



2023/24

ANNUAL REPORT



Brushstrokes
Annual Report
for work
completed
1st April 2023-
31st March
2024



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Chair's Report

Jo Watters

As I hand over, after 9 years as Brushstrokes Management Committee Chair, to the new Father Hudson's Caritas Head of Community Projects, Shari Brown, I continue to be in awe of the hard work and commitment of the staff and volunteers. Once again Brushstrokes has helped large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Services continue to be in high demand - advice, practical provisions, community activities, ESOL and specialist support. This is against a tough funding environment with grants, trusts and donations becoming increasingly difficult to secure.

Brushstrokes has excelled in its refugee resettlement work supporting Sudanese evacuees, Afghan refugees and Ukrainians in settling in Sandwell. The opening and full occupancy of the new refugee accommodation project, Nicolas Barre House, was a huge achievement and reflects a clear need for more of this type of work.

Brushstrokes was especially adept in responding to need, taking initiative, and working in partnership, as seen in its offering of services in Dudley, providing asylum advice in contingency hotels, tackling health inequalities, and supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

As the new Chief Executive Officer at Father Hudson's Caritas, I will continue to be involved with Brushstrokes, a community project which plays a key part of the wider organisation's strategy and focus.

Jo Watters
CEO, Father Hudson's Caritas

Project Manager's Report

Dave Newall

The work of Brushstrokes does not exist in a vacuum but is influenced by new legislation and policy, international events determine patterns of migration, and the changing make up of our local communities. Within this, we seek to be the welcome we would hope to receive ourselves, responding and adapting to the changing context, needs and aspirations of asylum seekers, refugees and the wider migrant population in Sandwell, Birmingham and Dudley. Looking back on the year Brushstrokes has been able to demonstrate a unique capacity to respond to new and emerging needs. Our new 3-year strategy sets (Brushstrokes Community Project) out our strategic direction for 2023-2026 focusing on greater migrant voice, reduced crisis, better health, increased belonging and empowered resilience. This year's report highlights the progress we are making against these goals.

In 2023 we worked with Sandwell Council to provide an emergency response for Sudanese evacuees, building on our expertise and experience gathered from the years delivering support for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees who have been resettled in Sandwell. We rolled out our combined Inclusion health and Early action Asylum advice model in three new contingency hotels; piloted work that addressed the health inequalities migrant communities face in West Birmingham; secured funding to deliver therapeutic interventions and counselling; responded to the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children leading to a new project; built new partnerships with local schools to ensure families and asylum seeking children and young people were able to access counselling and advice to help deal with trauma; developed with St Henry Newman Parish, Nicholas Barré House, a housing project meeting the needs of single refugees.

Project Manager's Report

Sandwell secured Borough of Sanctuary status this year. It was our privilege to work with colleagues from community organisations and those with lived experience of migration in the development of the Borough's strategy and action plan. Recognition as a place of welcome for refugees marks a significant step, but one that must be built on moving forward.

Brushstrokes was honoured to be recognised as the Community Organisation of the Year award in Septembers BBC West Midlands Radio 'Make a Difference' award. To be present with several of the staff team who had come to Brushstrokes as volunteers highlighted the significant role volunteers have and will always play in our work as an organisation. We were also delighted that Bayar, another of our volunteers, was recognised and received on the 'West Midlands Lieutenancy-50 for 50 Awards' for her contribution. Volunteering remains a core element of our work, and through the CATS project this year we were able to expand supported opportunities for service users to volunteer in external organisations. Over 40 individuals secured volunteering placements as a result of this service, building skills, confidence and helping to create a more positive narrative about the contribution migrants make in local communities.

"People cannot be free unless they are willing to sacrifice some of their interests to guarantee the freedom of others. The price of democracy is the ongoing pursuit of the common good by all of the people." Saul Alinsky

Project Manager's Report

The release of the Commission for the Integration of Refugees Report in March 2024 included several examples of our work supporting refugee integration and opportunity for Brushstrokes staff and service users to be able to share their experience and views on the commissioned recommendations in local and national media as part of the launch event. The Commission was able to highlight the time and support required for effective integration is spotlighting Assayed, a former OET Student and staff member, who as a doctor in his home country has through the combined support of Brushstrokes and NHS colleagues been able to move into a medical role at a Birmingham GP practice. ([Building communities for refugees and for Britain](#) ([youtube.com](#)).)

The year saw the end of our partnership with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust on IELTS and OET . We are thankful for all the work Dominic, Jane and all our teachers have put in over the life of this project, supporting over 300 migrant medical professionals with free language courses in the past 6 years, so helping them on their journey towards working in the health service. Assayed, is just one example of the difference this project has made to individuals and the wider community. Our Refugee Transitions Outcome Framework project ended in March significantly overachieving in delivery and demonstrating the benefits of combining refugee integration, housing and employment support in securing sustainable outcomes for new refugees. We were proud to be part of a project which tested and set a benchmark for refugee integration.

Project Manager's Report

Partnership remains central to our approach to improving opportunities and outcomes for new communities. Our work with the Refugee and Migrant Centre in the development and delivery of the Dudley Migration Hub, Refugee Action in the Explore Adapt Renew early action project, St. Chads Sanctuary in the development of contingency hotel support and with Sandwell Consortium on Reach and Reconnect, the Cost of Living programme and Communities Acting Together in Sandwell , are just some examples from 2023/24. Thanks to all who have worked with and supported us over the past 12 months and who have been committed to seeking and taking action to promote the welfare of those most in need in our community. I leave you with the words of Stanley Hauerwas,

"Rather than a theory, God has called into the world a people capable of transgressing the borders of the nation state to seek the welfare of the downtrodden."

Dave Newall

Brushstrokes Project Manager

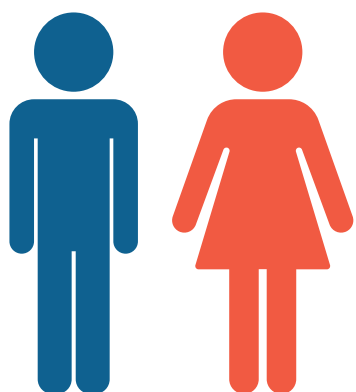
Support in 2023/24



4264 service users, an increase of 866 (25%) on last year. 7633 total beneficiaries, an increase of 1922 (34%) on last year



1385 FAMILIES SUPPORTED

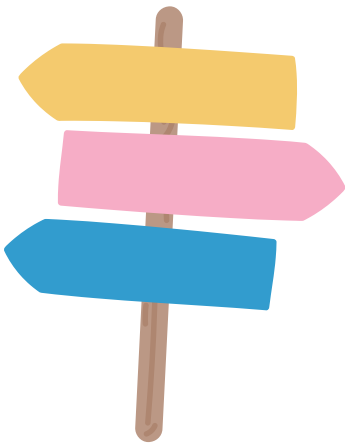


58% MALE/42% FEMALE



129 NATIONALITIES SUPPORTED

Support in 2023/24



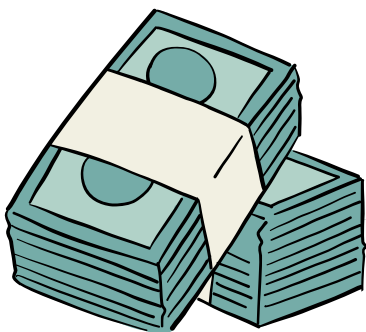
53 Local Authority areas supported.



**25.5% Refugees,
25% Asylum Seekers,
18% EU Nationals**



61 languages spoken



**£938,321 in financial
gains claimed for
clients**

Highlights for 2023/24

1. Greater Voice – Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants will play an increasing role in the community, actively engaging and raising their collective voice with policy makers, commissioners and service providers in ways that address their needs and aspirations and make a positive contribution to the sustainability and flourishing of the areas where they live.

The most striking illustration of how we give our clients greater voice this year was our singular contribution to 2023's Commission for Integration Report, a report stating that £1.2 billion would be contributed to the economy, if those seeking asylum had opportunities to learn English and were allowed to get a job within 6 months of arrival. The report, [From Arrival to Integration: Building Communities for Refugees and for Britain](#) sets out recommendations which would improve the asylum system and enhance the lives of refugees and of the country as a whole.

Brushstrokes was initially visited by commissioners, Dr Ed Kessler, Professor Hanna Kienzler and Alphonsine Kagabago back in November 2020. They came to gain an insight into our work and learn about the difficulties for integration in and around Smethwick.

Later on, Dave Newell, Project Manager at Brushstrokes, took part in the first commission hearing in Birmingham. Evidence of how integration for refugees can be improved has been gathered from over 1,250 organisations, services and individuals, including Brushstrokes. Dave Newell said "It was especially important for us to submit evidence of the importance of access to English language classes at the earliest stage and access to employment". Brushstrokes hold a number of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes and is one of the largest community providers in the Smethwick area. Dr Assayed Dawood, originally from Sudan, was instrumental in providing the Commission with first hand lived experience. Assayed came to the UK in 2015 and spent a number of years working as a Health Inclusion Worker for Brushstrokes in the Contingency Hotels we oversee. He is now working as a GP assistant in Birmingham.

Highlights for 2023/24

The commission representatives visited Brushstrokes again in March to revisit to interview our team and our clients once more. The findings are consistent with our experiences working with asylum seekers in the West Midlands. The vast majority of our asylum-seeking clients possess have skills which would benefit the labour market and the vast majority wish only to get into work as soon as possible to improve their own situation and to not be reliant on the state.



“

I did full time night shifts and then got the bus straight to the Brushstrokes classroom because one day I will practise medicine as a doctor again, as an NHS GP. That is my overall goal even if it takes years. It is a goal I will achieve. I am determined.

”

Assayed, a doctor from Sudan and a refugee



“

The benefits of helping refugees and asylum seekers in areas such as education, employment, skills, and housing, will positively reflect on Britain, as it will drive the economy forward with the skilled people the nation needs for growth.”

”

James Watkins, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Head of Policy and Public Impact



“

We found real hope and inspiration for a very different system. One that supports refugees, communities and wider society to thrive. One that our political leaders can realistically embrace.

”

Dr Ed Kessler, Chair of the Commission



“

Away from the division and headline grabbing policies, and despite our differences as commissioners, we have found consensus on what a good system could look like.

”

The Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Commissioner and former refugee

Highlights for 2023/24

Equally, we attach great importance to our continued engagement with the Service User Panel, which has become an increasingly important forum for us to consult when we are building our own strategies, considering new projects or seeking qualitative feedback on the work we do.

Please see a case study for a member of the Service User Panel below.

Case Study Service User Panel

TSalvador has faced several challenges since moving to the UK from El Salvador with his two daughters. One of the biggest barriers that he, just like many who seek asylum in the UK, was the language barrier. However, he has shown a lot of commitment to learn English from a low base, through studying at his local college and practising whenever possible. Despite restricted opportunities to gain employment due to his limited English and no access to private transport, Salvador gained employment in the cleaning sector. His working hours were unsociable, and he would often finish shifts in the early hours with negligible public transport at his disposal. Living in Smethwick, he also encountered challenges regarding his accommodation and anti-social behaviour.

Salvador was one of the members of the growing local Latin American community who most engaged with Brushstrokes' services, such as the bike project, men's group activities, immigration advice and the community cafe. After settling into the community, Salvador was eager to contribute to Brushstrokes and he joined the ESOL team as a volunteer. His English language skills had clearly improved and he wanted to use these skills to benefit others who were experiencing the different linguistic challenges he had faced.

Salvador was invited to become a member of the Service User Panel in June and his input has been valuable to recent discussions at our monthly meetings. It has taken a while for the Latin American community to establish itself in the area, often due to their low level of English which has made it difficult for them to engage with services and receive clear information regarding health services and access to education. Many have fled their homelands due to extortion, so their wariness towards new people is also understandable. Having a confident member of the Latin American community such as Salvador with a good understanding of how Brushstrokes operates has provided the SUP group with another different and important perspective.

His confidence (as well as that of his family) is growing and as well as supporting Brushstrokes, they have recently volunteered at The El Sueno Existe festival in Machynlleth, Wales, to celebrate Latin American culture and politics.

Service User Panel Team

Highlights for 2023/24

2. Reduced crisis - Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are able to take early action themselves, through the provision of information, advice and advocacy that prevents them falling into crisis or to seek early help when faced with homelessness, destitution, unemployment or poor health.

The sheer increase in numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants we see coming to our door for advice, guidance and material assistance paint a very clear picture of our reputation as an effective crisis response organisation in the UK and we very much need to highlight that our reputation extends far beyond the boundaries of Sandwell and the West Midlands as we frequently encounter those reaching out for help from across the UK.

While our work is truly holistic, in that we capture clients needs way beyond the initial presenting issue, we are very careful that the work we do is done "with" the client, empowering them with the skills and knowledge necessary to help themselves in future. This is crucial as we would not be successfully integrating our clients if they did not leave us with the ability and knowledge to engage with statutory agencies like the Local Authority and Home Office or with banks, prospective employers and the like. To this end, wherever possible we adopt a coaching style of advice provision with our clients and encourage them to engage with the many classes, workshops and group advice sessions we increasingly provide.



Highlights for 2023/24

In this period, we provided 347 new refugees with wraparound support. Some of these came through the Home Office's Refugee Transition Outcome Fund (RTOF), some from the Homes For Ukraine scheme and also included 53 individuals evacuated from war-torn Sudan. For the Sudanese cohort we were the emergency first responders on behalf of the Local Authority. Wraparound support in these cases takes the form of an exhaustive support package of initial benefits claims through the setting up of Universal Credit accounts, housing advice and assistance, and employment advice.

We also worked with 131 Homeless On The Day cases in this period. In these cases we will routinely go that extra mile in ensuring a roof is put over somebody's head, even if they are in the most extreme and seemingly hopeless crisis.

Health Support in Contingency Hotels

With additional funding from Public Health, we aimed to promote access to and understanding of health services, addressing the wider determinants of public health for new migrants in Sandwell and provide increased access to ESOL for those in contingency hotels.

The project set out to support at least 200 individuals over the period Sept 2022- March 2023 and achieve the following outcomes:

- Residents in the contingency hotel will report a greater understanding of how to access NHS services.
- Increased uptake of GP registration and services
- Reduction of inappropriate use of A & E and Urgent Care Centre provision
- Provision of HC2 certificates
- Increase in BBV screening for new arrivals.
- Access to ESOL reducing learners' sense of social isolation and increased confidence to take action themselves as a result of improved ESOL.
- Urgent health and wellbeing cases are identified at an earlier stage through proactive outreach and access to advisers at the contingency hotel.
- Access to information and advice onsite at the contingency hotel reduces residents' levels of stress and anxiety.

Highlights for 2023/24

Supporting Destitution

Food

Our foodbank this year has seen a dramatic increase in numbers this year. Last year our average monthly users totalled 346 households. This year we now average 517 household per month. Driving factors around this include a rise of NRPF clients (particularly student VISA individuals), hotel dispersed individuals and the cost-of-living crisis. We see people who used to be able to afford to feed themselves now struggling to afford the same as they have always bought, this is due to rising prices in the supermarket.



Highlights for 2023/24

The additional strain to our budget that increased demand has caused has led us to slightly reduce our weekly food offering. While our clients contend with sharp price increases in the supermarkets, we also feel the effect. The cost of our weekly shop means we have to be extremely frugal with the offering we can provide for households. We maintain that our packages are an emergency pack for those facing food poverty. We are still able to offer enough that families can guarantee a source of fresh food and some basics they require to cook healthy meals. To reduce costs, for much of the year we collected surplus stock from multiple small TESCO stores, this totalled £7,555 (not all usable) worth of food. Unfortunately these collections have had to be dropped as the decreasing amount to collect hasn't warranted the time out of our extremely busy schedule.



Large donations around harvest, Christmas and a couple of emergency donations from 'Black Country Foodbank' have ensured that every person that comes to our doors for food has been able to leave with something that can ensure they are able to feed themselves for at least 3 days. All this being said, our resource assistant and team of volunteers have worked tirelessly to maximise our offering and make sure people receive their food in a dignified and timely matter. Without our fantastic resource team the level of support we have been able to provide would not have been possible.

Highlights for 2023/24

Non-Food

The year has brought a variety of challenges for our clothing resources. In response to the Sudanese crisis we saw many families all move into the area in a very short space of time. We were able to put together a package for each individual person and deliver them to the hotels in which they were accommodated. This left us extremely short on many children age groups. Thanks to our fantastic donors, a quick Facebook appeal brought our stock levels straight back up. Throughout the year our menswear has been under pressure due to the amount of single males being housed in hotels in the area. We have been tackling this by delivering emergency packages to individuals but also allowing them to book a group appointment in our resource room. This has meant we were able to provide a lot more a lot quicker than with our usual appointment method. We have put out multiple appeals for men's clothing online and it is something we still see an extremely high demand for.

We have been able to provide 232 items of baby equipment this year. Items include cots, pushchairs, baths, changing mats and any other baby items we receive from donations. Many of the clients that receive these items are referred to us by the Sandwell Midwifery team who identify the family does not have the necessary items to provide a safe and comfortable environment for the newborn baby. We continue to receive items from Dunelm as part of the 'Home 2 Home' scheme. This has allowed us to provide more complete household starter packs and offer much wanted household decorations to our service users.

Highlights for 2023/24

A big cause for celebration for us in 23/24 was the establishment of our new refugee accommodation, Nicolas Barré House, located in Willenhall. The accommodation is an ex-presbytery house which the St. John Henry Newman Parish are letting to us to offer a supported accommodation to house 5 single males with recently granted refugee status. We filled the house within 3 months. Residents all have 12-month licenses and receive enhanced, bespoke support from Brushstrokes advisers to get into employment and into their own properties. They also receive advice and support on successfully integrating into UK society, household budgeting, ESOL and digital skills classes, where required, and any other support we can reasonably provide them. One of the residents is already volunteering at Brushstrokes and all have community befrienders in the form of parish volunteers in Willenhall.



Highlights for 2023/24

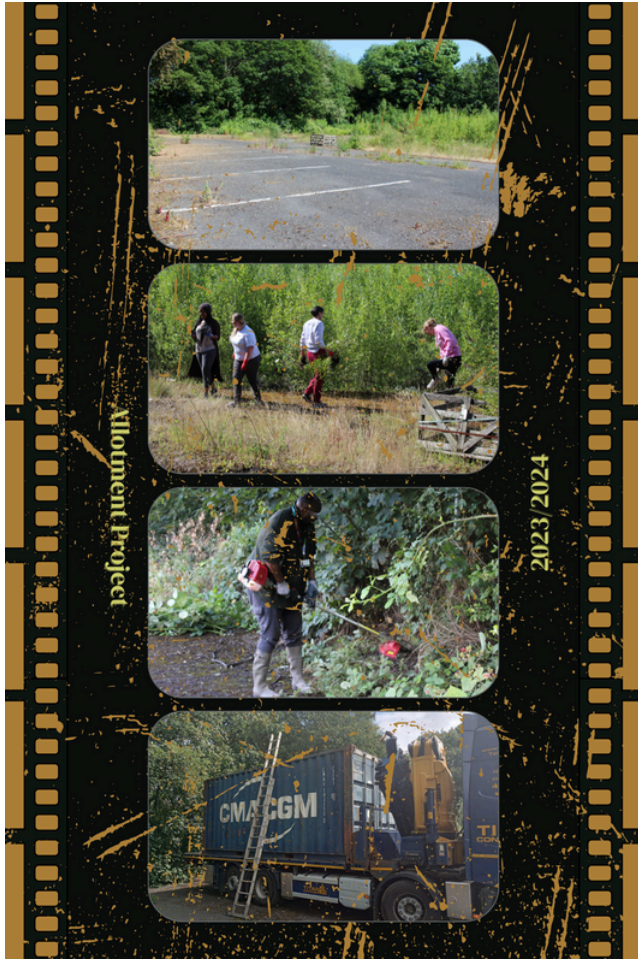
Community Allotment

We also established an allotment project this year, thanks to donated space from Sandwell Council and a small grant from SCVO.

Over the course of the year, it has:

- Engaged volunteers from the asylum community, the private sector, the public sector and the local community in contributing to a outdoor, green project.
- Engaged isolated individuals in meaningful work, giving them new skills and involving them in our community.
- Contributed a steady supply of fresh vegetables to our foodbank and community café. The produce we have grown has included spring greens, kale, spinach, green beans, French beans, onions, garlic, potatoes, cavallo nero, broad beans, lettuce, chard. We are currently cultivating, courgettes, sweetcorn, pumpkins, radishes, lamb's lettuce, tomatoes, runner beans, more potatoes and more onions.
- Demonstrated practical and productive use of unused council land which directly contributes to alleviating cost of living problems for the hidden poor in the community.
- Made a very positive difference to the mental health of service users and staff at Brushstrokes.
- Played host to WMCA's and The Wildlife Trust's 2024 West Midlands Virtual Forest Project.

Highlights for 2023/24



Highlights for 2023/24

3. Better Health – The health and wellbeing of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants improves and health inequalities are reduced as a result of increased understanding of NHS services, self-care, improved accessibility and a responsive local health service.

Our health advice services are extensive and focussed mainly, but not exclusively, at the contingency hotels, with regular NHS drop-ins occurring at Brushstrokes on Community Café days covering blood pressure checks, heart health, bowel health, TB screening and many others. Our advice and information sessions are designed to ensure not only that new asylum seekers and migrants get all of the necessary health screening and register with a GP on arrival, but furthermore understand their healthcare rights and have a full understanding on how to access services.

This year we delivered 1613 health advice sessions covering the following areas.

Pharmacy 1st Scheme Referral
General Health & Wellbeing Advice
Referral to the GP
TB Clinic List
Flu Vaccination clinic
Immunization Program Check List
Dental Referral
Understanding NHS & Pharmacy 1st Scheme Session
General Advice
Clothes
Referral to other Brushstrokes Services
Free GYM Pass
Musical Wellness Referral
ESOL Lessons List
Referral to other charities
Need for Legal advice/Solicitor
Group Discussion about NHS Plan
Pharmacy day at Brushstrokes (blood pressure checks & Pharmacy 1st Scheme 1-2-1 session)
Mental wellbeing – 5 Ways to Wellbeing session
Blood donation programme
Health 1-2-1
GP Registration
Dental Surgery Registration
HC1 Certificate applied

Highlights for 2023/24

This year also saw the beginning of the Embrace Project, designed to explicitly support vulnerable parents of young children and marking the beginning of our family support expansion.



EMBRACE

Support for parents of under 2's and families through pregnancy.



- We provide specialist advice to address poverty low income, poor quality housing and immigration issues.
- Employment support
- Information and support to understand and access local health services
- Specialist counselling and access to music therapy.
- Orientation sessions for new arrived families
- Peer led new parents group, parenting courses and social activities

For more information please contact
Phone 0121 565 2234
Email: info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Highlights for 2023/24

Brushstrokes has started this year to use an Inclusion Health approach to increase understanding and accessibility of health services among the communities we work with and beginning to demonstrate how this approach can address the wider determinants. Employing two migrant health professionals as Inclusion Health workers this year, we have piloted a new approach to health information, advice and advocacy in West Birmingham and our contingency hotel work with those seeking asylum.

Inclusion health is an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded, who typically experience multiple interacting risk factors for poor health, such as stigma, discrimination, poverty, violence, and complex trauma. You will see from the list many vulnerable migrants and those specifically from the asylum system may fall into more than one inclusion health groups. People in inclusion health groups tend to have poor experiences of healthcare services because of barriers created by service design. These negative experiences can lead to people in inclusion health groups avoiding future contact with NHS services and being least likely to receive healthcare despite have high needs. This can result in significantly poorer health outcomes and earlier death among people in inclusion health groups compared with the general population. Extremely poor health status among inclusion health groups is driven by severe disadvantage and clusters of social risk experienced when people are socially excluded. For example, someone who is alcohol dependent may also be homeless resulting in vulnerability, limited opportunities, extremely poor health and a reduced life expectancy. Risks may also build up over the life course. The following illustrates how the work to address migrant health inequalities through our inclusion health work has been delivered this year.

INCLUSION HEALTH IN PRACTICE

- GP and dentist registration HC2 certificates	Provision of counselling and arts and music therapy	Engaging with the Maternity Voice Partnership midwives and health visitors and NHS consultations	Work to translate and promote awareness of health conditions vaccinations and treatment eg. MMR, Flu Chicken Pox Scabies
Health for hotels work initial health assessment and registration process	Understanding the NHS and other health information sessions	Blood Born Virus screening clinics Trust Information Organisation	NRPF TB pathway Assessment support post treatment and decision pathways
Blood donation project	5 ways to wellbeing and mental wellbeing activities	Pharmacy first developments and blood pressure check provision	Dealing with NHS charges

Highlights for 2023/24

4. Increased Belonging - Refugees and migrants develop strong connections and a sense of belonging to the local community as a result of an effective integration support that enables them to feel safe, secure accommodation, access education and training, gain employment and reach a place of financial stability.

Increased belonging, in the most poignant cases, comes about when somebody who has had to deal with unimaginable circumstances in their lives is finally "seen". This is most often the case with clients who have been captured by our NRPF team whose task is to help those people with No Recourse to Public Funds. Some of the circumstances we've seen our clients have to endure reflect the shocking details about the way vulnerable people can be treated in our society.

Those with NRPF can be people who have restrictions on their visas and can be those who have come to the UK for ostensibly legitimate reasons but due to circumstances out of their control, find themselves without the means to financially or materially support themselves.

A notable example of this was in October 2023 when we participated in a crisis management exercise hosted by Sandwell on the 10th October following the fallout of a major social care home losing its license to operate. The event was intended to assist the 190 skilled migrant visa workers employed by the home in protecting their immigration and employment statuses, given that the sponsoring employer had lost their sponsoring rights. This left the 190 workers in a position whereby technically, if they were unable to find a new sponsoring employer within 60 days, the Home Office would revoke their visa. We had representatives from our employment and immigration teams attend and as it turned out, the vast majority of the skilled migrant workers they spoke to were unable to evidence any qualifications which would have validated their initial skilled migrant visa applications, visas which had nonetheless been issued.

Sometimes cases are much more clear cut cases of individuals sadly taking advantage of vulnerable individuals, as the case study below shows. ²⁴

Highlights for 2023/24

Case Study *NRPF*

LW is a 60-year-old Polish citizen, widowed, homeless with a long history of rough sleeping and a victim of modern slavery and human trafficking. When he first approached our organisation, in mid-June, he did not have any valid ID or immigration status in the UK, he was unemployed, destitute, struggling with alcohol misuse, suffering from depression, and struggling to access health care due to lack of address.

Initially the casework was focused to secure client's immigration status under the EU settlement scheme. We started work with him by arranging a passport appointment for him and finding him a place to live. We were able to get accommodation in "Tabor House" in Birmingham City centre from the beginning of July. Since then, the client was required to engage with our services in terms of receiving weekly destitution support of £20. Slowly we were able to build a trusted relationship with the client and while looking for proof of residence in the UK, we were able to find out more details about his life in this country and the background from his home country.

It appeared that the client was trafficked to the UK in October 2007 by Polish Roma travellers. They had paid for his bus ticket and arranged his accommodations and work in the UK. From the time of his arrival in this country he was under their "supervision". For many months he had to give back 70% of his salary to pay-off his ticket and rent, the NINO has been applied for and kept by the gang, they also took a loan of £8000 using his identity and appointed him as director of a company he was never aware of. Back home he was convicted of many, minor criminal offences. He was raised by single mother and because they struggled financially, he had been forced to go to work when he was 14. He had been imprisoned in total 16 times between 1983 and 2007 in Poland. Once he left prison, he struggled to settle and find a job, he was vulnerable, and this is when he has been targeted by the people who brought him to the UK.

After a few months he managed to escape from the traffickers, he moved to Ashton near Manchester and managed to find a job. Just as everything was starting to get better, he became unwell and unable to work due to his health condition. He claimed JCA from 2014-2017 but once he was no more eligible to receive the benefits, he started sleeping rough. He was sleeping in the tent by the canals in Ashton, until one day all his belongings burned down. Since then, he was placed in the temporary accommodation in Ashton but due to the language barrier, he did not receive further support or advice.

In April 2023 he decided to move back to Birmingham and slept in the tent in different public parks until he was referred to Brushstrokes. In the beginning of November, we made his referral to the Modern Slavery team in Sandwell Council. That was followed by NRM referral at the beginning of December after the client had given his statement. He is now in a safe house, and we have been able to get immigration advice, healthcare, and mental health support in place. We ended up providing destitution payments for him, weekly, for 6 months. The Salvation Army continue to care for him.

No Recourse To Public Funds Team

Highlights for 2023/24

We also run a regular and always well attended programme of wellbeing activities. These encourage togetherness, belonging and build a real sense of community between service users from dozens of different nations who would never normally socialise in such diverse groups.



SOCIAL ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE

MONDAYS 4:30–6PM

FOOTBALL SESSION

HADLEY STADIUM, WILSON ROAD, SMETHWICK, B66 4NL



TUESDAYS 3–5 PM

CRICKET SESSION

CRICKET NET AT VICTORIA PARK, SMETHWICK, B66 3NT



WEDNESDAYS 2– 4 PM

MEN'S GROUP GARDENING & NATURE WORKSHOPS

BRUSHSTROKES GARDEN AREA



WEDNESDAYS 5– 7 PM

WELCOME WEDNESDAY – TABLE TENNIS, CHESS, TEA & COFFEE, CHAT

BRUSHSTROKES HALL



FIRST THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH 12–4 PM

CYCLE REPAIR SESSION

BRUSHSTROKES CAR PARK



FRIDAY 12 – 1PM

COMMUNITY LUNCH (FREE)

BRUSHSTROKES HALL



FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH 6PM

FILM EVENING (FREE)

BRUSHSTROKES HALL



THIRD SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH 10 AM–2PM

CYCLE REPAIR SESSION

BRUSHSTROKES HALL / CAR PARK



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT BRYAN ON 07827 258680
BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ

Highlights for 2023/24



Highlights for 2023/24

5. Empowered resilience - Refugees and Migrants standard of living improves as they access the language classes, advice, education, training and employment support that values and enhances their skills, helps them secure meaningful employment and provides the resources to deal with the impact of the cost of living crisis.

Helping clients of 129 distinct nationalities speaking 61 languages naturally determines a need for a robust English language teaching offer and ESOL has always been a core component of Brushstrokes offer. As Charlemagne put it, "to have another language is to possess a second soul" and a huge part of developing our clients' empowered resilience is by helping them to develop that second soul. A functional grasp of English is critical, not just to aid clients' settlement into our communities, but also in allowing them to effectively navigate the jobs market and to qualify for even the most basic jobs. It is a common misconception that basic service jobs are accessible to those with little grasp of English, as in the modern workplace even those basic service roles require familiarity and compliance with Health and Safety, Health and Hygiene, Risk Assessment and COSHH policies which adopt quite complex terminology.

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

- In 2023/24, we had 308 ESOL learners attending our regular classes.
- We continued delivery as a part of the Sandwell Language Network.
- We introduced family learning ESOL sessions so we could capture learners with childcare commitments which would normally prevent them from attending a formal ESOL class.
- We also introduced provision for 3 contingency hotels and continued our outreach offer in Dudley.

IELTS and OET (HOP) programme

HOP funding for online OET and IELTS courses finally came to an end in February 2024. No new students were registered in September 2023, but we were able to continue with current students until the end of the summer term.

Highlights for 2023/24

IELTS students have joined with the SLN IELTS course which runs until July 2024.

21 OET students continued until June 2024 with a volunteer teacher. These are 10 doctors, 7 nurses, 4 pharmacists. For many students finding the time to study is a balancing act between childcare, work shifts and sometimes other college courses. All lessons are recorded so students can catch up on missed classes. Regular mock tests are evidence of progress and several students took the OET test in the summer.

Students also have the opportunity to attend online conversation groups run by Brushstrokes' volunteers. Both these groups are well attended and give students an opportunity to improve their fluency and general English conversation.

Two nurses, who were working as health care assistants in the NHS, have gained their nursing PIN through recent changes in NMC criteria. Both nurses were able to combine previous OET scores with detailed evidence of language competence from their managers and support from Brushstrokes.

'Thank you, you are the most wonderful team I have come across. I am now a community nurse in Birmingham South.' Jacobeth Moleele.

'Thank you for all your support. I have received my PIN and am now working as an RGN.' Parwinder Kaur

Assayed Dawood, who was the first refugee doctor we supported with English language provision back in 2017, is now working as GP assistant at a surgery in Northfield. He is working towards his final medical exam which will enable him to practise as a doctor in the UK.

Highlights for 2023/24

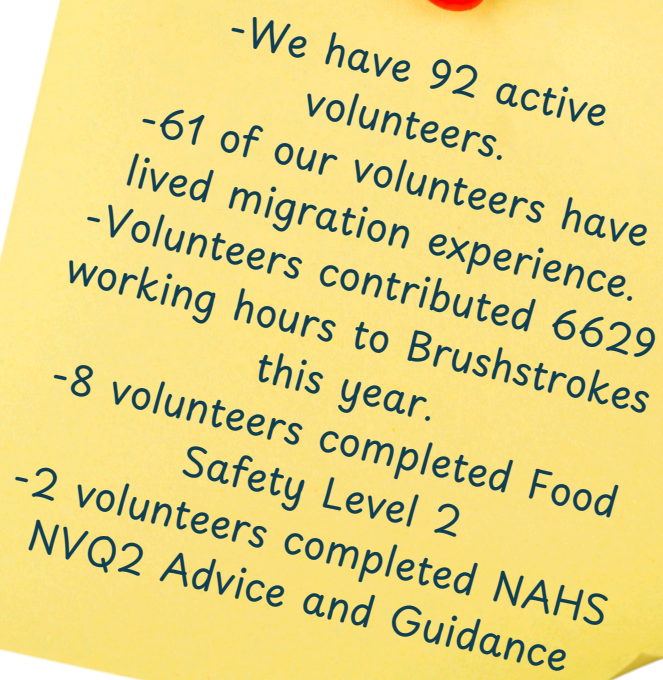
Employment

An employment outcome for a client is usually the pinnacle of an integration journey and often requires the most sustained work. Our ability to provide this kind of support as part of our holistic model really sets us apart from other organisations. Employment represents the ultimate facet of empowered resilience for an asylum seeker or refugee.

Volunteering

As well as being crucial for the operation of our services at Brushstrokes, volunteering is often the most effective gateway into employment for many of our service users and many of our own paid staff have been through that route.

For the past year we have recruited 44 volunteers from which 34 have lived experience of migration. We are proud to celebrate the wonderful diverse range of volunteers from different countries, religions and cultures. Countries include Portugal, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Kurdistan, Iran, Eritrea and Albania.

- 
- We have 92 active volunteers.
 - 61 of our volunteers have lived migration experience.
 - Volunteers contributed 6629 working hours to Brushstrokes this year.
 - 8 volunteers completed Food Safety Level 2
 - 2 volunteers completed NAHS NVQ2 Advice and Guidance

Highlights for 2023/24

"As a single mother of 1 child who needed help, emotionally and physically, I was supported and by Brushstrokes and in 2023 I was willing to help others who went through the hard time like me. That is how I started my journey to apply for volunteering at Brushstrokes.

I like to thank the Brushstrokes staff who made me feel comfortable and appreciated... Volunteering at Brushstrokes, has changed my life , I met different people , from different backgrounds , culture ,religious ...

My confident and skills has been improved after a long time without work. After 1 year volunteering at Brushstrokes I had an opportunity to apply for a job as a receptionist /Admin Assistant. Now I have been employed... since November 2023 up to now."

"Jay"

"Jay" was a single mom with one child, from East Africa, and moved into Smethwick in 2017. She came to Brushstrokes after hearing about the service from her support worker. She needed support and was feeling isolated. After receiving our help she received her immigration status, became a volunteer and then later gained employment.

Over the past year our volunteers have gained recognition from the Mayor of Sandwell for their Years of Service. Volunteers have also studied and have gained qualifications in Advice & Guidance, Food Safety Level II and have completed NVQs in Health & Social Care. Ten of our volunteers have gained employment. The work of our volunteers have been recognised by BBC Make a Difference initiative for the West Midlands and locally by the recent "Smethwick Community Awards 2024".

Highlights for 2023/24



It has been a busy but rewarding year with many volunteers being recognised for their studies and support. We finish the year with a record 92 active volunteers and over the past year have received a total of 6629 volunteering hours. We will continue to celebrate all the wonderful support our volunteers offer as they are an invaluable part of our services “Welcoming the stranger” and offering a helping hand to all.



Pictured Top: Baljinder Kaur, “Outstanding Volunteer Award”



Cllr Bill Gavin (Mayor) & David Newall (Manager)

Highlights for 2023/24

A poignant employment case study from the year.

Case Study Employment

Client was referred to Brushstrokes by Black Women's County Aid (BWCA), due to special circumstances.

Client attended the employment registration day & partially disclosed a personal matter.

Another appointment was immediately arranged with the client, whereby serious safeguarding matters were conveyed.

The client was informed of procedures that shall be followed, to assist the situation.

Client's Barriers:

- Client living in destitute circumstances (Safeguarding issues).
- Gaps in employment history.
- No UK work experience.
- Lack of confidence.

Safeguarding protocol was adhered to in respect of the client's circumstances.

- Submitted an internal referral to the Immigration department.
- Liaised with BWCA and the client's caseworker – exchanging contact details and information that has been provided by the client.
- Liaised with external health agencies, such as Walsall Manor Hospital.
- Submitted referrals to external bodies, such as Sandwell Trust, plus others.
- Built an effective rapport with the client, to develop their confidence skills & coping mechanisms.
- Created a CV for the client to complete job applications.
- Held motivational discussions with client & discussed weekly/monthly workshops held at Brushstrokes.
- Client was advised & attended the Jobs Fair and Volunteer Fair.
- Client successful submitted a job application for a vacancy with an employer that had exhibited at the Jobs Fair.
- In depth Interview Preparation was conducted with client.
- CV: A new professional CV has been provided for the clients.
- Client attended the Jobs Fair.
- Client attended the Volunteer Fair.
- Interview Preparation: A Mock Interview was conducted with the client & they were provided with hardcopies of questions and examples.
- Client attended an Interview.
- Client successful gained employment.

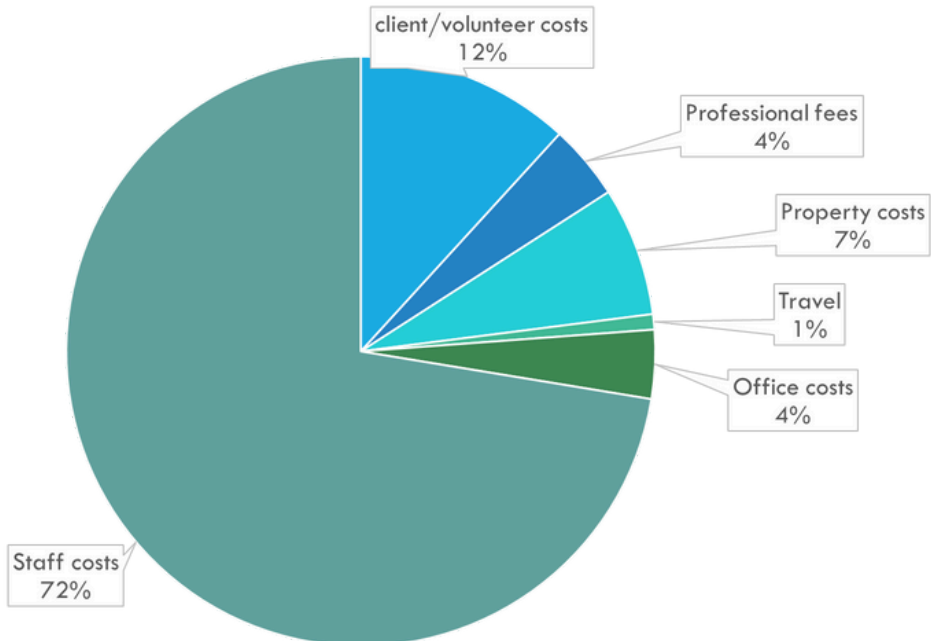
"With your help, when I lost hope you motivated me. And from then I had hope and you showed me that I should look at this direction and use it wisely. Thank you."

Employment Team

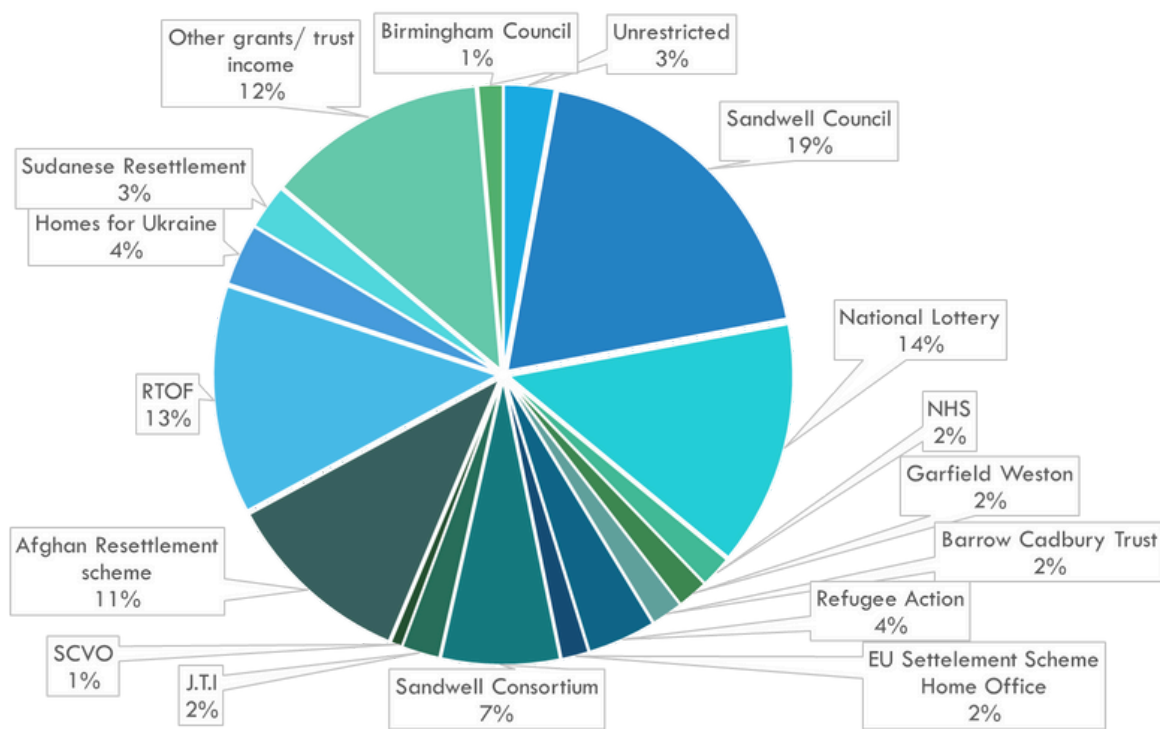
Selected Financial Info

2023/24

Brushstrokes expenditure 2023/24 £1398992

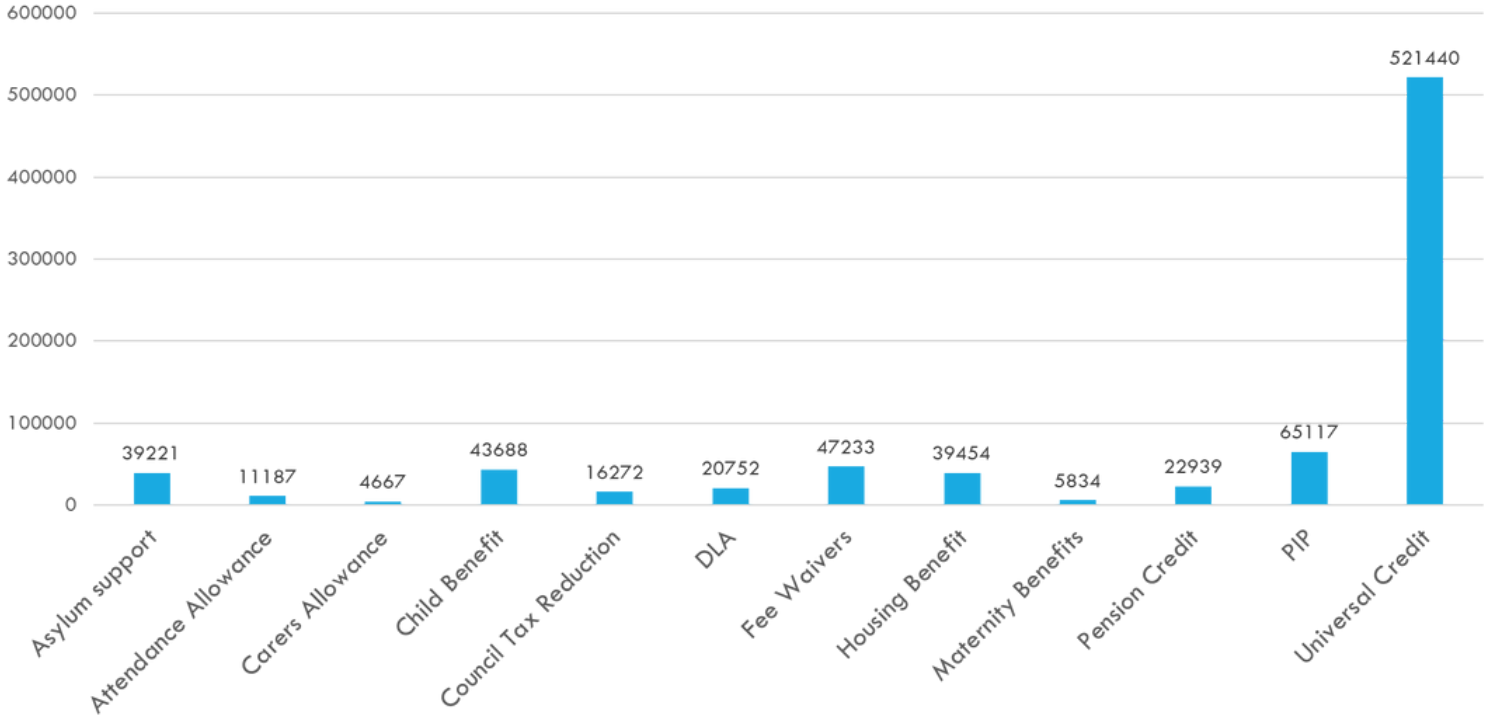


Brushstrokes Income 2023/24 £1,420,230

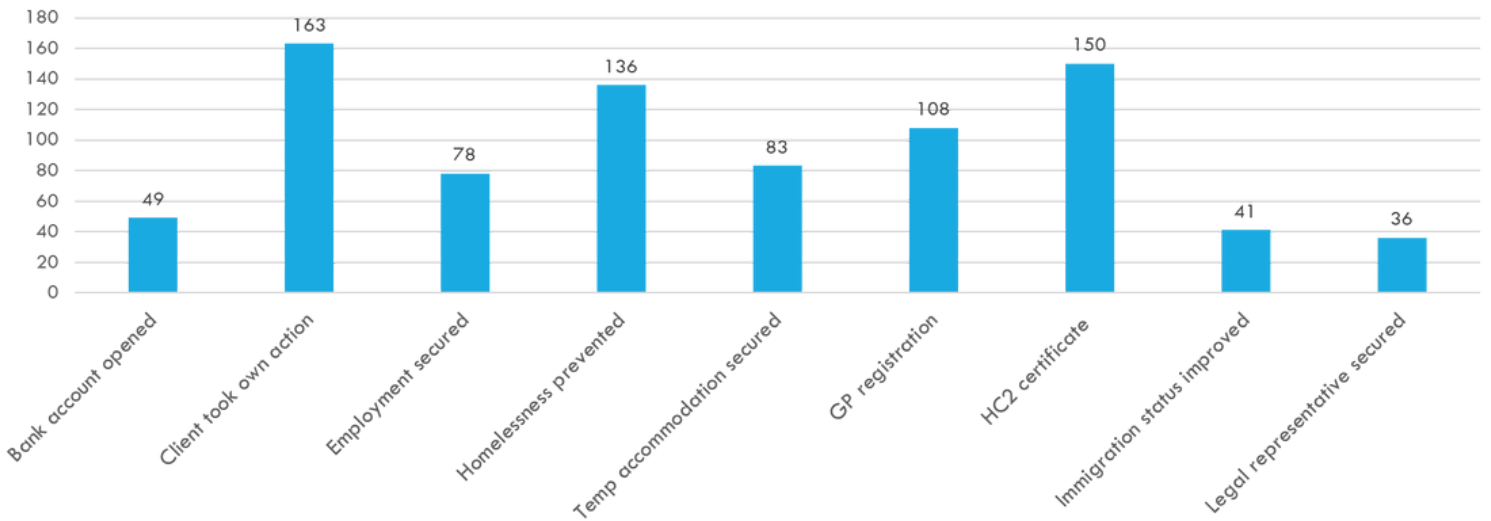


Financial and Non-Financial Outcomes 2023/24

Selected Financial Gains 2023/24

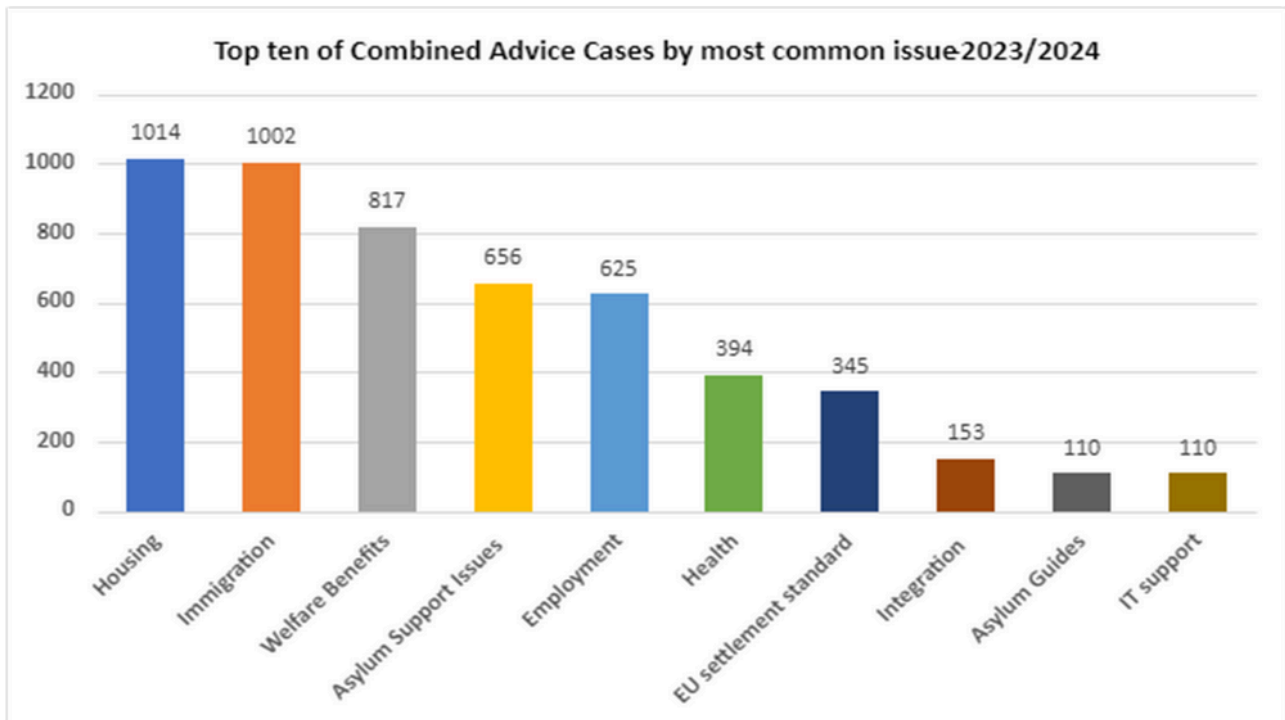
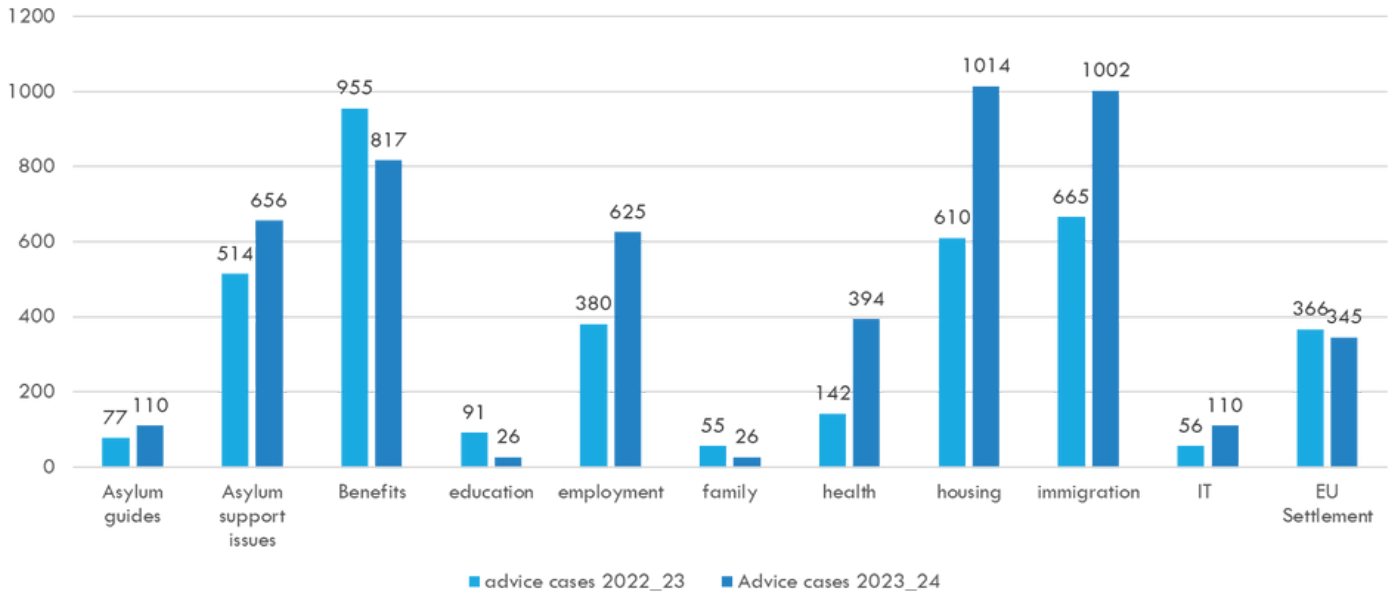


Number of outcomes for 2023/24



Casework 2023/24

Comparison of advice cases 2022/23 to 2023/24



a big thank you as always to our amazing funders

- Asda Foundation
- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- Birmingham City Council
- The Cole Charitable Trust
- Day for Life- Catholic Bishops of England and Wales
- Community Matters National Grid Fund
- Cycling UK
- The Garfield Weston Foundation
- The Grimmitt Trust
- Harborne Parish Lands Charity
- The Home Office
- The Infant Jesus Sisters
- Irwin Mitchell Charitable Trust
- The Joseph Hopkins Charity
- Justice Together Initiative
- The National Lottery - Awards for All and Reaching Communities
- Nationwide Community Foundation
- NHS Blood and Transplant
- Parish of St Philip Neri
- Parish of St Henry Newman
- Parish of St Joseph and St Etheldreda
- The Passionists
- Refugee Action
- Sandwell Consortium
- Sandwell Council
- SCVO – Vision 2030
- Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
- The Sisters of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
- West Birmingham ICB

For more information please contact David Newall
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