



Report & Accounts

2024

Trustee Report

Introduction

The Sulha Alliance CIO is the only UK charity whose work solely focuses on Afghan interpreters and other Locally Engaged Civilians (LECs) who used to work for the British Army in Afghanistan. The Sulha Alliance campaigns for their protection through resettlement to the UK from Afghanistan and third countries. Once in the UK, we provide support and signposting services to ensure interpreters and their families are given the best chance to thrive.

This report covers the period 1 January 2024 until the 31st December 2024

Board of Trustees

The Sulha Alliance has nine trustees, eight of whom appear below. The Charity Commission has granted a dispensation to one of the trustees and exempted them from inclusion of their name in the CIO's entry on the Register of Charities

Sara de Jong – Chair of the Board of Trustees
Ed Aitken
Sarah Hutchinson
Liaqat Ali Hassanzadah (resigned 5th July 2024)
Laurence Longe
David Turner KC
David Williams
Peter Gordon Finlayson
Mukhtar Malakzai (appointed 12th April 2024)
Trustee (identity withheld)

Mission and Objectives

Our objectives are set out in our constitution as found on the Charity Commission website. Our beneficiaries are Afghan interpreters and Locally Employed Civilians (LECs) who worked with the British Army, and their families. Sulha Alliance CIO is to promote the mental, physical and financial wellbeing of our beneficiaries. We endeavour to support their journey from Afghanistan and third countries to a new life in the United Kingdom, and do so facilitating interagency support for housing, health and financial needs, assisting where possible with advice on education and vocational training. In addition to this, Sulha Alliance has set up forums and events to generate public support and amplify advocacy.

Financial Overview

The Sulha Alliance was incorporated on 6 May 2022, and is reliant on external funding to support the objectives stated in our constitution.

Income Sources

In the reporting period, Sulha Alliance received donations through crowdfunding platforms, small events, and personal donations. We received an additional two years of funding from Unbound Philanthropy: stretching over a period of two years (1 March 2025 until 1 March 2027) with a sum total of £60,000. This additional funding to Sulha Alliance recognised how successfully we have been assisting our beneficiary community to date.

We were grateful to receive unrestricted funding from the Wareham Family Trust of £5000 and another £10,000 from a foundation who wishes to remain anonymous.

Expenditure

Expenditure during the reporting period includes employment and administrative support costs which funds case work and direct community support to our beneficiaries, hardship grants to beneficiaries, and community events.

The grant from Unbound Philanthropy exclusively funds the cost of our Community Support Officer and the Charity Foundation Officer. These two crucial roles allow us to effectively run the charity (eg adhere to crucial compliance activities) and process case work, which has a direct impact on our beneficiaries. Our employment costs are very low, as our executive team are all volunteers.

We started a hardship fund for our community. The aim was to make quick small payments to those in need with very little red tape. For example, this can be to purchase warm clothing for new arrivals, new toys for children or emergency travel. In 2024, we made 3 payments (total amount of £300) from the hardship fund to support our community.

We have also used our funds for hosting events for the community, typically around Eid or other cultural festivals. For Eid al Fitr 2024, we held a very successful celebratory event for our beneficiaries in South Wales which was much appreciated by our beneficiaries. These events generate community integration and build organic support networks in the community.

Financial Governance

Sulha Alliance's financial governance involves separation of duties (accounting, raising and authorising payments), dual authentication of all payments by trustee members, cash withdrawal limits, documentation of all spend and income, and scrutiny by a Financial Working Group made up of expert members of the board of Trustees.

Achievements and Activities

Community Outreach Work in the UK

Our Community Support Officer (CSO), a former Afghan interpreter, offers support and advice to those who have been resettled to the UK, but who may be looking to bring additional family members to safety here, or seek employment, housing and educational opportunities.

In 2024, 78 families were supported by our Community Support Officer. The families we support often present with many different challenges within the same household and complex needs. Over half of those cases we were able to find a solution to and these cases are now closed.

The majority of cases are immigration related or a combination of immigration and one other issue, such as housing or employment. We successfully lobbied a city council in Scotland to rehouse an interpreter and his family who were put in temporary accommodation that was damp and had a rat problem. This was a welfare issue as rats were chewing through electric cords, destroying blankets and clothing of the family. With Sulha Alliance's help, we were able to get the family a new accommodation offer.

Another interpreter was keen to resume his career as a lab technician in the UK. Sulha Alliance was able to support him into an apprenticeship programme at Charing Cross hospital.

One of our volunteers on our Executive Team has been instrumental in helping a family who have been stuck in Pakistan, then Turkey. The stranded family was desperate to be reunited with family already resettled in the UK. Our volunteer has given enormous time and lobbied two MPs, Home Office and Foreign Office to resolve this issue, during which time, a child was born in precarious circumstances in Istanbul. The Home Office withdrew its refusal to issue a visa to the family and now the family have arrived safely in the UK and Sulha Alliance are committed to helping them resettle.

Our community this year enjoyed the events we co-sponsored with the Scottish Refugee Council and also we held one in Cardiff.

In Glasgow, our community gathered at the Namak Mandi Restaurant for Eid festivities. MSP and local councillors were invited and the feedback was incredibly positive from guests and our interpreter community. Many expressed gratitude at having a family event to attend. The children were entertained throughout the day with party games such as musical chairs and pass the parcel.

Our Community Support Officer based in Wales organised a wonderful Eid event in Cardiff at the community space, Oasis. This was a truly grassroots affair. Our team and supporters purchased the food for Eid in the days leading up to the event and a Chef drove from Birmingham to cater the event in the onsite kitchen. Many of those who attended were thrilled at the opportunity to reconnect with other interpreters and their families. The event

was such a success that the wives and female relatives of the interpreters stayed after the event finished to dance and celebrate Eid together.

The Impact on our Beneficiaries in Afghanistan

The Sulha Alliance and Rafi Hottak has continued to work closely with law firms, such as Leigh Day and DPG to provide Afghan interpreters who are still left behind in Afghanistan with pro bono legal support, to challenge unjustified exclusions from resettlement under ARAP. In this year, about 12 of our cases got a positive resolution.

Media Coverage

Our advocacy efforts were widely reported in local and national newspapers. This year, the focus has been on housing new arrivals and the ongoing struggle to get those who are eligible for resettlement to the UK. Employability of our community also was reported in the Daily Mail and highlighted how many of those are forced to work in low paid or zero hour contracts and how the financial instability and hardship makes it difficult to build a life in the UK.

Elite Afghan soldiers who fought alongside British troops are now living in the UK and want to join the Army - but why are they forced to work in hotels and as pizza delivery drivers?

By DAVID WILLIAMS and STEVE BOGGAN FOR THE DAILY MAIL
PUBLISHED: 22:52, 25 August 2024 | UPDATED: 01:51, 26 August 2024



DAVID WILLIAMS AND STEVE BOGGAN FOR THE DAILY MAIL, 25 August 2024

The Sulha Alliance, a UK charity that supports interpreters and others who worked for the British military in Afghanistan, says it would back the calls to allow trained Afghans to join the Army.

'We are aware of interest among the former interpreter community to serve in the British Armed Forces,' says Peter Gordon-Finlayson, an Afghan veteran and one of the charity's founders. 'Many interpreters associate Britain with the experiences that they had of British soldiers while serving together in Afghanistan.'

'Much of the British military culture is therefore familiar, and the camaraderie and sense of purpose of the military is often at the heart of what they hold dear about Britain. There is a clear natural fit.'

Over 2,300 Afghan Allies and Their Families Currently Housed in UK Military Sites, MoD Reveals

Many of these highly skilled former soldiers, including a former major general, are now working in low wage jobs such as cleaners or delivery drivers due to current rules

John Overton 13 August 2024



IAN OVERTON for BYLINE TIMES, 15 August 2024

'Out of all the Afghans in temporary accommodations, the MoD reported that 679 have been living there for more than six months. The numbers revealed in a Freedom of Information Act disclosure to Byline Times, listed locations referred to as Reception Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) and Transitional Service Family Accommodation (TSFA) sites, and are up to June 2024. [...]

Legal representatives and advocacy groups, such as the Sulha Alliance, the only UK charity whose work solely focuses on supporting Afghan interpreters and civilians who worked for the British Army, have been vocal about the urgent need to expedite the resettlement process.

'The government's delays and errors have left many in dangerous limbo,' said Sara de Jong, co-founder of the Sulha Alliance.

Afghan soldiers blocked from joining stretched British Army for 5 years

Elite army personnel who trained with the UK's special forces have been thwarted by stringent eligibility rules, forcing them to work as cleaners or Deliveroo drivers

EXCLUSIVE

sa Brown, Defence

or

Friday August 13 2024,
3pm BST, The Times



LARISA BROWN FOR THE TIMES, 13 August 2024

Afghan interpreters in danger of being forgotten about, ex-defence attaché warns

Sian Grzeszczyk Melbourne 15th August 2024 at 9:00pm



More needs to be done to help the Afghan interpreters who worked with British forces, a former defence attaché has warned.

Most Popular



Reservists could now get Army pension following 'major' vote in landmark case (10th August 2024) | News

SPRINGER NATURE



Stomach: The UK's short-term aid delivery system

SIAN GRZESZCZYK MELBOURNE for FORCES.net, 15 August 2024

Public Awareness-Raising

The Afghan Interpreter photo exhibition, 'We are Here Because You Were There: Afghan Interpreters in the UK' created by photographer Andy Barnham and Sulha Alliance co-founder Prof Sara de Jong continued touring to different venues in the UK in 2024. The exhibition was extended with portraits of Afghanistan veterans from different countries, who took leading roles in advocacy, including three portraits from Sulha Alliance co-founders Simon Diggins, Ed Aitkens and Peter Gordon-Finlayson. The combined exhibit of Afghan interpreters and veteran advocates was shown under the title 'Armed with Words: Interpreting the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021)'.

The exhibition launched in February 2024 at the Impressions Gallery in Bradford, where the wife of an Afghan interpreter, Nahid, gave a presentation on her experiences and offered Afghan cuisine to attendees (all expenses covered by Impressions Gallery). The exhibition remained in place for nearly three months before continuing its tour around the UK.



A talk given by Prof De Jong, Andy Barnham and an Afghan interpreter at Impressions Gallery, Bradford.

The exhibition subsequently moved to the British Academy for a high-profile three day showcase in July 2024. Sulha Alliance community support officer, Ferooz, and member of the board of trustees, Mukhtar Malakzai, were present for the entire British Academy exhibition to respond to audience questions, together with Andy Barnham and Sara de Jong (all expenses covered by the British Academy). An external report commissioned by the British Academy quoted one visitor's feedback: *"The Afghan interpreter photography [...], amazing to have the creators on site to discuss the importance and answer questions".*

In August 2024, the exhibition moved to the Fusilier Museum at the Tower of London. The launch event was organised and hosted by Sulha Alliance co-founder Simon Diggins, supported by Peter Gordon-Finlayson, which attracted a number of veteran and media stakeholders (expenses covered by the Fusilier Museum).

The final showcase of the year was at the Yorkshire Integration Festival in Halifax, on 21 September, which provided an excellent bookend to the year's tour.

The exhibition, which spanned both the year and the country, has offered thousands of visitors in 2024 an insight into the experiences of Afghan interpreters who worked for the British Army and have now been resettled to the UK. It also provided a fundraising opportunity through the sale of our exhibition catalogues.

- Bradford – Impressions Gallery – 16 February 2024-4 May 2024 - **4,168 visitors**
- London, British Academy Summer Showcase, 11-13 July 2024 - **1,425 visitors + 92 participants = 1517**
- Fusilier Museum London, Tower of London, 5-26 August 2024 - estimate of visitor numbers (based on a percentage of the overall visitor numbers to Fusilier museum during the exhibition period): **26,785.**
- Yorkshire Integration Festival, Halifax, 21 September 2024 - **225 visitors**

Some examples of visitors' feedback:

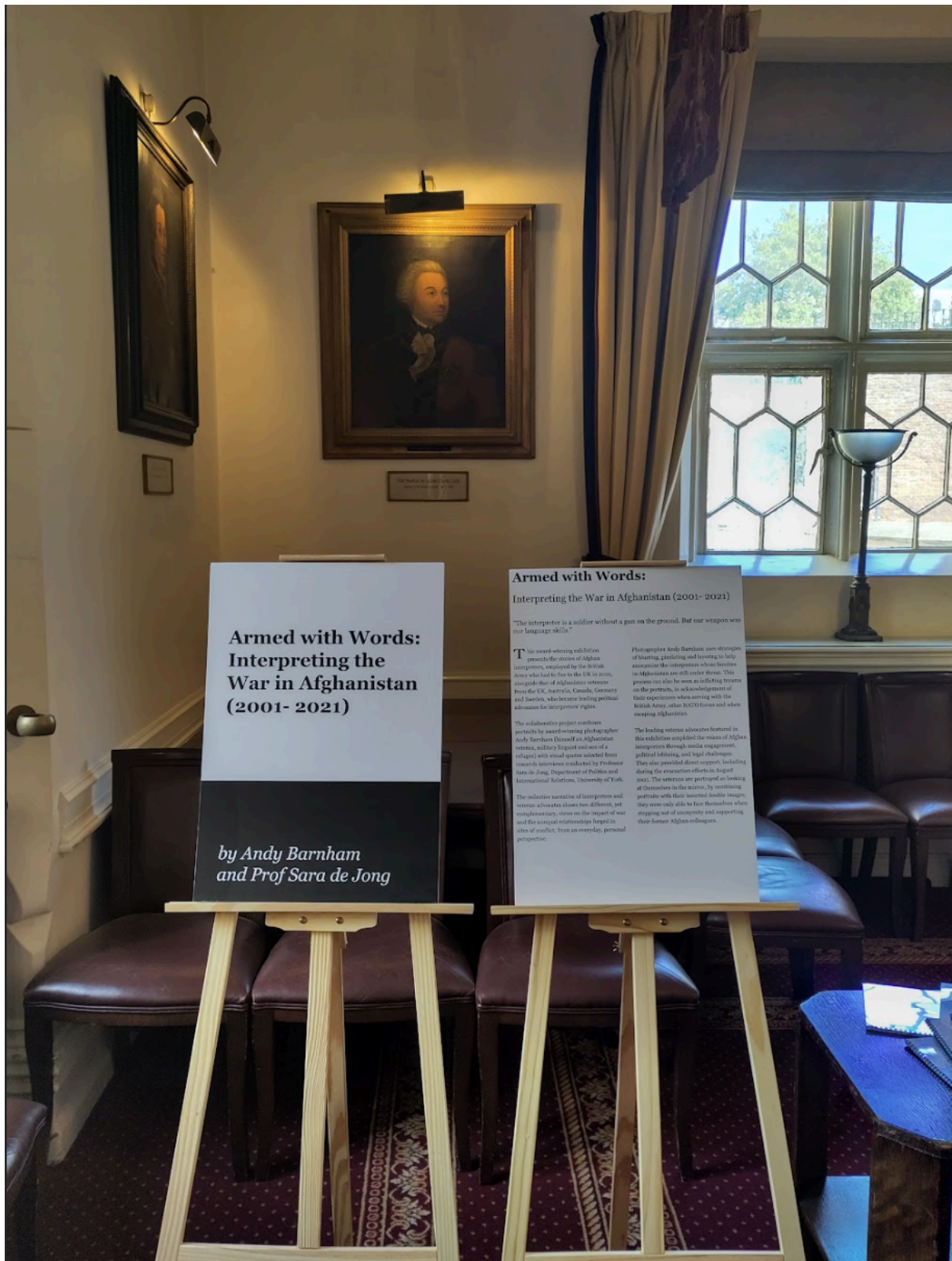
<p>Visitors Fusilier Museum London:</p> <p><i>"It was an absolute delight to come into a new room that we had not seen before as part of the Armed with Words exhibition."</i></p> <p><i>"Great exhibition. Moving stories."</i></p> <p><i>"Easy to judge people until you read their stories"</i></p> <p><i>"Afghanistan campaign medal with 3x campaign stars. Thank you for this exhibit."</i></p> <p><i>"Really thought-provoking."</i></p> <p><i>"Very powerful. Our brother was injured in Afghanistan."</i></p>	<p>Visitors Impressions Gallery, Bradford:</p> <p><i>"Thank you for your work bringing back into sharp focus the plight of Afghan people and the brave translators who aided us. Shameful and tragic what we have allowed to happen to those brave people."</i></p> <p><i>"A sobering essential piece of history"</i></p> <p><i>"Excellent exhibition that has opened my eyes. Brilliantly curated."</i></p> <p><i>"Fantastic exhibition. You feel and learn so much. And hang our heads in shame as regards to the response and attitude of our government."</i></p> <p><i>"Everyone should see this."</i></p>
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Sulha Alliance trustee, Peter Gordon Finlayson (QDG) featured in the 'Armed with Words' exhibition held at the British Academy Exhibition held in July 2024 at Carlton House, London.



Centre is Sulha Alliance trustee Prof Sara De Jong with our Sulha Alliance Community Support Officer Ferooz on the left and Andy Barnham, an Afghanistan veteran and photographer.



After a successful run at the British Academy, the Armed with Words exhibition went to the Fusiliers Museum at the Tower Of London.

Governance and Compliance

Sulha Alliance CIO takes all reasonable steps to comply with charity law, and has a Board of Trustees with skills in both law and accountancy. We take external legal advice where appropriate from our legal team at:

Charles Russell Speechly LLP
5 Fleet Place
London EC4M 7RD

Internally, governance is achieved through weekly meetings of the executive team (A sub-group of 3 trustees) and the operational team (employees and volunteers). Activity is scrutinised through quarterly meetings between the executive team and the full board of trustees.

Challenges and Risks

Our funding for our two staff members is secure until 2027, however the risk is that we are unable to find funding to run the events and workshops that deliver value to our beneficiaries.

This year we have formalised our risk governance process, with a standing risk register complete with risk management plans, risk owners and status updates. This has codified and brought greater rigour and coherence to our capabilities to manage risks effectively.

Future Plans and Goals

The Sulha Alliance is actively seeking funding from multiple sources to enable us to help as many people as possible. We are already experiencing more demand for support, be it emotional support or financial or material help.

We would like to fund our CSO to do more hours to support this influx and/or if we are able, employ a female CSO for gender-sensitive support for the women in our community, or hire another CSO based in the Scotland or the North of England to support to our beneficiary base their on an in person basis. We do have a volunteer network nationwide to offer ad hoc support but we would like to professionalise this support.

Our funds are limited at the moment but as we grow, we would look at new cost effective ways to deliver more to our community.

Financial Projections

Sulha Alliance accounts are prepared in accordance with the guidelines of the Charity Commission of England and Wales.

Our core financial support is secure for the coming 2 years (with thanks to Unbound Philanthropy) and we expect to retain a healthy financial position for the foreseeable future.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Sulha Alliance would like to thank our partners who contributed to our success this year.

Unbound Philanthropy

Wakeham Family Trust

Access Foundation

Leigh Day Solicitors

Deighton Pierce Lynn

Charles Russell Speechley

Celia Record

Halford Community Centre

Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team Wales (EYST)

Vodafone Connected

Help for Heroes

Forces Employment Charity

First Class Learning - Harrow Weald (Solilah Anwar)

Counterpoint - Third Country Operations

Assad al Kanjo - Medical Support and Translation

Andy Barnham

Simon Diggins

Impressions Gallery

The British Academy

The Fusilier Museum at The Tower of London

All our individual donors

Contact Information

Sulha Alliance

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Sulha Alliance
Receipts & Payments Accounts
Year to 31 December

	2024	2023
	£	£
Receipts		
(Donor wishes to remain anonymous)	10,000	-
Wakeham Trust	5,000	-
Home Office Grant	6,377	-
Unbound Philanthropy	-	30,000
Individual donors and fundraisers	2,190	1,653
Program Sales	-	177
Total receipts	<u>23,567</u>	<u>31,830</u>
Payments		
Staff salaries	14,842	17,326
Staff pensions	1,472	1,394
Employer & employee payroll HMRC	1,886	2,511
Staff reimbursed expenses	1,118	402
Fundraising & Admin Support	7,803	-
Independent Accountant Review	-	420
Payroll manager	330	252
Insurance	241	227
Community Events	4,810	-
Hardship Grants	300	-
Total payments	<u>32,802</u>	<u>22,532</u>
Net deficit/surplus	<u>-9,235</u>	<u>9,298</u>
Cash at bank		
Balance brought forward	58,134	48,836
Net surplus/deficit for period	<u>-9,235</u>	<u>9,298</u>
Balance at period end	<u>48,899</u>	<u>58,134</u>
Restricted funds	16,747	49,549
Unrestricted funds	<u>32,152</u>	<u>8,585</u>
	<u>48,899</u>	<u>58,134</u>