

IMPACT REPORT 2023



Registered Charity Number 1102814

A message from our Chair of Trustees

2023 has been another year which has tested the resilience and flexibility of our organisation and we are proud of our performance in the face of huge challenges for those we work with and for the sector in which we work. The challenges faced by those we work with include increased restrictions on their access to justice and opportunity, along with the ongoing cost of living crisis and the expected impact of the Illegal Migrants Act. In response, we have ensured that we are directing our resources to those who are most marginalised and that we are constantly increasing our expertise and impact.

We recognise the vital importance of building our organisation's capacity and resilience for the future. With this in mind we focused clearly this year on improving our financial resilience, ensuring the wellbeing of our staff and volunteer team and centring and valuing the expertise of people with lived experience at all levels in our organisation.

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

1037

people directly accessed our services

213

people were supported to move on from street homelessness

147

emergency grants were provided to those who were destitute

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I'm involved in SLRA's Community Leaders programme so I can learn more about other people's stories and tell them about mine. I like to hear different stories and hear similar ones, similar problems. It relieve stress and problems and we can find out how to help each other.

Ana, Community Leader

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Adult and Family Services

489 people

accessed our advice and casework, education and wellbeing services for adults and families.

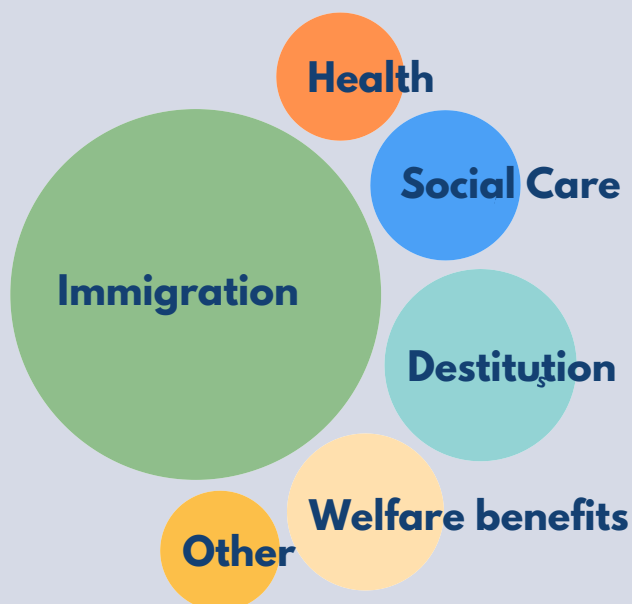
441 people

were supported with specialist immigration advice and casework.

218 people

joined our **community groups**, learning new skills, taking part in creative projects and wellbeing activities.

The main issues we supported with during the year were:



SIAS: Supporting homeless migrants off the streets

SLRA is leading the GLA funded Sub-regional Immigration Advice Service partnership across South West London. We're working with South West London Law Centres, with specialist homelessness services and Local Authority homelessness teams across the region to bring accessible, high quality immigration advice to people who are street homeless. Many of those reached by the project have been rough sleeping for years, without access to the advice and support they need in order to move on. We provided vital immigration advice and casework to **213 homeless people** in 2023 and succeeded in progressing the immigration cases of 86% of these.

Nest Project: Early Intervention to build family and community resilience

53 families were involved in our Nest Project, which works collaboratively in four local community settings. The project aims to reach families with the immigration advice and information they need before their insecure immigration status causes them to fall into crisis. The project provides vital immigration casework, as well as building links with communities and increasing the knowledge of staff and volunteers in the settings through training and workshops. The project aims to build community by reducing stigma, increasing knowledge and fostering self advocacy and community organising skills.

“

I don't know where I would be without SLRA. I think I would still be living on the street at the age of 70 years old! You are the people who helped to move things on for me! I still love coming there whenever I can.

Service user

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Services for young people aged 14 to 24 years

420 young people

accessed our services during the year.

356 young people

received specialist, holistic one to one casework support for a range of issues including immigration, age assessment, trafficking and criminal exploitation, welfare benefits and social care.

212 young people

attended our weekly Youth Club.

76 young people

took part in trips, activities and events.

Early Intervention Project

Our Early Intervention Project, funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, has seen us developing a collaborative approach to improving outcomes for young migrants who are looked after. We have worked with Merton Council to develop an effective model of early intervention; providing immigration advice and casework, along with training for Children's Services team members. This collaborative working ensures that young people have access to impactful support and good legal representation as soon as they arrive in the UK or their immigration issue is identified. Evaluation has shown a significant improvement in young people's experience of the asylum or immigration process and in knowledge and good practice among Children's Services professionals. Merton Council agrees and has now commissioned this service for the next two years.

39 young people secured refugee status and were able to move on with their plans for work or study.

73% have increased their independence and social activities

66% of young people supported have improved emotional wellbeing

69% say they have become more confident

“

It was life saving for me and I don't say it lightly. I don't know the country very well; I don't know the language. You can imagine I was completely at a loss, but they were kind, helpful, friendly and taking me to these places and also, I wasn't isolated by participating in activities so it was huge for me.

Young Service User

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Policy and Participation

Supporting Local Authorities to adopt the Immigration Support Pledge

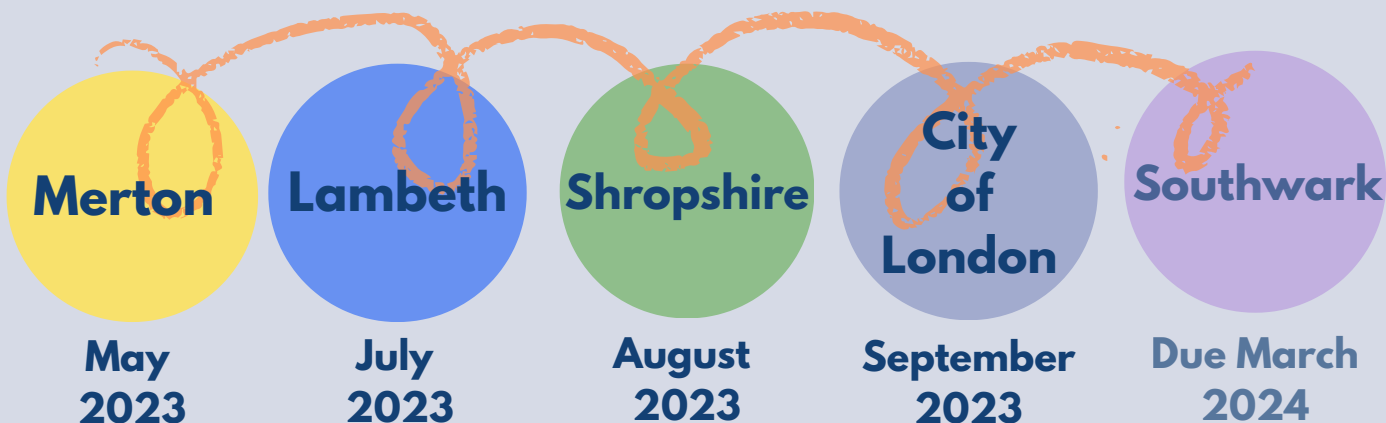
SLRA is working with charities across the UK to call on local authorities to sign an immigration support pledge, which commits them to identifying all looked after children and care leavers with immigration and nationality issues. Local authorities that sign up also pledge to connect young migrants with good quality legal support as soon as possible, to take a proactive and informed role in supporting young people through any immigration applications and appeals, enabling those who are eligible to apply for permanent status and British citizenship.

We recognise that there are lots of excellent examples of social care practice in this area across the UK. For these local authorities, adopting the immigration support pledge is an opportunity to build upon this and embed it within local policy and processes.

We also recognise that many local authorities may be near the beginning of a journey to build systems and new practices which meet the specific needs of non-British children. Signing the immigration support pledge is an important first step.

To support the implementation of the commitments in the immigration support pledge, we have co-developed a learning package for local authorities. The package includes a [training video](#) developed by young leaders from SLRA and Coram Young Citizens. This resource illustrates why the immigration support pledge is so important, and the difference adopting this kind of good practice can have on the lives of young migrants in care

Local authorities that have adopted the pledge so far:



Community Leaders

37 Community Leaders

took part in our program to develop leadership skills and organise to influence the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of people in their communities.



Helping to shape Lambeth Borough of Sanctuary

SLRA Community Leaders who are Lambeth residents have been involved in Lambeth's successful bid to become a borough of sanctuary and are now involved in shaping this important initiative.

Four SLRA Community Leaders sit on the Borough of Sanctuary Forum; helping to make sure that Lambeth is a welcoming borough for all sanctuary seekers.

Community Leader Imran took a turn of chairing the forum for six months, and is using his experience to support and encourage others to take on roles like this in the community.

No Recourse to Public Funds

NRPF restrictions have affected the lives of many of our Community Leaders and their families. Leaders are continuing to influence locally to improve the support and increase the advice available to families in need. This includes a focus group that will work with Lambeth to improve the information for people with NRPF, and professionals supporting them, provided on their webpage.

Our series of community education videos, co-produced with Community Leaders, about the issues of 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF), 'Section 17 support' and 'Immigration Advice' are being used by agencies across London to inform and empower.

Legal Aid Crisis

SLRA is partnering with Migrants Organise to campaign for review of the Legal Aid system. Our Community Leaders are learning about the Legal Aid crisis and how this is impacting them and others in their communities. Our Leaders aim to join forces with others across the country to campaign for change.

In the coming months our Leaders and other groups plan to take action, starting off with a 'Take your MP to work' campaign at the beginning of next year.



Soa's Story

Paulina's Story

Paulina, a 17 year old unaccompanied minor seeking asylum in the UK, approached SLRA as she had been incorrectly assessed as an adult by Social Services and informed that she was to be moved into adult Home Office accommodation in a matter of days. This often happens to young people whose age is incorrectly assessed and means they end up in unsuitable accommodation where they are at risk.

Soa had been trafficked to the UK, after a stranger promised her a chance to go back to school - what she had always wanted to do. She found herself far from home, working in a house in London, for a woman she didn't know. When she became pregnant the woman made her leave, she now had nowhere she to go and she feared approaching the authorities.

The caseworker helped Paulina register at college and encouraged her to attend SLRA's youth club. Despite her worries and challenges, Paulina was determined to learn new skills and meet other young people. Soon, Paulina joined our Youth Participation group to speak up on issues affecting young migrants. She even joined a residential trip during the summer. Paulina's caseworker also applied for grants for her so that she could travel to college and solicitor appointments.

Soa is taking every opportunity to study, including joining our ESOL classes, taking part in our Community Leaders workshops and writing letters to her MP. Soa now has safe accommodation, her solicitor is progressing her immigration case and her child, Sami, has just celebrated their first birthday. Sami loves books and dinosaurs.

We received a call from a hospital about Soa, a young woman who had just given birth but couldn't be discharged because she had nowhere to go. Soa had our number saved in her phone. Someone she met at an antenatal class had given it to her.

Paulina arrived at our office anxious and distressed. Her SLRA caseworker listened to her worries and explored options with her so they could work out a plan together. They decided to refer Paulina to a Community Care solicitor to get advice on challenging her age assessment and to support her with her asylum claim. Over the following months, Paulina's caseworker remained a consistent and supportive presence - the only reliable source of support Paulina had when she was moved into hotel accommodation in a new area.

SLRA supported Soa to find a lawyer, and referred her to organisations which provide specialist therapeutic support and practical help with her baby. She has also been recognised as a potential survivor of modern slavery.

After four months in inappropriate hotel accommodation, Paulina was moved back into care in South London. She also got the good news that she had been granted refugee status, something that can take much longer without the specialist support Paulina received from her caseworker. Now she has her refugee status, Paulina plans to continue studying alongside working. She says she will build on the skills she gained as a youth participation group member to pursue a career in marketing.

Our finances

FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 2023

£991,577
TOTAL INCOME

£913,881
TOTAL EXPENDITURE



With thanks to the funders who supported our work in 2023

BBC Children in Need
CAF
Childhood Trust
Community Justice Fund
Eleanor Hamilton Educational Trust
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
Henry Smith Charity
Impact on Urban Health
Jack Petchey Foundation
John Swire 1989 Charitable Trust

Julia & Hans Rausing Trust
Justice Together Initiative
Lloyds Bank Foundation
National Lottery Community Fund
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Sir Walter St John's Educational Charity
Steel Charitable Trust
Walcot Foundation
Wimbledon Foundation

and to the individuals, schools, churches and community groups who ran, shopped, saved and organised events in order to support our work.

All photos by Federico Rivas

