



Action For Refugees In Lewisham

**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MAY 2024**

Registered Charity Number: 1116344

Company Number: 05819537

Action for Refugees in Lewisham
F3 Leemore Centre
Bonfield Road
Lewisham
SE13 5ES

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

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	R Tran	(Resigned 10 July 2023)
	L S Barron	
	K A B Commons	
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Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

The trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 May 2024. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011 and "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).

The trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

Objects

The charity aims to relieve the poverty of refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable migrants, advance their education and advocate for their rights, and to provide them with the tools they need to improve their own lives and fulfil their potential as members of the community and society.

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Letter from the Chair of the Board

It is a privilege to be able to introduce you to the outstanding work of Action for Refugees in Lewisham over the past year. We, the board of trustees, are immensely proud of the impressive services being delivered by the staff and volunteers at AFRIL.

Some of the worst political rhetoric around people migrating and seeking refuge in this country has declined with the change of government in 2024, and the welcome ditching of the cruel and inhumane Rwanda scheme. However, at a time of fiscal constraint for the new government, and with far-right individuals and parties, here and in other countries, using anti-immigration narratives to channel people's anger over unrelated issues like the cost of living, the fundamentals remain depressingly similar.

AFRIL's staff are still responding to people seeking asylum who are left to fend for themselves shortly after having endured the most appalling imaginable journeys to get here, without money, shelter or the means of accessing basic services. Time and again our brilliant team swing into action, working with partners in local government and a range of voluntary agencies, to support and protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Time and again, they go into the grim 'hotels' to advise and help people faced with a bureaucracy that has, over time, become difficult to navigate by design, as much as by default. And time and again they go over and above what is expected, to raise funds for our services, to manage and spend that money for the greatest impact, to support and inspire the children of migrants as they learn and grow in their second or third language, to support people to work in and with nature to grow food on our allotment and make connections with others in the community, and to provide food and other basics in a friendly and welcoming place of safety. What is more, they continued to do it during a particularly grim period this year when far-right politicians and social media grifters literally raised a mob against people seeking refuge and those who help and support them.

We, the trustees of AFRIL, thank every single member of staff, every volunteer, every supporter, every partner organisation, every fundraiser, every trust and foundation and company and guild and local authority and place of faith that funds and supports our work. I, as chair, thank my fellow trustees and our outstanding director. And we take particular pride that more of the people working with and for AFRIL, at every level, bring with them their lived experience of migration and of seeking refuge.

What everyone in this extended team does and enables is that most basic, beautiful and important thing in a complex and turbulent world – people helping and supporting people. Please do read about that work here in this report, and please do continue to support AFRIL to continue to deliver for our community; the job is not getting any easier any time soon.



Gareth Redmond-King

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About AFRIL

Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL) is a dynamic local charity established in 2006. We support asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants, to lift themselves out of poverty and rebuild their lives in the heart of our community. We provide both crisis support to meet immediate need, and longer-term, flexible programmes to tackle the underlying problems that lead people to be in crisis.

We are a team of 15 majority part-time paid staff (7.3 FTE) and 125 volunteers. Our office is based in the Leemore Centre in central Lewisham and we deliver services across Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark, including the Church of the Good Shepherd with St Peter in Lee, St Saviours primary school, One Tree Hill Allotments in Honor Oak, and outreach at local asylum hotels and community hubs. Our clients travel from across South East London to access our services.

Our core services

Casework and Advocacy Service: We provide AQS accredited advice, casework and legal interventions in complex welfare rights, community care, housing and homelessness, asylum support and related matters to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). We draft in-house legal letters to challenge unlawful public law decisions through our PAP Project in partnership with Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors, and we provide second tier advice on complex cases to statutory, voluntary and community organisations.

Helping Hands Food Bank: We address food insecurity through distributing food parcels, food vouchers, toiletries, clothes and essential items to destitute and low income asylum seeking and migrant families and individuals with no recourse to public funds. We offer destitution support through the direct provision of emergency grants for food or urgent short term accommodation, and applying for grants for essential items for individuals. In partnership with St Peter's Church, our Food Bank includes a warm community hub, free cafe, information and peer support, social and wellbeing activities including our art@home group.

Rainbow Club Supplementary School: We provide supplementary Saturday School education and wellbeing activities to children aged 4-11 years from asylum seeking, refugee, and migrant families to improve educational attainment, confidence and social development (NRCSE Quality Mark).

Allotment of Refuge: A welcoming and integrated community of food growers improving the health, wellbeing and healthy food access for people seeking sanctuary in South East London through weekly growing sessions and workshops focused on learning and community building.

Immigration Project: In partnership with Southwark Law Centre, an experienced immigration solicitor provides free, in-depth immigration advice and legal representation to enable our clients who are ineligible for or cannot access sufficient legal aid to resolve the underlying immigration issues that lead to poverty and crisis.

In addition, we use our knowledge and expertise from frontline service delivery, along with the lived experience of our clients, to influence positive policy change in housing, asylum support, and related issues. We advise on London wide housing policy through our position on the London Housing Panel, advise the GLA on several asylum and safeguarding related working groups, and work closely with Lewisham Council to track and support progress in developing their services and policies so that they meet the needs of our client group.

Our values and approach

At AFRIL we:

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- Work with our members to develop services and support that meet their real and not perceived needs.
- Work with our members to enable them to build their knowledge, confidence and skills.
- Work collaboratively with local and national organisations to ensure that services are relevant, appropriate and effective.

Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025

Our strategic priorities, as set out in our Strategic Plan 2023-25 are to:

- Support people to transition from dependence to independence
- Meet crisis needs
- Advocate with and for our clients
- Maintain a sustainable and effective organisation

Activities, achievements and performance for the year

The people we support

The people we support come from a range of backgrounds and countries. Their immigration status is a prominent feature in their lives, but they should not be solely defined by their immigration status; they are parents, siblings, daughters, sons, community members, volunteers, employees and friends. However, their immigration status does have an adverse impact on their lives, particularly by affecting their ability to access housing and income, and to integrate and put down roots in the community.

Our members are all seeking sanctuary in the UK and fall into three categories: newly recognised refugees, people who have an asylum claim, and 'vulnerablised' migrants. Many of the latter have outstanding protection issues, including issues around gender based violence or trafficking, but have been unable to successfully claim asylum due to complexity and the culture of disbelief in the system, and are now on a longer human rights based route to settlement due to having children in the UK and are struggling with no recourse to public funds. The underlying reason that our members are in need of support is that the hostile environment makes it extremely difficult for people seeking sanctuary in the UK to navigate the complicated immigration system, access safe accommodation, and meet their essential needs.

This year, the majority of the people we supported had made an application for asylum at some point in their protection journey. Their current immigration status was a mix of those still in the asylum system, newly recognised refugees, and other vulnerable migrants who were on longer human rights based routes to settlement. Upon approaching AFRIL this year, 77% were living in insecure housing arrangements, including 47 families who were street homeless. In addition to this, 46% had no formal income whatsoever and 48% had very low income - the majority of those with low income were in receipt of asylum support payments which is just £49.18 per person per week, or for those living in overcrowded asylum "hotels" just £8.86 per week and food that is often inedible.

Our impact

Last year we supported 682 people from 301 families, a 59% increase on the year before. The majority of people accessed more than one of our services. The continuous increase in need and demand for our services is due to high costs of living, hostile immigration policies, and related failings in the systems and structures that should support people seeking sanctuary to meet their needs and rebuild their lives. This results in increasing numbers of people arriving at AFRIL in crisis, often experiencing destitution and homelessness. They require intensive holistic support and complex casework in order to resolve complicated issues resulting from their immigration status. The people we support show high levels of independence and resourcefulness and have often tried to resolve situations themselves but have reached a crisis point due to being repeatedly let down by the systems that should be there to support them.

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Our approach is one of long-term, holistic support. We provide emergency relief during crises, alongside support to resolve the underlying issues that are the root cause. This year, our food bank distributed food parcels, food vouchers, and other essential items to 160 individuals from 56 families, including 90 children; our Casework and Advocacy Service supported 210 clients with 104 dependents (445 individuals) with detailed advice and complex casework to resolve the issues they are facing; Rainbow Club provided early intervention to support 88 children from 58 families to improve their educational attainment, confidence and wellbeing. Our Immigration Project in partnership with Southwark Law Centre supported 35 clients with 50 dependents (85 individuals) with 42 cases. 34 of these clients received full legal representation and 8 were provided comprehensive written advice as a one-off following assessment or on a separate matter to their main representation.

Immigration, housing and income

This year, 43% of the people we supported improved their immigration status and a further 43% were supported to maintain a more secure immigration status or remain in the asylum system whilst they awaited a decision on their asylum claim. For our members, maintaining an immigration status can mean progressing on the 10 year humanitarian route to resettlement. The UK immigration system makes this particularly difficult as applications for leave to remain cost £3,845.50 for every adult in the family and £3,198 for every child in the family every 2.5 years for 10 years. However people on this route have a 'no recourse to public funds' restriction that requires legal support to be lifted, and at least at first do not have the right to work. If a deadline to extend this leave is missed, then they must start the 10 year process again. Our Immigration Project supports people to understand this complication system, apply for fee waivers, and make applications. In addition to this, we supported clients to remain in the asylum system, for example by ensuring they had access to asylum support so that they could afford to travel to present at the Home Office when requested, and supporting people to access immigration solicitors to support with complications. An improvement of immigration status is most commonly our clients seeking asylum receiving a grant of refugee status and people who were previously undocumented receiving limited leave to remain through the 10 year route.

We support clients to access the income and housing that they are entitled to, when access is difficult due to the government's hostile environment. We have established and utilise escalation routes, and when informal advocacy fails, we prepare Pre-Action Protocol (PAP) letters to overturn unlawful decisions made by Local Authorities or the Home Office with a 99% success rate. 44% of people we supported this year reported that their access to income had improved since joining AFRIL, and a further 36% were supported to maintain regular access to their income entitlements. In addition to this, 41% percent reported that their housing arrangements had become more secure since joining AFRIL, and a further 42% were supported to maintain access to their housing entitlements, for example by resolving disrepair issues or addressing safeguarding in asylum support accommodation.

Despite AFRIL working hard to maximise the income that families are able to access, 87% of clients reported that they do not have access to enough money to support themselves and their family without help from charities. This reflects low levels of government support, and policies of the hostile environment such as asylum seekers being prohibited from working whilst they await a decision on their claim, unless they meet very specific requirements. This results in people being unable to meet their essential needs, especially in the current context of high living costs.

Wellbeing, confidence and community

Experience prior to, during, and after forced migration impacts upon the wellbeing and confidence of the people we support, and they often report feeling isolated when they arrive at AFRIL. The people we work with have fled highly unsafe situations and have come to the UK to seek sanctuary. However, they are instead faced with the harsh reality of the UK's hostile environment, and high costs of living. Few of the people we support speak English as a first language and therefore

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have to navigate the immigration, education and healthcare systems in an unfamiliar language, all whilst adapting to life in the UK and caring for their children.

In our annual survey, we asked our members about AFRIL's impact on their wellbeing, confidence, feelings of isolation and community. **96% said coming to AFRIL had improved their wellbeing, 93% said coming to AFRIL improved their confidence, 90% said AFRIL has helped them to feel less isolated, and 94% said AFRIL has helped them to feel a part of a community.** The people we support have often been let down by structures, systems, and organisations that should support them which impacts how much they trust. We build strong working relationships with our members and prioritise building trust - **96% of our members said they trust AFRIL a lot or mostly, compared to 58% saying they trust other organisations a lot or mostly.**

Member experience of AFRIL

"For six years, I had the chance to be involved with AFRIL (Action for Refugees in Lewisham). Their help was invaluable to me and my family. They supported us on many fronts, including immigration, guiding us through often complex and daunting processes. Thanks to them, my children were able to receive free meals, which significantly eased our financial burden. In addition, AFRIL provided us with food and clothing, meeting essential needs and offering us security and dignity that we would have struggled to maintain without their help. Beyond material support, it was within AFRIL that I made some of the most meaningful connections of my life. I met people who shared similar experiences, and we formed a supportive and understanding community. This period with AFRIL not only helped me overcome daily challenges but also enriched my life with valuable relationships and a deeper understanding of human solidarity." - AFRIL member, 2024

Helping Hands Food Bank

The Helping Hands food bank runs fortnightly on Saturdays in conjunction with the volunteer team from Good Shepherd St Peter's Church, Lee. All the families registered with the food bank have sought sanctuary in the UK. Priority is given to residents from Lewisham and Greenwich, but we also support people living in Southwark, Bromley and Bexley.

The food bank aims to increase food security for individuals and families experiencing destitution as a result of their immigration status. **This financial year, we distributed 2016 food parcels consisting of supermarket vouchers and fresh produce to 56 families with 104 dependents, including 90 children.** In our annual survey, **97% reported that knowing they will have a regular supermarket voucher with fresh food, or food parcel helps them to feel more secure, and 85% said that the food bank improved their child or baby's health and wellbeing.** We regularly ask for feedback from our members to ensure the food bank is meeting their needs. In our annual survey, an overwhelming majority of food bank members (94%) reported once again that they preferred receiving supermarket vouchers to traditional food parcels, citing reasons such as being able to budget better, and to purchase food which is culturally appropriate and meets their children's preferences and dietary requirements. Due to this consistent feedback, we have been pioneering cash first approaches for food banks in Lewisham.

The people we support do not have enough money to buy enough food for themselves or their families, and this means that they also face challenges meeting their other essential needs too. This year we distributed sanitary towels and toiletries to our members, as well as nappies and baby wipes to 23 mothers experiencing destitution. A grant from Team Feed enabled us to give 13 grants to purchase baby formula to mothers who use formula. We made 23 referrals to baby banks, 6 referrals to clothing banks, and 18 referrals to the Household Support Fund to support people to keep warm and pay their energy bills. We distributed winter coats from Wrap Up London, handmade crocheted blankets from a local church, sim cards with free calls and data from Unconnected.org and 27 grants for essential household items from the Lewisham Local Essentials fund. We distributed laptops from The Good Things Foundation and referred 13 of our members

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to Catbytes so that they could receive a laptop to help them to complete online forms, access education and keep in touch with friends and family, addressing digital exclusion.

As part of our destitution support, **we provided emergency destitution grants to 65 families across AFRIL services during particular moments of crisis.** These payments offered temporary and immediate relief, for example for transport to emergency accommodation for people with disabilities or young children, food for destitute people, or a safe overnight hostel for someone who is homeless and vulnerable. Not only do these payments mean that people can meet their essential needs, but the temporary relief and security that they offer enables people to have more capacity to engage with the often complicated and daunting process of resolving the underlying immigration, housing and income issues that have resulted in crisis.

“You have peace of mind - food on the table and personal cleanliness” - Food bank member, 2024

Usually our food bank members are supported for over a year whilst our Casework and Advocacy Service, and Immigration Solicitor at Southwark Law Centre, work to resolve the underlying immigration issues, and the resulting housing and access to income issues, that are the cause of their extreme food poverty. The food bank therefore has a strong sense of community; in addition to supporting people to meet their essential needs, it provides a warm, safe place for people to have a hot drink and a free breakfast at our cafe, access information, social activities, and meet other people who may or may not have similar experiences.

Once our Caseworkers and Immigration Solicitor have worked with members to resolve underlying causes of destitution, we support them to sustainably move on from the food bank and rebuild their lives in South East London. Last year, we supported 19 people to move on and welcomed new members. This support includes referrals to employment support, to our Casework service or an external casework service to ensure they have access to any welfare benefits that they are entitled to, and to our partner, GRACEAid, so that they can access free clothes with dignity. We also refer to trusted ESOL providers and our Allotment of Refuge to support clients to reduce isolation and support with community belonging.

“Having food to eat and a sense of belonging.” - Food bank member, 2024

Rainbow Club Supplementary School

Our Rainbow Club Supplementary school supports children from asylum seeking, refugee, and vulnerable migrant families. The school runs every Saturday morning during term time, where children receive specialised English, Maths, Music, Art and Sport lessons, wellbeing support and termly school trips. The school is split into 3 classes: Passion Fruit (ages 4-6), Starfruit (ages 6-8), and Mango (ages 8-11).

Rainbow Club children frequently experience destitution or extreme poverty, and are living in challenging home environments. Many live in insecure housing such as temporary accommodation or asylum hotels, which rarely have space for playing or doing homework, and they are often moved or made homeless at very short notice by the home office or local authority. Rainbow Club provides a safe, consistent space for these children to learn, play, make friends, and develop their confidence and self-esteem, whilst providing respite and wraparound support to parents.

In the 2023/24 academic year, **Rainbow Club supported 88 children from 58 families. Each child received 140 hours of English, Maths, Art, Music, and Sport provision to support integration and success in their mainstream schools.** It is widely understood that children from low-income families and refugee and asylum seeking children experience educational disadvantage (IPPR, 2012; UNICEF, 2018). Tailored English and Maths provision at Rainbow Club works to reduce the attainment gap and support children to thrive and integrate. Lessons were delivered by our 3 experienced

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teachers, who each bring valuable lived experience of migration. Children were also supported by our team of 33 volunteer teaching assistants. **17 older children attended Rainbow Club** as youth volunteers aged 11-18, accessing training and support. **The results of our formal assessments showed that 91% of Rainbow Club children made progress in Maths and English, with 59% making significant progress.**

“The Saturday school helps me during normal school days, it makes it a bit easier.” - Rainbow Club child, 2024

As well as improving educational attainment, Rainbow Club develops the confidence, self-esteem and aspirations of sanctuary seeking children. **In the 2023/24 academic year, 86% improved in self esteem and confidence, and 82% developed their future aspirations.** Children enjoyed regular creative and sports activities provided by our experienced art and sports teachers, as well as music and instrument lessons from our partner, Fairbeats. Our Allotment of Refuge became part of the Rainbow Club curriculum this year. Once a term, each Rainbow Club class spends a morning at our 160m² allotment site where they participate in fun food growing and environmental workshops, providing learning and joy in an accessible green urban space. Other extracurricular activities and trips included the Discover Children’s Story Centre, Mudchute Farm, Museum of London Docklands, the Horniman Museum, and a series of holiday workshops with our art teacher at the National Gallery where children co-produced resources for the National Gallery’s new family area.

We significantly developed our youth engagement projects to give children more voice and influence in Saturday school matters, and enable them to gain leadership skills and responsibility. In January, we launched the Rainbow Club Youth Council, where student representatives collect and share their class’ views, feedback, and suggestions for Rainbow Club. We significantly expanded our youth volunteer programme, growing from 5 to 17 youth volunteers. Youth volunteers are usually former pupils and/or older siblings of current pupils. They support the class teachers to deliver sessions, and receive formal inductions and training so they are equipped with the skills to support the younger children with their learning. As many attended Rainbow Club themselves, they are well-placed to share their experiences and understanding with the younger pupils.

The Rainbow Club Education Manager provides pastoral, safeguarding and integration support to families throughout the year, including joint working with AFRIL’s Advice Service, Lewisham Council and other statutory bodies to make sure children and families get the support they need. We closed the summer term with a brilliant Sports Day that Rainbow Club Year 6s and Dulwich College Year 6s planned and delivered together, and our Refugee Week Showcase.

Notable success outside of the classroom this year was being awarded Sanctuary status by City of Sanctuary, in recognition of our culture of welcome and inclusion for children seeking sanctuary in South East London. We have also been helping mainstream schools through Lewisham’s Schools of Sanctuary working group, and directly with Southwark and Bromley Councils, sharing good practice and resources on how best to support their sanctuary seeking children. This not only means that Rainbow Club children will have a more positive mainstream experience but that we can improve the educational and cultural environment for far more children in this diverse part of London. We recently joined the appraisal panel for another school’s application, and aim to encourage more local schools to work towards accreditation.

The impact of Rainbow Club is widely acknowledged in our area, and this year we have been approached by two local authorities and another local organisation who are interested in setting up similar projects in their areas. We have shared our knowledge and expertise, and will continue to offer support as these prospective projects develop.

“I feel excited when I come here. Sometimes, I even wake up early when I know I am coming here. My favourite subject is art.” - Rainbow Club child, 2024

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Allotment of Refuge

AFRIL's Allotment of Refuge is part of the One Tree Hill Allotment Society (OTHAS) allotment site at Honor Oak Park. We acquired the plot in 2017 and thanks in a large part to grants from the Mayor of London, have developed it into a space of sanctuary where AFRIL members and people in the local community come together in a truly integrated project to learn about food growing, climate resilience, meet new people, and work together to improve this safe, green space.

This year, 184 people participated in activities at the Allotment of Refuge. **54 local community members** volunteered regularly at the allotment this year, **31% of whom have lived experience of seeking sanctuary**. Our Allotment Project Lead led weekly Tuesday gardening sessions where activities included food growing and harvesting, learning and sharing knowledge, and generally maintaining and improving the site. Each session ended with a shared lunch where volunteers come together to make plans and share ideas for the site. During harvest season, our Allotment Project Lead ran fortnightly sessions on a Friday afternoon to harvest fresh produce to supplement the food parcels that are distributed at AFRIL's food bank on Saturday morning. **This enabled 160 individuals from 56 families experiencing destitution to access fresh, locally grown, healthy produce**. We ran Sunday work days where volunteers came to help with larger tasks, such as building a shed and moving manure. We have improved accessibility of the site, for example improving and maintaining paths to make them steady to walk on, removing ditches, creating a walk-in shed for easy access to tools, and improving seating in the polytunnel.

Climate friendly practices, climate resilience, and environmental protection are a priority at the Allotment of Refuge. We have transitioned the site into an eco-friendly hub, for example through creating deadwood areas for habitat and ponds for biodiversity, and using organic matter and no chemicals to feed our plants. We have used climate friendly practices, for example we have improved soil health through making our own compost, practicing the "no dig" method, and mulching once a year with manure from a local farm. Members reported that they have learnt about climate friendly ways to grow food and about protecting the environment. In March, this was particularly prominent as we experienced the impact of climate change as the site flooded and our beautiful willow tree came down in the storms. We therefore worked quickly and collaboratively to repair the site. The willow tree played an important role in regulating the water levels on the site, so we have since factored this into our plans for food growing. Going forward we can only expect further disruption due to climate change, but we are confident that, with our experienced Allotment Project Lead and enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers we will be able to effectively respond to these new challenges.

Once a term, children from AFRIL's Rainbow Club Saturday school came to the Allotment of Refuge to use the site as an outdoor classroom, **enabling 88 children to benefit from accessing this relaxing, fun environment**. Workshops included building a wormery and making seed bombs. The children learnt about sustainable food growing and environmental protection, which is important as the climate crisis will only become a more prominent part of each of their lives as they grow up. These sessions also gave them an opportunity to have fun and play in a safe, natural, outdoor space. In our annual survey, **88% of parents said their child enjoyed going to the allotment, and 79% said the allotment improved their child's wellbeing** (the remaining 12% and 21% respectively responded "don't know"). This impact of the project is particularly important for the families we support as many live in poor quality, overcrowded housing with little access to outdoor space.

Co-production is a key element of the project and this year we set up our Allotment Advisory Panel which acts as a project steering group. The panel have set their values as a group, agreed how it should be run, reflected on their best moments, highs, lows and challenges, and discussed leadership, community, outreach, barriers to attending, and what resources are needed.

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Allotment members reported improvements in their mental and physical health and wellbeing from the physical activity involved with gardening, from spending time in a beautiful, restorative greenspace, and from building social connections with others. **In our annual survey, 89% said that going to the allotment improved their wellbeing, and 79% said it helped them to feel part of a community.** This includes those who attended the Refugee Week allotment celebration, as well as regular volunteers.

“A place to meet friends, learn new skills on gardening and feel as part of a family.” Allotment member 2024

Casework and Advocacy Service

Our Casework and Advocacy service provides Advice Quality Standard (AQS) accredited advice and casework support in complex welfare rights, asylum support, community care, housing and homelessness, and related matters to asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants. Formerly referred to as our ‘Advice and Advocacy Service’ we have expanded and developed this work significantly in the course of the year and recently changed our name to reflect our focus on complex casework as opposed to one off advice. In March 2023, we were awarded AQS Casework Level for Housing, and Refugees and Asylum Seekers, and Advice Level for Welfare Benefits. At time of writing we had been reassessed and awarded Casework Level in a record five areas: those already listed plus Disability and Community Care.

In the last 12 months, our Casework and Advocacy service has supported **445 individuals from 210 families, with 218 cases. This is an increase of 131% since the previous 12 months.** We take a holistic and person centred approach, working together with our clients to co-produce a personal casework plan with short and long term goals, agreeing together the steps to achieve them. **Our success rates are high:** 100% of cases made progress towards resolving at least one casework issue; 98% of cases had at least one casework issues resolved; and 77% of cases were fully resolved, with the remaining 23% continuing to receive casework support.

Demand significantly and continually increased over the year, with client needs becoming more complex due to changes to UK immigration and asylum support policy. Most clients present with multiple pressing casework needs which require complex casework support to resolve, but have often only been able to receive one-off advice from other organisations. We have expanded and developed our Casework and Advocacy team in response to this demand. This increased capacity enabled us to continue to be dynamic and flexible in our approach to ensure the development of our service continued to meet the real and not perceived needs of our clients, and to identify and meet gaps in local service provision.

A significant area of expansion this year has been our outreach advice and casework in local asylum “hotels”. This expansion followed the government policy during the Covid-19 lockdowns to house asylum seekers in hotels which has since continued. We delivered fortnightly outreach advice sessions in the largest local asylum hotel where we met people with extremely complex casework needs due to unhygienic and overcrowded conditions and ample safeguarding concerns, including toddlers allocated and falling out of top bunks, families forced to co-sleep, adults and children with complex health needs and disabilities being housed inappropriately in the hotel, and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers becoming malnourished, and in some instances hospitalised, due to poor quality food. In August 2023, the hotel was closed at short notice and we responded rapidly and dynamically to support residents. **We assessed and submitted over 40 comprehensive representations to the Home Office to ensure residents were not dispersed to unsuitable locations or accommodation.** We prioritised supporting single people with complex needs who were at risk of being dispersed to ex-MOD sites like RHS Wethersfield, the Portland Barge, and maximised hotels which were unsuitable due to their high needs (e.g. people with physical and mental health needs, trafficking survivors, and survivors of torture). We delivered casework to those with complex needs who had strong grounds to remain in London/Lewisham under Home Office policy, or to be dispersed to self contained dispersal accommodation. Due to the

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success of our response to this closure, we were later asked by Greenwich Council to support residents through the closure of two asylum hotels in their borough, and the GLA distributed our guides as best practice. We have developed expertise in this area, recognised across the sector, and continue to expand this work in response to need - now with a full time Senior Asylum Support Caseworker funded by Lewisham Council who supports Lewisham's asylum seeking residents with complex casework and safeguarding support in asylum hotels and in the community, including at family hubs for accessibility..

We delivered regular outreach sessions both at local asylum hotels and other community hubs to encourage wide access to our support. In the year, this included outreach sessions with child care options to support single parents to overcome this barrier. Clients approach us at these sessions and are taken on for ongoing casework with appointments at our office or online/via phone. Through outreach advice, we supported more deaf, LGBTQ+, and asylum seekers who experienced trafficking and modern slavery. We find increases are quick with people recommending us by word-of-mouth in these communities. We also provided a significant amount of casework support to people with complex disabilities living in unsuitable asylum support accommodation. These cases are often the most complex as ableist systems prevent those with disabilities from accessing the support they are entitled to. **We supported 100% of clients not receiving all or any of their asylum support payments to obtain the income they were entitled to, and had an 89% success rate in securing safe accommodation for clients living in unsuitable asylum support accommodation.** This is a significant achievement given that asylum support is officially allocated on a 'no choice basis'. We supported clients who were at risk of being moved to inhumane asylum support accommodation, such as ex-RAF sites and the Bibby Stockholm, and prevented 100% of these dispersals.

We saw an increase in both individuals and families experiencing or at imminent risk of street homelessness. In December 2023, the government changed the cessation period from 28 days to 7 days, meaning people had to leave asylum support accommodation within 7 days of receiving refugee status. 28 days was already not enough time for recently granted refugees to find accommodation and employment and apply for any welfare benefits, so many became homeless. We support people intensively in this 'move on' period to apply for welfare benefits and make supported referrals for employability support. The shorter cessation period, that was later reversed, particularly affected single men as they were rarely considered 'priority need' by the local authority. In response, we established a project with Lewisham Council for bed spaces for single homeless men, sourcing housing grants to support with deposits, and developed relationships with local authority supported housing teams, Refugees at Home, and private providers. In addition to this, we saw an increase in asylum seekers and migrants with no recourse to public funds living in the community becoming homeless as the rising cost of living meant that the informal networks that they relied on for food and accommodation, for example friends and church members, could no longer afford to support them. Our caseworkers work tirelessly to secure safe accommodation for people as soon as possible, with a very high success rate: **94% of homelessness cases were resolved, and 77% were resolved on the same day, rising to 100% when children were involved.**

In May 2023 we launched our Pre-Action Protocol (PAP+) project with Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors (DPG), supported by the GLA, with a 99% success rate. As part of this project, we **trained and coached 18 other small charities** and community groups to use this legal tool to secure better outcomes for their clients. We continue to write PAP letters, and are working with DPG to develop the PAP+ model further. PAPs enable us to challenge unlawful decisions made by public bodies when informal advocacy has not worked. This is most often in cases of local authority gatekeeping when homeless families with children, or individuals with complex needs, are not being assessed or provided with the emergency relief that they are entitled to, or when people are allocated asylum hotel accommodation which is unsafe or unsuitable.

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

“They helped me greatly and I was getting the best understanding of what I am entitled to and how to tackle the problems with [their] help and support.” - Casework and Advocacy client, 2024

Immigration Project

Through our Immigration Project in partnership with Southwark Law Centre, an experienced immigration solicitor provides free immigration advice and representation to AFRIL clients with insecure immigration status and little to no income. Some have complex asylum claims, and others have a human rights based claim that falls outside the scope of legal aid, and they are not able to afford the expensive legal fees to regularise their status. In our annual survey **87% reported that it was difficult to find a free immigration solicitor outside of AFRIL.**

Last year, the solicitor provided representations in **33 cases plus 10 instances of one-off detailed immigration advice to 33 clients with 51 dependents (84 individuals)**. 5 of these clients have had successful asylum claims, 10 clients have received a successful grant of leave to remain, 1 client received settled status, and 3 undocumented children secured/were registered as British Citizens. Only 1 client has had a refusal - we are currently representing this client at appeal stage on the strong grounds that it is unsafe for them to return to Darfur. The majority of the remaining clients are waiting for decisions from the Home Office. The high costs of LLR applications are a barrier for many of our clients in regularising their status and we have a **100% success rate in fee waiver applications.**

As a result of accessing our Immigration Project, **60% of clients reported that their housing or income had improved**, as these two things are inextricably linked. In addition, **93% of annual survey respondents said that the Immigration Project had helped them to understand the immigration system in the UK more generally**, and all but one respondent said that they would recommend the service to a friend.

UK Immigration Law continued to change significantly over the year, most notably with the Nationality and Borders Act being superseded by the Illegal Immigration Act, and the threat of removal to Rwanda which, thankfully, has been scrapped by the new government. This means significant time keeping up to date with changes, and puts pressure on other small community organisations who may not have an experienced Immigration Solicitor on their team to support them through these changes. We shared our knowledge and expertise through delivering training and capacity building to other organisations and community groups. In November 2023, **we delivered two training sessions to 14 external organisations**. These were ‘Immigration Law - An Overview’, and ‘Recent and proposed changes to immigration law: An Overview’. The sessions were well received, with **82% reporting in the follow-up survey that their knowledge and confidence of UK Immigration Law and Policy had improved as a result of the training.**

We expect further immigration changes following the change in government in July 2024. It is too early to say what the impact of this will be in the long term, however so far we have seen some potential positive changes. The time it takes for fee waivers decisions and straightforward renewal decisions on the 10 year route to be made, seem to have significantly reduced. An anticipated challenge as a consequence of these quicker decisions is a larger appeal backlog in tribunals. Around 48% of asylum refusals are overturned at appeal.

“They let me know that I can be protected.” Immigration client 2024

Policy Work

This year we have significantly expanded our policy and influencing work, in a large part due to our growing casework team providing a solid evidence base. We combined our expertise gained from frontline services with our clients' lived experience and voice, to advocate together for positive social change. We worked with local authorities to track service quality and outcomes for our clients, encouraging improved practice.

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

We are steering group members of the Lewisham Migration Forum, through which we work with local partners and the Council to ensure that the Borough is a place of sanctuary for asylum seekers and migrants. We are a permanent member of the Lewisham Refugee and Asylum Safeguarding Partnership.

As a small frontline organisation we **see trends as they emerge**, and can develop timely policy positions to the most pressing current issues. Our strong working relationships and high levels of trust with clients, means that our **policy work is rooted in lived experience**, and we regularly facilitate our clients speaking directly to decision makers. Our policy priorities are shaped by the needs and priorities of our clients. We are increasingly consulted for our input on asylum related policy issues by local authorities and regional bodies such as the Greater London Authority (GLA).

This year, we were one of the charities **leading the challenge against one of the worst aspects of the asylum hotels policy: maximisation** (forced room sharing without suitability assessments). We worked with partners, Deighton Pierce Glynn solicitors, Southwark Law Centre and West London Welcome, and with our Members Forum who have shared their lived experience of these “hotels”. We produced translated guidance which was distributed nationally to asylum seekers living in asylum support hotels to provide them with information to advocate for themselves, which improved the capacity of organisations to prioritise the most vulnerable community members who were less able to advocate for themselves. In December, we chaired a Local Authority roundtable on the issue which was well attended and received excellent feedback. We understand that several local authorities took action on conditions in hotels in their area as a result of this meeting. We secured a **direct audience with the Home Office Director of Asylum Support** to raise our concerns and suggestions for hotel closures practice. This preparatory legal work provided the basis for ongoing litigation to improve asylum support accommodation.

We formally advised the GLA in three areas; experiences of deaf asylum seekers, asylum support safeguarding, and asylum support hotel closures. From February 2024, we provided advice and contributed towards a piece of formal research on the experiences of deaf asylum seekers. In April 2024, we were appointed to the GLA working group on asylum support hotel closures where we provided the GLA, Home Office, and other organisations with an insight into what was happening on the ground during closures, particularly regarding policy breaches. In May 2024, we joined the GLA advisory panel on asylum support safeguarding, and were commended for our contribution to research in this area.

In our home Borough of Lewisham, we have supported the **Council to track performance and secured improved practice** in several areas. A group of AFRIL clients formally advised Lewisham Council on their priorities for sanctuary seekers this year, and we supported our members with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) to speak to the conference that produced the **Lewisham Food Justice Action Plan**, ensuring that NRPF and culturally appropriate food issues were central. AFRIL clients from our Food Bank inputted into the **Lewisham 2030 strategy**.

Our policy work has continued to develop since the end of this financial year. Most notably, in July 2024, we were **appointed a member of the London Housing Panel** where we bring the voice of migrant Londoners and our frontline experience in housing and homelessness casework to work collaboratively with the panel and the Mayor of London to improve housing for all.

Other Activities

We started the year with our annual celebration of Refugee Week, hosting a community meal at our Allotment of Refuge. In June 2023, the theme was Compassion - the whole AFRIL community was appreciative of this opportunity to focus on the compassion that we see, share and experience every day, and to spend time in a safe space away from the hostilities of UK immigration policies. Our volunteers, staff, supporters, funders and the people we support came together to share

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

food, listen to live music, and create art at our beautiful Allotment. Each year, we celebrate this event and centre it around the people we support. It is an important space of reflection, community, and togetherness.

This year, we relaunched our Parents Forum as a Members Forum. The group initially developed as Rainbow Club parents wanted a space to meet other parents, share experiences, and learn from each other. Transitioning this space into a Members Forum means that clients from across our services can benefit from this project. Topics are driven by our members, which included workshops on health and wellbeing; employability, volunteering and education; and housing rights. Our Members Forum is an important co-production space and feedback loop on AFRIL services. A special Members Forum on a large local hotel closure, co-produced AFRIL's strategy and direction in this area.

"The parent meeting helped my wellbeing and I got to meet other parents which helped me alot". - Members Forum member, 2024

In December 2024, we featured in an Evening Standard article focused on the impact of the rising cost of living on the people we support. This opportunity to provide a story which contrasted with the dominant media narrative followed us experiencing a 93% increase in demand since the start of the cost of living crisis. Our members are best placed to talk about the impact of the cost of living crisis and AFRIL on their lives, so we worked closely with a journalist and two of our members to support them to safely share their experiences. The full article can be found [here](#).

Vicarious trauma and burnout are common in frontline delivery in our sector, and the rise in far right violence in the UK exacerbates this risk. We have increased clinical supervision for staff, and provided training to staff and volunteers on managing and preventing vicarious trauma. This improves staff and volunteer wellbeing and motivation - feedback included "the extra wellbeing support really helped me to process and move on from a stressful situation at work, and it being offered to me in the first place made me feel valued." In addition to clinical supervision, staff and volunteers have access to our Employee Assistance Programme, and good HR support and policies.

Future plans

In 2024/25 we plan to consolidate our growing services, supporting 350 asylum seeking, refugee and vulnerable migrant families to access safe housing, sufficient income, regularise their immigration status, improve their wellbeing, support their children to thrive, and rebuild their lives in the heart of our community.

Our Food Bank will meet the crisis needs of over 50 of the most destitute households, whilst working intensively with AFRIL's other services to improve peoples' entitlements and options so they can move from dependence to independence. Our Casework and Advocacy Service will grow in line with the needs of our client group, maintaining our outstanding success rates and continuing to have a client first approach that prioritises supporting people to co-design their own casework plans and build independence. We will be dynamic in our outreach locations, responding to changing client groups and emerging issues. We will work in partnership with mainstream organisations to co-develop services, provide training, and therefore improve support for our client group. Maintaining our excellent legal partnerships, we will continue to be outspoken in the face of injustice and support strategic legal challenge when it aligns with our values and mission. Our Immigration Project will secure status for more and more people, enabling them to really rebuild their lives. We will provide training in line with policy changes, and strengthen our partnership with Southwark Law Centre to ensure high quality representation for our clients. We plan to become registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner in our own right to provide regulated immigration advice, which will enable us to increase our offer to clients in this under-resourced field. Our Allotment of Refuge will undertake volunteer outreach to recruit more sanctuary seeking members who are harder to reach and can be reluctant to put down roots when they live in such uncertainty. We

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

will continue to improve accessibility of the site, with plans to rebuild our beds to be easier to reach. We want to build more wicking beds to control the growing environment and increase our crop yield for the food bank, and to continue to try to grow new crops recommended by our members to ensure our harvest is culturally appropriate. We will continue our resilience measures in the face of climate change, for example creating flood defences such as swales and a rain garden area. Rainbow Club will grow from strength to strength, further developing our Youth Council, and our special literacy work to encourage children to read and write for pleasure, and develop their confidence in sharing their opinions and voice, thereby unlocking success. We will develop a strategic advocacy plan for our 24/25 policy work with client voice at the centre. We will maintain the flexibility to respond to emerging urgent issues, as is our specialism, and aim to properly resource this work. We will continue to focus broadly on asylum support issues, safeguarding, and housing rights as it impacts our client group.

We are in the final year of our current strategic plan and will launch a bottom up strategic planning process with a focus on increasing lived experience in our governance decisions. In order to maintain a sustainable and effective organisation, we will build on the work that has been done this year to diversify our funding streams, and we will resource our central support functions to provide strong governance and organisational support in proportion to our growing front line services. Our 23/24 internal priority has been to invest in monitoring and impact measurement. Our case management system, customised in-house, will capture outcomes across all our projects and continue to provide the robust evidence base we need to make both the case for support and to advocate for positive policy changes. At the same time, we will continue to invest in wellbeing support for our outstanding staff and volunteer team so we can continue to deliver positive outcomes with and for asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants, and refugees across South East London.

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

Our funders, supporters, partners and volunteers

Thank you to our funders, supporters and partners. We would not have been able to provide the services and support detailed in this report without you. We are enormously grateful for your support, and for the solidarity and compassion that you show towards refugees, asylum seekers and migrants seeking sanctuary in our community.

Thank you also to our wonderful team of volunteers for donating your precious time to AFRIL. We would not be able to deliver the quality of services that we do without your time, commitment, and dedication.

Trusts and Foundations

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust • AB Charitable Trust • Angus Lawson Memorial Trust • Barnett and Sylvia Shine Charitable Trust • BBC Children in Need • Delamere Dairy Foundation • Fund for Human Need • Heinz, Anna and Carol Kroch Foundation • The Lee Education Charity of William Hatcliffe • Lewisham Local • London Catalyst • London Churches Refugee Fund • London Communities Foundation • Robbins Family Charitable Trust • Feed UK • The Caring Foundation • The Childhood Trust (Big Give) • The Henry Smith Charity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hillcote Charitable Trust • The Indigo Trust • The Julia Rausing Trust • The Northwick Trust • The Strategic Legal Fund • The Worshipful Company of Gardeners • The Worshipful Company of Launderers • Topinambour Trust • Trust for London | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewisham Free Cakes For Kids • Lewisham Lottery • Michael O'Mara Books • NEPOMAK • Sabina Motasem Bridal • Salvation Army • Schools include: St Winifred's School, Deptford Green School, Bullers Wood School for Girls, Forest Hill School, Bexley Grammar School • South East London Humanist Group • Sharegift • Staff at IBM • St. Augustine's with St. Luke's Churches • Tesco Community Grants • The Unconnected • Vodafone • Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Association • Women's Institute • WrapUp London • Youth Against Crime Not Crime Against Youth |
|---|---|--|

Community groups and organisations

- Acorn Book Club
- Beckenham South Scouts
- Blackheath Quakers
- Dulwich College
- Forest Hill Quakers
- Gerald Moore Gallery, Eltham College
- Goldluxel Services
- Good Things Foundation
- Give A Car
- Greenwich Ecology Centre
- Kindred Yoga
- Lewisham 14th Scouts

Thank you to our **statutory funders**: the Greater London Authority, Greenwich Council, and Lewisham Council, London's first Borough of Sanctuary, who have supported our work with contracts, grants and policy engagement.

Thank you to our **project delivery partners**: Fairbeats, Creating Ground, the Church of the Good Shepherd and St Peter (Lee), The One Tree Hill Allotment Society, Southwark Law Centre, Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors, Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, Citizens Advice Lewisham, West London Welcome, and the museums and organisations that support our Rainbow Club trips and activities - the National Maritime Museum, the Horniman Museum, National Gallery, Museum of London Docklands, Discovery Story Centre, Lewisham Youth Theatre and The Flying Seagull Project.

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

Thank you to all our supporters who wish to remain anonymous, and those who regularly donated via direct debit, made one-off donations, or donated to one of our fundraising campaigns.

Organisational Structure, Governance and Management

AFRIL has a strong and effective Board of Trustees that brings a diverse range of experience and expertise, including lived experience of forced migration and professional backgrounds in finance, law, policy, charity management, education, fundraising, and HR. The trustees, who are also the Directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

G J Redmond-King (Chair)	L S Barron
K A B Commons (Vice-Chair)	N D Walker
M R Gravelle (Secretary)	K R Wildgoose
D Burnett	K Richards
R Tran (Resigned 10 July 2023)	H Khalifah (Appointed 13 November 2023)

Trustee recruitment is led by the Chair of the Board and the recruitment process is delivered by at least 2 trustees along with the Executive Director. We recruit trustees to meet a gap in board skills and experience identified via regular skills audit against needs, prioritising lived experience of forced migration. We advertise on Charity Job and publicise widely. Trustees are inducted by the Chair of the Board and the Executive Director in line with the charity's Induction Policy, which includes an introduction and visit to the charity's operations and activities. They are asked to read all relevant policies, the Charity Guidance 'The Essential Trustee', to declare any conflicts of interest, undergo a DBS check and sign fit and proper and confidentiality declarations. Trustees are provided with training where required to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively.

The Charity is a Company limited by guarantee. None of the trustees has any beneficial interest in the company. All of the trustees are members of the company and guarantee to contribute £1 in the event of a winding up.

Organisational Structure

Since the beginning of the 2023/24 financial year our staff team has expanded in response to increased demand for our services. We have also recruited new staff since the end of the financial year who are included below.

Executive Director: Sophie Wickham

Food Bank

Food Bank Manager: Helen Mason (until Jun 2024)
Food Bank Administrator: Louise Vangheluwe (until Jun 2024)
Food Bank Coordinator: Louise Vangheluwe (since June 2024)

Rainbow Club

Rainbow Club Manager: Kieran Tang-Wright
Passion Fruit Class Teacher: Ruth Michaels
Starfruit Class Teacher: Vita Baliaj
Mango Class Teacher: Ndaiziyei Murimba
Art Teachers: Sadegh Aleahmad (until Dec 2023),
Lucie MacGregor, Hannah Conway (since Oct 2024)
Sport Teacher: Daniel Espinosa (until Sept 2024)

Allotment

Allotment of Refuge Project Lead: Rose Cowling
Allotment of Refuge Project Lead (Maternity Cover):
Rue Refson-Dye (since Jan 2024)

Casework and Advocacy Service

Casework and Advocacy Manager: Chloe White
Advice and Advocacy Officers: Emma Loffler (until Oct 2023)
Senior Caseworkers: Bevlyn Annokye; Jess Fogarty (since Dec 2023)
Caseworker: Awaatif Muktar (since Aug 2023)

Office

Senior Monitoring and Operations Officer: Jess Hughes

Trustees Report for the year ending 31st May 2024

Immigration Project

Southwark Law Centre Immigration Advice Partnership

Solicitor: Ed O'Driscoll

Risk Management

The trustees have given consideration to the risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that systems and processes are established in order to identify, manage and mitigate those risks. The charity has established and maintains a risk register which is reviewed by Trustees every 8 weeks, alongside emerging risks and plans for mitigation as presented by the Director to the Board. In addition to this, the charity maintains and regularly reviews a wide range of organisational policies and procedures that address mitigating risk. Risk is a standing item at the 2 monthly board meetings.

Financial Review

The charity's income and expenditure have both increased by a reasonable proportion since the last financial year, in a managed and sustainable way. The increase in expenditure was greater due to increased operating costs and expansion of services, leading to a deficit of £41,384 after a surplus of £21,026 and £7,764 in the previous two years. This was a calculated risk to use our unrestricted funding, as we anticipated a number of funding sources to materialise in the first quarter of 24/25 which they subsequently did. Our fundraising strategy has resulted in an increase in multi-year grant commitments, and income from services provided to our client group under contract from Local Authorities.

It is the policy of the charity that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three and six month's core operating expenditure. This calculation excludes the partner costs that we only incur should we secure funding for multi-agency projects for which AFRIL is the lead partner. The trustees consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue and adapt the charity's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

The trustees' report has been approved by the Board of Trustees.



G J Redmond-King

Trustee

Date: 18/02/25

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Action for Refugees in Lewisham (the charity) for the year ended 31 May 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 (the 2006 Act).

Having satisfied myself that the financial statements of the charity are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the charity's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- 3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



F J Wilde FCCA MBA DChA

Warner Wilde
4 Marigold Drive
Bisley
Surrey
GU24 9SF

Dated: 20 February 2025

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

		Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
	Notes						
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	3	121,528	3,869	125,397	27,153	20,967	48,120
Charitable activities	4	84,155	259,972	344,127	-	246,311	246,311
Investments	5	1,259	-	1,259	369	-	369
Other income	6	179	12,157	12,336	-	10,189	10,189
Total income		<u>207,121</u>	<u>275,998</u>	<u>483,119</u>	<u>27,522</u>	<u>277,467</u>	<u>304,989</u>
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	7	90	147	237	216	-	216
Charitable activities	8	224,476	299,497	523,973	3,127	280,620	283,747
Total expenditure		<u>224,566</u>	<u>299,644</u>	<u>524,210</u>	<u>3,343</u>	<u>280,620</u>	<u>283,963</u>
Net income/(expenditure) and movement in funds		(17,445)	(23,646)	(41,091)	24,179	(3,153)	21,026
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 June 2023		<u>136,381</u>	<u>32,701</u>	<u>169,082</u>	<u>112,202</u>	<u>35,854</u>	<u>148,056</u>
Fund balances at 31 May 2024		<u>118,936</u>	<u>9,055</u>	<u>127,991</u>	<u>136,381</u>	<u>32,701</u>	<u>169,082</u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MAY 2024

	Notes	2024 £	£	2023 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	14		39		1,501
Current assets					
Debtors	15	2,000		922	
Cash at bank and in hand		136,264		206,319	
		138,264		207,241	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(10,312)		(39,660)	
Net current assets			127,952		167,581
Total assets less current liabilities			127,991		169,082
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	19		9,055		32,701
Unrestricted funds	20		118,936		136,381
			127,991		169,082

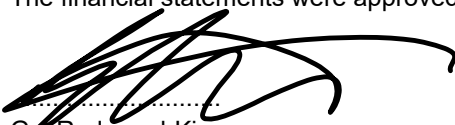
The company is entitled to the exemption from the audit requirement contained in section 477 of the Companies Act 2006, for the year ended 31 May 2024.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of financial statements.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year in question in accordance with section 476.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 18/02/25


G. Redmond-King
Trustee

Company registration number 05819537 (England and Wales)

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Action for Refugees in Lewisham is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is F3, Leemore Central Community Hub, Bonfield Road, Lewisham, London, SE13 5ES.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" ("FRS 102") and the Charities SORP "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). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The charity has taken advantage of the provisions in the SORP for charities not to prepare a Statement of Cash Flows.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

Endowment funds are subject to specific conditions by donors that the capital must be maintained by the charity.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash donations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges are allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Office equipment	20% straight line
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The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.7 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.8 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.10 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.11 Retirement benefits

Payments to defined contribution retirement benefit schemes are charged as an expense as they fall due.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Donations and gifts	54,018	3,869	57,887	21,303	20,967	42,270
Grants	46,500	-	46,500	5,100	-	5,100
Donated goods and services	21,010	-	21,010	750	-	750
	<u>121,528</u>	<u>3,869</u>	<u>125,397</u>	<u>27,153</u>	<u>20,967</u>	<u>48,120</u>

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

3 Income from donations and legacies

(Continued)

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Grants						
AB Charitable Trust	16,500	-	16,500	-	-	-
Indigo Trust	20,000	-	20,000	-	-	-
The Northwick Trust	10,000	-	10,000	5,000	-	5,000
Other	-	-	-	100	-	100
	<u>46,500</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>46,500</u>	<u>5,100</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,100</u>

4 Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Charitable activities						
Services provided under contract	84,155	-	84,155	-	-	-
Performance related grants	-	259,972	259,972	-	246,311	246,311
	<u>84,155</u>	<u>259,972</u>	<u>344,127</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>246,311</u>	<u>246,311</u>

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

4 Income from charitable activities

(Continued)

Performance related grants analysis

	Charitable activities 2024 £	Charitable activities 2023 £
BBC Children in Need	-	51,810
Angus Lawson Memorial Trust	2,700	18,386
Henry Smith Charity	32,050	63,600
National Lottery Communities Fund	-	10,456
Trust for London	50,700	16,250
GLA Grow Back Greener Fund	8,751	10,803
29th May 1961 Charity	-	5,000
London Communities Foundation	31,250	10,000
AB Charitable Trust	-	18,500
Julia and Hans Rausing Trust	-	3,325
London Catalyst Samaritans Grant	1,500	2,000
London Churches Refugee Fund	2,650	850
Lewisham Local Essentials Grant	8,350	5,000
Robbins Family Trust	4,000	4,000
Hillcote Charitable Trust	5,000	5,000
Advice Lewisham Partnership	-	10,000
GLA Migrant Advice and Support Fund	39,441	5,575
Other	73,580	5,756
	<u>259,972</u>	<u>246,311</u>

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £
Interest receivable	<u>1,259</u>	<u>369</u>

6 Other income

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Other income	<u>179</u>	<u>12,157</u>	<u>12,336</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,189</u>	<u>10,189</u>

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

7 Expenditure on raising funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
Fundraising and publicity						
Advertising	-	14	14	-	-	-
Other fundraising costs	90	133	223	216	-	216
	<u>90</u>	<u>147</u>	<u>237</u>	<u>216</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>216</u>

8 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Charitable activities 2024 £	Charitable activities 2023 £
Direct costs		
Staff costs	293,580	185,524
Depreciation and impairment	1,463	1,463
Advice and Advocacy project	7,329	4,674
Foodbank project	21,970	17,109
Immigration project	61,231	16,232
Rainbow Club project	35,222	21,186
Wellbeing projects	17,204	3,017
Destitution fund	2,963	4,473
Interpreting	14,524	3,333
Other volunteer and other staff costs	1,965	2,531
Travel and training	2,427	2,330
External partner costs	33,750	-
	<u>493,628</u>	<u>261,872</u>
Share of support and governance costs (see note 9)		
Support	25,522	20,290
Governance	4,823	1,585
	<u>523,973</u>	<u>283,747</u>
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	224,476	3,127
Restricted funds	299,497	280,620
	<u>523,973</u>	<u>283,747</u>

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

9 Support costs allocated to activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Office and core costs	24,956	19,729
Insurance	566	561
Governance costs	4,823	1,585
	<u>30,345</u>	<u>21,875</u>
Analysed between:		
Charitable activities	<u>30,345</u>	<u>21,875</u>

10 Net movement in funds

	2024 £	2023 £
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	<u>1,463</u>	<u>1,463</u>

11 Trustees

One of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received £20 (2023: none) for travel expenses from the charity during the year.

12 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2024 Number	2023 Number
	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>

Employment costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Wages and salaries	266,396	172,007
Social security costs	15,252	6,338
Other pension costs	11,932	7,179
	<u>293,580</u>	<u>185,524</u>

The Trustees consider that they, together with the Executive Director, are the key management of the charity in charge of directing, controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis.

The total remuneration of key management personnel during the year was £56,491 (2023: £40,820) and total employer's national insurance contributions in respect of these individuals amounted to £5453 (2023: £1,843), before allocation of the employer's national insurance allowance.

There were no employees whose annual remuneration was more than £60,000.

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

12 Employees

(Continued)

Remuneration of key management personnel

The remuneration of key management personnel was as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Aggregate compensation	56,491	42,664

13 Taxation

The charity is exempt from taxation on its activities because all its income is applied for charitable purposes.

14 Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment £
Cost	
At 1 June 2023	4,522
At 31 May 2024	4,522
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 June 2023	3,020
Depreciation charged in the year	1,463
At 31 May 2024	4,483
Carrying amount	
At 31 May 2024	39
At 31 May 2023	1,501

15 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Other debtors	2,000	-
Prepayments and accrued income	-	922
	2,000	922

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

16 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
Other taxation and social security		3,987	-
Deferred income	17	-	38,086
Other creditors		954	-
Accruals		5,371	1,574
		<u>10,312</u>	<u>39,660</u>

17 Deferred income

	2024 £	2023 £
Other deferred income	-	38,086
	<u>-</u>	<u>38,086</u>

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2024 £	2023 £
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	-	38,086
	<u>-</u>	<u>38,086</u>
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 June 2023	38,086	-
Resources deferred in the year	(38,086)	38,086
	<u>-</u>	<u>38,086</u>
Deferred income at 31 May 2024	-	38,086
	<u>-</u>	<u>38,086</u>

18 Retirement benefit schemes

	2024 £	2023 £
Defined contribution schemes		
Charge to profit or loss in respect of defined contribution schemes	11,932	7,179
	<u>11,932</u>	<u>7,179</u>

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all qualifying employees. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the charity in an independently administered fund.

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

19 Restricted funds

The restricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 June 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	At 31 May 2024 £
Advice and Advocacy Service	153	87,120	(87,273)	-	-
Client Grants	912	7,710	(6,076)	-	2,546
Core Costs	15,438	76,541	(91,979)	-	-
Destitution Fund	-	7,123	(4,843)	-	2,280
Foodbank and Allotment of Refuge	3,661	25,975	(29,636)	-	-
Rainbow Club	12,031	19,929	(28,346)	-	3,614
Immigration Project with SLC	18	50,700	(50,103)	-	615
Summer Projects: Summer school and refugee week	488	900	(1,388)	-	-
	<u>32,701</u>	<u>275,998</u>	<u>(299,644)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,055</u>

Previous year:	At 1 June 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	At 31 May 2023 £
Advice Service	-	39,737	(39,584)	-	153
Client Grants	-	3,250	(2,338)	-	912
Core Costs	35,854	113,017	(105,571)	(27,862)	15,438
Destitution Fund	-	5,128	(5,900)	772	-
Foodbank	-	24,451	(47,880)	27,090	3,661
Rainbow Club	-	73,153	(61,122)	-	12,031
Immigration Project with SLC	-	16,250	(16,232)	-	18
Summer Projects	-	2,481	(1,993)	-	488
	<u>35,854</u>	<u>277,467</u>	<u>280,620</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>32,701</u>

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

19 Restricted funds

(Continued)

Client Grants: grants secured from Trusts or specific donations for the purpose of specific items for individual clients.

Advice and Advocacy Service: costs related to provision of Advice, Advocacy and Casework.

Covid 19 response: funding provided for services in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Destitution Fund: destitution payments for food or emergency accommodation.

Foodbank and Allotment of Refuge: costs relating to the delivery of Food Bank, Art@home group and Allotment of Refuge.

Rainbow Club: Costs relating to the delivery of Rainbow Club Supplementary School.

Summer projects: Summer school educational activities.

Immigration Project: costs relating to the solicitor employed by Southwark Law Centre and related costs.

Office equipment: purchases of furniture and large equipment for the AFRIL office.

Monitoring and Evaluation: costs related to monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Core costs: general running costs of the organisation, including central staff, rent and rates, and general running costs of projects that are not covered by project specific funding.

20 Unrestricted funds

The unrestricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes.

	At 1 June 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 May 2024 £
General funds	136,381	207,121	(224,566)	118,936
Previous year:	At 1 June 2022 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 May 2023 £
General funds	112,202	27,522	(3,343)	136,381

ACTION FOR REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2024

21 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
At 31 May 2024:			
Tangible assets	39	-	39
Current assets/(liabilities)	118,897	9,055	127,952
	<u>118,936</u>	<u>9,055</u>	<u>127,991</u>
	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £
At 31 May 2023:			
Tangible assets	585	916	1,501
Current assets/(liabilities)	135,796	31,785	167,581
	<u>136,381</u>	<u>32,701</u>	<u>169,082</u>

22 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2023 - none).