



# IMPACT REPORT

2023 – 2024

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**ISLINGTON CENTRE  
FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**



# CEO Message

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The last year has been one of many challenges for refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK. 2023-24 saw repeated attempts by the Government to fly migrants to Rwanda, followed by riots over the summer - all of which contributed to an increasingly hostile environment. We are proud that we were here throughout, offering unwavering support to the 202 people in our community.

Everyone who comes to us is working hard to create a better life in the UK. Our role is to provide the emotional support, practical tools and a sense of belonging people need to feel empowered and move forward in their lives.

Over the last year, we offered English classes, our creative and expressive sessions like art and writing, choir, dance and yoga, hot lunches, cultural trips and so much more. Alongside our classes and activities we offered casework to support people as they worked to overcome challenges like homelessness and seeking legal representation. This resulted in significant success for many people, as you will see in our outcomes figures on page 9.

Meanwhile, 2023-24 was a year of organisational progress for us too, with work to strengthen our leadership through the development of our board of trustees and a project to review our monitoring and evaluation methods with support from an external consultant. As an organisation, we are constantly developing to keep ahead, the impact of which can be seen in the pages of this report.

**ANDY RUIZ PALMA**



# About Us

## Mission

To offer people the emotional support, practical tools and sense of community they need to build a happy life in the UK.

## Vision

We envisage a world where refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are integrated fully into their new communities with equal access to opportunities to progress their lives and fulfil their potential.

## Charitable Objectives

### 01

To advance education and relieve financial hardship amongst those seeking asylum and those granted refugee status by the provision of advice, training and support.

### 02

To advance the education of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.

### 03

To advance the Christian religion by living out our love for neighbour and bringing the stranger of any or no faith into our community.\*

\*We welcome people of all faiths and none and have no religious affiliation. This reference to the Christian religion comes from our early beginnings in a church in Islington in 1997.

# What We Do



## Classes and Activities

Our comprehensive offering of classes and therapeutic activities includes English, art and writing, yoga, gym, exercise, dance, choir, and sports discussion group. Classes are aimed at increasing language proficiency and building a sense of community. Last year we offered 1,500 classes both online and in person.



## Support Service

The Support Service provides expert advice and one-to-one casework to overcome barriers migrants often face. Last year we supported 42 people with long term accommodation, 55 people to see a solicitor and get the legal support they needed to advance their asylum case, 62 people to apply for college and so much more.



## Centre Days

Every week, our Centre Days operate as a community hub with a space for migrants to come together, join engaging sessions, access advice, meet others, take items from the 'free shop', enjoy a shared meal, and feel at home in community space at our three sites in Islington. Last year we offered 80 Centre Days with over 16,000 attendances in total.



## Support Packages

Through our Support Package financial hardship grants scheme, asylum seekers avoid hunger, have the means to buy essentials and can live with dignity. We are proud that last year we distributed £80,000+ in 2,700+ disbursements.



## Digital Inclusion

Online access is vital to securing resources, attending online classes, and pursuing education. Last year we distributed 89 smartphones and laptops and empowered our community to feel confident online through 1-1 digital support sessions.



# Our Year In Numbers



**1,077**  
English  
Classes



**440**  
Therapeutic  
Arts + Fitness  
Classes



**80**  
In-person  
Centre  
Days



**1,772**  
Support  
Service  
Appointments



**2,725**  
Support  
Packages



**1,760**  
Home-  
cooked  
Meals Served



**19**  
Cultural +  
Educational  
Trips



**89**  
Laptops +  
Phones  
Distributed



*“Before I come here I'm always sad. But when I'm coming here and you see a lot of people it's so nice and helps a lot. Coming here even to dance is something great in my life. I cherish it.”*

- Francine (not her real name)



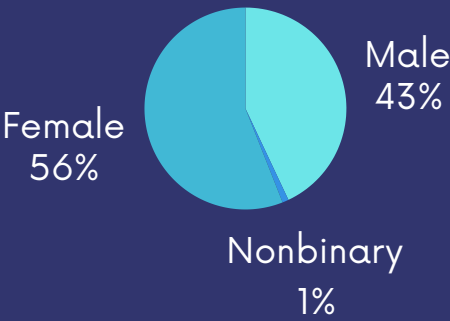


# Our Community

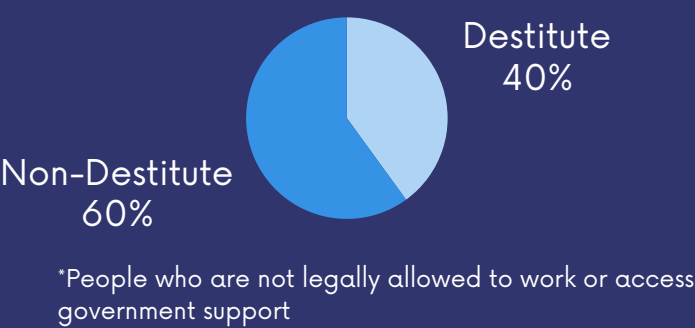


Our approach is not institutional, but compassionate and human. We have been in London for 27 years and have built many long-standing relationships with our 202 community members who originate from more than 40 countries.

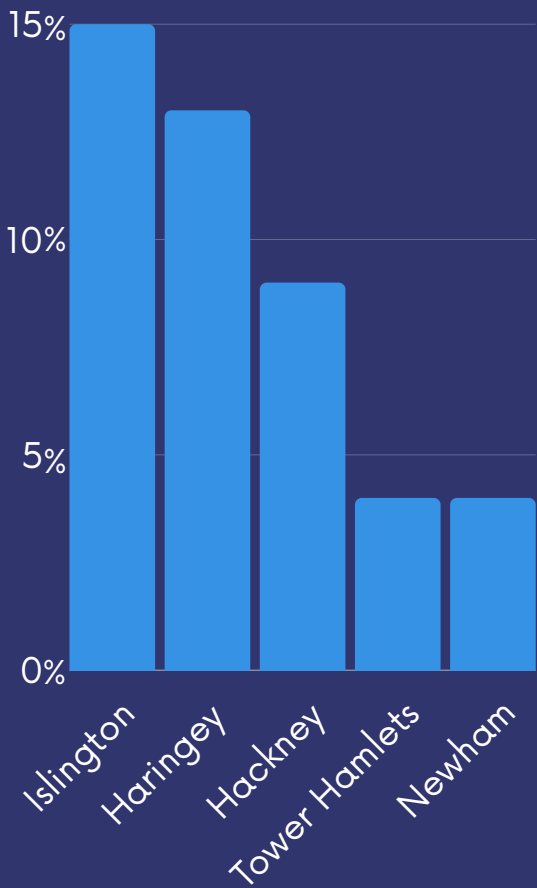
## Gender



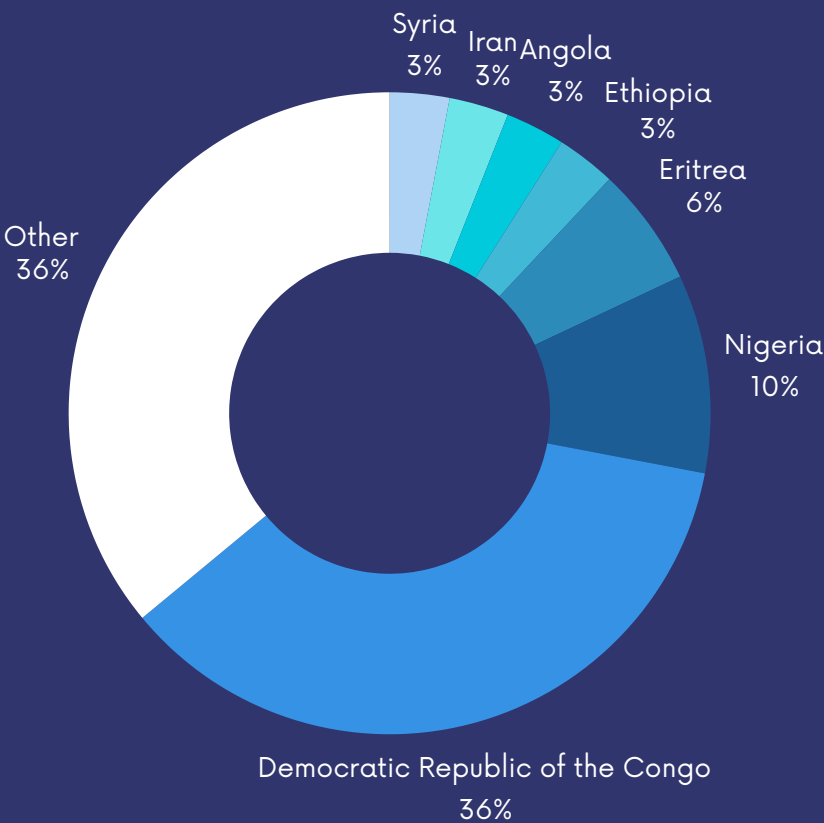
## Destitution\*



## Top 5 Boroughs



## Country of Origin



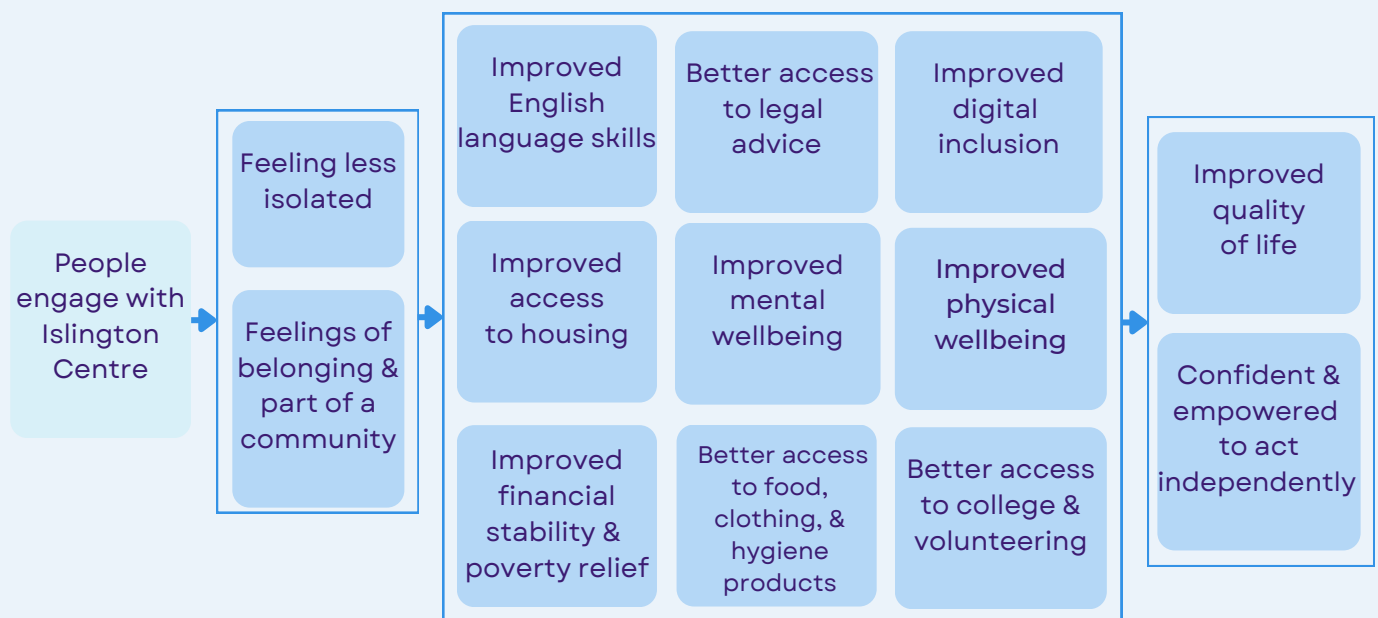
# Outcomes Model

When people first come to us, often the initial impact they experience is a sense of community and belonging, which comes from meeting new people.

Next, by joining our therapeutic art and fitness activities, English classes and making use of the poverty relief we offer, people begin to experience an improved ability to communicate in English and better physical and mental wellbeing.

Over time, a sense of trust grows and people begin to talk with us about the issues they face, but also about their dreams and ambitions. Our caseworkers are here offering support to access housing, find a solicitor, overcome poverty and build a better life.

People stay with us for as long as they need to, on average around four years. When members of our community leave they have improved their English, developed friendships, and feel confident to advocate on their own behalf and pursue new opportunities.



This Outcomes Model forms part of our Theory of Change. To see the full Theory of Change please [visit our website](#).





*“I've had a lot of problems which have happened to me but since I've started coming to the Centre it's strengthened me. Thank you for giving me this space.”*

- Joshua (not his real name)



# Outcomes

Across the year our community of 202 people achieved many positive outcomes in their lives through their own hard work and the advocacy, referrals and casework of our Support Service. Our Support Service offers advice on a wide range of issues, including healthcare, education and housing and is registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to provide advice at Level 1 (Asylum and Protection). Last year the issues people overcame included:

**25**

people **gained permission to stay in the UK**

**33**

people accessed **food banks**

**46**

people saw a doctor or dentist to get **healthcare**

**72**

people avoided street-sleeping and had safe **housing**

**88**

people **negotiated the asylum system**

**62**

people applied to further their **education**

**55**

people accessed **legal support**

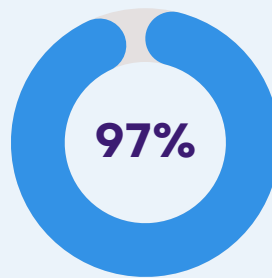
**22**

people created CVs and sought **employment**

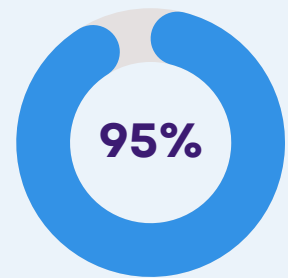


# Outcomes

We closely monitor the services we offer to ensure that they are genuinely the services our community needs. We collect feedback from our community twice each year, with a survey to new starters every February and for all clients every July. Below are the results from our all client survey about the Centre's impact over the last 12 months:



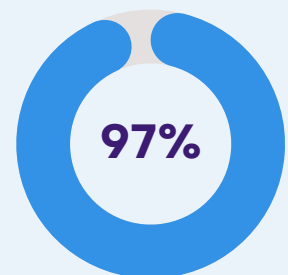
Quality of Life Improved



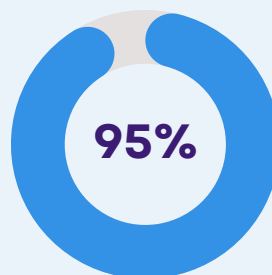
English Improved



Less Stressed



Less Isolated



Physical Wellbeing Improved



More Empowered

**“I like meeting people here. It makes me feel happy.”**

- Sade (not her real name)

# Community Stories



## Gladys

"I come to the Centre because they help me a lot with many things including paperwork and legal matters. I come here to see people and make friends. It's great to mix with people from different cultures. I make an effort to come every week because it's really important for me. I have even participated in singing and dancing projects. It's a great stress-buster!"



## Amba

"I come here for help with the difficulties experienced by me and my family. It's a relief to be able to come to the Centre for support. I hope to be able to continue coming to the Centre until our lives are on track."



# Partnerships



We partner with Speak Street, which provides fun, high-quality English classes.

Speak Street leads an online English class for our community each week with **40 sessions across the year** as well as monthly field trips to art galleries with **11 art trips last year.**



We partner with Bloody Good Period, working together to ensure dignity through accessibility of period products to people in our community. Last year we **distributed 340 orders** directly to people's homes, **including 20,000 individual items.**



Lawyers Against Poverty leads a weekly online session providing information to our community in the areas of public law, social welfare, housing and homelessness, and immigration and asylum with **51 sessions across the year.**



NHS Central London Action on Sexual Health (CLASH) provides free and confidential sexual health advice sessions to our community with **11 sessions across the year.**

# Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks to our community partners:

- Barts and The London University Islamic Society
- Bellow Fellows
- Christ Church Highbury
- Church on the Corner
- Cross Street Baptist Church
- ETC Education
- GAIL's Bakery Islington
- Haberdashers' Girls' School
- Houghton University of New York
- Islington Choir
- London St Pauli Fan Club
- Macquarie Group
- NHS Whittington Health
- Protein Dance
- Smith&Nephew
- Songworks Choir
- Speak Street
- St Mary's Islington Church
- World Harmony Orchestra

Huge thanks to the individuals who made donations, and to the many foundations which put their trust in us. For more partners and funders visit [our website](#).



Thank you to the **90 volunteers across the year** who generously gave their time and talents to make this work possible!



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London N1 2BG  
Registered charity in England and Wales - 1135205  
Registered as a company limited by guarantee in England & Wales - 07076199  
[islingtoncentre.co.uk](http://islingtoncentre.co.uk)