



Impact Report

2022-2023



Introduction

‘When you are experiencing being an asylum seeker or refugee it is quite challenging. When I met the Centre I got the sense of my humanity, my dignity, coming back. Islington Centre is my home.’ - Centre community member

Since the Centre was founded in 1997, we have welcomed each person as an individual, listened to their experiences and responded to what they needed.

Our approach is compassionate and human and the support we offer is long term - on average people stay with us around three years.

Our services are holistic and include:

- Advice and advocacy to overcome difficulties accessing healthcare, education, legal support etc.
- Hot food and a sense of community at our Centre in Islington.
- Free, high quality English lessons.
- Enrichment activities, art and writing, yoga, gym.
- Support packages for people in destitution.

The people who come to us are working hard to overcome a lack of English, a sense of isolation, mental and physical health issues, homelessness and poverty. Last year around 45% of the people who approached us were experiencing destitution, with no legal right to work and not in receipt of any statutory support.

The cost of living crisis, along with an increase in people seeking asylum in the UK, led to a 43% jump in demand on our services in 2022-23.

We responded by increasing our capacity and offering more activities, both online and in person. As a result, we saw a 53% increase in activity attendance across the year.

Our 2022-2023 impact is being measured and considered within the context of our the three year strategy launched in November 2022.

Strategic priorities for 2022-2025 are:

- Develop a strong organisation to underpin the work and enable the Centre to be the best it can be.
- Provide activities and services for our clients to help relieve the issues they face and enable them to reach their potential.
- Build our profile and our partnerships to share the work we do and to increase support to carry it out.

We know that the year ahead will be difficult but with the support of our many partners, volunteers and funders, we will continue to be here, helping people to achieve a decent quality of life in the UK.

Our Classes and Services



Between September 2022 and August 2023 we offered 186 people compassionate, long-term support to begin to build a life in the UK.

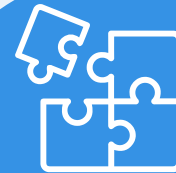
We are so proud that, thanks to our funders who put their trust in us, we were able to grow our classes and services and offer:



1,359

Online Classes

- 11,230 attendances
- 1,079 English classes
- 280 arts / wellbeing classes



1,474

Support Service Appointments

- 186 people



83

In Person Centre Days

- 1,867 attendances
- 1,700 lunches served



2,448

Support Packages

- 92 people

56

People accessed **healthcare** e.g. GPs, HC2 certificates and dentists

68

People supported to access emergency and long term **accommodation**

92

People helped to **negotiate the asylum system** with 10 gaining refugee status

76

People came to us for support to access **college and university**

92

People experiencing destitution were kept from **hunger**

Measuring Our Impact

Over the last 26 years, we have come to know our community well. We closely monitor the services we offer to ensure that they are genuinely the services our community needs.

Across 2022-23 we used a variety of methods to gather both quantitative and qualitative impact data, such as:

- Surveys of long term clients to gauge a sense of wellbeing, integration, confidence, etc., at the start and end of the year.
- A survey of new starters after 6 months on the impact our services have had.
- Recording attendance at each session, to understand what works and where we can improve.
- Recording the work of our Support Service e.g. the number of people we worked with to achieve refugee status, to access accommodation, healthcare, legal support etc.

This year we introduced an information management system, which enabled us to gather and share information more efficiently. We are very grateful to Cloudesley, an Islington-based funder, for its ongoing support and for providing a special one-off grant to enable this.

In the coming year, with guidance from a consultancy firm funded through a grant with the Lloyds Bank Foundation, we seek to develop a theory of change, articulate our client journey and are introducing new client surveys and evaluation meetings.

We are always striving to improve.



91%

Of new starters **feel their life is going in a better direction** after joining us

83%

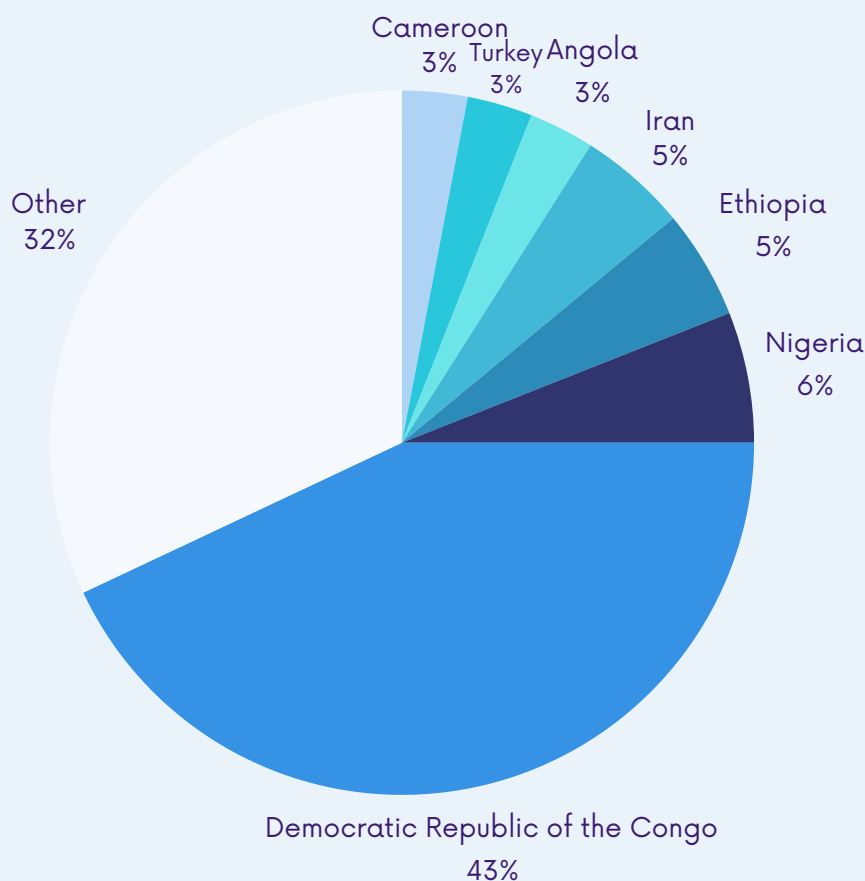
Of new starters **feel more empowered** after their first six months with us



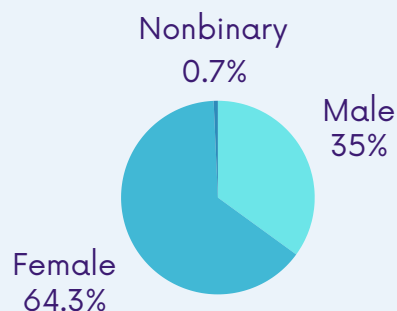
Our Community

Our approach is not institutional, but compassionate and human. We have been in London for 26 years and have built many long-standing relationships with our 186 students and clients who originate from 43 countries.

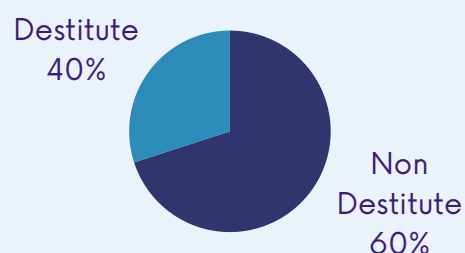
The top 7 countries of origin were:



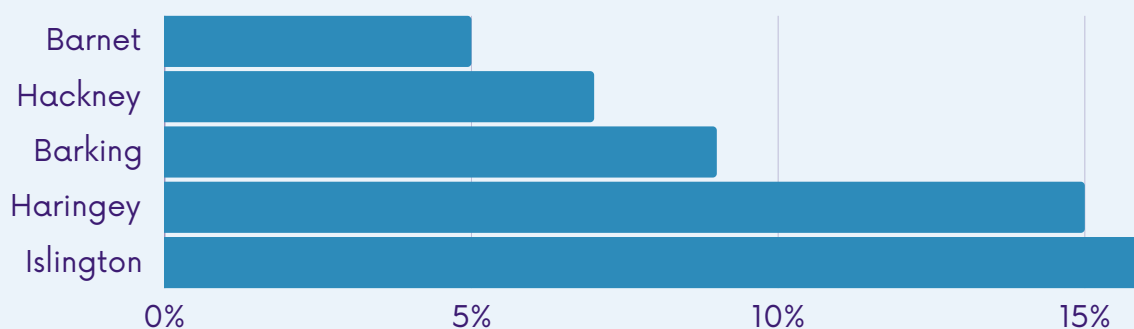
The gender split was:



Those considered destitute were:



People came to us from all over London. The top 5 boroughs were:



Eric's Story



“ I came from the Democratic Republic of Congo to the UK in 2015.

It was very hard for me because I didn't know where to start as a newcomer in the country. I heard a friend talking about the Islington Centre for Refugees and decided to register.

I started learning English at the Centre and I participated in many activities such as yoga, gym, English classes, Speak Street activities. I have visited London's most important and precious places, such as Buckingham Palace. It was good for me at the Centre and I made friendships and **the Centre helped me to access painting and decorating at college. This was my ambition.**

During the Covid 19 Lockdown, my case was rejected. It was very hard for me. I had to stop my studies and didn't have any place to stay or support.

Islington Centre was there for me. It helped me to find accommodation and find a lawyer. While I was receiving no money from NASS or the government, the Centre supported me with Support Packages. These were essential as I had nothing at this time.

After Covid things became very stressful with my court hearing. Some members of the Centre's community, Andy and Jane, came to be witnesses for my final appeal hearing. I am happy to say that my court appeal was successful and recently I had a positive decision from the Court. **I won my case. I had a Positive Decision.**

I am now ready to start my life again. I am studying painting and decorating, I am on level 2 and hopefully next year I will find a job. I will keep coming back to the Centre when I need help and I hope I can give back to the Centre.

The Islington Centre is my home. Again and again, thank you.

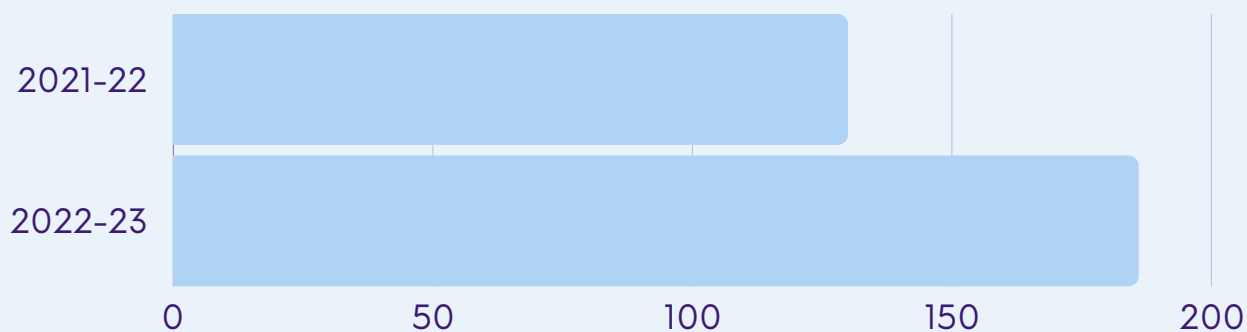




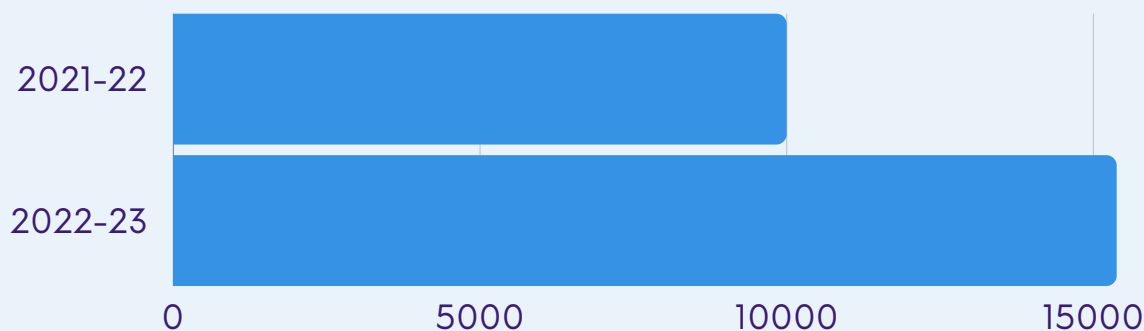
Meeting the Increasing Need

The Centre has been working to be responsive to the growing need as more people are seeking our services. The Centre increased the number of people registered with us last year and offered more activities, which led to a significant increase in total attendances to our activities and services.

The Centre saw a **43% increase** in total people served last year.



The Centre saw a **53% increase** in total attendances last year.



Volunteers and Partnerships

Over the last 26 years we have built relationships with organisations locally and within the sector. Our partners provide the people who come to us with advice and support around housing, counselling and law and also with activities like dance, gym and much more. Here we focus on two of the organisations in our network.



The Centre is a long time partner with Bloody Good Period, working together to ensure accessibility of period products to people in our community. **Last year we disbursed 350 orders including 20,000 individual items.**



Lawyers Against Poverty leads a weekly online session providing information to our community on individual rights in the areas of employment, criminal and family law with **43 sessions across the year.**

VOLUNTEERS

Our work was supported and made possible this past year by 20 online volunteers as well as 92 in-person volunteers, totalling **112 volunteers across the year.**

Positive Outcomes

**Improved
Mental +
Physical
Wellbeing**

**Reduced
Sense of
Isolation**

**Improved
English**

**Access to
Food and
Essentials**

**Access to
Housing**

**Confidence
to Negotiate
Asylum
System**

Acknowledgements

Our work has only been made possible by the tireless work and generosity of our volunteers and community partners, including:

- Amnesty International
- Bloody Good Period
- Christ Church
- Church on the Corner
- Creatives Against Poverty
- Cross Street Baptist Church
- Haberdashers' Girls' School
- Islington Choir and Bellow Fellows
- Islington Libraries
- Lawyers Against Poverty
- Macquarie Group
- NHS CLASH
- Protein Dance
- Songworks Choir
- Speak Street
- St Mary's Islington Church
- Temple of Seitan
- Westminster Abbey

A huge thanks to the trusts and foundations which put their trust in us. For a full list please visit [our website](#).



Thank you to everyone
who has supported us,
we couldn't do it
without you.

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