

Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Charitable Incorporated Organisation number: 1176524

**Trustees' Report
and
Financial Statement
for the year ended
31 March 2025**

Legal and Administrative Information

Name: **Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

Charitable Incorporated Organisation number: 1176524

Structure: Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Directors of FODI:

Chair	Stephen Newman
Treasurer	Mahnur Roushan
Secretary	Pauline Shannon (Resigned April 2024)
	Jane Nikolarakis
	Abraham Eiluorior
	Brenda Reardon
	Melika Azhandeh
	Talha Mahmood

Address: The Co-op Centre,
Whitehouse Road,
Hendon,
Sunderland, SR2 8AH

Bankers: Santander Bank.

Independent
Examiner: Mark Thompson MAAT
42 Lesbury Road
Newcastle
NE6 5LB

FRIENDS OF THE DROP-IN FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

REGISTERED CHARITY NO: 1176525

Trustees' Annual Report for the year to 31st March, 2025.

Friends of the Drop-In FODI has the following purpose

We aim to improve the mental health and well-being of the asylum-seeking and refugee community in Sunderland, reducing their social isolation and promoting their integration into the wider community, enabling our clients to interact with others. We collaborate with other local organisations and groups to achieve this goal.

FUNDING

FODI's main funders are the National Lottery, Tudor Trust, and Sir James Knott. These are the primary supporters of FODI. The National Lottery has funded us for five years, the Tudor Trust for three years, and Sir James Knott for three years. These supporters have praised FODI for the quality of its service.

We continue to receive support from the International Care Board (ICB), Sunderland City Council, which includes Links for LIFE, as well as the Household Support Fund. Also, we received funding from the Hadrian Trust, London Marathon Solidarity, and other organisations that prefer to remain anonymous.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The trustees and the Manager of FODI decided to delay the review of the strategy from January 2025 to a later date in the year, allowing the input of a consultant from Lloyds Bank Foundation, who was assigned to work with FODI on the funding strategy. FODI has a two-year non-funding grant with Lloyds Bank Foundation. Therefore, it was beneficial to have someone from outside with expertise to assist us in developing the business strategy for the three-year operation.

FODI STAFF

Although FODI has only one full-time staff member, Fanni Ng'ambi, the Manager, and Farkhunda Nawzadi, the Operations Assistant, as part-time staff, the team, along with the project worker, has worked to deliver all the much-needed services that FODI provides. They have also successfully managed five projects funded by Sunderland City Council through the Links for Life initiative. This has been achieved with the support of both long-standing and new partners across the city. We worked with the people who facilitated some of our projects.

VOLUNTEERS

FODI cannot carry out most of its activities with staff alone; however, it has dedicated volunteers from both the local community and among its service users. We conducted five volunteer inductions during the year, onboarding 32 volunteers. Three of these sessions involved local community members and service users. At the same time, the other two included six second-year medical students on work placement from Sunderland University and six members of the Sunderland University REACH staff network. They undertook various tasks, including data collection with FODI surveys, sorting donations, tidying, bike repairs, helping in the kitchen, assisting the Sewing group, and leading English classes.

TRUSTEES

The FODI Committee is a cohesive team composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those with firsthand experience of the asylum system. Although they were strangers before joining FODI, they value the charity's culture and the mutual respect they have for one another. The appointment of new trustees has fostered a strong sense of mutual respect among them. They are dedicated to working throughout the year and regularly meet via virtual platforms.

SERVICES USERS

As of March 2025, we had 825 asylum seekers in Sunderland, including 78 families. Most asylum seekers are allocated to the outlying Sunderland area, including the coalfields, Houghton-le-Spring, and Hetton.

Homelessness remains a challenge that the local authority continues to tackle. Service users who have been granted refugee status, particularly single men, are viewed as a lower priority for local housing.

FODI services users come from 41 countries and speak 25 different languages.

SERVICES PROVIDED

ST MARY'S DROP-IN

FODI's regular Wednesday drop-in took place for 50 weeks instead of 51 due to the summer riots. To ensure the safety of our service users, we had to cancel one Wednesday drop-in in August. Attendance at this drop-in ranges from 110 to 150 people per session. The service users attend for a social space, practical help, and advice. Our service users will return regularly to seek assistance and guidance from the North of England Refugee Service (NERS) for their immigration issues, as well as from the Sunderland City Council Resettlement team and the Housing Options team for their housing challenges, council tax applications, bill issues, employment concerns, and other financial matters.

SUNDERLAND MINSTER

Our bi-weekly drop-in at Sunderland Minster is always a busy place, providing essential food parcels, hygiene products, and care packages to our FODI community, funded by Sunderland City Council, which also supplies us with fresh food. The local community generously donates items, which we also distribute, including clothing, kitchenware, books, toys, and various other household essentials.

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD ESOL PLUS ACTIVITIES

This was a two-year project that began in April 2023. It was an aspiration linked to FODI's 2022 strategy, which was launched alongside the three-year strategic plan. Providing this service in 2023 was a significant achievement, primarily because it addressed the shortage of ESOL providers in Sunderland. We saw ourselves moving from operating three days a week with our employed ESOL coordinator, Luke Shannon, to operating five days a week with the support of dedicated ESOL volunteers, Steve Newman and Judith Turner. The learners attend these classes to reduce their isolation and enjoy participating in various activities, including visits to the Glasshouse in Gateshead, historical sites, the Museum, the beach, and trips to explore local Sunderland places. It has been great to see how specific individuals who attended these classes have progressed to Sunderland College, and others have gone on to start working after obtaining their refugee status.

WOMEN'S GROUP

This is a women's space only, where FODI women enjoy practising yoga and contemporary dance. It highlights the opportunity for women from diverse backgrounds and cultures to come together, engage in physical activity, network, and form lasting friendships. In November last year, in solidarity with the aftermath of the riots, FODI women collaborated with Sangini women and Women in Need to create a banner as a reaction to stand in solidarity with other women, following the summer riots. Although most of the women whose English is their second language, they thoroughly enjoyed making these patches, which were later put together to create a beautiful banner of solidarity and unity.

BIKE PROJECT

The bike project continues to thrive, thanks to a dedicated volunteer, Nasarolla, who is also very committed to thoroughly repairing the bikes. We distributed 78 adult bikes to our service users. The bikes help our service users travel to different places. With the costs of bus fares soaring, this supports our service users who receive £ 49.18 per week. Using the bikes is not only a good mode of transport but also empowers them to live a healthy and well-being lifestyle.

LINKS OF LIFE PROJECTS

SEWING GROUP

This was another service offered by FODI, with an attendance of 8–10 women, including both skilled sewists and beginners. This was funded by Links for Life (Sunderland City Council). It takes place every Tuesday afternoon after the break following the morning English class in the Fiscus building. We have three wonderful volunteers—Mary Nicol, Sylvia, and Sandra Watt—who collectively search for fabric, repair sewing machines, and oversee the loaning of machines to women on a four-week basis so they can continue practising at home. Women make dresses, bags, pillow covers and are also taught how to recycle most of the fabric to reduce waste.

SUNSHINE PROJECT MAY AND JUNE 2024.

The event was well-attended and facilitated by Tracey West and Mark Barfoot, who led drumming and dancing sessions over six Saturdays in May and June. Claire Wayman then acted as the facilitator, helping to source local ingredients with the support of FODI volunteers to prepare delicious dishes from diverse backgrounds and cultures to share after the dance sessions. We are grateful to Sunderland Museum for offering their space, where these sessions took place. Between 10 and 25 families attended the sessions. The children were captivated by drumming and dancing.

CITIZEN SONGWRITERS AND STORIES OF SANCTURY PROJECT

Alex and Sam Slatcher led this project, which involved five families and ten individuals attending ten sessions. The sessions were enjoyable as we learnt to sing songs from various cultures and backgrounds. We sang in Spanish, Kurdish, Farsi, and, of course, in English. The project started in May, and we collaborated with the Recovery Choir from Newcastle, performing at Newcastle Cathedral. We also performed at Ripon Cathedral, and finally, in June, we concluded our project with a performance at Sunderland Minster to mark Refugee Week with the theme of 'Our Home'.

The gym sessions, which were held exclusively for men and women, were facilitated by Katrina Brown in the Fiscus building. However, she was unable to continue later due to health issues, so we had Danni from Duke Fitness step in to rescue the day. These sessions were highly popular and consistently drew a regular crowd of attendees, who testified to the benefits of regular exercise. Sunderland City Council funded this project through the Links for Life initiative.

COLLABORATION PROJECT.

A. THE PHOENIX WAY NORTHEAST & CUMBRIA

FODI Manager Fanni Ngambi was part of 11 Black Minority Ethnic organisations in Sunderland last September, who convened to design a more equitable-led grant-making process. It was great to be on the first session of the panel and have representatives from the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and The National Community Fund. It was a month of learning, listening, exploring and empowering moments throughout the process. The organisations networked and got to know each other better. It was excellent and worthwhile to be part of this process, which showcased many of the skills and strengths that we had as individuals from these organisations. Following that, in April, FODI was awarded £7,500 through funding from the Community Foundation.

B. UNITING COMMUNITIES.

From November last year to February 2025, FODI families and single individuals participated in the 'Uniting in the Community' event, facilitated by Tracey West and Mark Barfoot. The sessions were held at Sunderland Museum, with some sessions also taking place at the Eagle building. The drumming and dancing project had 15-30 people in attendance, including both adults and children. Naila, one of FODI's volunteers who has now obtained her refugee status and is self-employed, prepared the food for the sessions. It was great to sample a variety of curries, infused with different spices.

C. SECRET GARDEN

We continue to collaborate with Secret Garden in the Ford Estate of Sunderland. Although the weather patterns were not ideal for growing plants, we still managed to harvest a reasonably good crop of tomatoes. It was great to see volunteers ready to start gardening, clearing the area in February, and preparing the bed for planting cabbage, spring onions, and a variety of herbs that had been started in the poly tunnel.

JUSTICE TOGETHER INITIATIVE.

FODI remains a referral partner for this project. We direct cases related to family reunion and other immigration advice to the Northeast Law Centre. They sent their representative to our drop-in last year to assist with the E-visa issues.

MEDICAL STUDENTS

In November, FODI welcomed six second-year medical students from the University of Sunderland for their community placement. They had an online induction with the FODI manager, and then began volunteering at the Wednesday drop-in from November 2024 to February 2025. The students were very interactive with service users, helping to collect data from them using our quarterly survey, which assesses the performance of our services. Two female students also attended our women's group sessions on a Friday.

UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Following the August 2024 riots, a unity community event was held, bringing together organisations and groups to showcase their work, network with others, and stand in solidarity.

The first event was held at Sunderland Minster, followed by subsequent events in various areas of Sunderland. The Unity in the Community roadshow has visited Houghton-le-Spring and Ford Estate. Then, later in the year, events will take place at the Washington Art Centre, 1719 Church in Hendon, and finally at Roker Life Church. In these three locations, FODI has been present, with staff, volunteers, and service users, to facilitate networking and support the integration and community cohesion of our service users.

REFUGEE WEEK

The theme for Refugee Week in June 2024 was 'Our Home'. FODI's chairman, Steve Newman, coordinates the planning meetings with partner organisations in Sunderland. These meetings provide insight into who would like to participate or host an event during the week. Then a timetable is formulated. We had a fully packed week, featuring a walk of sanctuary, football, Lunch for our service users, a breakfast event with the local community, and choir performances.

CHRISTMAS:

We gave Christmas gifts to 350 children from FODI families. We are grateful to Sunderland Area Support (SAPS) for their generosity in donating all the much-needed boxes full of amazing gifts, carefully packed with love. We are also grateful to Sunderland Community Kitchen for supporting us with the much-needed selection boxes for all our children; they provided us with more than enough boxes. We also offered a warm meal to all our service users who attended the drop-in on 18th December. This was our last drop-in to give our staff and volunteers a well-earned Christmas break.

NEW ARRIVAL PATHWAY

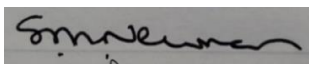
Since this project has concluded, it is now confirmed that FODI is the initial contact point for asylum seekers dispersed to Sunderland. We still receive the consent form from MEARS, the accommodation providers. Our Operations Assistant contacts the new arrivals by text or phone to invite them to registration and welcome orientation, led by our experienced volunteers. New arrivals will receive a free SIM card with data as part of the welcome pack.

CHALLENGES FODI FACES:

- Asylum seekers are being allocated in the coalfields area in Houghton le Spring and Hetton, which is too far to assess our drop-in plans. We hope to start a Satellite drop-in once we mobilise resources.
- There is a shortage of immigration solicitors in Sunderland and nearby cities, and the few solicitors present in the region cannot take on any more legal aid cases. Some of our service users even travel as far as London to see their solicitors.
- Homelessness issue for those granted refugee status, especially single individuals who do not have priority to be housed.
- ESOL providers, it has been a year of shortage in the city, as Sunderland College was not accepting new students. As a result, our service as ESOL providers has been stretched since January 2024.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

Stephen Newman, chair.....



Mahnur Roushan, treasurer.....

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Report to the trustees of

Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

On accounts for the year ended

31 March 2025

Charity no 1176524

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The trustees of the organisation are responsible for the preparation of accounts; they consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2011 Act),
- follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Act), and
- 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 Commissioners. 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 trustees 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 the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the trustees have not met the requirements to ensure that:
 - proper accounting records are kept (in accordance with section 130 of the Act); and
 - accounts are prepared which agree with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Act; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date: 11 September 2025

**Name:
Address:**

Mark Thompson MAAT
42 Lesbury Road
Newcastle
NE6 5LB

Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Income & Expenditure Account

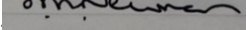
	Notes	Unrestricted £	2024-25 Restricted £	Total £	2023-24 Total £
Receipts	4				
Grants			170005	170005	120997
Donations & Sundry Income		9200		9200	6402
Reimbursed Income		42		42	0
Total Receipts		9242	170005	179247	127399
Payments					
Salaries		1350	59651	61001	64931
Payroll Charges			234	234	207
Client Activities		480	18401	18881	12528
Client Travel			19920	19920	18300
Staff expenses				0	762
Clothing				0	11
Creche			3000	3000	2850
Freelance Work			3940	3940	2700
Volunteer Expenses			2098	2098	976
Food		98	2858	2956	5589
Hardship Payments			8389	8389	10779
Household Support			4201	4201	0
Rent & Room Hire			26289	26289	19198
Other General Running Costs			707	707	1243
Telephone & Internet			1281	1281	991
Insurance			309	309	302
Accountancy			5032	5032	4291
Training			10	10	437
Adveristising & Promotion				0	322
Legal & Professional				0	60
Total Payments		1928	156320	158248	146477
Surplus/Deficit for the period		7314	13685	20999	-19078
Funds as at 1 April 2024		32462	59338	91800	110878
Total Funds at 31 March 2025		39776	73023	112799	91800


Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Current Assets			
Cash at Bank and in Hand		112799	88124
Debtors			3676
Total Current Assets		112799	91800
Assets less Liabilities		112799	91800
Represented by	5		
Unrestricted Funds		39776	32480
Restricted Funds		73023	59320
Total Funds		112799	91800

The financial statements were approved by the following members of the Management Committee :

Stephen Newman, chair..........

Mahnur Roushan, treasurer..........

Date...

Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Notes to the accounts 2025

(1a) Basis of accounts

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with 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 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006

FODI meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

(1b) Legal Status

Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers registered with The Charities Commission 4 January 2018, registered no. 1176524, as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

(2) Trustees and Staff

Three members of staff are employed. Total salary costs £61,001.

(3) Costs of independent examination

The cost for the independent examination of accounts for the year will be £400.

(4) Grants received in year

2024-25

Catherine Cookson Fund	500
Community Foundation Mayors Fund	7500
Hadrian Trust (Bike Project)	500
Hilden Charitable Fund	7000
Justice Together Initiative	4000
Know your Neighbourhood - National Lottery Community Fund	22500
London Marathon Foundation	2000
ORP Foundation	10000
Roseline Foundation	10000
SBMEN Household Support Fund	8716
SCC Household Support Fund 5	5000
Sir James Knott Trust	10000
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Fit Kat)	6953
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Gym Genius)	3656
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Sewing Project)	2416
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Staff Salary)	437
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Stories of Sanctuary)	1930
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Sunshine Corner)	2697
Sunderland City Council (Tesco Vouchers)	945
The National Lottery Community Fund	33255
Tudor Trust	30000

Total Grants Received

170005

(5) Funds Analysis:	Balance April 2024	Income	Expend	Balance March 25
Catherine Cookson Fund		500		500
CCG/ICB (Activities Fund)	12012		4732	7280
CCG/ICB (Project Development)	3005			3005
Community Foundation Mayors Fund		7500		7500
Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland Funded by The Temple, Daphne & Martin Cookson, Sara Alexandra Bernstone	1537		1537	0
Hadrian Trust (Bike Project)		500	91	409
Hilden Charitable Fund		7000	855	6145
Justice Together Initiative	4992	4000	1350	7642
Know your Neighbourhood - National Lottery Community Fund	5692	22500	27266	926
Leathersellers Foundation	4510		4510	0
London Marathon Foundation		2000	2000	0
ORP Foundation		10000	5569	4431
Roseline Foundation		10000	1264	8736
SBMEN Household Support Fund		8716	8516	200
SCC Household Support Fund HSF 1000	253		253	0
SCC Household Support Fund 4	1648		1648	0
SCC Household Support Fund 5		5000	1354	3646
Sir James Knott Trust	4545	10000	7092	7453
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Fit Kat)	0	8634	5944	2690
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Gym Genius)		1490	1490	0
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Sewing Project)		2901	2417	484
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Staff Salary)		437	437	0
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Stories of Sanctuary)		1930	1930	0
Sunderland City Council (Links for Life - Sunshine Corner)		2697	2697	0
Sunderland City Council (Tesco Vouchers)		945	945	0
The National Lottery Community Fund	5985	33255	33348	5892
Tudor Trust	13928	30000	38291	5637
Tudor Trust (Wellbeing Fund)	1231		784	447
Restricted Funds	59338	170005	156320	73023
Unrestricted Funds	32462	9242	1928	39776
Total Funds	91800	179247	158248	112799