



Fightback Charity

Society of Disabled Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Annual Report and Accounts

April 2025

Trustees' Annual Report for the Year 2024/2025

Overview

Fightback was formed in Sunderland in 2004 as a multicultural, one-stop, holistic, user-led, not-for-profit organisation. Fightback continues to be one of only a few projects that works with people who experience multiple disadvantages arising out of intrinsic factors, such as, disability, race, ethnicity, language, cultural barriers and immigration status.

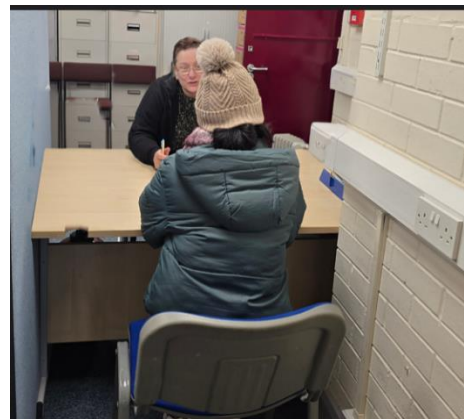
Fightback charity provides a range of practical, social and educational services and activities to refugees, asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers and other BME and marginalised groups.

Fightback's holistic approach aims to improve the mental health and well-being of our clients by involving, supporting and engaging marginalised and disadvantaged individuals, facilitating autonomy, building confidence, reducing social isolation, and promoting integration into the wider community and community cohesion.

Practical Services

Drop-in Service

Our twice-weekly Drop-in service provides a wide range of practical support, offering clients advice and assistance with everyday challenges. From reading and replying to letters to making appointments, paying bills, dealing with utilities, and navigating complex systems like housing, benefits, or job applications, we're here to help. Fightback takes a holistic approach, advocating for, and supporting clients while also empowering them



with the skills and understanding needed to tackle these issues independently. Many clients tell us that these everyday tasks are a significant source of stress due to their complexity, but knowing they have access to help in a welcoming, non-judgmental environment makes a big difference.

By reducing anxiety and providing practical tools and guidance, we aim to increase resilience, build autonomy, and enhance life chances for those who we serve. We also provide access to phones, the internet, the use of a laptop and a printer.

Year	2023/2024	2024/2025
Advice	1,008 clients	1,039
Advocacy and Mediation	225 clients	241

Client Feedback

- I split up from my husband, and I don't have an income and had to go to court because of debts. Fightback helped me apply for Universal Credit, set up a repayment plan and cancelled the court. I was in so much stress, you can't believe how much this helped me. (Deborah)
- Fightback helped my daughter who is autistic get DLA after she was refused twice, anytime I have benefits forms to fill in or renew, I always come here. (Eileen Cowen)
- When I have problems, I can get help here (Deepak)

Form Filling

Our service is an absolute lifeline for many clients who face challenges with language, reading, writing, or understanding complex forms that are required to access essential support. Fightback provides hands-on assistance by writing letters and completing forms on behalf of clients with language or cognitive difficulties. These forms include housing applications, housing and council tax benefits, PIP, DLA, Universal Credit, ESA medical questionnaires, driving licenses, passports, and more. Between April 2023 and April 2024, we have successfully filled out 211 forms, ensuring our clients can access the services and benefits they need, while alleviating stress and providing essential support to navigate these often-complicated processes.

Year	2023/2024	2024/2025
Forms filled	211	221

Client Feedback

- I struggle with reading and writing. The girls at Fightback help me with forms, benefits and reading letters, so I know when my appointments are, and it keeps me out of trouble. (Sean)

- I came to Fightback for help with applying for PIP, and they also helped me get a disabled persons bus and metro pass, which I didn't even know I could get. I'm so happy because I need to use buses to get around and it was expensive, but now its free. (Mr. Duggen)

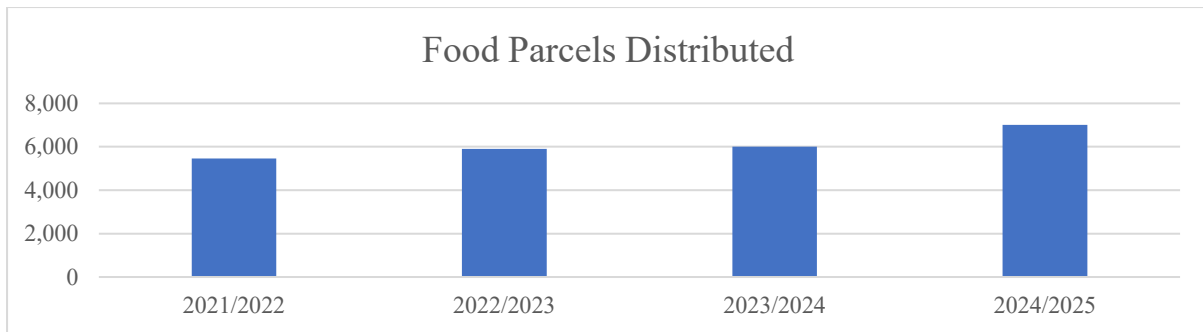
Provision of Food Parcels

The increase in demand for food support which Fightback experienced during the start of the cost-of-living crisis, has not abated. As financial pressures on families and individuals continues, demand for our services has also continued to increase. UK households continue to feel the after effects of the cost-of-living crisis, with around 90% of households reporting noticeably higher food bills on an ongoing basis. Prices have continued to grow, and people's incomes have never caught up. Staples such as, eggs, bread, milk, oil, meat, rice, potatoes, cheese, pasta, vegetables and fruit, remain unaffordable for many households. Essential costs have remained disproportionately burdensome for low-income families: millions of low-income households reported cutting back or skipping meals, going without heating, or borrowing to pay for basic essentials, reflecting persistent hardship even as headline inflation fell from the peak in 2022.



The demand for food support at Fightback continues to increase weekly and extends across the community, and includes groups such as refugees, asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers, members of other BME groups, the elderly, people with disabilities, students, benefits claimants, and low-income working families. Fightback continues to receive referrals from other agencies, such as CAB, churches, Sunderland City Council and other charities.

Year	2023/2024	2024/2025
Food parcels distributed	6,002	7,012



Client Feedback

- I get universal credit, after ive paid my rent, and bills I have nothing left. If it wasn't for the regular food parcels, I don't know what I would do (Anon)
- The fruit and veg help my family a lot, I have 4 children and fresh food is very expensive. (Usman)
- The food bank is a life saver, they helped me so much when I had no income at all for 5 weeks. (Sarah)



Provision of Hygiene Products

Many people who are locked in poverty or those who find themselves in times of crisis often experience severely restricted options. This leaves them caught between being able to heat their home, pay their rent, buy food or keep clean. Hygiene poverty can be shaming, humiliating and excluding and can result in social isolation. Hygiene poverty can lead to a lack of confidence and can negatively affect good health, mental health well-being and social interaction. At Fightback we provide hygiene products to clients on a regular basis throughout the year, both to alleviate financial pressures, but also to directly support the wellbeing of our clients.



Year	2023/2024	2024/2025
Hygiene parcels distributed	1,575	1,645

Client Feedback

- Getting help with toiletries really helps, washing power, shampoo, and handwash etc are all expensive. (Fred)
- Toiletries are essential but they are so expensive, especially for us women because we have added costs because we need sanitary products every month. I really appreciate the help I get with these, it helps me a lot. (Anonymous)

Social Services and Activities

Fightback holds a twice weekly **Coffee Morning and Befriending Service**. These social activities enable people to come together and enjoy a selection of refreshments in a safe and welcoming environment. Our aim is to reduce social isolation and loneliness, while promoting social inclusion and good mental health wellbeing amongst our user groups. Many families and single parents with children attended our coffee morning illustrating that



people needed to socialize. This service is vitally important, as the heightened divisive political and media rhetoric surrounding immigration has increased polarisation and hatred in the UK. Fightback’s social and befriending services brings people from diverse communities together to create safe spaces for interaction and dialogue, ultimately nurturing understanding, trust, and reducing isolation. This serves to support and strengthen community resilience at a time of increased division and uncertainty. Ongoing feedback from our clients highlights how much they appreciate being able to get out, connect with others and socialise in a safe and relaxed atmosphere.

Year	2023/2024	2024/2025
Refreshments provided at coffee mornings	8,580	9020

Fightback’s **Chat Club** gives people the opportunity to engage with others, make positive social connections and break down barriers. We provide a safe, friendly, relaxed environment where clients can talk about everyday life, their hopes, fears, plans for the future, and mental health worries without being judged. They can share experiences, information, and strategies for coping with life’s ups and downs, connect with others who understand what they are going through, and be heard. This service is designed to build self-esteem, self-worth, and self-awareness, promote autonomy and increase motivation.



Client Feedback

- I love coming to Fightback, its safe, friendly, I meet friends here, we have a chat, coffee and something to eat. (Ken)
- I like the coffee morning, I can talk to people, get food, and it’s free. (Youbi)
- We have been coming to fightback for years, we have met so many people from all over the world, its good to see everyone just talking and making friends. (Fiona and Eddy)
- I like the atmosphere here, it doesn’t matter who you are or where your from, your welcome. (Shoban)
- I’ve made some lovely friends here, my friend taught me how to make a real biryani and curry at home, and I showed her how to make Yorkshire puddings and dumplings. (Ashley. D)

- I like the chat club, and the coffee morning and befriending service. I have learned a lot about other people and the different places they come from. We really have more in common than we realise. I think this is great for breaking down barriers and stereotypes, the people I meet are so lovely and very caring. (Viv)
- I like the coffee morning and befriending group, it's not just old women sitting around talking, it's a real mixed bag, the elderly, adults, teenagers, kiddies from all different countries. It's amazing meeting and making friends from so many different places. (Doreen)

Tabletop Days

Fightback takes in donations of previously loved items and then redistributes them free of charge to anyone in need at our tabletop days. Items include clothing, toys and household items. This helps vulnerable individuals access everyday essentials, which can often be expensive and unaffordable for many people, builds community support, and benefits the environment by reducing waste and promoting reuse, creating a positive impact on society and also demonstrating Fightback's commitment to sustainability.

Client Feedback

- I look forward to the tabletop, you never know what there will be, and if there is something I really need, I can ask the staff and they will put it aside if someone donates it. (Anon)

Job Skill Support

Fightback provides advice on how to look for jobs and apply for them online, creating and updating CVs, advice on approaching an employer for the first time, or where to find advertised vacancies. We also provide guidance on updating Universal Credit journals and fulfilling job search requirements. This service increases skills, promotes autonomy, enables clients to take advantage of employment opportunities when they arise, prevents clients who are already economically and socially disadvantaged from being sanctioned by the DWP, and increases positive life chances.

Client Feedback

- Fightback helped me to appeal my benefits sanction and got my benefit re-instated, without them I would have been sanctioned for 6 weeks. (Anne)
- I can't use a computer, Diana set up a universal credit journal for me, and she looks at the messages for me and answer any questions for me. I wouldn't be able to do it on

my own. (George)

- I got help to apply for attendance allowance for my husband because he has dementia and needs more care. We got it first time with no problems. (Cathy and Jim)
- I had been out of work for 6 years after an accident. Matti made me an online journal for universal credit and a CV for applying for jobs, she also gave me a reference as well. Now, I have a part time job in a food factory and im waiting to see if they will take me full time. (Annon)
- I got help transferring over to universal credit from ESA, I didn't know what to do, and it was stressing me out, but they did it very quickly. (Daniel)

Volunteers and Volunteering Opportunities

We have 20 dedicated volunteers on rotation who organise and run our weekly coffee morning, befriending service, chat club, and drop-in services, as well as collecting, packing, distributing and delivering food parcels. Fightback is a continuously evolving user led project that actively encourages user participation at every level and to take up various roles within the project, such as, acting as trustees and using their skills and competencies for the benefit of the whole project. Whether they give their time to help organise and run coffee mornings, our befriending service, chat clubs or drop-in services, contribute clerical and IT skills, use bilingual or multilingual abilities to support interpretation, help assemble and distribute food parcels, or offer free haircuts, this support is highly valued and deeply appreciated. User participation through volunteering is essential as it helps us to continue to provide a wide range of services that are responsive to the needs of the users themselves. Providing our clients/users with volunteering opportunities helps them to gain new skills or enhance transferable skills which they can then use to secure paid employment or go on to enrol on college or university courses. Fightback is always happy to provide volunteers with references and letters of support.

Volunteer Feedback

- I've been running the food bank for years now, I like organising things, being useful and helping other people. (Monique)
- I love volunteering with Fightback, it gets me out of the house, and I meet lots of people. (Tina)

- I volunteer in the foodbank every Thursday, I really enjoy working with the other volunteers, we have a good relationship and laugh and chat while we work. (Carine)
- I volunteer for the coffee morning and befriending service. I really like it, I talk to many people and I feel good helping people. I am trained in hairdressing and beauty, and I cut women's hair here for free, which helps them feel good. (Fatemeh)
- I do lots of things volunteering, making food parcels, stock rotation, interpreting for different languages, and make sure people are okay when it is very busy. (Abdullah)
- I am a qualified Barber and I give free hair cuts to men and boys (Mahmood)

Two of volunteers were finalists in the VCAS Sunderland Awards this year, Monique Gorvel in the BME Champion category, and Hannah Lambton in the Young Volunteers award. At the ceremony in Sunderland Minster, Monique won the BME Champion Award.



Other Services

Free Hair Cuts

Many of our clients face numerous challenges, with low self-esteem being a common hurdle. Something as simple as a haircut can have a profound impact, offering a real boost to their confidence and helping them feel good about themselves. Recognizing this, we have continued to provide free haircuts for our clients, ensuring they experience this small but meaningful gesture of care and support. More recently, we now have a female hairdresser, who provides free haircuts for women.



Client Feedback

- I don't have any money, come here every 4 weeks for a haircut for free, its very good. (Mark)
- My husband and children come here and get their hair cut. My children look clean and good for school. (Isla)
- I get my hair and face shaved for free (Carl)
- My boys get their hair cut here (Shanaz)
- Fatemeh cut and dyed my hair for me a few times, she did a really good job. (Anon)



Christmas Hampers

Each year, Fightback looks to give our clients, a little something at Christmas. In December 2024, we provided Christmas Food Hampers to our clients. This heartfelt initiative aimed to bring joy and warmth to those facing challenges during the holiday season, ensuring that they could experience the spirit of Christmas. We also made the holidays special for the children of our clients by providing each of them with a thoughtful gift, ensuring that the magic of the season reached the younger members of the community as well.



Client Feedback

- I think everyone who comes to Fightback looks forward to Christmas, the staff put a lot of work in to spread a little joy around. (Caroline and Peter)
- The staff try to make Christmas special, especially for the kids. (Esme, C)
- We are adults and we are not christian but we like the decorations, tree and presents and we even get excited when we come here at Christmas. Our children love Christmas. Its very important to share cultures, traditions, celebrations and happiness. (Mohammed)

Funding

The National Lottery Community Fund – Reaching Communities

In Nov 2021, The National Lottery Community Fund – Reaching Communities, kindly donated funding for five years to cover the costs of our accommodation rental, salary of our existing part-time manager and accountancy charges.

Household Support Fund

In August and September 2024, Fightback once again acted on behalf of Sunderland City Council to distribute Household Support Fund grants to families and individuals in need. Fightback distributed £4,050 of grants.

Medical Placement

Fightback continues working with Sunderland University Medical School, offering to host 2nd Year medical students as part of their community placements. The students have visited our organisation on a few occasions and observed our activities, interacted with volunteers, did some background research and interviewed Fightback Charity's staff. The students also spoke to other clients/ service users, to gain insight into the experiences of refugees, asylum seekers and minority ethnic groups, the disabled, elderly and those experiencing economic hardship to gain an understanding of the struggles they faced within the community. While they were with us, the students got involved and assisted Fightback's team of volunteers in delivering our services.



Online Charity Shop

In November 2024, Fightback launched its online charity shop, using eBay to sell donated items, which might otherwise have gone to landfill. These items are now being given new homes right across the UK, all while raising funding to support Fightback's other activities.

Fundraising 2024-2025

- Jill and Norman Franklin Trust
- City of Sunderland Council
- University of Sunderland
- Online Charity Shop
- Cash Philanthropy Donation
- Fightback is currently being supported by Sunderland City Council with Fareshare donations which help us to provide a wide range of food products in our food parcels.

Thank You for your Support

- To all our funders for their kind generosity
- Greggs (Union Street Sunderland), who provides unsold pastries for our coffee mornings.
- Sunderland City Council for financially supporting us with Fareshare food contributions towards our weekly food bank.
- SVP Charity for their kind donations
- Sunderland Police Constabulary Community Officers.
- Northumbria Fire Brigade.
- Chris Howson, Sunderland University Chaplin
- Fightback charity trustees, staff and volunteers.

Business Information

Committee Members

Chairperson: Diana Lambton

Treasurer: David Lowther

Committee Member: Monique Gorvel

Committee Member: Claudia Conteh

Committee Member: Sabina Bain

Committee Member: Mahmood Sharif Rahim

Committee Member: Janet Nalweysio

Committee Member: Daniel Pearce

Committee Member: Ali Mirzaei

Accountants

Accountability

3 Cuthbert House, Tower Road, Glover Ind Est, Washington, Tyne & Wear, NE37 2SH.

Bankers

Unity Trust: 4 Brindley Pl, Birmingham B1 2JB

Address

Fightback (Society for Disabled Refugees and Asylum Seekers)

Registered Charity; Charity number: 1168874

Units 4-6. Eagle Building High Street East Sunderland SR1 2AX.

Phone: 0191 565 2707

Fightback

Approval statement

I approve these accounts which comprise the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and the related notes. I acknowledge my responsibility for the accounts, including the appropriateness of the accounting basis as set out in note 1, and for providing all the information and explanations necessary for their compilation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Diana Lambton', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Diana Lambton

9 January 2025

Fightback

Accountants' report to the members on the unaudited accounts to Fightback

You have approved the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the Income and Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and the related notes. In accordance with your instructions, we have compiled these unaudited accounts from the accounting records and information and explanations supplied to us.



Accountability
Accountants

3 Cuthbert House
Tower Road
Glover Industrial Estate
Washington
NE37 2SH

9 January 2025

Fightback
Income and Expenditure Account
for the year ended 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
	£	£	£	£
Income Resources	21,022	51,931	72,953	99,951
Resources Expended				
Wages, salaries and other staff costs	-	21,173	21,173	21,158
Travel, volunteer expenses & consumables	8,660	-	8,660	6,825
Rent, rates, power and insurance costs	4,528	16,625	21,153	10,318
Telephone, fax, stationery and other office costs	2,626	72	2,698	1,902
Food parcels	34,385	18,000	52,385	47,010
Household Support Fund (HSF)	-	4,050	4,050	5,630
Bank, credit card and other finance charges	28	78	106	189
Accountancy, legal and other professional fees	-	670	670	2,842
Other business expenses	3,299	277	3,576	1,058
	53,526	60,945	114,471	96,932
(Deficit)/surplus	(32,504)	(9,014)	(41,518)	3,019
Balance brought forward	80,059	9,015	89,074	86,055
Balance carried forward	47,555	1	47,556	89,074

Fightback
Balance Sheet
as at 31 March 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Current assets			
Bank/building society balances		51,489	98,478
Cash in hand		52	171
		<u>51,541</u>	<u>98,649</u>
Current liabilities			
Trade creditors		<u>3,985</u>	<u>9,575</u>
Net current assets		47,556	89,074
Net assets		<u>47,556</u>	<u>89,074</u>
Accumulated fund			
Balance at start of period		89,074	86,055
Net (deficit)/surplus	3	(41,518)	3,019
		<u>47,555</u>	<u>89,074</u>
		1	
		<u>47,556</u>	<u>89,074</u>

Fightback
Notes to the Accounts
for the year ended 31 March 2025

1 Accounting basis

The accounts have been compiled on a basis that enables surpluses to be calculated in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice and that provides sufficient and relevant information to enable the completion of a tax return if necessary.

2 Income and Expenditure account analysis

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2025 £	2024 £
Incoming resources				
Fundraising	21,022	51,931	72,953	99,951
Wages, salaries and other staff costs				
Wages and salaries	-	10,338	10,338	9,910
Pensions	-	1,333	1,333	1,333
PAYE & NI	-	9,502	9,502	9,915
Training & Development & Networking	-	-	-	-
Building Capabilities	-	21,173	21,173	21,158
Travel, volunteer expenses and consumables				
Volunteer general expenses	8,660	-	8,660	6,825
Rent, rates, power and insurance costs				
Rent	3,752	16,229	19,981	8,863
Rates	-	396	396	372
Property insurance	451	-	451	439
Water rates	325	-	325	644
	4,528	16,625	21,153	10,318
Telephone, fax, stationery and other office costs				
Telephone and fax & stationery	1,682	-	1,682	761
Stationery and printing	250	-	250	374
Software	694	72	766	767
	2,626	72	2,698	1,902
Food parcels				
Food parcels	30,557	18,000	48,557	44,665
Toiletries for failed asylum seekers	3,828	-	3,828	2,345
	34,385	18,000	52,385	47,010
Household Support Fund		4,050	4,050	5,630
Household Support Fund	-	4,050	4,050	5,630
Bank, credit card and other finance charges				
Bank charges	28	78	106	189
	28	78	106	189
Accountancy, legal and other professional fees				
Accountants fees	-	670	670	708
Other legal and professional	-	-	-	26
Organisational Development	-	-	-	2,108
	-	670	670	2,842
Other business expenses				
Other sundry costs	3,282	-	3,282	1,058
Charity shop	17	277	294	-
	3,299	277	3,576	1,058

Fightback
Notes to the Accounts
for the year ended 31 March 2025

3 Restricted funds

	Balance as at 1 April 2023 £	Incoming £	Transfer Between Funds £	Outgoing £	Balance as at 31 March 2024 £
The National Lottery Community Fund – Reaching Communities	9,099	29,796	-	38,895	-
Jill Franklin Trust	-	18,000	-	18,000	-
Community Foundation	-	-	-	-	-
HSF4 Fund	(84)	4,135	-	4,050	1
Groundwork UK -Tesco	-	-	-	-	-
	<u>9,015</u>	<u>51,931</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>60,945</u>	<u>1</u>