

DAR – Darlington Assistance for Refugees

Annual Report & Financial Statement – 2024

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Registered Charity Number: 1170986

The Board of Trustees of DAR, who are also Directors of the Charity for the purpose of the Companies Act 2006, present their Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The Financial Statement complies with the Companies Act 2006 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)

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REFERENCE & ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

PRINCIPAL OFFICE

33 Linden Avenue
Darlington
DL3 8PS

CEO Fran Wood

TRUSTEES IN 2024

Tresor Bukasa		
Hassan Eisa		Resigned April 2024
Sally Forth		Resigned March 2024
Peter Meek	Chair	
	Acting Treasurer	From April 2024
Andrew Newens		
Fatima Zohra Smaili		From November 2024
Simon Thorley		From November 2024
Diane Toner		

TRUSTEES at the date this report was approved

Tresor Bukasa
Lauren Lovegood
Peter Meek
Andrew Newens
Syed Ali Akbar Rizvi
Fatima Zohra Smaili
Simon Thorley
Diane Toner

COMPANY SECRETARY Andrew Newens

PRINCIPAL FUNDERS	Barclays Football Foundation (Sported)
	Bauer Radio
	Darlington Borough Council
	Global Giving
	Inner Wheel
	Lloyds Bank Foundation Development
	Postcode Neighbourhood Trust
	Sports England
	Tesco
	The National Lottery

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER Janice Lincoln, FCCA, ACIB

FOREWORD – by the DAR CEO Fran Wood

This year has been transformational for our charity. Our new chair has guided us into a more sustainable organisation with committed hard working Trustees, enabling us to better navigate the storms inflicting the refugee sector. The outrageous riots of the summer and ongoing hostilities to “the other” has strengthened our resolve to be an ever-present force of support for our asylum seekers and refugees.

Our volunteers are our most valuable resource. Their ability to adapt to the changing needs and situations that surround us has amazed me. Their impact on those we support is long lasting and profound which is demonstrated by many returning to “give back” by volunteering with us.

Our gratitude extends to the National Lottery, Sport England, Point North, Ward Hadaway, Barclays Community Football Fund and Tesco Groundworks all of whom have helped us run projects that have kept our clients involved, active, creative and positive. Receiving funding from the Postcode Lottery gave us much needed admin support and core funding. We are looking forward to the continued development support from the Lloyds Bank Foundation. Addressing the Mental Well-being of our asylum seekers and refugees has led us to seek the advice and support of EGW Psychological services who have offered us sound training and consultations which has been funded by a grant from the Darlington Refugee Support team.

There is a core of faithful donors who donate on a monthly basis – they give us the confidence to book church halls for our drop in and teaching sessions. One-off individual donors have given us that extra boost of support. The thoughtfulness of school children and their parents has made Christmas a special time to all of our asylum seekers and refugees. In particular we thank Carmel College for creating 54 hampers, Reid Street Primary School for donations towards our gift bags and St Aidan's Academy for their generous harvest festival donations.

We are fortunate to have good working relationships with Justice First, the British Red Cross, First Stop, the 700 Club, Darlington CAB, the Darlington Refugee Support Team, Darlington Football Club, Old School Boxing gym, Charlotte Welton fitness coach, Darlington Pilates to name but a few.

OUR CHARITY OBJECTS

Taken from the DAR Constitution dated May 2022:

The objects of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) are:

i). The promotion of social inclusion for the public benefit among people who are refugees and asylum seekers living in Darlington who are socially excluded on the grounds of their social and economic position, by providing:

A education and training in the English Language

B volunteer befriender / mentors who will assist them with their integration into the community of Darlington, by the provision of information, advice and support.

ii). The relief of poverty for refugees and asylum seekers displaced from, in particular, but not limited to, Syria and other war zones who are or have been resident in any refugee camps in Europe by the provision of essential equipment, furniture and other items as may be necessary

OUR MISSION

Being a refugee or asylum seeker means reaching a foreign land after fleeing one's home in fear. It means leaving everything and everyone behind.

At DAR, we want to ensure that those men, women, and children who come to us, not as a choice but in order to save their lives, have the warm welcome they deserve.

We offer them a safe and friendly environment where they can get the support they need to rebuild their lives. We introduce them to our system and community as we would a dear friend who just moved from abroad. We respect their culture and heritage and cherish the richness they bring into our lives.

www.darlingtonrefugees.org

OUR STRATEGY

The DAR Strategy is reviewed and updated by the Board of Trustees working with the CEO on a half-yearly basis, in December and June each year.

The forward Strategy for each calendar year is expressed in terms of specific timed objectives, based predominantly upon the following **strategic themes**:

- DAR is an **independent charity** regulated by the Charities Commission and is completely non-aligned.
- We reach out to **all refugees and asylum seekers** (individuals and families), who arrive in the Darlington dispersal area.
- We anticipate all changes in the **UK Asylum System**, modifying and extending DAR services as appropriate.
- There is a need to explore the provision of **accommodation services** through DAR – possibly necessitating building strategic relationships with established accommodation providers.
- Continuing improvement in **information management** across DAR, supporting compliance with all relevant UK legislation, GDPR rules, and cybersecurity standards.
- Establishing a **DAR fundraising strategy** to achieve sustainable income levels over £60k per annum.
- Aiming to fund and establish a **permanent base** for DAR in Darlington.

OUR PERFORMANCE IN 2024

In total, DAR supported 373 asylum seekers and refugees, including those granted leave to remain, in 2024.

We started the year supporting 171 asylum seekers; this increased by 82 to 253 by the end of the year. During 2024, we assisted approximately 120 people (including 17 families and 34 single men) who were given Leave to Remain by supporting their move from Mears' accommodation to temporary housing, and eventually into more permanent homes. This process involved setting up Universal Credit accounts (with the help of DWP and First Stop), registering with Darlington HomeSearch to bid for social housing, and seeking private rented accommodation (with support from First Stop). The skills and employability agency, Triage, played a key role in training and assisting with job searches. Our mentors also supported families with changes of school and new GP registrations resulting from the moves.

We have made progress in recording the contributions of our 72 volunteers, 45 of whom are actively involved on a weekly basis. We estimate a total of 5,600 volunteer hours in 2024.

Our **drop-in** service delivered 150 hours of support and was attended by Justice First, Triage, the British Red Cross, Mears, and the Darlington Borough Council's Refugee Support Team. We started the year with around 23 asylum seekers attending, peaking at over 70 in August and maintained a steady attendance of 60 for the rest of the year.

Our 13 **mentors** provided over 650 hours of personalised support to asylum seekers and refugees over the year.

Our 10 **language tutors** delivered over 500 hours of language support.

Funding from the Postcode Lottery enabled us to appoint a freelance Office Manager for 2 days per week. We have, as a result, made significant progress in organising policies and practices, managing accounts, and administrative support.

Our **fundraising team** dedicated over 300 hours; organising Refugee Week, quiz nights, participation in Darlington Community Carnival, and funding bids. For Christmas, they coordinated the purchase, collecting donations from Reid Street Primary School, and packing of 270 gift bags and along with the distribution of 54 hampers, generously provided by Carmel College. We received numerous donations from individuals and community groups, including contributions from Jeanette Smith, the Darlington Mother's Union, Charlotte Welton, and Hazel Commene's Darlington Pilates group. It was wonderful to have some children from Reid Street Primary School help the team hand out the gift bags at our Christmas Drop in.

The depth of support we offer is enhanced by our seven volunteers with lived experience of the UK asylum system, including members of our Executive Committee and Board of Trustees.

We have encouraged the development of an Experts by Experience group, which has named itself Refugees and Asylum Seekers Together (RAST). This group is evolving into an independent organisation that will consult with the Board of Trustees on the challenges faced by those seeking asylum and suggestions for how we can improve our support.

The **Guide to Inclusive Practice for Welcoming and Supporting EAL Learners**, available on our website, was developed from our pilot orientation programme for newly arrived asylum students. This initiative involved consultation and collaboration with Darlington schools. Additionally, we worked with schools to re-establish the EAL network and created a Volunteer Interpreter Scheme, enabling schools to communicate effectively with parents who have limited proficiency in English. There are currently 13 volunteer interpreters who speak eight different languages, and we have encouraged them to study the Community Interpreting course at Darlington College to Level 3.

Mental Health and Well-being

The **Illegal Migration Act**, a rising trend in extremist views, and global instability have exacerbated anxiety levels among the asylum seekers we support. We have significant and increasing concerns about their mental well-being. We established a working relationship with senior trauma consultants at **EGW**, who have helped develop support systems for asylum seekers and provided guidance to our volunteers on vicarious trauma. This work is already making a meaningful impact, and we are grateful to the Refugee Support Team for enabling us to pursue this.

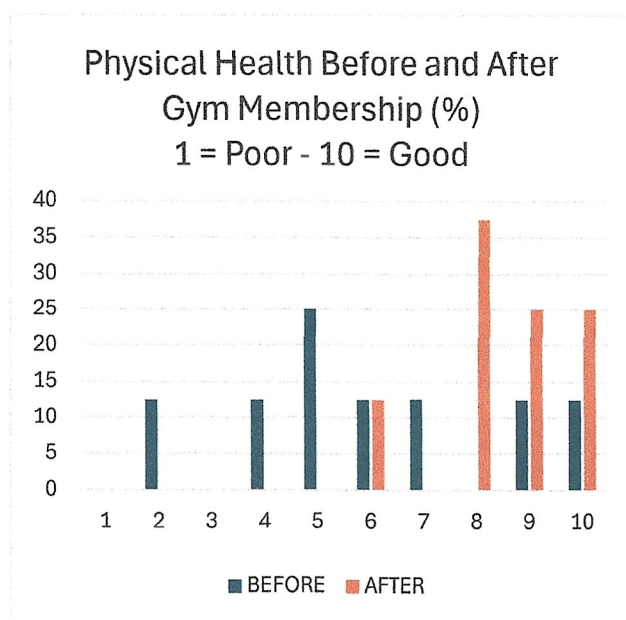
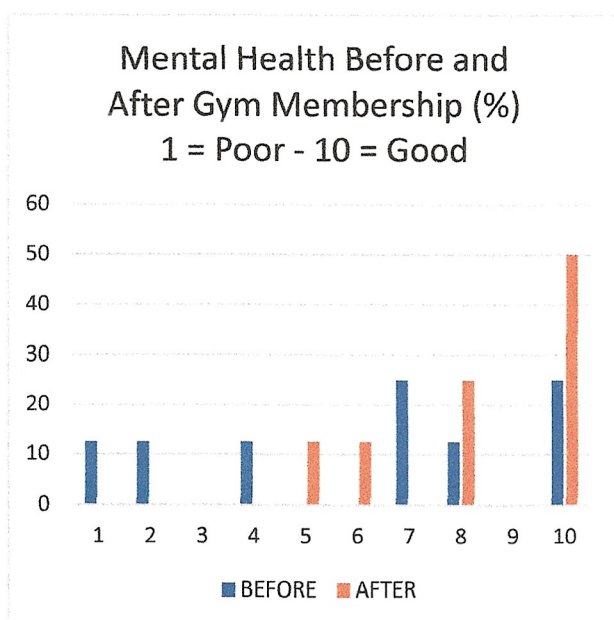
To help asylum seekers alleviate some of their anxiety, build routine and physical activity into their lives while awaiting Home Office decisions, we have listened to their needs and provided various activities. These activities were well received as the following comments demonstrate:

- **Football:** Weekly sessions funded by Sport England and coached by Darlington Football Club. These sessions benefited 20-30 participants, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
 - *I really enjoyed participating in the football sessions. These sessions not only helped me improve physically but also provided a great opportunity to connect with others and enhance my team skills. The coaches were always professional and supportive, and the atmosphere of the sessions was very positive and motivating. Through these experiences, in addition to improving my sports skills, I was able to strengthen my teamwork and cooperation spirit. I hope these sessions continue so that many more people can benefit from this opportunity." – Alikhan*
 - *"The football sessions are very important to the young people. I am a foster carer, and I have two young people who play and have made new friends from their own countries and from other countries it is an important event and I am very grateful to Dee for organising this - Lucy walker (foster carer for UASC)"*

Barclays Football (Sported) helped us extend our football sessions by 30 minutes during the winter months.
- **Boxing:** Sessions at Old School Boxing, also funded by Sport England, have been crucial for mental well-being and personal discipline.
 - *"When I go to a boxing session It's especially important when you're far from family, uncertain of the future, and grappling with a complex background." – D.H.*
 - *"Shirzad has been coming to us for quite a while now. He was quite shy and quiet at first and kept himself to himself. You could see right from the start that he'd already done a bit of Boxing. It's been great watching him not only improve his Boxing but also see him come out of his shell and start to make friends and watch his English improve. I think the Boxing classes have made him feel part of something and helped him with his confidence and give him a sense of belonging. He's had two Boxing contests with us so far and won both and I'm hoping there's going to be many more to come. He's been a pleasure to work with. - Mike Hall Head Coach at Old School Boxing"*
- **Keep Fit Classes with Charlotte Welton:** These classes have provided asylum-seeking women with community support beyond just fitness and have been sponsored by Sport England.
 - *"I benefited from the sports sessions healthily, psychologically, and socially. As I am a wife and a mother for three children, all in primary school. Sports exercises have increased my ability to perform my daily tasks. Living in a healthy and beneficial way. Psychologically: It has given me more self-confidence. It also it makes me feel satisfied with myself.*

Socially: It has helped me integrate into society and develop my language. I also love their respect and encouragement to me – Seeto

- **Pilates with Darlington Pilates:** Sport England have enabled us have spaces for women within this supportive group where we have seen friendships develop and confidence improve
 - *"Today, one woman was encouraging another, saying her hips had been sore and inflexible before she started, and the classes have made her feel a lot better." – Hazel*
- **Dolphin Centre Gym Membership:** Funded by County Durham Community Fund (now Point North) and the NHS Well-being Fund, this membership supported 26 people suffering from anxiety and declining physical health and exceeded the predicted outcomes as seen by the following charts.



- **Sewing Group:** Originally held in the library with six participants, this group grew to 12 asylum seekers from seven countries and four volunteers. With donations from Point North and Ward Hadaway, they purchased two new sewing machines and repaired existing ones. The group created and sold bunting at community events, made cushion covers, and supplied aprons for the cooking group.
 - *"I get out of hibernation."*
 - *"It helps my stress and situation."*
 - *"It makes me forget for an hour."*
- **Multicultural Cooking Project:** Funded by the National Lottery Awards for All, this weekly initiative encouraged asylum seekers to share cultural recipes while practicing English. Over the year, 28 participants speaking 11 different languages prepared meals for 440 people. Some participants also completed food safety certifications, with five passing Level 1 Food Hygiene and Safety, two passing Level 2 Food Hygiene and Safety for Catering, and one beginning the Level 2 HACCP.
- **Bicycle Project:** DAR continues to source bicycles for asylum seekers. We have partnered with First Stop's weekly café, where asylum seekers can learn to repair and maintain bikes before receiving them.

Through these initiatives, DAR has strengthened its support network, provided essential services, and fostered a sense of community and belonging for those seeking asylum in Darlington. This has been a year of growth and resilience, and we have strengthened our community support. The depth and breadth of services provided have been possible due to the dedication of our volunteers, partners, and the generosity of the Darlington community. Moving forward, we remain committed to advocating for and empowering asylum seekers and refugees as they rebuild their lives in the UK by Supporting refugees and strengthening communities.

Fran Wood CEO

GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATION

GOVERNANCE

The governance of DAR is set out in the *DAR Constitution – 27 May 2022*, particularly the powers and duties of the Trustees and the Members of the charity.

The Board of Trustees meets regularly with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to set strategy and exercise oversight of operations in line with the charity's Objects.

The *Annual General Meeting* of Members includes the (re)-election of all Trustees, consideration of the Annual Report and Accounts, and the appointment of auditors.

Currently the Board delegates authority to just one standing sub-committee:

The *Finance Sub-Committee* provides guidance, monitoring, and assistance to the CEO in matters relating to financial management and reporting, financial audit and controls, and purchasing.

LEADERSHIP & ORGANISATION

Executive leadership and management of DAR is vested in the role of CEO. The CEO leads the *DAR Executive Team* – the senior leadership team which coordinates all operations and activities across the whole of DAR. Chaired by the CEO, the Executive Team brings together the key leaders across the organisation, and including the leaders of the principal workstreams:

- Mentoring
- Languages
- Projects
- Media
- Fundraising

The Executive also ensures delivery of the DAR Strategy set by the Board of Trustees and oversees any internal DAR change projects.

All of the staff contributing to DAR are part-time volunteers – currently numbering around 60 people. Sourcing volunteers for team leadership roles proves to be very challenging and is particularly affecting the progress of our language team. Delivering services with a completely voluntary workforce can also cause difficulties in service continuity, which can put a strain on our stretched resources.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The CEO and Trustees of DAR have assessed the risks to which the charity is exposed and are satisfied that processes and systems have been established to mitigate them and ensure the continued viability of DAR.

Led by the CEO, Risk Management is a standing item on the Board's agenda. The DAR Risk Register details all risks and mitigations, categorised under the following headings:

Governance	Failure to deliver the charity's Objects / loss of strategic direction / failure of service delivery. Failure of Safeguarding Controls.
Operational	Insufficient appropriately motivated and trained volunteers to deliver quality services / loss of key personnel / failure to manage & report on "restricted" projects. Insufficient and / or inappropriate infrastructure to enable volunteers to deliver quality services – including accommodation, IT systems & hardware, information management systems, etc.
Financial	Insufficient funding income to sustainably support all DAR services & projects. Loss of Financial Control.
External	Changes in UK Immigration laws & regulations which impact needs / nature of DAR services / trends in the UK economy (e.g. Inflation, housing costs) which adversely affect DAR service users.
Compliance	Failure to comply with relevant laws and regulations - charity governance codes / charity financial regulations / health & safety regulations. Failure of cybersecurity measures / Loss of confidential data / Compromise of operational data.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024

Public Benefit - The Trustees have complied with their duty under the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

Reserves Policy – DAR aims to maintain sufficient free reserves of unrestricted funds in order to operate the charity for between 3 and 6 months. For the year ahead 2025, this sum is set at £10,000.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 13/5/25

& signed on their behalf by:

Peter Meek – Chair of Trustees 

8 Hillclose Avenue
Darlington
Co Durham
DL3 8BH
01 April 2025

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
DARLINGTON ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES (DAR).**

I report on the accounts for the Year ended 31 December 2024.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and Independent Examiner.

As Trustees of the charity of DAR you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (The 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 act and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of Independent Examiner's Statement

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanations from the members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement.

In accordance with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention

1. which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the members have not met the requirements to:
 - keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - prepare accounts which accord with the accounts records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act
2. or which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mrs Janice Lincoln

FCCA, ACIB

Previous Non- Executive Director of Penrith Building Society (Retired 30 June 2024)

 13/5/25



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Darlington Assistance for Refugees

No (if any)
1170986

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

Period start date
1/01/2024

To

Period end date
31/12/2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Events, DAR Lottery	5,933	-		5,933	7,713
Grants received	548	55,645		56,193	37,938
One off donations	1,832	-		1,832	12,987
Standing Order	2,381	-		2,381	
Other donations	100	-		100	
Appeals	-	-		-	300
Other income	140	-		140	3,998
Earned income	238	-		238	
Bank interest	-	-		-	
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	11,172	55,645	-	66,817	62,936
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	11,172	55,645	-	66,817	62,936
A3 Payments					
Rent, rates, storage, room hire	2,822	1,025	-	3,847	3,748
Summer Activities including football tournament	176	3,551		3,727	5,730
Bicycles/ repairs, equipment and maintenance	1,099	1,063		2,162	1,568
Christmas	1,756	6,980		8,736	770
Translation	-	-		-	242
Language resources	500	-		500	94
Miscellaneous	446	176		622	407
Mentor Family Activities	132	202		334	4,462
Administration - insurance, subs, DBS, etc.	106	-		106	1,298
Publicity inc. webhosting	1,566	169		1,735	152
Resettlement of AS on gaining status	-	-		-	
Employment Support	-	58		58	
Volunteer expenses	660	36		696	
Campaigning / Refugee Week	-	-		-	
Fundraising expenses	344	-		344	878
Coaching/counselling	90	9,460		9,550	
Pitch hire / room hire	169	14,127		14,296	280
equipment	104	4,116		4,220	100
Household goods for new Asylum seekers	132	-		132	1,050
Travel	-	1,045		1,045	142
Sub total	10,102	42,008	-	52,110	20,921
purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	10,102	42,008	-	52,110	20,921
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,070	13,637	-	14,707	42,015
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	31,596	35,677	-	67,273	25,258
Cash funds this year end	32,666	49,314	-	81,980	67,273

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Petty Cash	50	-	-
	Bank Account	32,616	49,314	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	32,666	49,314	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	