrey), Lottery Community Fund -Crisis Project, London Borough Of Merton, London Borough of Wandsworth (Crisis, EUSS, Rent Subsidy and Cost of Living projects), Merton Giving, Merton Social Prescribers, Surrey County Council, The Access to Justice Foundation, Trust for London (employment and temporary accommodation projects) 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 and to meet its obligations to suppliers and statutory parties on a timely basis; and
- 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 £431,459. At March 2024, our unrestricted reserves stood at £457,404 (2022/23 £501,465). Because reserves are effectively held as work in progress rather than cash the Trustees continue to prioritise the effective management of work in progress: turning it into cash as quickly as possible 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

Going concern

The ongoing impact of both the freezing of legal aid and limited alternative sources of funding available for our operational activities has maintained our focus as a going concern. There is considerable impact on the ability of the Law Centre to earn Legal Aid income through an effective 25 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 by undertaking a scenario-based budgeting exercise to quantify the potential deficit and put in place early savings measures.

This work continues by harnessing our community engagement work. By listening to what the community wants and further developing pilots we have added to our portfolio winning new funding from the London Borough of Wandsworth, expanding our reach through funding by Surrey County Council and seeking funds to help train new solicitors from The Legal Education Foundation and Propel. We are optimistic that the relationships that we have developed with new and existing funders, and 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 small budgeted deficit. The board will carry a full mid year review to make sure that the law centre remains on track as well as close regular monitoring of the cash position. Actions being taken includes moving to cheaper premises in Croydon and freezing a number of roles when they become vacant. Early work is taking place for the budget for 2025/26 to review further remedial action that need to be taken to remain on a stable financial footing where we continue face the strictures of legal aid together with an over subscribed and competitive competition for grants.

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The Budgets are regularly reviewed by the Trustees at Board level and through a Finance Sub- Committee.

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.

Principal risks and uncertainties

South West London Law Centres undertook a strategic review in 2023/24 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

Plans for the future: The Year Ahead – Our Strategic Objectives 2024-25

Update – Current situation and update on the last strategic plan

In 2024 we are celebrating our 50th anniversary. We want to take this milestone anniversary to celebrate, reflect and adapt so that we can put ourselves in a strong position for the future for the benefit of our clients and staff.

Our last three-year plan was written before the pandemic. It was an ambitious attempt to modernise and drive our growth to meet the 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 both our clients and our ability to deliver services. 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 increase significantly 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 overall direction of the plan and goals for the next three years has not changed significantly. We have set out the actions for next year only as the environment continues to change rapidly.

Our Current Challenges

There are some major challenges ahead. The more immediate ones are:

- a. Broader demand – The community needs for specialist legal advice go far beyond our current capacity
- b. Recruitment – Our ability to attract suitably qualified staff to maintain and grow capacity within our specialist advice teams
- c. Reduced funding opportunities – Legal aid funding has been stagnant for more than twenty years; grants are less available and unpredictable.
- d. Changes in access – The service delivery model has changed significantly since covid. Online delivery is now more common. This opens up geographical reach, increasing access and demand for services. However, coping with that demand creates significant pressures on staff.

Summary of the past three years

How we measure success and the vision we set ourselves in the previous version of this 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
-

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

- 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? - in 2027 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
- Hosting Pro Bono clinics that generate some discrete casework
- Attracting and retaining staff including 'home grown' qualified staff through innovation in our staff offer and development opportunities
- Lived experience is incorporated into our work and influencing our future development
- A better working environment is established

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 increased 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 SWLLC 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 Sub-committee, HR Sub-committee and Fund Raising Sub-committee. 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.

**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

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).

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.


The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website.

Members of the charity guarantee to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 to the assets of the charity in the event of winding up. The total number of such guarantees at 31 March 2024 was 91 (2023: 89). The trustees are members of the charity but this entitles them only to voting rights. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity.

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, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on21 December 2024..... and signed on the board's behalf by:


Trustee - Sarmad Qureshi

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 2024, 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 2024 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.

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

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.

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

Responsibilities of trustees for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement set out on page 14, 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.

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

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:

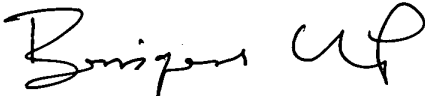
- Inspecting correspondence with regulators and tax authorities;
- Discussions with management including consideration of known or suspected instances of non-compliance with laws and regulation and fraud;
- Evaluating management's controls designed to prevent and detect irregularities;
- Identifying and testing journals, in particular journal entries posted with unusual account combinations, postings by unusual users or with unusual descriptions; and
- 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.



Ricky Hutson BSc ACA FCCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
Berringers LLP
Lygon House
50 London Rd
Bromley
BR1 3RA

Date: 21/12/2024

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
INCOME FROM					
Grants and donations	3	185,433	1,126,250	1,311,683	1,158,419
Legal and advice services	4	459,311	-	459,311	409,863
Investment income	5	<u>3,278</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,278</u>	<u>872</u>
Total		<u>648,022</u>	<u>1,126,250</u>	<u>1,774,272</u>	<u>1,569,154</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	6				
Legal and advice services		<u>692,083</u>	<u>1,033,754</u>	<u>1,725,837</u>	<u>1,544,089</u>
 NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		(44,061)	92,496	48,435	25,065
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>501,465</u>	<u>139,155</u>	<u>640,620</u>	<u>615,555</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>457,404</u>	<u>231,651</u>	<u>689,055</u>	<u>640,620</u>

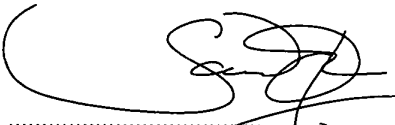
These notes form part of these financial statements

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES (REGISTERED NUMBER: 05018587)

**BALANCE SHEET
31 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	12	3,603	-	3,603	11,604
CURRENT ASSETS					
Work in progress	13	329,556	-	329,556	316,801
Debtors	14	437,765	-	437,765	453,366
Cash at bank		<u>127,046</u>	<u>231,651</u>	<u>358,697</u>	<u>328,206</u>
		894,367	231,651	1,126,018	1,098,373
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	15	(440,566)	-	(440,566)	(469,357)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>453,801</u>	<u>231,651</u>	<u>685,452</u>	<u>629,016</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>457,404</u>	<u>231,651</u>	<u>689,055</u>	<u>640,620</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>457,404</u>	<u>231,651</u>	<u>689,055</u>	<u>640,620</u>
FUNDS	16				
Unrestricted funds				457,404	501,465
Restricted funds	17			<u>231,651</u>	<u>139,155</u>
TOTAL FUNDS				<u>689,055</u>	<u>640,620</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on21 December 2024..... and were signed on its behalf by:


 Trustee - Sarmad Qureshi

These notes form part of these financial statements

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	<u>30,833</u>	<u>103,863</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>30,833</u>	<u>103,863</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(3,620)	(10,369)
Interest received		<u>3,278</u>	<u>872</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		<u>(342)</u>	<u>(9,497)</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		30,491	94,366
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>328,206</u>	<u>233,840</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u>358,697</u>	<u>328,206</u>

These notes form part of these financial statements

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
NOTES TO THE CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2024 £	2023 £
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	48,435	25,065
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	11,621	10,716
Interest received	(3,278)	(872)
(Increase)/decrease in work in progress	(12,755)	105,448
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	15,601	(59,767)
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	<u>(28,791)</u>	<u>23,273</u>
Net cash provided by operations	<u>30,833</u>	<u>103,863</u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1.4.23 £	Cash flow £	At 31.3.24 £
Net cash			
Cash at bank	<u>328,206</u>	<u>30,491</u>	<u>358,697</u>
	<u>328,206</u>	<u>30,491</u>	<u>358,697</u>
Total	<u>328,206</u>	<u>30,491</u>	<u>358,697</u>

These notes form part of these financial statements

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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 2024

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 2024. 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 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
General donations	5,744	12,658
Solicitor and long term donations	226,909	178,025
London legal support trust (Surrey)	10,916	14,686
London borough of Merton	76,241	56,000
London borough of Croydon	-	57,342
Other grants	991,873	839,708
	<u>1,311,683</u>	<u>1,158,419</u>

The charity received no donations in kind in 2024 (2023: NIL).

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

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 £1.4m (2023: £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 £72,929 in added value (£11.44ph administration/reception and £15ph casework support).

We estimate the value of pro bono work provided by our evening volunteers at around £1.4 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

	2024	2023
	£	£
Legal and advice services	<u>459,311</u>	<u>409,863</u>

5. INVESTMENT INCOME

	2024	2023
	£	£
Interest receivable	<u>3,278</u>	<u>872</u>

6. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs £	Support costs (see note 7) £	Totals £
Legal and advice services	<u>1,706,001</u>	<u>19,836</u>	<u>1,725,837</u>

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	Finance £	Governance costs £	Totals £
Legal and advice services	<u>161</u>	<u>19,675</u>	<u>19,836</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

7. SUPPORT COSTS - continued

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

	2024	2023
	Legal and advice services	Total activities
	£	£
Bank charges	161	369
Auditors' remuneration	11,000	15,000
Accountancy fees	<u>8,675</u>	<u>7,500</u>
	<u>19,836</u>	<u>22,869</u>

8. NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)

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

	2024	2023
	£	£
Auditors' remuneration	11,000	15,000
Depreciation - owned assets	11,621	10,716
Hire of plant and machinery	<u>(1,779)</u>	<u>25,843</u>

9. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2024 nor for the year ended 31 March 2023.

TRUSTEES' EXPENSES

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31 March 2024 nor for the year ended 31 March 2023.

10. STAFF COSTS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	1,185,193	1,118,754
Social security costs	111,156	107,131
Other pension costs	<u>47,316</u>	<u>2,040</u>
	<u>1,343,665</u>	<u>1,227,925</u>

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

	2024	2023
Legal service and advice	29	26
Support and fundraising	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>
	<u>41</u>	<u>38</u>

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 £56,895 (2023: £56,038).

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

10. STAFF COSTS - continued

Redundancy payments were £13,745 (2023: £NIL) in the year.

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
INCOME FROM			
Grants and donations	230,148	928,271	1,158,419
Legal and advice services	409,863	-	409,863
Investment income	<u>872</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>872</u>
Total	<u>640,883</u>	<u>928,271</u>	<u>1,569,154</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON			
Charitable activities			
Legal and advice services	<u>635,126</u>	<u>908,963</u>	<u>1,544,089</u>
 NET INCOME	5,757	19,308	25,065
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	<u>495,708</u>	<u>119,847</u>	<u>615,555</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u><u>501,465</u></u>	<u><u>139,155</u></u>	<u><u>640,620</u></u>

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Plant and machinery £
COST	
At 1 April 2023	139,236
Additions	<u>3,620</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>142,856</u>
 DEPRECIATION	
At 1 April 2023	127,632
Charge for year	<u>11,621</u>
At 31 March 2024	<u>139,253</u>
 NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2024	<u><u>3,603</u></u>
At 31 March 2023	<u><u>11,604</u></u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

13. WORK IN PROGRESS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Work-in-progress	<u>329,556</u>	<u>316,801</u>

14. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024	2023
	£	£
Trade debtors	128,193	148,035
Other debtors	252,495	191,144
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>57,077</u>	<u>114,187</u>
	<u>437,765</u>	<u>453,366</u>

15. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024	2023
	£	£
Clients' funds held	87,634	149,238
Trade creditors	277,548	232,503
Social security and other taxes	24,316	37,319
Other creditors	8,803	7,258
Accrued expenses	<u>42,265</u>	<u>43,039</u>
	<u>440,566</u>	<u>469,357</u>

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1.4.23	Net movement in funds	At
	£	£	31.3.24
			£
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	489,861	(36,060)	453,801
Fixed asset fund	<u>11,604</u>	<u>(8,001)</u>	<u>3,603</u>
	501,465	(44,061)	457,404
Restricted funds			
General fund	<u>139,155</u>	<u>92,496</u>	<u>231,651</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>640,620</u>	<u>48,435</u>	<u>689,055</u>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

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

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	648,022	(684,082)	(36,060)
Fixed asset fund	-	(8,001)	(8,001)
	648,022	(692,083)	(44,061)
Restricted funds			
General fund	1,126,250	(1,033,754)	92,496
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>1,774,272</u>	<u>(1,725,837)</u>	<u>48,435</u>

Comparatives for 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	22,320	(10,716)	11,604
	495,708	5,757	501,465
Restricted funds			
General fund	119,847	19,308	139,155
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>615,555</u>	<u>25,065</u>	<u>640,620</u>

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

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	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>

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

16. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined position is as follows:

	At 1.4.22 £	Net movement in funds £	At 31.3.24 £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	473,388	(19,587)	453,801
Fixed asset fund	<u>22,320</u>	<u>(18,717)</u>	<u>3,603</u>
	495,708	(38,304)	457,404
Restricted funds			
General fund	<u>119,847</u>	<u>111,804</u>	<u>231,651</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>615,555</u>	<u>73,500</u>	<u>689,055</u>

A current year 12 months and prior year 12 months combined net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	1,288,905	(1,308,492)	(19,587)
Fixed asset fund	<u>-</u>	<u>(18,717)</u>	<u>(18,717)</u>
	1,288,905	(1,327,209)	(38,304)
Restricted funds			
General fund	<u>2,054,521</u>	<u>(1,942,717)</u>	<u>111,804</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>3,343,426</u>	<u>(3,269,926)</u>	<u>73,500</u>

Fixed Asset Fund

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

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024**

17. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Brought Forward	Income	Expenditure	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£
AB Charitable Trust	-	22,000	(22,000)	-
Debt Free Advice	-	226,909	(226,909)	-
GLA Homeless	-	63,260	(63,260)	-
Grant to Clients	305	9,381	(7,119)	2,566
LCN Propel	-	17,168	(17,043)	124
Legal Education Foundation	-	46,000	(46,000)	-
Locality	7,500	-	(7,500)	-
London Legal Support Trust – Cost of Living	-	95,480	(95,480)	-
London Legal Support Trust - Surrey	14,616	10,916	(4,570)	20,962
Lottery CF – Crisis Project	78,475	164,500	(162,659)	80,316
London Legal Support Trust	5,000	-	(5,000)	-
Merton Council	-	82,241	(80,694)	1,547
Merton Giving	6,339	-	(6,339)	-
Merton Social Prescribers	1,250	5,000	(6,250)	-
Surrey County Council Domestic Violence	-	100,000	(34,001)	65,999
The Access to Justice Foundation	-	114,627	(112,162)	2,465
The Good Things Foundation	2,000	-	(2,000)	-
Trust for London – Employment	-	60,000	(56,667)	3,333
Trust for London Temporary Accommodation	3,212	80,417	(57,037)	26,592
Wandsworth Council – Crisis Fund Projects	1,222	-	(1,222)	-
London Borough of Wandsworth - EUSS	12,942	6,997	(6,997)	12,942
London Borough Wandsworth Rent Subsidy	6,294	-	(6,294)	-
London Borough Wandsworth Cost of Living Project	-	26,040	(24,567)	1,470
Wimbledon Guild	-	16,000	(2,666)	13,334
Total	139,155	1,148,937	(1,056,441)	231,651

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Purpose of restricted funds:

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

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.

Law Centre Network Propel - a partnership grant administered by the Law Centres Network through Propel funding from London Funders, to help support legal apprenticeships as a way of qualifying as a solicitor at the law centre.

Legal Education Foundation – a grant to fund a trainee solicitor role with supervision costs.

Locality - a carried forward grant towards refurbishment cost of the Merton office and spent on a partial refurbishment of the office including installing a new boiler and lighting.

London Legal Support Trust – Cost of Living - a 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 and completed this year.

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 plus an additional rent subsidy payment for the prior year.

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

Merton Social Prescribers - a pilot grant to provide debt advice to referrals from Merton Social Prescribing team which completed in June 2023

Surrey County Council Domestic Violence Project - a new two year grant to provide casework and advice on immigration issues to the residents of domestic violence refuges. The grant will help support the refuges to take on people fleeing domestic violence who have outstanding immigration issues.

The Access to Justice Foundation – Completion of grant under Help Accessing Legal Support to support access into law centre services. A further 21 month grant under Improving Outcomes Through Legal Support (IOTLS) grant program. The purpose of supporting organisations working to sustain and improve access to early social welfare and family legal support and advice, to enable users to resolve these problems as early as possible and avoid the need for court or tribunal proceedings where possible.

SOUTH WEST LONDON LAW CENTRES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

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

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

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

Wandsworth Council – Crisis Fund Projects – brought forward grant towards additional training and supervision for volunteers working on the Cost of Living project

London Borough of Wandsworth - EUSS - a brought forward grant towards the funding of part of an immigration post specialising on helping those needing support with EUSS applications. These funds were spent with a new grant dealing with housing and immigration issues.

London Borough of Wandsworth – Rent Subsidy - a brought forward one off grant to support local Wandsworth charities through cost of living crisis used to support our rental commitments

London Borough of Wandsworth – Cost of Living Project - a new project to provide housing and immigration advice to the residents of Wandsworth.

Wimbledon Guild – a grant towards work within our Cost of Living team

18. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2024 (2023: NIL).