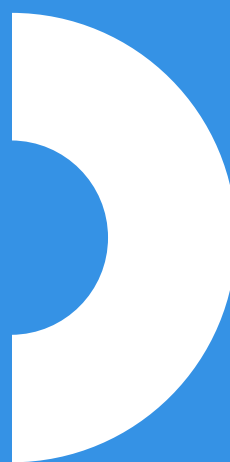




Impact Report 2024/25



Islington Centre for
Refugees and Migrants



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Note: All quotes marked with an asterisk (*) have been anonymised to protect the identity of the individuals involved.



Message from our Board

When I first came to the UK, the support I received from the Islington Centre was invaluable. It helped me improve my English, better understand the culture, connect with others in similar situations, access clothing for my children, and build meaningful friendships. These services made a significant difference in my life and in my ability to settle here.



Having once been in the position of those we support, I understand the challenges that newcomers face and the importance of having a place to turn to. Now, as a Trustee, I am committed to ensuring that the Centre continues to offer support to all who need it.

Angelina Durgaj

Trustee

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.

Values

01 Offering a warm welcome to all who come to us

02 Working together to put the client first

03 Care and compassion

04 Respect and dignity for all

05 Improving our working model from our own learning

06 Showing grit and determination to be here for our clients

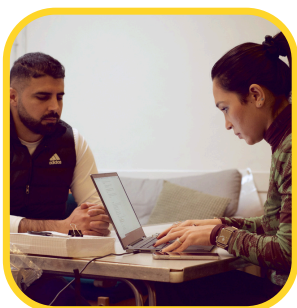


What We Do



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 **1,260 classes** both online and in-person.



Support Service

The Support Service provides expert advice and one-to-one casework to overcome barriers people often face. Last year we supported 45 people with long term accommodation, 81 people to see a solicitor and get the legal support they needed to advance their asylum case, 23 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 **115 Centre Days** with over 2,700 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 made **2,400+ disbursements to 92 people seeking asylum**.



Digital Inclusion

Online access is vital to securing resources, attending online classes, and pursuing education. Last year we distributed **91 smartphones and laptops** and empowered our community to feel confident online through 1-1 digital support sessions.

Community Story



Since joining the Centre three years ago, Grace [not her real name] has seen her housing situation improved, built valuable friendships and studied hard to improve her English skills. She shared:

*“My situation, it is so hard. **At the Centre, I get to meet people.** I get to exercise. I have been coming to the Centre every week. I do English classes, art, choir, dancing, and I especially love doing gym and yoga online.*

*The Islington Centre will find a way to help you. If you feel lonely, bad, or insecure, then this is a good place to be. **They helped me when I had nowhere to stay**—finding me a host and getting me off the streets.*

*I have studied very well and am attending college. I now have good references and **I am going to the next level.** Once I get my status, I want to work and give back. I want to be an inspirational person for others. Everything we do here is training for our new life.*

I want to say to the donors of the Centre that they are amazing. You are sowing positive seeds. You are doing a good job. Thank you!”

Grace is continuing to build her new life in the UK and the Centre will be here as a place of support for as long as she needs us.

Our Year in Numbers



609

English
Classes



495

Arts + Fitness
Classes



115

In-Person
Centre Days



2,214

Support Service
Appointments



2,425

Support
Packages
Disbursed



1,800

Home-
cooked
Meals Served



12

Educational
+ Cultural
Trips



91

Laptops
+ Phones
Distributed





"Here I can get clothes, food, and toiletries. I can find housing and services. If not for them, I might not know about services and ways to get help. I have achieved a lot. I am more connected here. At Islington Centre I feel at home."

- Simone*

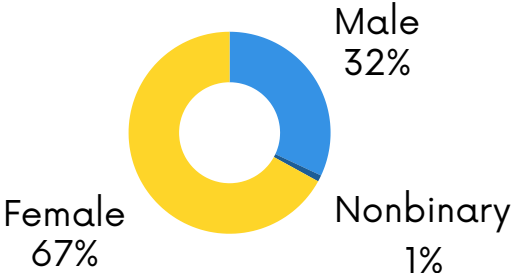


Our Community



Our approach is not institutional, but compassionate and human. We have been in London for 28 years and have built many long-standing relationships with our 219 community members who originate from more than 40 countries.

Gender

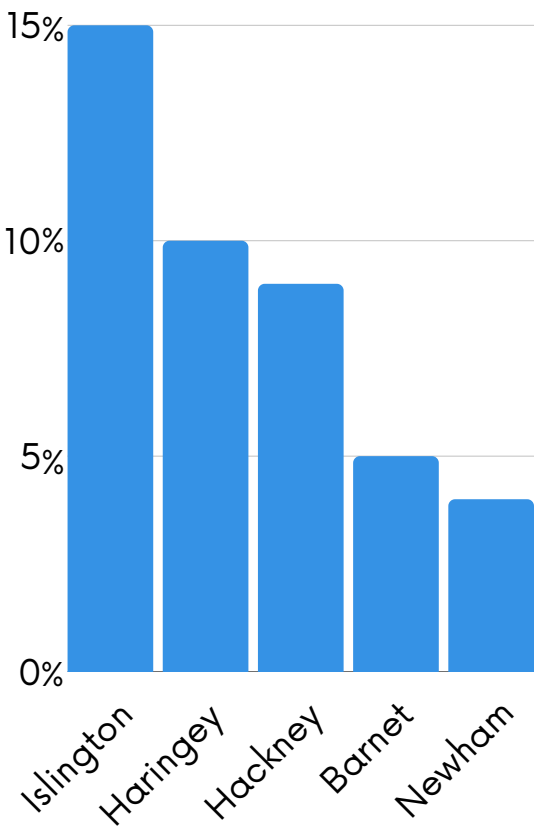


Destitution*

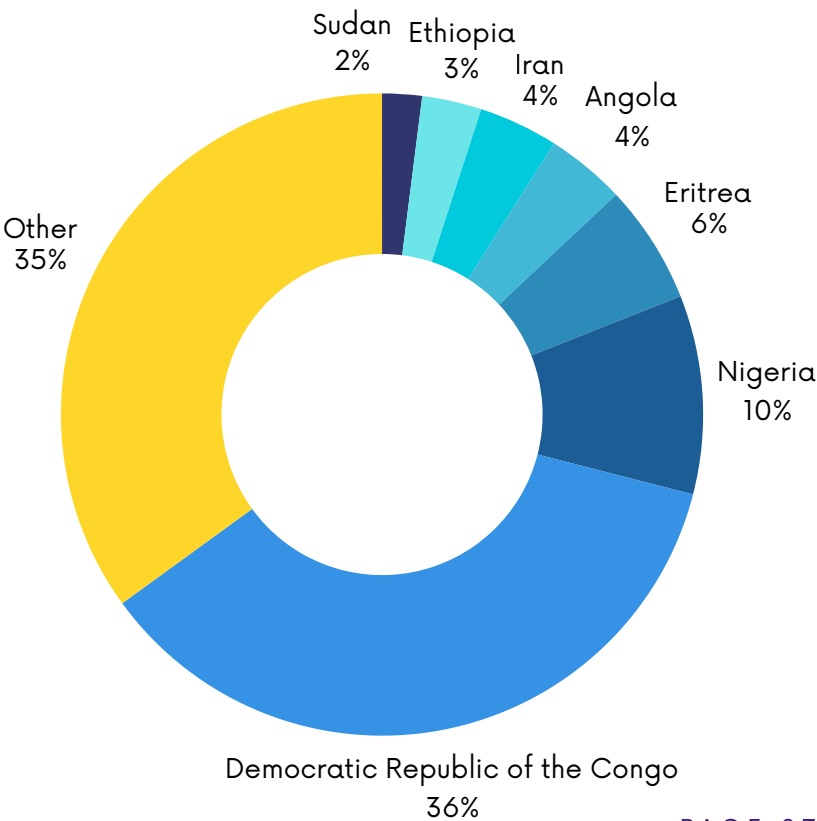


*People who are not legally allowed to work or access government support

Top 5 Boroughs



Country of Origin





"I feel good when I come to the Islington Centre. I am happy to learn. It has helped with my depression. I am happier."

- Faith*



"With the Islington Centre I am feeling more confident. My English has been improved. Here I feel safe, happy, and at home. "

- Hassan*



Outcomes

Across the year our community of 219 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 Immigration Advice Authority (IAA – formerly OISC) to provide advice at Level 1 (Asylum and Protection). Last year the issues people overcame included:

81

people accessed
legal support

75

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

71

people
**negotiated the
asylum system**

48

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

27

people accessed
food banks

26

people accessed
welfare / benefits

24

people accessed
**new parent
support**

23

people applied to
further their
education

18

people created
CVs and sought
employment

14

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

**“If you bring any
problem here,
they will help
you.”**
– Alan

Outcomes

We are committed to ensuring that our services remain responsive, relevant, and impactful. We collect feedback from our community through regular co-creation sessions and twice annually, with a co-created survey to new starters in February and again from the whole community in July. This ongoing dialogue helps us refine our approach and stay aligned with evolving needs. Below are the results from our all community survey about the Centre's impact over the last 12 months:

Less Isolated + More Part of Community



Less Stressed



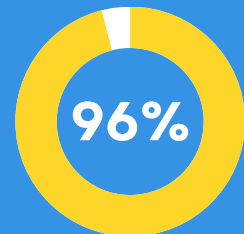
More Confident



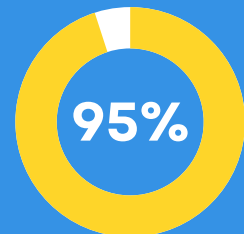
More Confident Using Computers + Internet



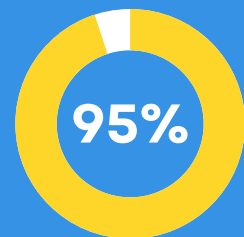
English Improved



Access to Food, Clothes, + Essentials Improved



Physical Wellbeing Improved



Community Quotes

"I always feel great and happy at Islington Centre. I can't feel loneliness or depressed again. I have very lovely people around me. They are always encouraging me to work hard to move forward. It is very good for me."

"The Islington Centre has been my companion. They have arranged for whatever my baby needs and baby clothes. They give us what we need. I love this Centre."

"The Islington Centre will find a way to help you. If you feel lonely, bad, or insecure then this is a good place to be. They are helping if you don't have a place to stay. They helped me with hosts and got me off the streets and helped me find a home."

"Attending English lessons greatly contributes to my positivity and boosts my confidence."

"The Islington Centre is where I can learn English, have many activities, like going on a trip to learn not only English, but also history and culture. I can get support, which makes my life easier and comfortable, not stressed, to more actively live."

"I like to come to see friends, meet new people, take part in choir and dance with people I can relate to. I also like doing art, playing bingo at the Tea Cosy club and having lunch."

*Feedback provided anonymously by community members during our latest surveys.

Samira's Story

When Samira [not her real name] first came to Islington Centre in 2023, she was living in an asylum hotel, struggling with poor mental health, and awaiting a decision on her asylum claim. She dreamed of going to college but needed support to take those first steps. At the Centre, she joined our higher-level English classes and met regularly with the Support Service, beginning to build confidence and a sense of community.

In October 2024, Samira's asylum claim was refused. Within weeks she lost her financial support and accommodation, a devastating blow that left her facing homelessness and suicidal thoughts. She felt deeply hopeless. The Centre acted immediately, offering emotional support and referring her to The Listening Place, where she accessed professional mental health care. We also helped her secure emergency accommodation ensuring she wasn't left on the streets.

During her stay, she discovered she was pregnant, and the constant moving daily from place to place began affecting her health. We successfully advocated for a safe night shelter, allowing her to rest and store her belongings, though she still had to leave during the day.

Samira found a solicitor to prepare a fresh asylum claim. We supported this process by liaising with the lawyer and covering travel costs for her to lodge her asylum claim in-person in Cardiff. We also helped her apply for Section 4 support for refused asylum seekers, which was granted. When bureaucratic delays left her without accommodation, we intervened to secure a place in London, protecting her links to her support network. When the housing provider proposed relocating her outside London, we advocated for her to remain near her support network. She was eventually moved to suitable self-catering accommodation in South London.

We celebrated with her when she was granted discretionary leave to remain and continued to stand alongside her as she transitioned to this new stage in life. We supported her in claiming Universal Credit and with other practical issues. During her pregnancy, we referred her to baby-focused organisations and sourced a car seat, essential for leaving the hospital. Her baby was born in August 2025.

Samira is now seeking long-term housing for her and her baby, and the Centre is supporting her with a housing application to her local council.

The Centre will continue to support Samira for as long as she needs. Her journey reflects the Centre's commitment to walking with individuals through every challenge, providing practical help, advocacy, and care.



Organisational Developments

Strategy

As our current three-year strategy concludes in 2025, we're proud to have delivered on key goals, from strengthening our organisational structure, board of Trustees and fundraising capacity to expanding English language learning and forging new partnerships. These achievements reflect our commitment to growth and community impact. We're now preparing to launch our next strategic plan in autumn 2025, building on this momentum to shape the Centre's future direction.

Co-Creation

For 28 years, our work has been shaped by what our community tells us they need. Since September 2024, we've partnered with ExpertLink through a grant with the Lloyds Bank Foundation to embed co-creation across the Centre, from community-led sessions and volunteering to co-designed surveys and feedback forums. Looking ahead, we plan to establish a community advisory panel and offer training and a paid role to further elevate lived experience in our decision-making.

Income Diversification

Over the last year, in the face of a difficult economic time, the Centre has put in place measures to diversify our income so we are more resilient in where our funding comes from. We worked with a consultant through Lloyds Bank Foundation on a fundraising strategy and expanded capacity on our fundraising team.



Community Member Highlight

Gladys

Gladys first came to the Centre for help with legal advice, and we celebrated with her last year when she was granted leave to remain in the UK.

One year on, her life has transformed. She's already thinking about how she can give back to others starting out on the same journey. She shared with us:

*"I like the Centre. They are helping me a lot, a lot, a lot. **Now I have my own place and I started my first job in the UK. Everything is opening for me now.** The Centre is good.*

*For the future I am thinking to do a lot of things. I am thinking about helping people - people like me when I first came here. I want to give back. Now I know things and **I want to give back to my community.** When we come to the Centre we meet people and are a big family.*

To donors of the Centre I need to say thank you so much. Not just from me. There are many people here you are supporting to get housing, to get food, to make friends. Gods blessings to you."

Partnerships



Speak Street

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 39 sessions across the year as well as monthly field trips to art galleries with 12 art trips last year.



NHS CLASH

NHS Central London Action on Sexual Health (CLASH) provides free and confidential sexual health advice sessions to our community with 15 sessions across the year.



Bloody Good Period

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 125 orders directly to people's homes, including 5,500 individual items.



Screen Share UK

Screen Share UK works to ensure every refugee in the UK has access to a connected digital device and the skills to use it to achieve their goals. Screen Share UK lead 63 digital support sessions across the year and distributed 14 laptops to our community.



Thank you to the **110 volunteers** who generously gave their time and talents to make this work possible!



Contact Us

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