

annual review april 2025



Big Leaf Foundation

contents

about us	04
our approach	05
about our young people	06
king's award	08
our achievements	10
youth leadership in action	24
sharing our approach	26
community fundraising	27
priorities for the year ahead	28
governance, structure and management	30
risks and mitigations	31
finance & accounts	32
thank you	34
support us	35
financial statements	36

welcome

It hardly seems possible that another year has passed. But when we look back on all that we have achieved in that time – the many young people we’ve supported and the new projects and partnerships we’ve built – it’s no wonder the time has flown.

We have celebrated remarkable milestones. We were honoured with the King’s Award for Voluntary Service, a testament to the incredible dedication of our volunteers who work tirelessly to support our young people in so many ways. We graduated new Young Leaders and created formal ambassador roles within Big Leaf. We saw young people pass GCSEs, an extraordinary achievement when you consider the additional challenges displaced young people face in education. We watched them step into employment and higher education, and use their voice to speak up on the issues that matter to them. But equally, we have cherished the smaller, quieter moments – the courage of a young person speaking in public for the first time; the continued success of our sports projects, including those we’ve run with community partners; and the many new friendships formed.

Of course, there have also been considerable challenges. Last year we spoke about the increase in hostility towards migrant communities and people seeking asylum and this has continued and intensified. Organised far-right agitation in the form of direct threats to non-white communities, rioting and prolonged “protests” outside hotels have become commonplace, while the values of tolerance, fairness and acceptance that we took for granted as a bedrock of our society feel far less solid than they once were.

Too often public debate has ignored the human stories of those seeking sanctuary and failed to reflect the true facts of forced displacement. Instead we’ve seen an almost endless outpouring of dis- and misinformation on both social media and in mainstream outlets, with little challenge from those in authority. This lack of humanity and truth has left young people feeling misunderstood, unwanted and unsure of their place here.

At the same time, conflicts in other parts of the world have also intensified, leaving young people desperate for reliable news about their families and communities back home.

But they never give up. Despite everything they have lived through, and the challenges and uncertainty that lie ahead, these young people continue to show up, ready to study, to play, to create, or simply to be together. They share their food and music with us, tell us stories of where they come from and what they hope to become. Their resilience, curiosity, determination to move forward, and their hope for the future inspires us every day.

These young people are not a burden on our society. They are an essential part of the strong and connected communities we need and want. Communities that choose compassion over fear, solidarity over division, and humanity over hostility.

This is the community we see around us every day in Surrey.

It is reflected in our partners, funders, volunteers and supporters who stand alongside young people with generosity and care. It is reflected in the schools, universities, sports clubs and local organisations who open their doors. And it is reflected in the many individuals who believe that young people seeking safety here deserve opportunity, dignity and belonging.

This is the community that will stand strong in the face of division. We are proud to be part of it. We hope this review shows just how much you have helped us achieve and how grateful we are to you all for standing so firmly alongside us.

Thank you to all of you.

Kayte & Vicki
Big Leaf Foundation Founders



Image © Vicki Felgate / Big Leaf Foundation

about us

Our vision is of a community where displaced young people are valued, supported and given the opportunity to create better outcomes for themselves.

Big Leaf Foundation is an award-winning charity working with displaced young people aged 15-25 across Surrey.

Our aim is to provide a nurturing programme of activities, projects and events that focus on combating social isolation and improving wellbeing for the young people we support.

Our work starts from the knowledge that displaced young people are so much more than the status they have been given. They come with hopes, talents, determination and strength. For us, it's not about proving their worth, but about creating spaces where others can recognise it too.

Through our programmes, we provide opportunities for people to connect across communities and for the young people we support to build skills and a sense of belonging that can sustain them into the future.

Our projects range from sports, music and creative arts to full-day English language schools, specialised casework and residential workshops, alongside leadership programmes, summer schools and progression opportunities.

All of our projects are built with the focus of helping young people feel more empowered within their own lives, their local communities and Big Leaf itself.

“

I don't know how to thank Big Leaf enough – just saying thanks doesn't feel like enough. I hope we all do our best to become better people and help the world, just like Big Leaf helps us grow and improve.” M

our approach

We're a growing team of passionate individuals, determined to support and empower displaced young people to know they are more than their status, and help them find their place within their local community.

We believe meaningful change begins with listening and we work with our young people to create spaces where they feel safe, heard and supported.

We stand with them as they navigate their life in a new place and help build communities that recognise their strengths, talents and potential.

Our values

Trust & transparency

Nothing is more important to us than trust, because so many of the young people we support have experienced a world in which they can trust no one. It's essential that we build trusted relationships with our young people, and that they have confidence that we will always act in their best interests. We do this through maintaining high standards of openness, honesty and transparency.

Equality

We want everyone to feel welcome at our projects. We approach everything we do with empathy and compassion. We strive to create a sense of community to which we all belong, on equal footing and to create a safe, secure and non-judgemental space for young people to engage and build new friendships, explore new activities, and uncover their talents and passions.

Growth

Everything we do is focused on promoting the personal growth of our young people – growth that builds confidence, nurtures self-belief and reminds them that they are valued for who they are. Growth is also at the heart of our approach to governance. We prioritise learning, work to embody best practice and aim to make each project better than the last.

Working in partnership

To achieve our vision of a community where displaced young people are valued and supported, strong connections are essential. Our partnerships with local organisations, agencies and businesses are the foundation of a community that is open, welcoming and resilient.

Over the last six years we have built a network of more than 70 community and multi-agency partners. These relationships bring valuable skills, knowledge and opportunities and help create the trust and understanding that allows young people to feel part of the place they now call home.

Youth leadership

Listening is the starting point for all of our work. Through open dialogue, trust and collaboration, we learn from their experiences, ideas and feedback, and shape our work around what matters most to them.

Our Young Leaders and Ambassadors programmes build on this foundation, creating spaces for young people to take the lead. We support them to build skills and confidence, to share their knowledge with partners and peers, and to play an active role in shaping their own futures, their communities and Big Leaf itself.

Sharing our approach

Over the last six years we've learnt so much from working alongside our young people and partners. We're still learning. But we also recognise the value of our approach and its relevance to others. We now share our work with a wider range of people – from local charities and community organisations to businesses and anyone who wants to listen and learn. Through these conversations we hope to increase understanding of the realities facing displaced young people and encourage more communities to create spaces of welcome and belonging.

“

I came to this country to feel safe... but that did not mean that I didn't have dreams and aspirations in life... Being listened to, taken into account and recognised feels incredibly rewarding, especially during difficult times when there is a lot of uncertainty for us.” R

about our young people

The young people we support have all been forced to leave their homes. Many fled conflict, political or religious persecution. Some were trafficked, others were kidnapped from their families and forced to train as child soldiers, and some were promised the dream of a better life and smuggled to the UK at huge cost. Most arrive with little or no support network and face the challenge of rebuilding their lives in an unfamiliar country.

Surrey is home to a significant number of displaced young people. There are currently 165¹ Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) under 18 living in care, alongside many care leavers who continue to need support. Others have been resettled in Surrey with their families through government resettlement schemes, while some have arrived independently post-18 and been placed in asylum hotels.

Separated children often arrive alone, in shock and without language or cultural understanding. They must navigate a new country and a complex asylum system without the support of family or friends. Even those who come with family or through resettlement schemes find the experience overwhelming and uncertain. Cut off from everything familiar, displaced young people are especially vulnerable to loneliness, isolation and anxiety, and face major barriers to accessing legal support, education, employment and, above all, community.

Over the past year, national policy has continued to create uncertainty and strain for young people seeking safety. While the Rwanda plan remained in the headlines, it was the Supreme Court ruling against it that brought real relief. For most young people, the policy quickly felt unlikely ever to be implemented, and their concerns shifted elsewhere.

The biggest change has been around citizenship eligibility. For those who entered the UK through irregular routes to claim asylum, new barriers to citizenship have caused significant worry about their future. At the same time, an increase in asylum decisions, coupled with higher refusal rates, has led to long delays for appeals. Many of the young people we support have waited months for outcomes, with a clear impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

Hostile rhetoric has also taken its toll. The government's "Stop the Boats" slogan has been widely understood by young people as "you are not welcome here". This message has eroded trust in UK systems and led many to rely on one another for support and solidarity rather than the state.

In this climate, Big Leaf's role could not be more vital. Young people need safe, stable spaces where they can learn, grow and connect. Over the past year, many have passed their GCSEs, enrolled in college or training, and started shaping their futures with confidence. These successes reach far beyond the individuals involved – they strengthen schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods, helping to build a community that is more tolerant, welcoming and resilient.

“

The word refugee to me means determination; it means allowing yourself to feel sadness but not giving up; it means resilience and that you are equal.” Randy

205

young people accessing our services

64

of whom were new to us this year

5%

girls & women

73%

aged 15-18

1. Data from Surrey Virtual School, June 2025

Hi, I passed the exam! Finally, my efforts paid off. Thank you for all the hard work you did for me. This happiness is thanks to you. I'm very happy. 09:40

I also wanted to check in after the earthquake on Monday... hoping your family are all ok and not affected? It's difficult to see these th...

It was terrible... I've got my friend his family and died still with him it's too hard I can't believe that's happened and how can i explain to u how difficult is my life I'm struggling with all this but i still have hope it means I'm alive just because of my mum waiting me to see...

Football means a lot to me. I have been playing it since I was young. It is a safe haven for me. It is the place where I release all my negative energy, stress, and boredom, and charge myself with positive energy by talking more with friends, bonding more, and making new friends.

18:13

...the entire internet has been shut down in Iran, and I can't contact my family. I'm really worried – until I hear my mother's voice, I just can't focus on anything...

21:11

Is there a reason you haven't been going to college?

All I think about is my family
19:26

Literally they mean everything for me
19:26

Couldn't imagine my self without them
19:27

That's understandable. Have you talked to anyone at college... to tell them what is happening?

19:27

All they want is me going to college
no matter what.
19:28

How was your first week at work?

Hi. I was very nervous at first, but it got better every day... I have kind colleagues and one of them is also from my country and she helped me a lot.
17:53

Hi how are you doing, they accept my age today I am so happy
12:19

This issue was exactly the biggest challenge we faced during our time as asylum seekers. I'm really glad it's going to be brought up. If I had been able to start working earlier, or if anyone else could start working just three months after arriving – it would have made a big difference. It would have reduced the financial pressure on the government to support asylum seekers, and it would have helped people integrate into society more easily. I'd be happy to share the things I've experienced – through a video call or any other way...
21:55

I read it, and I really love the idea of participating as the narrator in this program. It was very powerful and heartbreaking, especially the last part, which made me to tears.
15:27

Never give up
First of all i wanted to say thank you to Big leaf foundation they gave me hope not to give up on something I really want to see or to do and with their help I have never given up to find my dreams and finally it came true I have found my family. Just never stop trying, never stop believing, never give up on someone or something that really matters to you. At the end of the day your day will come I know it take a lot of courage to push through hard time however, the only thing that you can do keep going and never give up and good things are coming your way
22:52



KING'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE | celebrating the dedication of our volunteers

This year we were honoured to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Service – the highest award given to voluntary groups in the UK. It celebrates the hard work and dedication of all of our volunteers, whose commitment makes a huge impact in the lives of displaced young people in Surrey.

Over the past six years our volunteers have given so much of their time to Big Leaf – through casework, teaching English, mentoring, running activities at our youth hubs and even helping fundraise behind the scenes. Their commitment goes far beyond simple acts of kindness – creating stability, trust and community in a world that often feels uncertain for the young people we support.

This award belongs to each of them.

We know that without our volunteers we would not have the same impact in the lives of the young people we support. To all of the volunteers who have made this recognition possible – thank you. This award is a testament to the lasting impact you make every day.

We asked our community what this award means to them.

“

We've had the privilege of working with Big Leaf since 2020. We have witnessed first-hand their exceptional dedication to supporting displaced young people and in recognition of this, the Law School nominated Big Leaf for the King's Award. Their unwavering care and commitment are both inspiring and transformative.”

Elizabeth Williams, Professor in Law, Surrey University





“

... [this award] confirms that Big Leaf's work is valued and recognised as important and worthwhile. It's wonderful to be a volunteer - the work is interesting and rewarding.”

Annabel, ESOL Volunteer

“

I realised that all of us in the team of dedicated volunteers play a big part in Big Leaf's work and how appreciated we all are. My badge has pride of place on display at home.” Jessica, Projects Volunteer

“

This award is for all those who give their time, energy, humour and compassion – week in, week out, and often in between. It's for the people who play football, teach English and maths, play table tennis, cook meals, mentor and help find work experience. It's for the people who keep showing up.” Kayte Cable, Big Leaf Co-founder &

Programmes Manager

86

volunteers over the last 6 years

more than

2000

hours volunteered each year



Image © Vicki Felgate / Big Leaf Foundation

“

This recognition means a lot to me. Being part of Big Leaf feels like being surrounded by family and friends who genuinely care. Your support has instilled in me a sense of love, respect, and inspiration that drives me to aim for greater achievements.”

Sabir, Sports Ambassador.

The award was presented to our co-founders, Vicki and Kayte, by the Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Michael More-Molyneux, at a special ceremony in Volunteers Week and with funders, partners and (of course) our fabulous volunteers, all joining us to celebrate.

“

What an incredible job you do for young people... Many congratulations on this award, so richly deserved.” Michael More-Molyneux,

Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, presenting the award.

“

You all really deserve this recognition. Well done to you and all your volunteers. Amazing and much-needed work.” Neelam Devesher, Chair,

Community Foundation for Surrey

Thank you

We remain entirely and endlessly grateful to the many, many people who work alongside us with kindness, compassion and a shared determination to give the young people the opportunities and the future that they deserve.

CASEWORK | providing steady support in an unstable system

It's been a year of change for our casework team, supporting displaced young people through new challenges in the asylum system, rising housing pressures and the transition to adulthood.

Sudden shifts in Home Office policy under the new government reshaped the asylum process, while global instability affected our young people both online and in their daily lives. Many of the young people we've seen grow up alongside Big Leaf started to reach the difficult age of young adulthood and looked to our support where other services tailed off.

Over the last year our casework team supported 66 young people and achieved a positive outcome in 92 per cent of cases. But numbers only tell part of the story. It's the defining themes and issues that show what it means to walk alongside these incredible young people at a time when hostile policies continue to threaten their very right to exist in this space.

Home Office backlogs and refusals

After years of delays that left thousands of people living in limbo, the Home Office made significant changes to the rate it processed asylum claims. The average wait for a substantive interview fell from over a year to less than six months. For many of our young people, this was a huge relief. Receiving refugee status quickly meant security and stability at last. For others, seeing recently arrived friends get decisions so fast when they'd been waiting for years was a frustrating and destabilising experience. But this increase in pace also led to rushed and poor decision making, resulting in more refusals and pushing more people through the appeals process. Many young people were left waiting for appeal dates and desperately in need of support from our caseworkers to help find solicitors or collect supporting evidence.

66

young people supported through casework

92%

positive outcome

Housing and homelessness

Our largest area of work has been around housing and homelessness, accounting for 36 per cent of all cases.

This increase was a result of the 28-day limit on Home Office support, which makes it almost impossible to find move-on accommodation after being granted refugee status; and the lack of funding for supported lodgings for care leavers.

With all of the barriers displaced young people face, and the chronic shortfall of local government funding, the housing crisis saw many young people need more help than ever. In East Surrey there wasn't a single week for an entire six months where we weren't supporting at least one homeless young person.

From helping young people make homelessness applications, finding temporary accommodation, or advocating to funding panels for care leavers to retain accommodation funding, our caseworkers have supported young people every step of the way.

Often the only options are outside of statutory support, and we worked hard to ensure young people learnt the skills necessary to maintain secure accommodation and avoid falling through the cracks in the system in future.

“

I had been struggling to look for accommodation. Sleeping on the street is not easy or safe... It would be good to find a place for the people before leaving current [accommodation] because most of the organisations are getting hard on this point. The one important thing... is to make a good relationship with landlords, organisations and people around us.” A

36%

of cases were for housing issues

21%

related to asylum cases/legal support

23%

were for emotional support



GUEST EDIT | Ro

Ro joined Big Leaf in 2023 as a Caseworker, bringing several years of experience supporting displaced young people in other charities. Their thoughtful and empathetic approach quickly became an integral part of our work. Here, Ro reflects on their first year with Big Leaf, what made it different from previous roles, and what community truly means in practice.

When I started at Big Leaf, I had about five years' experience as a caseworker in the charity sector, with plenty of the scar tissue that comes with this kind of work. Working in overstretched services where you are constantly engaged with the worst that the asylum system has to offer, from age assessments to detention, it becomes all too easy to close yourself off just to be able to keep functioning.

I found my first year with Big Leaf incredibly challenging. Not because of the technical aspects of the job, but because of how much I had come to rely on distance as a defence mechanism. When you work with vulnerable people experiencing horrific situations, allowing yourself to be emotionally connected can feel like too much of a risk when you know how bad the outcomes can be. That emotional connection – a real and genuine care – is core to everything Big Leaf does, and it took me a really long time to feel comfortable with it.

The most important part of that process was learning what a genuine community focus meant for casework. I had been used to fixing problems and advocating for isolated people where my relationship to them was an individual one, and all I had to offer was the resolution to a problem. Big Leaf doesn't work like that.

“

The community of young people in and around our projects isn't one we're helping, but one we are a part of.”

When young people come to me with problems, we find solutions that include and rely on that community, not just my work with them. It is hard to articulate how rare this is in this area of work, and I cannot express how lucky I feel to be slowly getting used to it.

Thank you

With huge thanks to Tresanton Trust for their continued and vital support for our casework service and to our long-term casework volunteer Alison for the commitment and experience you bring to this role.



“

Every dish tells a story of culture and care, reminding [us] that the best meals are those shared with others.” RM

YOUTH HUBS | providing a safe and welcoming space

Our youth hubs offer a safe and welcoming community for displaced young people in Surrey – providing a space for young people to meet, play games, share music and eat together.

Our hubs run once a week during term time in both Guildford and Redhill and were one of the first projects we launched over five years ago. These spaces have grown and changed over time as young people who have settled in the community help plan activities and welcome and support the new arrivals.

The impact of having a consistent, sustainable space to build connections cannot be overstated and seeing the vibrant community that has grown in and around our hubs is one of the most rewarding aspects of this work.

“

The hub is important because it gives people a place to gather, make friends and feel part of something larger. It’s an inclusive environment where people are free to come as they are and be treated with respect... and where everyone can hold a sense of belonging.” RM

Food is an important part of our hubs and young people are invited to come with recipes and ideas and cook alongside our hub team.

In 2024 we saw conflicts in Sudan, Yemen, Palestine and Ukraine continue and escalate. Despite the distance, these conflicts felt close to home for many of our young people, connected through family, nationality, race or religion.

Whether the relative media silence on Sudan or the bias and Islamophobia present in much of the reporting on Gaza¹, many of our young people struggled with how social media and news reporting depicted their communities. Despite the election, we also saw more anti-migrant policies that had a huge impact on the young people.

With our young people confronted on all sides, we put extra focus into building community resilience. We were open. We talked about what was happening and the impact of events. We discussed laws around digital hate speech, talked about how to avoid triggering content on social media, and explained the implications of government policies. But above all we made sure that in the hub space, they felt listened to, supported, well informed, connected and safe.

Thank you

With thanks to our funders, Tresanton Trust; our hub volunteers, Alison, Sofia, Jess, Alfie, Richard, Hannah and Ella; and our hub chefs Ash, Ro and all of the young people who cook alongside them.

72

hub sessions this year

28

young people (average) at hub a week

8

dedicated hub volunteers

1. ‘Media Bias in Gaza 2023-24’ report, Centre for Media Monitoring, March 2024



“

I learned a lot about how to work in the garden, how to work with animals and tree pruning and scrub clearance. Before, people said that living in a city was better than living in a village, but now I say that a village is better than a city because you have gardens and animals.” H

Image © Vicki Felton / Big Leaf Foundation

GARDEN PROJECT | growing together and connecting to home

Our gardening project brings young people together to transform disused land into shared growing spaces for fruit, vegetables and flowers. It provides an opportunity to build new skills and reconnect with those learnt from home while also supporting wellbeing.

We set up three new gardens in Guildford this year, bringing the total number of shared growing spaces to eight. Every space is different but the sense of pride and joy in growing and harvesting vegetables connects them all.

We also continued to develop our community garden at St Mary's Church with our ESOL group helping to prepare the ground and plant vegetables. During the summer holidays the keenest gardeners kept the vegetables watered and enjoyed eating the tomatoes and, in the autumn, we harvested salad and vegetables to share at our Guildford hub.

Growing with RHS Wisley

Chris, from the RHS Community Outreach team visited our gardens in the summer, and in spring he ran a seed workshop at our youth hub alongside our gardening ambassador, H.

RHS Wisley is an incredible garden and it's on our doorstep but for the young people we support both cost and location can make it hard to access. Thanks to the Community Outreach team we were able to organise two trips to the gardens – with guided tours of the grounds and glasshouses and conversations with an MSc student exploring how to involve refugees in community gardens.

My Green Future

In September we were invited to put forward participants for a new three-month environmental training programme for young people, My Green Future. We knew just the person. H had been part of our gardening project from the start and he spoke often about how important gardening and nature are for his mental and physical health. We encouraged him to apply and he was accepted.

Finding meaningful work experience and training opportunities for the young people we support can be hard and we're incredibly grateful to project coordinator, Jo Woodhams and Air Time CIC, for giving H this opportunity.

“

H has been an absolute star... always the first to lend a hand and a natural at all the practical tasks... his compassion towards both wildlife and people is something really special. It's been amazing to see his confidence grow and leadership skills shine.” Jo Woodhams, MGF Coordinator

Thank you

With thanks to our gardening volunteers, Alison, Alex and H; to Chris and RHS Wisley for your continued support; and to Jo Woodhams from Air Time CIC.



“

The football sessions mean a great deal to me. It's not just a chance to play the sport I enjoy but to connect with others in a positive, supportive environment. I look forward to each session because it brings a sense of community, encouragement and personal growth.” AA

SPORTS | improving health and connecting through sport

Sport plays a central role in how we build trust with young people. Regular sessions, familiar coaches and friendly faces give them a stable space to join in at their own pace, especially when new to Surrey.

More than 115 young people joined our weekly sports sessions this year and these continue to be one of the first places where young people meet us, find community and feel welcome. Many come through friends or local partners and quickly settle into a space that is consistent and supportive.

Our football sessions in Redhill and Guildford remain our busiest, with the pitch providing space to relax, play and get to know one another. The commitment of our coaches shapes the atmosphere, and small adjustments, such as introducing smaller side games, created more chances to play, build confidence and connect this year.

Fair Shot with the Refugee Council

Three of our young people were selected for the Refugee Council's Fair Shot FC – a team of refugees and people seeking asylum. During their first season they played alongside iconic football clubs and fans across the country to show how a shared love of football can bring people together. This has never felt more important and we're incredibly proud of the young people who continue to play for the team.

115

displaced young people
joining sports sessions

for 35

of these young people it was
their first introduction to Big Leaf

When one project ends another begins

Our basketball project, first funded through Active Surrey's Together Fund, grew into more than 50 sessions across two years thanks to the generosity of our partners, Basketball4All. It became a space where young people learnt new skills, tried something different and took pride in their progress. Our boxing project at Redhill Amateur Boxing Club also wrapped up after 25 sessions that challenged young people to build discipline and focus.

With both projects ending, we took the chance to reflect on what young people were asking for. While these sessions offered a chance to connect and try new sports, the moments that made the biggest difference were the ones that brought different parts of the community together. This felt especially important in a year of rising hate and division. These reflections set the foundation for Sports for Connection, our new programme using community sports events to bring people together ([see p.15](#)).

Thank you

With thanks to our funders BBC Children in Need and Active Surrey; our sports volunteers Nikki, Anto, James, Henry, Abdulsalam and Sab; our football coaches, Rob Wright (Chelsea Foundation) and Martin King (PMAActive); Coach Creon, Bridget and Amelia from Basketball4All; the WP team and sports ambassadors at Surrey University.



“

It was another lovely event, and all of our players thoroughly enjoyed it. Gaining the trust of the young people and showing them that we love our sport and enjoy the engagement with them is really important to us.”

Surrey Police, Sports for Connection partner

Image © Vicki Felgate / Big Leaf Foundation

SPORTS FOR CONNECTION | building stronger communities, one game at a time

Sports for Connection uses community sports events to create inclusive spaces where young people can meet and connect with partners and local communities.

We’ve seen time and again the power of sport to create positive connections across communities and language and cultural divides. In a year of growing hostility and division in our communities, we wanted to bring people together through a shared love of sport.

Previous events, including our football tournament at Chelsea FC’s training ground, showed the value of these activities in helping young people meet others outside of their usual circles and engage with local community members in a relaxed and open environment.

This helped shape the design of our new Sports for Connection programme.

Launched late in 2024 with support from the Wisley Foundation, our Sports for Connection programme aims to reduce isolation, strengthen communities and create opportunities for young people to build confidence through regular contact with local partners and community members.

Our first event was a community basketball session that brought together young people from Big Leaf, friends from Aristar Consulting and others from our local networks. The session was warm and relaxed, and young people spoke about how much they valued the chance to meet new people outside of their peer networks. For some, it offered space to practise English through real conversations. For others, it created opportunities to challenge assumptions

and form impressions based on genuine encounters rather than distant narratives.

This work has taken on added significance following the rise in hate incidents into 2025 and as the programme develops we will continue to build relationships and create safe and active spaces that help rebuild confidence, increase understanding of the experiences of displaced young people and support more connected communities.

Our coaches and community partners remain central to this work and continue to shape environments where young people feel welcomed, supported and seen.

“

I enjoyed playing basketball, meeting new people and making friends with people from diverse and different backgrounds.” N

Thank you

With thanks to our funders the Wisley Foundation; our volunteers and young people for their participation; to our project partner Basketball4All; and all of the community partners who joined us for this first Sports for Connection event.



“

I'm so excited and I am proud of myself. I feel I can achieve my dreams like anyone else.” K

EDUCATION | supporting learning at every stage

The young people we support are determined to build independent and fulfilling lives here and recognise that learning English is essential to achieving this. We provide both structured and informal opportunities to learn English through our programmes.

Our weekly English classes focus on literacy, grammar and communication skills, alongside learning about life in the UK and 50 young people joined our classes this year.

We worked with the Guildford School of Acting to bring storytelling to life through shadow puppetry. We welcomed Surrey Police officers to discuss personal safety and policing; and we launched a new programme with Surrey Outdoor Learning and Development that combined climbing, outdoor activities, teamwork and language sessions and enabled participants to gain AQA qualifications.

GCSE support

The GCSE English exam, designed for native speakers, is an unfair barrier to further education and employment. But with no alternative available, our focus is on giving students the best possible chance of success. We offer small group classes for both English and Maths. These sessions are hugely popular and we're incredibly proud of the four young people who worked so hard to pass their exams this year.

Sexual health

Most young people arriving in the UK are placed in ESOL classes in college, which focus on English and functional

maths and miss the PSHE learning provided in mainstream schools.

Working with Surrey County Council's Public Health team and the Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, we explored how we could plug this gap and provide sexual health information for displaced communities that was both culturally sensitive, language appropriate and acknowledged the prevalence of sexual violence on migration routes. Through a series of workshops, we created a safe and open space for conversations around sexual health and healthy relationships including legality and consent.

Access to higher education

For the third year running, we joined the Surrey Higher Education Outreach Network to learn about pathways into higher education and explore course options. We visited four universities, meeting students and tutors, and exploring foundation courses, apprenticeships and blended learning.

For many of the young people we support, higher education can often feel out of reach, but opportunities like this, combined with structured opportunities for learning and growth can help make it feel a little closer.

50

young people
attending ESOL

8

young people
gaining AQAs

14

young people
getting support with
GCSEs

17

participating in sexual
health workshops

18

attending Access
to Higher Education
sessions

GUEST EDIT | Naoe

Naoe has been part of Big Leaf since its earliest days, joining when the charity was just taking shape. A qualified secondary school English teacher, she has taught English to our young people in both paid and voluntary roles, while also giving her time to support other Big Leaf activities.

Finding inspiration through teaching

I started working with Big Leaf in 2018 when the charity was just taking shape. Since then, I've taught in huge echoey halls, cosy coffee shops, on Zoom screens and in modern classrooms. One thing has remained the same: the inspiration these young people bring.

In the autumn of 2021, I joined Kayte, one of Big Leaf's co-founders, to teach Afghan refugees, newly arrived from Kabul. I remember the sheer chaos of the hotel dining room, where dozens of children of all ages poured in, some shouting and others looking stunned. We did what we could to provide lessons that they could focus on, something that distracted them from recent events. These language classes hopefully provided a few hours of fun in their recently shattered world.

Since then, I've taught outdoors at summer camps, in beautiful school and university grounds, and more recently in the Big Leaf house.



I've met so many people who give generously of their time and money, and I've seen the gratitude from the young people who know that learning English is key to building their future here.



I am particularly proud of my GCSE group, who, over the course of two years, have gone from stumbling over words to mastering the language to 'create mood' and 'persuade' in order to pass their GCSE English. And pass they did!

These young people embody the word resilient.

In a world that is becoming more divisive, Big Leaf leads the way in building connections, sharing love and looking towards a brighter future. I hold onto the words of one of our students: "As long as we have life, we have hope."

Thank you

With thanks to our brilliant English and Maths teachers Naoe, Daud, Annabel and Chris; to our partners in education Thamsin Young and Joe Hickinbottom from the Widening Participation (WP) team at Surrey University; Chris Dexter and the HEON team; the WP teams from UCA and RHUL; Nadia Mughal and Surrey Virtual School; Kate Crockatt from SCC and Ian Cole, Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust; PCSO Chris Moyes and PC Laura Madgwick-Smith from Surrey Police; Fatima and Amy from GSC; Ben Raynor from SOLD.



“

...seeing the work that's being done here to support those who have endured hardship and oppression, and bringing together people of such diverse backgrounds... increases my own faith... when I see compassion, justice, and humanity lived out so sincerely, it strengthens me and reminds me why gatherings like this are so important.”

Sajid Hussain, Seek2Change partner

SUMMER PROGRAMME | strengthening language and community

Our summer programme is designed to respond to the challenges many young people experience in the long summer break – isolation, lack of routine and boredom.

The long summer can leave young people feeling abruptly cut off, and for those carrying traumatic experiences, this can have a serious impact on wellbeing. Young people who arrive in summer also wait months before they can learn English or make friends. This year, far-right riots targeting displaced communities added further anxiety, making a safe and structured programme even more important.

Our summer school is more than just an English language programme – it's about history, culture and life in the UK, connecting with people, gaining new skills and above all getting out of their rooms and having fun.

Working with our ambassadors and partners, we co-created a summer of activities that built skills, encouraged friendships and supported wellbeing.

We spent time with sixth formers at St George's College – playing games, baking and creating art together. Planned by young ambassadors from St George's and Big Leaf, the camp ended with a huge water fight – a joyful close to an unforgettable three days.

We went to the Paradox Museum in London, enjoyed a picnic in Hyde Park, explored the Serpentine on pedalos and visited the city's landmarks. This sparked conversations about UK democracy, history and culture – and reminded everyone how welcoming people could be, despite the anti-immigration riots happening at the time.

Next came two days of camping and water-based activities – canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding and raft building – new experiences for most of the young people.

We held a community cricket match at Guildford Cricket Club, full of joy and connection and providing another much-needed break from the hateful rhetoric taking over so many UK streets.

The final three days were spent at Surrey University - learning about the law with Surrey police, and exploring different religions with local faith leaders, including beliefs shared by all faiths and what tolerance really means.

We finished with a workshop on identity and self-expression and young people created and shared beautiful prose and poetry and drawings of maps, flags and memories of home.

Thank you

With thanks to the High Sheriff Youth Awards, staff and students from St George's College, Surrey Police staff, and the community faith leaders for being generous with their time; and to the wonderful Thamsin Young and the Widening Participation team at Surrey University.

50

young people

1994

individual learning hours



“

This first day I came. I'm so afraid. Maybe because before this time, I don't have conversation... but [gradually] I feel confident to speak.” MM

SUMMER CAMP | turning strangers into a community

Each summer, we take a group of young people to a farm for a week, and it continues to be one of the most important things we do. Big Leaf started with a summer camp, and knowing the impact it has, we're determined to keep it at the heart of our work.

Our Summer Camp offers a chance to pause and reconnect. For the young people, it means time outdoors, rest, new friendships and new experiences. It's a chance to slow down and an escape from some of the daily worries that come from living in the asylum system. For us, it's an opportunity to build trust and get to know each young person so that we can better support them in the months and years ahead.

For the last five years, we've held our camp at Jamie's Farm, a working farm designed to help young people build confidence, resilience and positive relationships. Days are spent feeding animals, working in the gardens, cooking and exploring the countryside. Evenings are filled with games, laughter and shared meals that quickly turn strangers into a community.

“

Every morning, they tell us about new things, about life... they're always happy for us.” AR

The daily check-ins each morning and evening, are always special. They're simple but powerful moments where everyone pauses to talk about how they're feeling and reflect on the day. Each person also gives a shout-out to someone else in the group – recognising moments of kindness, teamwork, or even just that someone's presence made their day better.

For young people who have faced constant change and uncertainty, this space of trust and belonging is rare. Jamie's Farm offers it in abundance – a place where every young person is seen, heard and appreciated. By the end of the week, there is always a noticeable shift: more smiles, more confidence, and the knowledge that they are valued and supported, not just here, but long after they return home.

“

Jamie's Farm is the best place, if you come and get away from the crowded cities and calm your mind and clean your mind from all the stresses.” M

Thank you

With thanks to Surrey Virtual School for funding our Summer Camp and to the amazing team at Jamie's Farm in Lewes for always making us feel welcome and valued and supported.



CREATIVE ARTS | celebrating creativity and community

We want to raise awareness of the issues faced by displaced young people and encourage connection and cohesion in our communities. Our music and creative arts programmes help achieve this – bringing young people from displaced and host communities together through music and using art and theatre as a platform to showcase creativity and share powerful stories of displacement.

Music Connects

Thanks to funding from Youth Music and the Arts Council England we're able to run our Music Connects project for another two years with our fantastic partners at Surrey Arts.

Since launching in 2020, young people have been at the heart of this project – writing and recording songs, performing at London's Union Chapel, co-writing with Mother Mother and, most importantly, forming lasting friendships.

This year, we reflected on the core purpose of the project, to build connection and understanding across communities through music, and how this feels more important than ever right now.

We listened to what previous participants told us – how special it was to spend time with people they would never otherwise have met, how much fun and learning came from it, and that they wished it could happen more often – and used this to shape the programme.

We held the first in our new series of Open Mic nights, led by our Music Connects alumni and open to the community. Thanks to the wonderful Boileroom, we had an incredible venue, and a stage that has hosted some big names over the years. The evenings were an explosion of music from around the world with everything from Persian folk songs, classic rock, jazz and blues to Sudanese disco hits, Ethiopian rap and original Eritrean poetry. But as ever, our favourite moments were when local and displaced young people were up on stage together and all differences fell aside and everyone was united in the music.

“

It was brilliant. I thought the language difference would make it difficult, but it didn't, not at all. I loved meeting new people and singing together.” Hannah

48

young people

400+

community attendees
and partners



Celebrating creativity and resilience during Refugee Week

Refugee Week is a chance to celebrate our young people through recognition of stories, truth and the real contribution people bring to our communities when they have been forced to leave their own. The theme for 2024 was Our Home and we worked with Iraqi photojournalist and filmmaker, Ali Arkady, to create an exhibition with young people exploring this.

Ali developed a unique technique of printing photographs onto blasted sandstone, describing it as a “process of transferring the heaviness of my memories onto the stone”.

We invited 15 young people to choose images that evoke thoughts of home and spent the day with Ali printing these onto stone. The stunning and thought-provoking pieces were displayed at St Mary’s Church in Guildford in an open exhibition during Refugee Week, attracting more than 200 visitors.

For the young people it was a chance to learn a new skill, but also to feel their work and their experiences are valued within the community.

“

It was a spectacular and unforgettable experience with Ali... something I never knew before and it sparked a new creativity that I want to practice.” AD

“

Such a powerful, moving exhibition. Thank you for sharing your stories with us.” Rosamund

Sharing journeys to safety

We recognise the power of storytelling and wanted to explore this – using music as a soundtrack to the story of a journey, told through shadow puppetry.

Five young people worked alongside a scriptwriter, puppeteer and a set designer to create a story that blended their memories of leaving home to find safety.

Told through shadow puppetry, it reflected real events – some horrific and others showing the incredible kindness of strangers – and included words of strength and courage from a mother saying goodbye to her child. But most of all it showed the resilience and determination of so many young people to survive desperate and perilous events and still to look forward to a safe and hopeful future.

With so much misinformation blurring simple facts of journeys to safety, the space to share the real stories and experiences of our young people is precious, and we were delighted to perform in front of more than 200 people at the Mayor of Guildford’s Diversity Show.

Our Music Connects performers created an original soundscape and score with instruments reflecting the nationalities represented in the story. The standing ovation that followed the performance showed just how powerful a simple story can be when told with honesty and authenticity.



“

It was an absolute honour to be part of such a powerful and meaningful project... Knowing it touched people and helped raise awareness is more than I could have hoped for.” M

Thank you

With thanks to Youth Music, Arts Council England, Guildford Philanthropy and Tides Foundation for supporting these programmes; and to our partners at Surrey Arts, the Boileroom, Ali Arkady, St Mary’s & Holy Trinity Church, scriptwriter Denise Cassar, puppeteer Emily Hembrow and set designer Jane Wardle. We couldn’t have done without you.



YOUNG LEADERS | empowering young people to lead

For the last four years we've been supporting young people to build leadership skills, confidence and knowledge through our Young Leaders programme. This year we graduated another 12 young people and created formal ambassador roles within Big Leaf.

Our Young Leaders programme brings young people together to learn about leadership, legal rights, how to create change and support others, helping them to feel more empowered within themselves, their local community and Big Leaf itself.

We work with some incredible partners to bring this programme to life – from the team at Jamie's Farm who give us the space and support to get to know each other and build trust at the start of the programme; and the law students at Surrey University School of Law who lead the human rights and democracy sessions; to Guildford Shakespeare Company who work with us to build confidence in public speaking.

The programme is continually evolving as past graduates bring new ideas and help to shape the sessions for the next group.

But it's not just the young people who learn. Each conversation and every experience shared teaches us something new as well.

We've worked with the School of Law since the first Young Leaders programme and the law students tell us just how much they learn from the group – explaining that they had no idea this was the experience displaced young people have in this country, of their rights not being upheld, and that this knowledge and understanding will influence their work in the future.

This is one of the most exciting things about the programme – seeing the young people realise the impact that sharing their experience can have on those around them. Realising their voice is important, and just how much knowledge and wisdom they already have. It's this shift in confidence and self-belief that makes this programme so special...

...and it's this newfound confidence that has seen them advocate for themselves in pursuit of their education and career goals; step into leadership roles in their communities; share their stories through media and film; take up speaking opportunities or offer gentle but determined support to other young people who have just arrived.

[Read more about Youth Leadership in Action on p24.](#)

We come together at the end of each programme to celebrate the young people. Graduation is one of our favourite events of the year. It's a chance for us to celebrate their incredible achievements and for our community to hear first-hand what this programme means to them.

“

One of my favourite parts of the programme was Jamie's Farm... working together, eating together and sleeping under the same roof. As someone who grew up in a really large community who does everything together... those three days gave me the closest feeling I have felt of being home in a very long time. It was a reminder that no matter where you are, or how far you are away from home, those feelings can be recreated.”

“

My journey to the UK has not been easy but I am grateful that I am here. I am glad that I chose to do the Young Leaders programme... because I have learned so much, not just about leadership, but about myself and the world around me.”



“

I came from a country where there are not many opportunities or respect for human rights... However, since I have arrived and joined with Big Leaf, I've realised that [we have many rights]. These protect us and allow us to live freely... and with rights come responsibilities. It's so important for all of us to understand them and practice them to live in harmony in a new community.”



“

I hope to use what I have learned through this programme to help others, as so many others have helped me before.”

“

I am so proud of all of the graduates. I am always so in awe of what they can achieve when they believe in themselves a bit more – Big Leaf does that for them.” Jessica, key worker

You can listen to a few of the graduation speeches in full at www.bigleaffoundation.org.uk/young-leaders-speeches

Thank you

With thanks to The Listening Fund for supporting this programme; to our wonderful programme partners Jamie's Farm, Surrey University School of Law and Guildford Shakespeare Company; our mentors, Denise, Jessica, Abby and Martin who helped the young people practice their speeches ahead of graduation and/or supported with progression routes from the programme.



“

We live in a world where the value of human dignity and freedom is sometimes taken for granted.... But throughout history, we've seen how easily [people's rights] can be denied. People have faced violence, oppression, and injustice because their fundamental rights were ignored. That's why human rights are not just ideals – they are a call to action for each and every one of us.” M

YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ACTION | shaping our work and speaking out

Our leadership programmes support young people to speak out on the issues that matter to them and ensure collaboration and youth listening sit at the heart of our work.

Building on the success of our Young Leaders programme we created formal ambassador roles for young people keen to influence policy and public attitudes towards asylum and those wanting to work with us to support their peers.

Our ambassadors have stepped into leadership roles, shared stories through local media and film, contributed to policy work and taken up speaking opportunities. Just as important is the internal ambassador work – from co-creating projects to supporting other young people who have just arrived. Here are a few highlights from the year.

Leading within Refugee Week

Our ambassadors played a central role in Refugee Week – leading the vision and planning and taking charge of the cooking component to create an inclusive and welcoming community event called 'Our Home' with food from around the world.

“

It was a good experience for me. I enjoyed meeting everyone who came to the event and seeing them speaking to different people. I was proud that it was like my home.”

Ahmed, youth ambassador

Policy and advocacy work

Our ambassadors contributed to Surrey County Council's new migration policy – with their feedback on housing, employment challenges, and social isolation incorporated into the proposed policy, highlighting the importance of youth voices in shaping local strategies.

“

It was good to feel listened to... that our bad experiences will mean that no one else has to have a bad experience like this again... that we're helping to make Surrey better for all displaced people.” Randy, youth ambassador

M spoke at the annual Toulson Lecture at Surrey University with guests including lawyers, barristers, alumni, charity partners, and Supreme Court judge, Lord Hodge. He talked about how, as a displaced person, understanding his human rights in the UK has helped him feel safer and more confident.

Thank you

Huge thanks to all of our leaders and ambassadors for your passion and determination to advocate for displaced young people in Surrey and beyond. We're incredibly proud of you all.

6

external ambassadors

6

internal ambassadors

5

young people engaged in policy conversations

6

raising awareness through media/comms/public speaking

GUEST EDIT | Randy

Randy has been part of Big Leaf since 2021, first joining our ESOL programme and later becoming an ambassador. Here, Randy reflects on his journey and what the charity means to him.

Another year has passed, and it makes me realise that more than three years have gone by since I received a text message that changed my life. Back then, I was an asylum seeker, and now I'm a refugee. I had no idea that message would open the door to opportunities that helped me grow as a person and, for a moment, forget that I had to leave my country at such a young age.

If I had to describe Big Leaf in one word, it would be 'change'. I'm not sure the team realise how much they have changed, and continue to change, the lives of young displaced people. They give us a new chance to dream in a place that once felt unknown.

This happens through fun activities and opportunities for personal growth, like the Young Leaders Programme. From learning how the UK government works to developing leadership and professional skills, the programme has been so rewarding.

I remember how nervous I was at my first public speaking event, but Big Leaf doesn't just teach you how to do it. They stand beside you, and that is something special. Since then, I've spoken to audiences of more than 200 people about my life and dreams.

When I think about it, all these skills I've developed are because of Big Leaf. I'm now studying at university to become a physiotherapist, a goal I've had since I arrived here.

“

I know I'm here because they believed in me, just as they believe in all of us. That is why I use the word change. They changed my life.

Even now, far from Surrey, I still feel their support and call them my family. As an ambassador, I've spoken at the national conference for Child Services and recorded films for Surrey Police, secondary school students and BBC Radio. I will carry these achievements with me forever.

I know the future will bring more successes for young displaced people and for Big Leaf. They do everything for us... at no cost to us. I still get excited whenever I'm contacted to take part in something, and I hope that one day I can give back even a little of the love they've shown me.

Last year, Randy was on set with the multi-award winning TrueTube – discussing his life in Nicaragua, his reasons for leaving and his experience settling into life here. The film was part of new series for secondary schools to mark Refugee Week. You can watch at www.truetube.co.uk/resource/refugee-stories-randy/



“

...we all enjoyed your inspiring talk. It gave us a great deal of food for thought and we'll be discussing it further at our next trustee meeting.” London Luminaries

SHARING OUR APPROACH | increasing support for displaced young people

This year we've worked with partners and young people to share our learning with more people than ever before – helping to raise awareness, connect across communities and ideas, and build support for displaced young people both in Surrey and beyond.

The young people we support often tell us how much Big Leaf means to them. We've learnt a lot about what works and what doesn't. We've listened to our young people and collaborated with partners to develop projects that help meet the changing needs of displaced young people in our community, and we've explored how we can best advocate for them.

We're still learning. But we recognise our experience has potential for broader application. We also know that with the rise in mis- and disinformation targeting displaced communities and promoting hate, division and even violence, it's never been more important to speak up and provide truthful and human-centred narratives around displacement.

We've been invited to speak at events and join conversations around immigration and asylum rights – sharing the realities and voices of the young people we support alongside our own experiences working in the sector.

We're not there to change people's political views, we simply want to show the truth of our work and the challenges the young people face.

We've welcomed discussion and time and again, we've been met with respectful questions, compassionate responses and people expressing surprise at the real statistics and the human stories behind the numbers. Conversation between people who might not naturally agree is more important than ever at this time, and we're grateful to all of the audiences who have listened with such attention and empathy.

We also want to support the organisations and communities who already welcome people seeking sanctuary in the UK and we joined forces with the International Rescue Committee to run a Healing Spaces workshop. Open to partners, local organisations and statutory agencies working with displaced communities, more than 30 people came together to explore what it means to be trauma-informed and how to work together to build resilience and hope based on truth, acceptance and respect for everyone.

“

It was so interesting to hear more about the work you do and hear from other practitioners and organisations... truly inspiring. I really appreciated the opportunity to learn, share and connect with everyone involved.”

Dom, community partner and IRC training attendee

9

speaking events

300+

partners and community attendees



“

Day 2 complete... the hills were real and the wind was a bit unfriendly but we got through it. Incredible experience thanks again to you all for your support!” TR, London to IoW Challenge participant

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING | changing the lives of young people one mile at a time

We have an incredible network of supporters who give regularly to support our work. These donations are vital. But like all charities we need to consider new and creative fundraising ideas to ensure we can continue our work. Our community has risen to the challenge – taking part in another sponsored bike ride.

For the second year running, staff from Salesforce UK took to their bikes to raise money for Big Leaf – this time cycling from London to the Isle of Wight (and completing a loop of the island while they were there).

Seventeen riders covered almost 150 miles to raise money for our regular English language sessions – in a ride that was at times challenging but always joyous.

Our Co-founder and Programmes Manager, Kayte, and one of our trustees, Jocelyn, joined the support team – keeping the riders fuelled with snacks and sharing stories of what their fundraising efforts would help achieve as a motivator to keep on pedalling.

“

I enjoyed learning about Big Leaf and fundraising as part of the Salesforce charity ride. Hope I can help to raise awareness of the great work you're doing.” EA



One of the most significant barriers for young people arriving in the UK is a good understanding of English. They often arrive as beginners in English speaking and reading and those arriving after the start of the academic year can wait months for college places to become available. With little or no English, it can be incredibly difficult to find their feet in their new communities. This is where we come in. We run regular English sessions during term time for young people with limited or no access to college.

Each year we support around 50 young people through our full-day English language sessions. Thanks to all of the riders who completed the London to Isle of Wight Cycling Challenge, and to Salesforce UK who matched all donations, we have been able to run our English language sessions for another academic year.

If you're interested in organising your own challenge event to support Big Leaf you can fundraise and collect donations through our JustGiving page at www.justgiving.com/charity/bigleaffoundation

17

riders

£15,000

raised

150

miles covered

50

young people supported to learn English

priorities for the year ahead

Our priorities for the coming year reflect what we have heard from listening to our young people and partners, and the realities of the context we are working in. They focus on strengthening community, supporting youth leadership, and ensuring Big Leaf remains responsive, sustainable and grounded in the voices of the young people we support.

Over the past year, our work has taken place against a backdrop of growing hostility towards displaced communities, alongside increasing pressure on local services and support systems. For the young people we work with, this has often meant greater isolation, uncertainty and a need for spaces where they feel safe, listened to and supported.

Our priorities for the year ahead are shaped by these realities. They reflect a commitment to building strong, connected communities, creating meaningful opportunities for young people to lead and influence, and ensuring Big Leaf continues to grow in a way that is thoughtful, accountable and rooted in lived experience.

“

I had no idea what was happening in Darfur. Talking to E taught me a lot. I can't stop thinking about what life would be like in their shoes... We're good friends now.”

St. George's College Sixth Former

Strengthening community connections

We know that strong and connected communities are the most resilient to division and deliberate agitation. Building supportive communities has been at the heart of our work since the start, but it's never felt more important. Connecting people and making space for conversations helps dispel the myths around migration and rehumanises a debate that has, for too long, ignored the experiences of real people seeking sanctuary here. Over the next year we will look to strengthen existing partnerships and build new ones. We'll create even more opportunities for young people from both local and displaced communities to connect and collaborate, particularly through sports, creative arts and education. In doing so, we hope to continue building communities where young people feel a sense of belonging, shared responsibility and confidence in one another.

Youth leadership

Our priority remains to ensure the voices and experiences of displaced young people continue to shape everything we do. We recognise a culture of listening and meaningful opportunities for youth leadership, where young people are empowered to lead and have the support they need to succeed, are vital for building confidence, strengthening agency and ensuring our work remains relevant and grounded in lived experience.

Through our leadership programmes we're already supporting young people to take an active role in the development of Big Leaf and this year we created our first formal ambassador roles. Over the coming year, we'll create more opportunities for social action both as ambassadors, shaping and leading projects and influencing policy and public attitudes towards asylum, and as community caseworkers (more on this below).

“

Being listened to, taken into account and recognised feels incredibly rewarding, especially during difficult times when there is a lot of uncertainty for us.”

Randy, Youth Ambassador

“

“The most important reason to do a project like Community Casework is to help people who need support in their daily lives. It gives us the chance to understand real problems in our community and work together to make a difference.”

ES

Community casework

Most of our casework comes through our activities, where it is integrated into the spaces young people meet and connect with one another. Over the last year, we've seen more settled young people step in to support those who have just arrived – encouraging them to talk to us about their problems, helping to translate and even working with us to resolve the simpler issues. We believe that casework should help to build this kind of community agency. But we want to ensure that young people offering support remain safe and boundaried.

This year we will test a new Community Casework programme with training and support to help them understand the context and requirements of formal casework and decentralising the role of 'advice giver' to build a more resilient community.

Sharing our approach and speaking out

Over the past seven years we've listened to our young people and collaborated with partners to develop programmes that meet the changing needs of displaced young people and we know that so much of this has the potential for success in other parts of Surrey and beyond. We will work together with our partners and our youth ambassadors to share our experience - connecting with organisations who are looking to develop opportunities in their own settings, and sharing our approach, knowledge and experience to increase opportunities for displaced young people more broadly.

But it's not just about working with like-minded organisations. In the current climate where hate and division and the deliberate targeting of displaced communities has become the norm, we also need to step into new spaces and have brave conversations that challenge mis- and disinformation and raise awareness of the real issues.

“

...as I spoke I felt a deep connection with the people listening. I realised the power of sharing my story - it wasn't just about me it was about showing that hope and change are possible.”

Mohi, Youth Ambassador

Priorities for the year ahead

Strategic transformation

Last year we talked about reviewing our governance model to ensure we have the right structures in place for a growing and maturing organisation, operating in an increasingly difficult space. This year has been about strengthening our board to meet these needs – welcoming new trustees with experience in governance, policy, fundraising, evaluation and reporting, and strategic planning and change management. We also brought our financial admin into the staff team and transitioned to a new accounting package – all with a view to supporting greater organisational oversight and strategic development.

Over the coming year we'll take time as a team and with our young people to pause and reflect and to build our organisational strategy for the next three years. Our plan will focus on what young people need and want, giving them space to share their experience and ideas. It will consider the environment we're operating in and the challenges we face; and build on the incredible knowledge within our staff team. But above all it will capture what makes Big Leaf special and ensure this remains at the heart of our work.

We'll look forward to sharing our new strategic plan with you in 2026.

governance, structure & management

Big Leaf Foundation is controlled by its Constitution incorporated on 14 July 2018. It was recognised as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 14 December 2018 (UK Registered Charity Number 1181180) whose only voting members are its charity trustees ('Foundation' model constitution). The charity is run by the Board of Trustees who are responsible for ensuring we have a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and are focused on achieving these.

Appointment of trustees

Any person over the age of 16 who is willing to act as a trustee, and has not been disqualified from acting as a trustee by virtue of sections 178 - 180 of the Charities Act 2011 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision) may be appointed to be a trustee.

There must be at least three trustees and a maximum of eight. Every trustee is appointed for a term of two to three years, by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the trustees.

Retiring trustees are eligible for reappointment. But a trustee who has served for three consecutive terms may not be reappointed except after an interval of at least one year. In selecting individuals for appointment as trustees, we consider the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the organisation and follow a thorough recruitment process.

Governance changes

We have changed and grown over the last six years. To ensure we have the right governance structures in place to guide us through the next six years we reviewed our governance model. We considered new approaches that embrace fresh ideas and build on the incredible experience within our team, our youth network and our volunteer community. Some trustees stepped down and we welcome new members with experience in governance, immigration policy, philanthropic giving, evaluation and reporting, and strategic planning and change management. We paired each new trustee with a staff member and a young person – ensuring their introduction to Big Leaf was rooted in the experience of our team and the young people we support. As the new board settles we're excited about the next phase of our development and what these individuals will add to our team.

Organisational oversight

The trustees meet six times per year with an additional strategic planning day. We also ask our trustees to attend a minimum of two Big Leaf Foundation projects per year as we strongly believe this contributes to a better understanding of our organisation, how we work and the young people we support. Trustees are DBS checked at an enhanced level and Safeguarding and Prevent trained.

The Programmes Manager and Governance, Partnerships & Finance Coordinator report on operational plans at trustee meetings. Big Leaf Foundation also operates subcommittees to oversee and deliver specific areas of work including Safeguarding; Finance & Fundraising and a new Risk Subcommittee and with new subcommittees under consideration. Each includes trustees and staff and operates under clear terms of reference, reporting back at trustee meetings.

The Chair and Programmes Manager also have regular meetings to discuss operational matters and resource needs.

Find out more about our team
www.bigleaffoundation.org.uk/about-us

risks & mitigations

We're operating in a space that is increasingly hostile towards refugees and people seeking asylum. This has an impact both at an operational and strategic level, and on the young people we support. In recognition of this, we have established a new Risk Subcommittee to monitor risks and provide oversight to the Board.

We have focused on identifying the risks that pose the greatest threat and on defining realistic and effective mitigations. This organisational awareness means we can make careful choices about how we work and how we manage resources to build resilience in key areas.

Fundraising

Like many small charities, sustainable funding is key to our success. Reliance on a few, large donors leaves us financially exposed if a donor changes focus. We have worked hard to develop a diverse and engaged group of funders who support our work. But there is also a risk at the intersection between funding and growth – we need the right funders, with the right funding streams – to enable the evolution of the organisation in response to changing needs. This means ensuring staffing structures are fit for purpose, enabling staff to move from self-employed to employee contracts; and considering new roles, including a Director role. Our engagement with funders is authentic, rich and constructive, but identifying and building relationships with funders takes time. Revived commitment and expertise within the Board to consider and evaluate our fundraising strategy is a key mitigation and will provide Big Leaf with greater financial security in the longer-term.

Increasingly hostile environment

2024-2025 has been the most challenging year yet to be operating in the refugee and asylum space. Public displays of violence (physical and verbal) have become commonplace, more accepted and harder to challenge. This risk impacts both the safety and wellbeing of our young people, and staff morale and safety. In mitigation, we provide consistent, supported and varied safe spaces for our young people and interweave this with opportunities for accessing advice and expertise, from Surrey Police and same-sector partners, on how to remain safe in this environment.

Proposed changes to the asylum system represent a radical reshaping of the experiences of our young people. This instability increases the vulnerability of displaced young people. While we can't control policy, we use our influence and relationships with other organisations to petition MPs; we amplify the voices of our young people and focus on hope and belonging in our comms work; and we work to identify increased vulnerability and put in place extra support for these young people.

Safeguarding

Our ability to safeguard young people in increasingly challenging circumstances remains a key focus. The challenges of displacement and resettlement leave them vulnerable to homelessness, destitution and exploitation, alongside the deep psychosocial impact of living with ongoing uncertainty about their future, in a society that seems determined to exclude them, while also coming to terms with what they have lost.

Training for our staff and trustees is central to our response, along with robust policies and clear processes to support young people at risk and ensure they are properly safeguarded. This year we have focused on strengthening relationships with external agencies where we can escalate safeguarding concerns and developed our internal processes, and knowledge, to meet the challenges of a changing safeguarding environment.

Staff wellbeing

We're fortunate to have attracted some of the brightest and best to our staff team. Their passion for their work shines through in every engagement with our young people. We're committed to remaining a competitive employer in the sector through building a diverse and sustainable funding base. Thanks to multi-year core funding we have now started moving the team onto payroll.

Recent attacks on those working in the refugee sector has also led us to consider how we keep our staff and volunteers safe both physically and digitally. We have taken advice from cyber security experts, Surrey Police, and other organisations to build internal confidence and expertise. Our staff often absorb the fears and concerns of our young people. We work hard to ensure that our staff feel valued and supported, through regular supervision, responsive line management, and a strong collaborative working environment.

finance & accounts

Big Leaf Foundation is a registered charity and relies on donations from both trusts and individuals to continue its work.

One of our core aims this year was to broaden our funding streams for both project and core costs while also exploring general fundraising through events. We have made significant progress here with new multi-year core funding from BBC Children in Need, to complement existing multi-year funding from The National Lottery Community Fund; new multi-year project funding from Youth Music; and another successful fundraising event with a sponsored bike ride

from London to the Isle of Wight in July 2024 in support of our ongoing English Language programme. We also welcomed other new funders including Garfield Weston Foundation and the Wisley Foundation.

Our huge thanks to all of our funders and donors whether you're funding us for the first time or we've been working together for years. We can't do this work without you and we never take your support for granted.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES | for year ended March 2025

Income	Expenditure
Trusts & Grants: £284,952	Core Costs: £38,978
Individual Donations: £46,329	Staff Costs: £179,073
Gift Aid & Interest: £5,345	Project Costs: £77,374
Total: £336,626	Total: £295,425
Previous year: £213,182	Previous year: £305,038

The information above (both for 2024/25 and 2023/24) is prepared on an accruals accounting basis, which is a change from the previous financial reporting and is explained in more detail below.

Changes to financial reporting

We have now transitioned to a charity-focused accounting system and as part of this, adjusted our accounts for 2024/25 to an accruals basis. This new system will improve financial reporting and better support the trustees in planning and decision-making. This change means the financial report for this accounting year has a transitional impact (as shown in the table on p33).

Income held for work planned in the next financial year has been deducted from the current financial year in which it was received and will be accounted for as prepaid income for the next financial year. This prepaid income of £73,896 is an asset at year-end and is shown in the following table as 'Committed restricted funds'.

FUNDS SUMMARY | at 31 March 2025 and compared to previous year

£	at 31 March 2025	at 31 March 2024
General funds (unrestricted)	£88,362	£5,475
Restricted Funds	£41,416	£83,102
Total funds at year end	£129,778	£88,577
Cash holdings	£188,736	£216,141
Committed restricted funds	£73,896	£113,196

Funding as of 31 March 2025 comprises of £41,416 in Restricted funds and £73,896 Committed restricted funds which must be used on stipulated project expenditure. Designated funds of £70,666 have been allocated by the trustees to fund specific project expenditure with £17,696 in General funds and available to cover unplanned or unfunded expenditure.

Based on this, funds for future projects remains tight but we believe the charity is operating prudently while positively utilising all funds received. With our work continuing to build in depth and complexity, we will continue to seek additional funding to build organisational resilience in a rapidly changing external context.

Restricted and designated funds

Project name and/or funder	Purpose
BBC Children in Need Staff costs	Multi-year core funding for our Sports Programme Manager.
Blagrave Trust The Listening Fund Youth leadership	Multiyear funding for the continuation of our Young Leaders programme and improving our listening work.
Community Foundation for Surrey & Guildford Philanthropy Project funding	Funding for Refugee Week project costs and our translation costs and care leaver support
Garfield Weston Foundation Core funding	Core funding to support our organisational objectives and programme costs as needed.
High Sheriff Youth Award Summer School	Funding for our Summer School programme.
Salesforce English sessions	Match funding for our second summer Challenge Bike Ride in support of our English language programme.
Surrey County Council (Surrey Virtual School) Summer Camp	Funding towards our five-day Summer Camp at Jamie's Farm.
The National Lottery Community Fund Staff costs & office lease	Multi-year core funding from for Programmes Manager & Comms Coordinator and office space.
Tresanton Trust Casework and hubs	Core funding for our Casework service and weekly hubs.
Wisley Foundation Sports for Connection	Project funding for our new Sports for Connection events.
Youth Music Music Connects	Multi-year project funding to deliver our Music Connects programme in partnership with Surrey Arts.

Our 2024/25 accounts have been independently reviewed by Warner Wilde accountants in line with Charity Commission guidelines.

thank you

We'd like to thank everyone who works alongside us with kindness, compassion and a shared determination to give displaced young people in Surrey the opportunities and the future that they deserve.

Donors

- Active Surrey Together Fund
- Arts Council England
- BBC Children in Need
- Blagrove Trust (Listening Fund)
- Bright Light Theatre
- Community Foundation for Surrey
- Garfield Weston
- Guildford Philanthropy
- Healing Herbs
- High Sheriff of Surrey

- Holy Trinity & St Mary's
- Salesforce
- Surrey County Council/Surrey Virtual School
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Tides Foundation
- Tresanton Trust
- Wisley Foundation
- Youth Music

We'd also like to thank all of the individuals who have given one-off or regular donations this year and all of the incredible people who fundraised through the challenge bike ride in the summer.

Partners

- Air Time CIC | Jo Woodhams
- Aristar Consulting | Paul Glynn
- Basketball4All | Bridget Hayward & Creon Raftopoulos
- Central & North West London NHS Trust | Ian Cole
- Chelsea Foundation | Rob Wright
- Child and Adult Mental Health Surrey | Vicky Lord
- Guildford Cricket Club | Ahmed Hussain
- Guildford Shakespeare Company | Eli Murton
- Guildford School of Acting | Amy & Fatima
- Higher Education & Outreach Network | Chris Dexter
- Holy Trinity & St Mary's Guildford | Chloe, Corinne & Simon
- Jamie's Farm | Sam Maynard & team
- PMAActive | Martin King
- Redhill Amateur Boxing Club | Alex Moore & Rehan
- Refugee Council (FairShot FC) | Luke Stewart & Georgie Thomas

- RHS Wisley Community Outreach team | Chris Young
- Surrey Arts | Jim Pinchen & team
- Surrey County Council Public Health team | Kate Crockatt
- Surrey Football Association | Rob Bryant
- Surrey Outdoor Learning & Development | Ben Rayner & team
- Surrey Police | CI McDermott, PC Madgwick-Smith, PCSO Moyes & DC Tyson
- Surrey Sports Park | Carly Pearson
- Surrey Uni School of Law | Liz Williams, Jessica & the law students
- Surrey University WP team | Thamsin Young & Joe Hickinbottom
- Surrey Virtual School | Cass Hardy, Nadia Mughal & Lisa Scrivens
- The Boileroom | Dom Frazer & team
- Together with Refugees Coalition & IMix
- Shah Jahan Mosque | Kawther Hashmi & Imam Hashmi
- St George's College | Jon, Kevin Jess & all the staff & students

Volunteers

- Abdulsalam
- Alex
- Alfie
- Alison
- Annabel
- Antonin
- Ash
- Carol
- Chris
- Denise
- Ella
- Hannah
- Henry
- Jane
- Jaego
- James
- Jessame
- Jess M
- Jessica G
- Martin
- Naoe
- Nikki
- Paul
- Richard L
- Sofia

Youth Ambassadors

- Ahmed
- Hamid
- Henry
- Jessica M
- Mohi
- Nadir
- Randy
- Sabir
- Sahand

- Kayte Cable
- Ro Carter
- Vicki Felgate
- Koye Sofoluwe

Staff

- Daud Afzal
- Abby Auty

Trustees

- Sally Bagwell (app. 17/01/25)
- Nick Early (appointed 20/12/24)
- Vicki Felgate (chair)
- Caroline Parkes (app. 17/01/25)
- Dave Wagstaff (resigned 01/25)
- Katie Wilson (resigned 11/24)
- Jocelyn Zanasi (resigned 01/25)

support us

We can only achieve our aims with your help. With your support, displaced young people in Surrey can build new connections, regain confidence and find their place in the local community.

Donate

Your money will help to fund projects that combat social isolation and improve wellbeing among young refugees and asylum seekers in Surrey
www.bigleaffoundation.org.uk/support-us

Partner with us

We work with a growing network of organisations and individuals to develop projects that will inspire our young people. If you'd like to explore a partnership or have a project idea that you'd like to talk to us about, please email contact@bigleaffoundation.org.uk

Volunteer

Volunteers bring time, care and energy that make a real difference. Join our small, dedicated team and help create spaces of welcome and belonging for displaced young people. If you are interested in volunteering with us, please get in touch
contact@bigleaffoundation.org.uk

Keep in touch

Follow us on social media for the latest news and updates [@BigLeafSurrey](https://twitter.com/BigLeafSurrey)

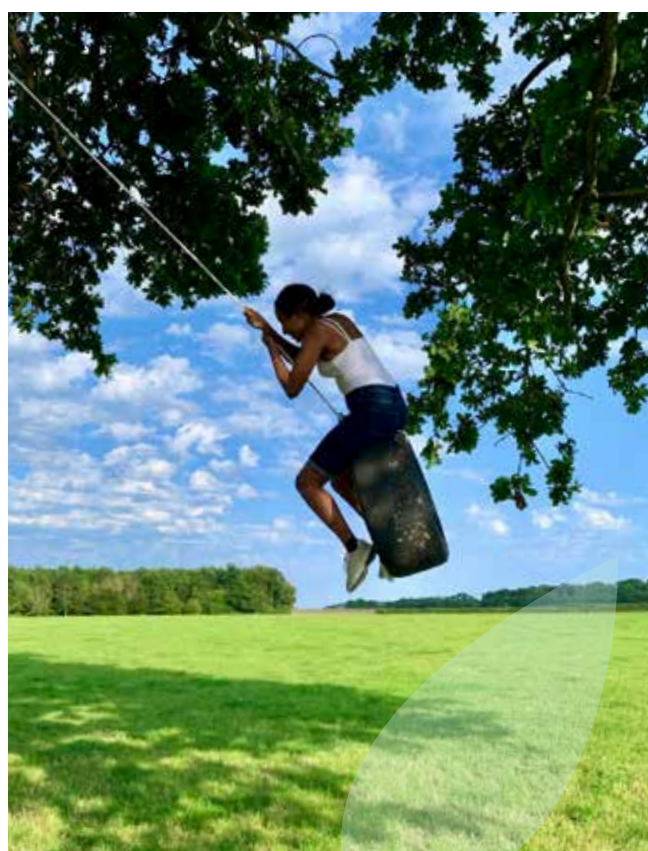


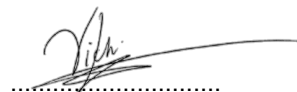
Image © Kayle Cable/Big Leaf Foundation

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



.....
V Ashraf Felgate
Chair

Date: 16 Jan 2026

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of Big Leaf Foundation (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011.

Independent examiner's statement


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

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the financial statements in accordance with the relevant version of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has now been withdrawn. I understand that this has been done in order for the financial statements to provide a true and fair view in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

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 130 of the Charities Act 2011.
- 2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- 3 the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of financial statements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a true and fair view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

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.



Frances Wilde FCCA DChA

Warner Wilde Limited
Chartered Certified Accountants
4 Marigold Drive
Bisley
Surrey
GU24 9SF
Date: 19 January 2026

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Current financial year		Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	Unrestricted funds designated 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
	Notes					
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies	2	27,798	100,494	205,283	333,575	210,569
Investments	3	756	-	-	756	-
Other income	4	-	-	2,295	2,295	2,613
Total income		28,554	100,494	207,578	336,626	213,182
Expenditure on:						
Charitable activities	5	15,599	65,321	214,505	295,425	305,038
Total expenditure		15,599	65,321	214,505	295,425	305,038
Net income/(expenditure)		12,955	35,173	(6,927)	41,201	(91,856)
Transfers between funds		-	34,759	(34,759)	-	-
Net movement in funds	7	12,955	69,932	(41,686)	41,201	(91,856)
Reconciliation of funds:						
Fund balances at 1 April 2024		5,475	-	83,102	88,577	180,433
Fund balances at 31 March 2025		18,430	69,932	41,416	129,778	88,577

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

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED) INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

Prior financial year		Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
	Notes			
Income and endowments from:				
Donations and legacies	2	7,317	203,252	210,569
Other income	4	-	2,613	2,613
Total income		7,317	205,865	213,182
Expenditure on:				
Charitable activities	5	12,025	293,013	305,038
Total expenditure		12,025	293,013	305,038
Net income and movement in funds		(4,708)	(87,148)	(91,856)
Reconciliation of funds:				
Fund balances at 1 April 2023		10,183	170,250	180,433
Fund balances at 31 March 2024		5,475	83,102	88,577

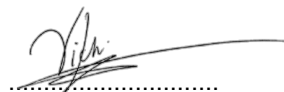
BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	Notes	2025 £	£	2024 £	£
Current assets					
Debtors	10	30,822		-	
Cash at bank and in hand		188,736		216,140	
		<u>219,558</u>		<u>216,140</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	11	(89,780)		(127,563)	
Net current assets			<u>129,778</u>		<u>88,577</u>
The funds of the charity					
Restricted income funds	13	41,416		83,102	
Unrestricted funds - general	15	18,430		5,475	
Unrestricted funds - designated	14	69,932		-	
		<u>129,778</u>		<u>88,577</u>	

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 16 January 2026.



V Ashraf Felgate
Chair

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

1 Accounting policies

Charity information

Big Leaf Foundation is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

1.1 Accounting convention

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's governing document, the Charities Act 2011, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" 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)". The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a true and fair view. This departure has involved following the Statement of Recommended Practice for charities applying FRS 102 rather than the version of the Statement of Recommended Practice which is referred to in the Regulations but which has since been withdrawn.

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.

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

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 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.

1.7 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.

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.

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) *FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025*

1 Accounting policies

(Continued)

1.8 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.

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

2 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	Unrestricted funds designated 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Unrestricted funds designated 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Donations and gifts	27,798	-	20,825	48,623	5,757	-	137,756	143,513
Grants	-	100,494	184,458	284,952	-	-	65,496	65,496
Donated goods and services	-	-	-	-	1,560	-	-	1,560
	27,798	100,494	205,283	333,575	7,317	-	203,252	210,569

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

3 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £
Interest receivable	756	-
	<u>756</u>	<u>-</u>

4 Other income

	Restricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2024 £
Other income	2,295	2,613
	<u>2,295</u>	<u>2,613</u>

5 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Charitable activities 2025 £	Charitable activities 2024 £
Direct costs		
Contractors and other staff costs	179,073	145,980
Project costs	77,374	132,951
	<u>256,447</u>	<u>278,931</u>
Share of support and governance costs (see note 6)		
Support	35,534	24,547
Governance	3,444	1,560
	<u>295,425</u>	<u>305,038</u>
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds - general	15,599	12,025
Unrestricted funds - designated	65,321	-
Restricted funds	214,505	293,013
	<u>295,425</u>	<u>305,038</u>

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

6 Support costs allocated to activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Premises costs	22,460	24,547
Travel & subsistence	10,090	-
IT, communications & stationery	2,984	-
Governance costs	3,444	1,560
	<u>38,978</u>	<u>26,107</u>
Analysed between:		
Charitable activities	<u>38,978</u>	<u>26,107</u>

	2025 £	2024 £
Governance costs comprise:		
Other governance costs	1,884	-
Independent examiner	1,560	1,560
	<u>3,444</u>	<u>1,560</u>

7 Net movement in funds

	2025 £	2024 £
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Fees payable for the independent examination of the charity's financial statements	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

8 Trustees

One trustee received remuneration commensurate with the team management & project management services they provided (2024: three trustees received remuneration for project management services and expenses).

9 Taxation

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

10 Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
Amounts falling due within one year:		
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>30,822</u>	<u>-</u>

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

11 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Deferred income	12	73,896	113,196
Other creditors		14,324	14,367
Accruals		1,560	-
		<u>89,780</u>	<u>127,563</u>

12 Deferred income

	2025 £	2024 £
Other deferred income	<u>73,896</u>	<u>113,196</u>

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	<u>73,896</u>	<u>113,196</u>
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 April 2024	113,196	-
Released from previous periods	(113,196)	-
Resources deferred in the year	<u>73,896</u>	<u>113,196</u>
Deferred income at 31 March 2025	<u>73,896</u>	<u>113,196</u>

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13 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 April 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2025 £
Care leavers	-	4,282	(4,641)	-	(359)
Casework team	16,571	11,575	(28,146)	-	-
Communications programme	8,879	18,448	(21,806)	-	5,521
ESOL & language	10,332	10,000	(10,643)	(9,689)	-
Finance & governance	10,948	10,000	(10,000)	(10,948)	-
Gardening activities	2,830	500	(889)	(2,303)	138
Hub activities	5,934	10,500	(9,713)	-	6,721
Music connects	-	6,856	(1,416)	-	5,440
Office costs	4,132	26,220	(22,835)	-	7,517
Programme management	3,785	31,400	(35,910)	-	(725)
Refugee week	(83)	5,339	(5,256)	-	-
Sports for connection	-	2,858	(358)	-	2,500
Sports programme management	(4,320)	31,651	(26,333)	-	998
Staff suport & pension costs	4,189	(345)	(69)	(2,682)	1,093
Team management	10,741	-	661	(10,089)	1,313
Translation support	987	4,470	(709)	-	4,748
Young leaders	4,870	17,650	(18,776)	-	3,744
Youth ambassadors	2,728	4,378	(4,339)	-	2,767
Other restricted funds	579	11,796	(13,327)	952	-
	<u>83,102</u>	<u>207,578</u>	<u>(214,505)</u>	<u>(34,759)</u>	<u>41,416</u>

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13 Restricted funds

(Continued)

Previous year:	At 1 April 2023 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2024 £
Casework team	51,897	-	(35,326)	-	16,571
Communications programme	8,109	770	-	-	8,879
ESOL & language teaching	6,607	3,725	-	-	10,332
Finance & governance	22,992	-	(12,044)	-	10,948
Gardening activities	-	2,830	-	-	2,830
Hub activities	5,716	218	-	-	5,934
Music connects	3,568	-	(3,568)	-	-
Office costs	-	4,132	-	-	4,132
Programme management	2,442	1,343	-	-	3,785
Sports programme management	5,662	-	(9,982)	-	(4,320)
Staff support & pension costs	2,649	1,540	-	-	4,189
Team management	19,057	-	(8,316)	-	10,741
Translation support	1,670	-	(683)	-	987
Young leaders	31,064	-	(26,194)	-	4,870
Youth ambassadors	-	2,728	-	-	2,728
Other restricted funds	8,817	188,579	(196,817)	-	579
Refugee Week	-	-	(83)	-	(83)
	<u>170,250</u>	<u>205,865</u>	<u>(293,013)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>83,102</u>

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13 Restricted funds

(Continued)

The transfer represents designated funds included with restricted fund balances in the prior financial year.

Funds in deficit at the year end are as a result of timing differences. These funds return to positive values in the following financial year.

Care Leavers

To help young displaced people leaving care to become independent & integrate into British society

Casework Team

To help & support displaced young people with issues around housing, education, asylum claims, age disputes, job applications etc.

Communications Programme

To communicate BLF's aims & objectives via all media and to participate in relevant campaigns

ESOL & Language

To provide English language teaching to young displaced people

Finance & Governance

To ensure that BLF is meeting governance requirements e.g. board structure, policies & procedures, training, safeguarding and accounting / bookkeeping

Gardening Activities

Gardening programme for displaced young people

Hub Activities

Drop-in social hubs with catering for displaced young people

Music Connects

Music events programme e.g. open mic nights for displaced young people

Office Costs

Office rent / rates / utilities etc.

Programme Management

F/T programme management role delivering multiple projects for displaced young people

Refugee Week

Summer project celebrating national refugee week

Sports For Connection

Sports events programme including community participation

Sports Programme Management

F/T programme management role delivering weekly football provision and Sports for Connection events

Staff Pension & Support Costs

Pension payments for employed staff, support costs e.g. supervision, HR software, staff training

Team Management

Line management role - direct reports - GPP role / Comms role / Caseworker roles and general team management

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

13 Restricted funds

(Continued)

Translation Support

Covers costs of translators / interpreters when needed if young person has low level language.

Young Leaders

Youth leadership programme covering leadership styles, law & democracy, employment skills, public speaking etc.

Youth Ambassadors

Progression from Young Leaders programme - representing BLF at events, conferences, press & media interviews.

Community IRC Refugee week

Blagrove Uplift Fund to support refugee charities with community engagement in face of far right hostility.

Football Activities

Weekly football provision with coaching.

14 Unrestricted funds - designated

These are unrestricted funds which are material to the charity's activities.

	At 1 April 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2025 £
Team management	-	9,648	(11,743)	10,089	7,994
Staff support costs	-	951	(951)	2,682	2,682
Sports programme management	-	7,000	(6,507)	-	493
Hub activities	-	8,250	(699)	-	7,551
Refugee week	-	2,314	(452)	-	1,862
ESOL & language teaching	-	16,990	(21,214)	9,690	5,466
Finance & governance	-	5,886	(6,133)	10,948	10,701
Football activities	-	10,705	(12,903)	2,302	104
Gardening activities	-	2,000	(548)	(952)	500
Casework	-	36,750	(4,171)	-	32,579
	-	100,494	(65,321)	34,759	69,932

15 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 April 2024 £	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	At 31 March 2025 £
General funds	5,475	28,554	(15,599)	18,430

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

15 Unrestricted funds (Continued)

Previous year:	At 1 April 2023	Incoming resources	Resources expended	At 31 March 2024
	£	£	£	£
General funds	10,183	7,317	(12,025)	5,475

16 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds general 2025 £	Unrestricted funds designated 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £
At 31 March 2025:				
Current assets/(liabilities)	18,430	69,932	41,416	129,778
	18,430	69,932	41,416	129,778
	Unrestricted funds general 2024 £	Unrestricted funds designated 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
At 31 March 2024:				
Current assets/(liabilities)	5,475	-	83,102	88,577
	5,475	-	83,102	88,577

17 Operating lease commitments

Lessee

Operating lease commitments comprise the property lease which commenced in July 2024 for a period of 3 years.

At the reporting end date the had outstanding commitments for future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases, which fall due as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Within one year	18,900	18,900
Between two and five years	17,325	36,225
	36,225	55,125

BIG LEAF FOUNDATION

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) ***FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025***

18 Related party transactions

There were no disclosable related party transactions during the year (2024 - none) except as disclosed in note 8.

19 Analysis of changes in net funds

The charity had no material debt during the year.

“

When I arrived in the UK, I was happy, I had arrived in a safe place. But just for one week, after that I realised I was lonely... I didn't know what to do... I didn't know how to speak English... I was overwhelmed. After that my social worker introduced me to Big Leaf... I learnt English, and I met my best friend, K, and I was happy.

M

”



The King's Award
for Voluntary Service

Recipient of the Kings Award for Voluntary Service

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