

**ASSIST**  
SHEFFIELD

# Annual Review

April 2023- March 2024



**Challenging Asylum Destitution,  
in solidarity not charity**

## Welcome from our Director



ASSIST Sheffield has 21 years of wonderful community-led hospitality and creative resistance to the Hostile Environment under its belt. We have continually developed new ways to mitigate and challenge the impacts of an ever-changing, intentionally cruel, racist policy environment.

This last year has been no exception as we responded to an unpredictable rollout of changes to the UK's Immigration and Asylum laws via the Illegal Immigration Act.

This political landscape combined with the cost of living crisis, public services crippled by underfunding and a crisis in access to legal advice, means that access to justice, equality

and basic Human Rights is harder than ever for our clients to attain.

### **Never has our work been more needed.**

Within these constraints, in 2023/24 we have managed to secure more housing for people, increase the amount of money we provide people with and extend the period we offer people accommodation. We have learnt about the need for such changes via our Client Consultation Group, the space where members of ASSIST meet each month and provide critical insight and reflection on the needs and concerns of clients.

We've been reflecting on our culture and practices, developing our organisation and exploring how we, as an organisation working entirely with people from the global majority, can make sure the way we deliver our work is in line with our anti-racist values.

As we look ahead to 2024/2025, the future from a policy perspective is worrying. I will be drawing on a deep personal belief in building power with communities, which aligns so well with ASSIST's long-held collaborative ethos. This year we will come together as a community to set a bold strategy and vision for 2025 - 2030, a

vision that will build our collective power to keep on delivering ASSIST's core services whilst pushing for system change.

ASSIST community members can feel proud of our work carried out in solidarity not charity. Over this last year, we have acted with care, competence, and passion for creating the type of community and city we want Sheffield to be - one of **welcome and safety for all!!**



## Word from Pious a new ASSIST Trustee

Hello everyone,

As someone who is in a precarious immigration situation, ASSIST came to my rescue in my desperate time of need nearly 3 years ago and I've been a Client since.

Last year, I joined the Board of Trustees. At first, attending trustee meetings was daunting and I felt out of place because there was an apparent lack of diversity within the team. However, as the Board, we've been on an exciting journey to adopt new ways of running our meetings, intentionally encouraging meaningful participation of all members and ensuring a consistent process of decision making.

Part of ASSIST's vision is to have a more diverse Board of Trustees and part of that diversity is to have 50% of the team comprise of people from a global majority background. We are in the process to make that a reality soon.

So the journey continues, and I'm honoured and privileged to be part of a wonderful team that helps shape the direction of the organisation to address some of the needs of so many people in our City, who are experiencing the UK's immigration 'hostile environment.'

Thank you  
*Pious Nyandoro*  
*Trustee (ASSIST Sheffield)*



## About ASSIST

People who have been refused asylum in the UK do not have the right to work, housing, benefits or other vital support. Having escaped unimaginable horrors of war, violence, persecution or economic poverty, they find themselves at the intersection of multiple marginalisations in our communities, pushed into destitution and homelessness. ASSIST works alongside people experiencing asylum related destitution.

All of our clients show deeply impressive fortitude and resilience despite the systemic barriers they face. At ASSIST, we work to remove barriers, seeking to create conditions in which our clients can take back some freedom and personal autonomy.

Thanks to our supporters, ASSIST offers an invaluable lifeline for people in Sheffield who have been refused asylum. We offer practical solidarity and support in the forms of accommodation, welfare payments, bus passes and a bespoke casework service, working with clients to understand and access their rights and entitlements in the UK. This includes an accompanying service supporting clients to attend appointments and a wellbeing service that provides access to local organisations, activities and community groups.

We will not stop our practical solidarity work nor our campaigning work until the discriminatory laws that marginalise our clients are changed...  
**until all are free!**



## Our three stage model

### Stage One:

#### Stabilise

- Money for essential living costs
- Foodbank vouchers
- Support to access urgent health care
- Welcome appointments and relationship building
- Access to accommodation
- Help desk weekly drop-in sessions

### Stage Two:

#### Plan for the Future

- Casework appointments
- Legal referrals
- Signposting to GP/ dentists
- Monthly 'Client Welfare' sessions
- High tier support
- Signposting to educational and wellbeing activities
- Accompanying to external appointments
- Signposting to volunteering

### Stage Three:

#### Move on

- Support to apply for HO Asylum support
- Referral to SPRING project for clients with LTR
- Referrals to Adult Social Care
- Intensive advocacy support
- Support exploring future options

## What we have provided from April 2023 to March 2024



**87**

clients supported from 30 countries



**67**

clients provided with accommodation



**725**

regular welfare payments issued



**68**

people successfully helped to access legal advice



**352**

casework appointments



**19**

clients helped to move on to Home Office or Local Authority support



**4**

clients got Leave to Remain whilst on our support



**5**

families provided with secure affordable housing

## Word from the Client Consultation Group (CCG)

Below is the speech that Bubacarr wrote for our AGM in Oct 2023. Bubacarr has moved on from ASSIST now, he was lively and highly valued member of the CCG during his time with us.

My name is Bubacarr and I am one of 5 members of the Client Consultation Group and we meet every month at the ASSIST offices. We are all clients of ASSIST. I have been with ASSIST for 10 months and part of the CCG for 5 months. Our main focus is to represent the clients of ASSIST and share how we live, our living conditions and how we can improve the situations of the clients in ASSIST - how to make ASSIST a better organisation.

We are a well-connected group, I feel that we can discuss our issues freely and that the organisation is

responsive to our feedback, even if it is not always possible to meet all the needs of our clients. The Client Consultation Group provides a space for me to express my own needs and those of other people who I live with and hear from.

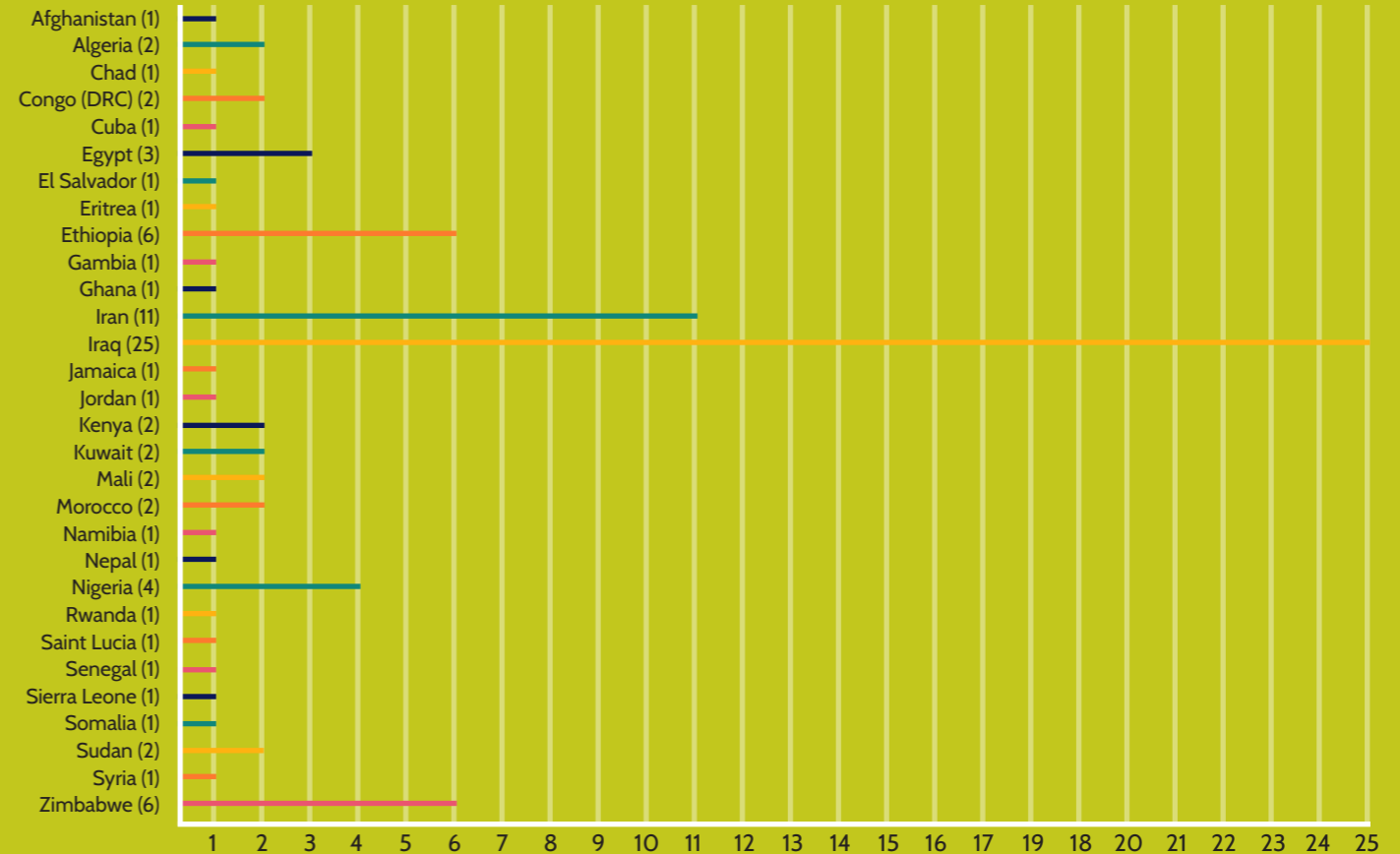
The Client Consultation Group is very much involved in the internal processes of ASSIST. A member of the Client Consultation Group is on the interview panel when new candidates are interviewed and I have been lucky enough to have participated in this. I am happy to be part of the recruitment process and

I learned a lot from it. It also showed that ASSIST are involving us in everything that they do, and want to collaborate on decision-making.

The best part of the Client Consultation Group is the opportunity to discuss our experiences and be part of the organisation's response. This is important because we are the clients. At the Client Consultation Group we are the voice of the clients, we voice the concerns of the clients and have the chance to make changes and represent ourselves.

## Country infographics

Who we supported in 2023/24 and their countries of origin (shown in counts)



## Accommodation

Our accommodation provision remains the largest of its kind in the region and we pride ourselves on providing high quality, safe and stable housing for ASSIST clients. By the end of March 2024 we managed or owned 10 houses for people who have been refused sanctuary. Overall, 68 people lived in housing provided by ASSIST, our partners Open Hands, and with volunteer hosts.

This year saw several exciting, new initiatives to improve ASSIST's accommodation offer as we also continued efforts to become financially sustainable:

- 'Night Shelter Transformation' funding from the government allowed us to purchase an additional property. Alongside another ASSIST house, it will be used as a "Welcome House" to offer initial accommodation for new clients.
- We secured funding to make all the houses we own more energy efficient and developed a partnership with SY Ecofit, a local social enterprise, to deliver the project.
- June 2023 saw the inception of the Client Maintenance Team, which offers residents of our houses the opportunity to gain new skills while helping to maintain our houses as decent places to live.
- At client request, via the Client Consultation Group, the maximum period of time in our accommodation was increased from 12 to 24 months. Clients have reported that this has improved their sense of stability and security.
- We completed our pilot project offering housing to five families who have arrived in Sheffield under the refugee resettlement scheme. Rental income generated directly supports our housing offer to clients.

## What clients say about us

As a client-led organisation, ASSIST consistently seeks feedback from those we work alongside. The team have used opportunities such as welfare payment sessions, casework sessions and CCG contributions to gain valuable insight into client experiences and opinions about the work that we do.

*"ASSIST has gone far and beyond to help those who don't have any support from any other organisations."*

*"I really appreciate this Organisation as it is helpful with my whole heartedly. This Organisation is one of the best at all times, all the best to this amazing organisation and all people working at ASSIST they work hard and opened heart to cover all our needs...All thanks to ASSIST"*

*"Before I didn't have any energy and the government wanted to take me away from Sheffield. I have a life in Sheffield and you helped me to stay here. Now I am feeling ok. You took a lot of time to listen to me. I was thinking too much on my own but you helped me to wake up and believe that I have a life here"*

*"Thank you for standing beside me. These people are kind, my family"*

## In memoriam - Keith Burdett

We were deeply saddened to hear about the passing of our friend and supporter Keith Burdett this year. In 2007, after learning about ASSIST's work at a Quaker meeting, Keith and his wife Ethel decided to use their savings to buy the first two ASSIST houses in Gleadless Valley. Their example inspired many other acts of generosity that helped to grow our accommodation offer to what it is today.



## Volunteering

Leah Lapautre, Volunteer and Community Outreach Coordinator

Volunteers are the lifeblood of ASSIST. As well as bringing a variety of experience, skill, and passion to our services, they raise awareness of our work in communities and are a powerful illustration of our role in building long term alternatives anchored in community solidarity.

This year we have expanded and strengthened our community links, connecting ASSIST to the local movement for migrant justice, to the communities we serve to empower, and to other local groups and community hubs that form the net of solidarity and resistance we are part of. We have huge gratitude for the groups who support our work, and to be in mutual relationships with them.

Some of the fruits of those connections have been visible in our volunteer recruitment rounds. We had a significant increase in volunteers who have lived experience of the asylum system, or come from migrant backgrounds, first or second generation. It is a vital part of our mission to be led by those who are personally impacted by the asylum system, including our volunteers.

We held two social events for all ASSIST volunteers to get together. Thanks to our events team, we also held our 20th Anniversary celebration which brought together many parts of the ASSIST community.

Our housing team has been working hard to bring to life our Client Maintenance Team, a volunteer team for clients who want to be involved in maintaining ASSIST houses through DIY or gardening. In March 2024, we held a social to celebrate their work and formally integrate them into our volunteer teams.

Sincere thanks to all volunteers who have contributed their time, energy and skills to ASSIST's work and our collective rejection of the Hostile Environment.

## Fundraising

Will Scott, Communications, Events and Fundraising Coordinator

Funding makes it possible for ASSIST, and the work we do in support of people seeking sanctuary, to continue and to adapt to changing circumstances. We are immensely grateful to all of the individuals and organisations that have chosen to support us, particularly during a period when budgets have become tighter for many.

The value of the support we receive from individual members of the local community, many of whom donate to ASSIST regularly, cannot be understated. Each year, we endeavour to give 100% of the donations we receive directly to our clients in the form of cash payments, and thanks to

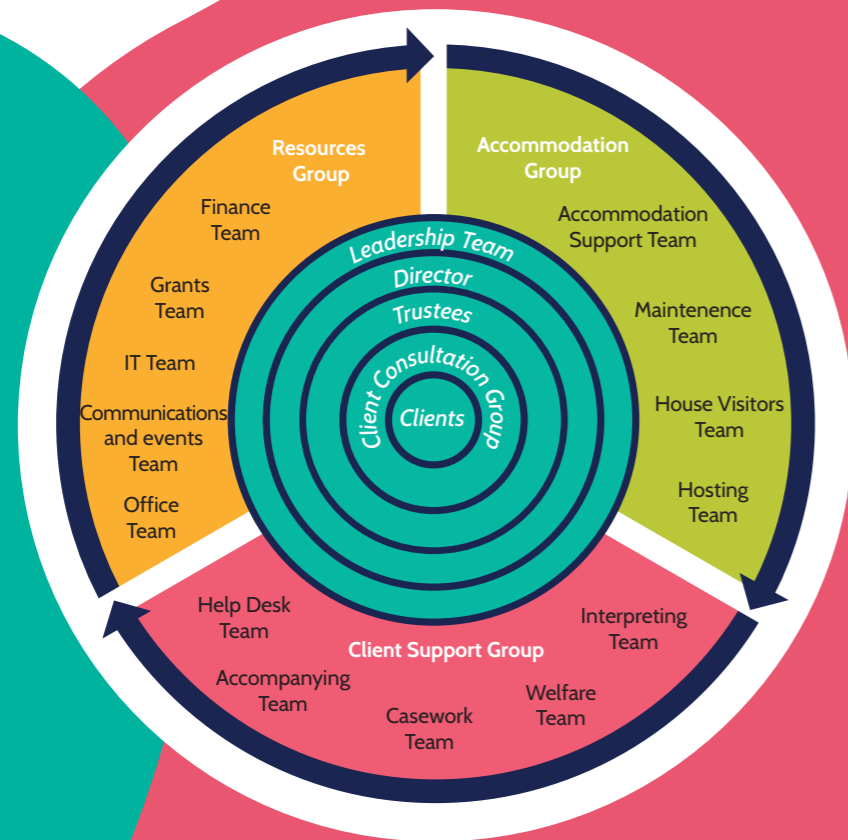
the generosity of our donors, we have recently been able to increase our support rates by £20 a month.

Similarly, the fundraising efforts of a wide variety of local community organisations (such as faith groups and student societies) continue to generate vital income for ASSIST that has directly benefited people seeking sanctuary in and around Sheffield.

Our approach to spending the donations we receive means that our core organisational costs, as well as the costs associated with specific development projects, can only be met through grant funding. We are thankful to each of the

charitable trusts and foundations that have awarded us grants this year, despite many funds being heavily oversubscribed. These have enabled us not just to preserve our existing activities and services, but to improve them in line with our strategic objectives.

## Organisational Infographic



## Finances

**Our finances are in the process of being independently examined. The figures below represent our draft end of year accounts. Our full financial statements will be presented at ASSIST's AGM and will be available on the Charity Commission website.**

In 2023/24, ASSIST raised an income of £675,937. Approximately 55% of this income was restricted for use for specifically pre-agreed purposes (e.g. grants) and the rest was unrestricted and could be used to cover any costs.

We are very grateful to our supporters who contributed £156,314.

We also really appreciate the two legacies we received that totalled £11,200.

ASSIST's expenditure in 2023/24 was £559,695 which, after taking into account funds received for capital expenditure left a surplus of £14,998.

Restricted Income - £371,296

Unrestricted Income - £304,641

**Total Income - £675,937**

Restricted Expenditure - £268,447

Unrestrictive Expenditure - £291,248

**Total Expenditure - £559,695**

Variance - £116,242

Restricted Surplus - £101,244

Available Surplus - £14,998



## There are so many ways you can get involved

Whatever your situation there is something you can do to help ASSIST continue to provide its crucial services.

- **VOLUNTEER** - Accompanying our clients to appointments, visiting the residents of our houses, helping with administration, running stalls at our events; these are just a few of the roles you can take on as an ASSIST volunteer. Please visit the 'how you can help' pages on our website for any current vacancies or, if you think that you have skills and experience that can benefit our work, then please get in touch.
- **FUNDRAISING** - Set yourself a challenge, be it sporting or otherwise, or organise an event. We want to hear your ideas!
- **DONATE** - we appreciate all donations, big or small, one-off or by standing order. Or leave a gift for ASSIST in your will.

Find out more at:

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