



Celebrating **20** Years of NCG

**Growing Together,
Building Futures,
Changing Lives**



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



Barnet Refugee Service
(working name New Citizens' Gateway)

Monday - Friday 9:30 am - 5 pm
9th Floor, Hyde House,
The Hyde,
London,
NW9 6LH
Telephone: 020 8905 9002
Email: info@ncgateway.org.uk
Registered Charity : 1107965
Co Ltd by Guarantee: 5243595
Incorporated as company Sep 2004

Principal funding sources 2024-2025

- Barnet Integrated Care Boards (ICB)
- Barnet Council
- BBC Children in Need
- The Violence Reduction Unit (GLA)
- The John Lyon's Charity
- The City Bridge Foundation
- The Mercers' Company
- The Betty Messenger Foundation
- The Henry Smith Charity
- CAF Bank - Keystone Fund
- Finchley Reform Synagogue
- National Zakat Foundation



@NCGateway



@NCGateway



@NewCitizensGateway

Index

Foreword From the Chair	1
Message from CEO	2
Organisational Chart	3
Staff and Sessional Workers 2024-25	4
Our History	5
About New Citizens' Gateway	5
Vision and Mission	5
Our Values	6
Our 5-Year Strategic Plan	6
Our Ambitions	6
Our Clients	7
Where Our Clients Come From	7
Inquiry Areas	7
Our Charity's Objectives	8
Clients' Satisfaction Survey 2024-25	8
Our Achievements at a Glance	9
Admin Team	10
London Legal Walk	10
Advice, Information and Guidance Team	11
Partnerships with Solicitors' Firms	13
Case Study 1	13
Bilingual Counselling Service	14
Partnership with Brent Council	13
Case Study 2	16
NCG Youth Wellbeing Project	17
Youth Counselling Service	23
ESOL Provision	24
Mums' & Tots'	25
Trinity College	26
Case Study 3	26

Sowing Seeds Ecotherapy Project	27
Cooking Project	28
Iftar Events for Asylum Seekers	28
CommUnity Quilt Project	29
Yoga Sessions	29
Health & Well-being	30
World Mental Health Day	31
Success Story	31
Barnet: A Borough of Sanctuary	32
NCG Staff Retreat	32
Mercy Mission Projects	33
Celebrating Refugee Week	34
Staying Connected: Vodafone SIM Cards	34
Training for Professionals	35
NCG Educational Outings	35
Jasmine Women's Group	36
International Women's Day	37
End of Year Party	37
Clothes and School Essentials Distribution	38
Case Study 4	38
Our Advocacy for Clients	39
Campaign for Free Bus Travel for Asylum Seekers	39
Volunteering Programme	40
List of Volunteers 2024-25	42
Volunteers' Party (2024)	43
Case Study 5	44
Donation	45
A Glance at NCG's Activities Over The Past Year	46
BRS Statement of Financial Activities	48
Partners and Collaborators 2024-25	49

Foreword From the Chair

Dear friends and supporters,

2025 is a landmark year, marking 20 years of supporting asylum-seekers, refugees, and displaced individuals across Barnet and the rest of the UK. It's especially important to note this record of decades of impact, given the testing times facing the vulnerable people we serve.

At the heart of this service to our community is the talent, care and dedication of NCG staff. Their passion and commitment drive the quality of the services our clients reliably tell us about. In 2024-25, New Citizens' Gateway (NCG) supported over **4,000** refugees and asylum seekers through its holistic model of care, delivering more than **8,000 participations** across advice, wellbeing, education, and community programmes.

We achieved an exceptional **81% counselling completion rate** and a **55% overall recovery rate**, well above the national average. The Youth Wellbeing Project reached over **180 young people**, with 95% reporting improved overall wellbeing and confidence, while the Volunteering Programme engaged **102 volunteers, 11 of whom transitioned into paid employment**. Across all services, client satisfaction remained consistently high, with wellbeing feedback averaging over **90% positive**, demonstrating NCG's significant impact in fostering resilience, inclusion, and community cohesion among refugees and asylum seekers across London.



Michael Young
Chair

Moreover, noting this is our 20th year of operations, it's worth noting that **during these two decades, NCG has touched the lives of over 34,000 individuals across all aspects of living, employability, health, finances, housing, education, and language (dealing with over 172,000 enquiries)**. Our clients have and continue to span all ages and from all sections of society. We are very proud of the impact we have delivered, but especially in our work with youth.

Our clients are people who have been forcibly displaced from their original homes and who now are living in the most difficult of circumstances, even in a country and society as advanced as the United Kingdom. Though NCG has been, and remains, an apolitical organisation, we too have been buffeted by the challenges of large-scale global immigration arising from conflict, a hostile political environment, and the pressures of population growth. And we have adapted, introducing large-scale use of technology to continue to deliver services and, in turn, extend the breadth of reach to wider audiences, whilst maintaining face-to-face provision as well.

Beyond that, we have reduced the footprint of our physical space without compromising its functionality and extended our service to go to where our clients are, whether it is in local asylum hotels, parks and gardens, or community hubs.

The past 20 years have not just been filled with a dedication to service, innovation, and relentless focus on the quality of the services we deliver, we have also grown through the support of our funders, who recognise the impact of our work and service. **In 2023, NCG's impact and quality of work were recognised through the GSK IMPACT Award, under the UK's GSK Community Health Programme which honours charities improving health and addressing health disparities.**

We would like to thank our staff, board members, key partners, funders, volunteers, and members of the community we serve for their dedication and support in sustaining NCG for the past two decades. As we look ahead, it is clear to us that our services, talent, advocacy, and collaboration will continue to be not just required but necessary. Beyond that, our ability to have impact, innovate, listen to our clients' needs, and adapt will remain the hallmark for ensuring that we can continue to provide the best support possible in helping displaced individuals (and their families) integrate into our society and rebuild their lives.

Mike Young,
Chair of the Board of Trustees

Message From the CEO

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of New Citizens' Gateway as an independent charity, and for me personally, it is a moment of both pride and reflection. I first joined what was then a small local VCS project 25 years ago. Twenty years ago, I witnessed its transformation into a registered charity, and for the past 18 years, I have had the privilege of serving as CEO. To see how far we have come is nothing short of remarkable.

Our clients, refugees and asylum seekers, come to us carrying the weight of unimaginable hardship: conflict, persecution, displacement, and the painful loss of home and loved ones. Here in the UK, their struggles do not end. They face new challenges of navigating complex systems, finding housing, learning a new language, managing trauma, and overcoming barriers to education and employment. And yet, time and again, they show extraordinary courage, determination, and hope.

Over these two decades, we have seen not only the difficulties but also the profound contributions of our clients. Many who once sought support at our doors have gone on to rebuild their lives, enter employment, and contribute meaningfully



Nazee Akbari
CEO

to the economy and the cultural richness of this country. Some have returned as volunteers, advisors, and colleagues at NCG, giving back to those who now walk the same path they once did. Their journeys remind us that refugees and asylum seekers are not only survivors of adversity but also active participants and contributors to our shared society.

As we mark this milestone, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our donors, funders, and commissioners. Your belief in our mission and your ongoing support have sustained us and enabled us to grow into the organisation we are today. Together, we have reached thousands of individuals and families, offering them not only practical support but also the chance to rebuild

their lives with dignity and hope.

My heartfelt thanks also go to our incredible staff, past and present, whose professionalism and compassion have made this work possible; to our volunteers, whose generosity of time and spirit have strengthened our mission; and to our Trustees, whose vision and guidance have ensured that NCG remains committed through both challenges and opportunities.

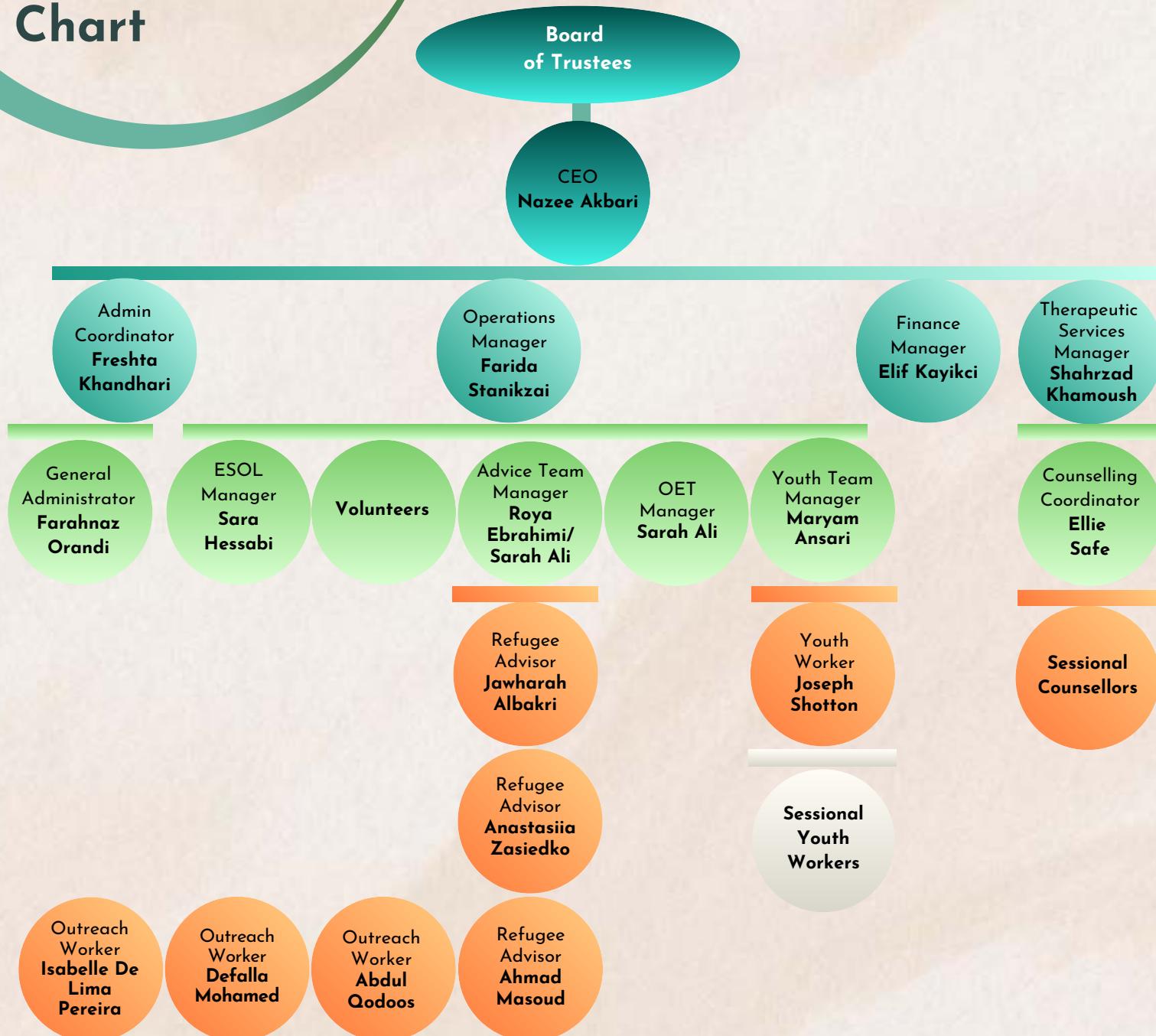
And most of all, I extend my gratitude to our clients for trusting us, for inspiring us, and for reminding us daily of the power of resilience and the value of community.

Together, over 20 years, we have built something lasting and meaningful, an organisation rooted in compassion, justice, and resilience. As we look to the years ahead, I am reminded of a question once asked by a funder: "If NCG could fly, what would it be?" The answer, of course, is the legendary phoenix, rising from challenge and adversity, representing transformation, resilience, and victory over obstacles. That is what our charity stands for, and that is the spirit that will carry us forward into the next 20 years.



Nazee Akbari,
Chief Executive Officer

Organisational Chart



Trustees serving in 2024-2025:

- **Michael James Young - (Chair - Appointed Jan 2024)**
- **John Conor Doyle - (Chair - Resigned June 2024)**
- **Geetha Thirusaba-Nathan - Treasurer**
- **Dr Sanjiv Ahluwalia**
- **Esmond S Rosen**
- **Fanta Sheriff**
- **Dr Penny A Trafford**
- **Sanjia Dujmovic Potnar**
- **Tata Issa Sougui (resigned Dec 2024)**

Key Senior Management Staff:
Dr Nazee Akbari - CEO

Staff 2024-25

Nazee Akbari
Chief Executive Officer

Farida Stanikzai
Operations Manager

Elif Kayikci
Finance Manager

Shahrzad Khamoush
Therapeutic Service Manager

Ellie Safe
Counselling Coordinator

Freshta Khandahari
Administrator

Farahnaz Orandi
General Administrator

Sara Hessabi
ESOL Manager

Maryam Ansari
Youth Team Manager

Joseph Shotton
Youth Worker

Roya Ebrahimi
Advice & Outreach Team Manager

Sarah Ali
Advice & Outreach Team Manager/
OET Manager

Jawharah Albakri
Refugee Advisor

Anastasiia Zasiedko
Refugee Advisor

Ahmad Masoud
Refugee Advisor

Isabelle Pereira
Outreach Support Worker

Abdul Qodoos
Outreach Support Worker

Defalla Mohamed
Outreach Support Worker

Tanya Novick (Volunteer)
Women's Group Coordinator

Mohammad Fard (Volunteer)
Gardening Coordinator

Sessional Workers & Volunteers

Alice Horsley - Youth Worker

Rukeya Mohamed - Youth
Worker

Ashley Levien - Football Coach

Ghazala Khattak - Youth
Counsellor

Jasmine Ansari - Youth
Counsellor

Hicham Jabrane - Youth
Counsellor

Jani Santos - Youth Counsellor

Aliona Lebed - Counsellor

Banu Aydin - Counsellor

Etti Kia - Counsellor

Fadi Salam - Counsellor

Fadumo Omar Mohamed -
Counsellor

Ghazala Noreen Khattak -
Counsellor

Hicham Jabrane - Counsellor

Kavita Nair - Volunteer
Counsellor

Khadijah Rahimi - Counsellor

Kiymet Omur - Counsellor

Negeen Zohari - Counsellor

Njomeza Kartallozi - Counsellor

Olga Paraska - Counsellor

Sahar Salim - Counsellor

Shahrzad Khamoush -
Counsellor

Shamsi Mahdavi - Counsellor

Soraya Mohammadi -
Counsellor

Ummu Gulsum - Counsellor

Valbona Preniqi - Counsellor

Yasmin Sher - Volunteer
Counsellor

Zainab Alkhoei - Volunteer
Counsellor

Haleh Kazemian - Clinical
Supervisor

Kiran Seth - Clinical Supervisor

Paul M Terry - Clinical
Supervisor

Sara Betteridge - Clinical
Supervisor

Shahrzad Khamoush -
Counsellor

102

Volunteers

CEO's Report

Our History

Barnet Refugee Service emerged as a charitable entity resulting from the integration of two initiatives founded in 1997: the Refugee Health Access Project and Homeless Action in Barnet - Asylum Seekers Project. Achieving independent charitable status in April 2005, the organisation has operated under the working name '**New Citizens' Gateway**' (NCG) since April 2021.

About New Citizens' Gateway (NCG)

NCG is collaborating with both individuals and organisations to **enhance the well-being** and **elevate the quality of life for migrants**, refugees, and asylum seekers who are situated in the UK, whether they reside, work, or pursue education here. Our activities are aimed at diminishing inequalities in health, as well as social and economic exclusion while facilitating a positive process of integration and fostering personal independence.

Mission

New Citizens' Gateway (NCG) provides **holistic support** and services which enable the **inclusion** of those seeking and getting protection in England and Wales and **to access their full potential as equal participants in UK life**. The focus of our work is to **improve the quality of life** and **promote the physical, social and mental well-being**, of refugees and people seeking asylum who live, work or study in the UK. We also help to reduce health inequalities, social and economic exclusion and enable positive integration and personal independence of these people.

Vision

All refugees are to be welcomed, safe, respected and resettled.

Statement of Values

New Citizens' Gateway firmly upholds the belief that **equality is an inherent birthright for every individual**, and that **seeking asylum is an indispensable human entitlement**. We readily recognise that our society is marked by instances where many individuals encounter unwarranted prejudice and constrained prospects, owing to circumstances that are inherently unjust.



Our Values:

Inclusive

We believe in an equal voice, equal opportunity, equal rights, and fairness for everyone. Being client-led and culturally sensitive is core to being inclusive.

Respectful

We treat everyone with kindness, empathy, openness and honesty. Active listening is the first step. This includes how we engage with clients, staff, volunteers and all others we engage with. It is part of our professionalism.

Collaborative

We believe in partnership. Working together results in better plans, decision-making, and solutions. We work together internally, and externally with other stakeholders for the best possible outcomes for our clients.

Empowering

We believe in enabling people to solve their difficulties, and in giving them greater participation in the solutions, hence developing the skills, experience and confidence to solve future problems.

Strategic Plan 2023-2028

In the year 2023, our organisation formulated a comprehensive five-year strategy to steer our efforts and propel us closer to this overarching objective. The charity has articulated a visionary framework for the future we aspire to create, complemented by a mission statement that defines the organisational essence required to attain this aspiration. Our operational approach encompasses the description of annual objectives across our **front-line services, advocacy and advice, and collaborative work**. This collective effort underscores **our commitment to effecting positive change and fostering a more inclusive society**.

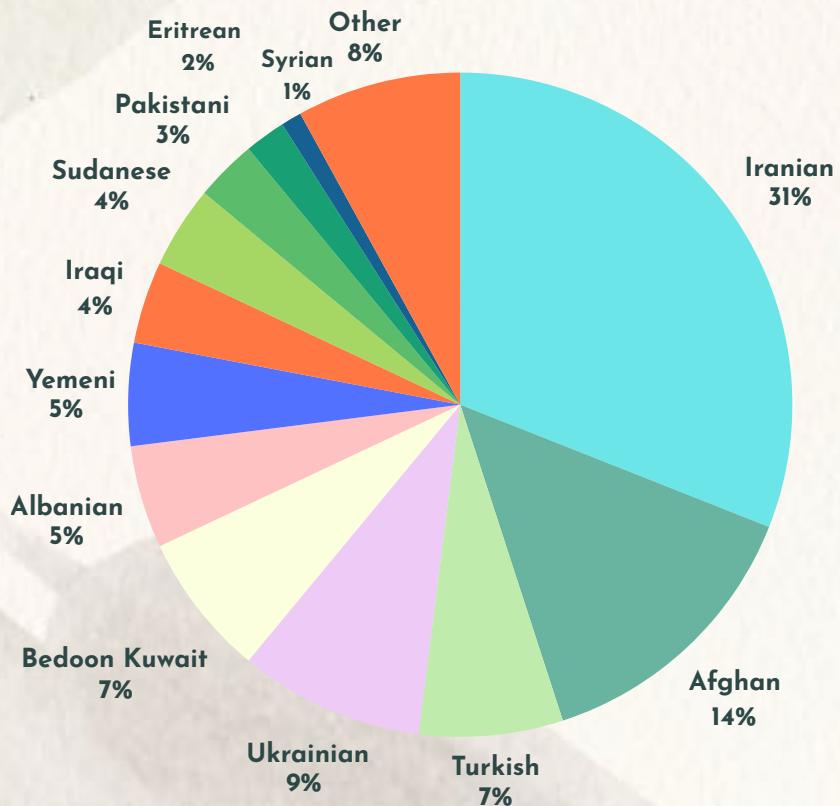
Our ambitions for the next five years

- For NCG to be more **client-led**.
- To further develop our **holistic model of support**.
- Establish NCG as one of the most **trusted organisations in youth work**.
- To **work in collaboration** with other agencies to **influence government policies and public narratives** for improvement in the protection of refugees and those seeking asylum.

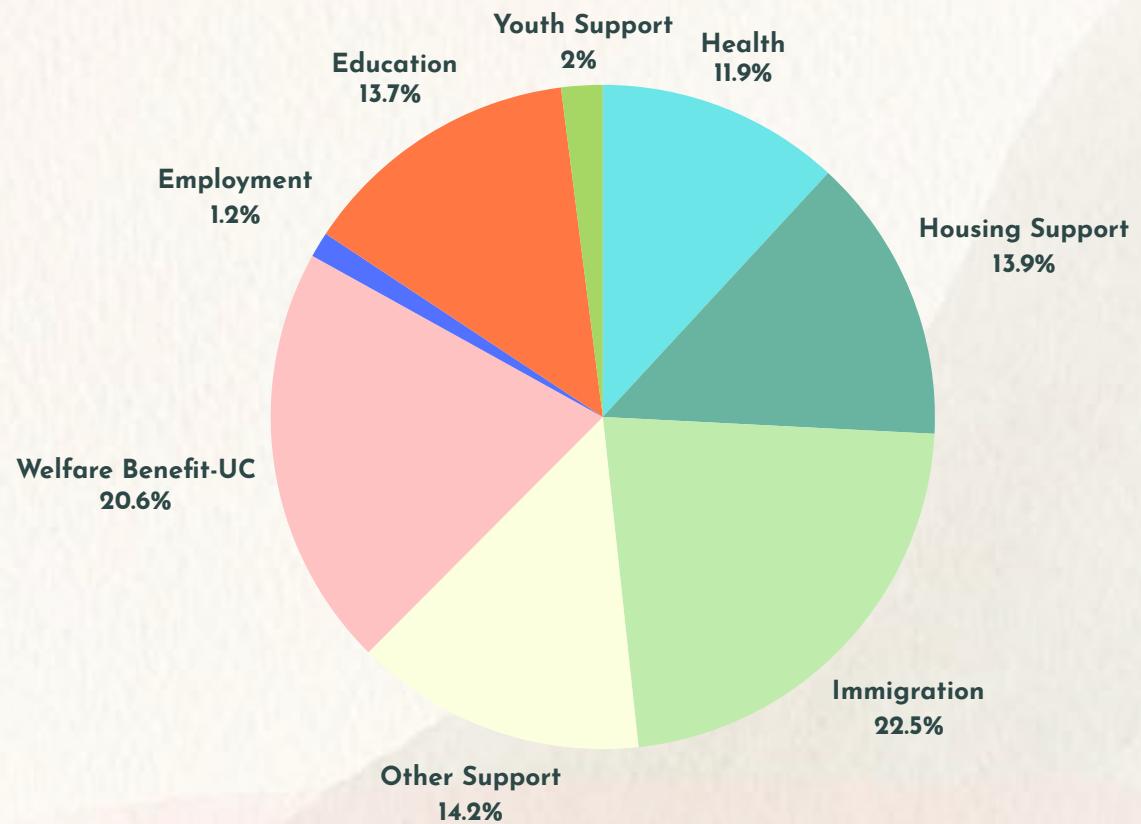
Our Clients

NCG's purpose revolves around aiding refugees and individuals seeking asylum who have endured harrowing experiences under some of the world's most oppressive regimes. Having escaped unimaginable horrors, they encounter ongoing challenges in the UK, frequently grappling with homelessness, impoverishment, and the inability to secure employment. Our objective involves **extending essential assistance to these profoundly vulnerable and traumatised individuals, equipping them with the necessary support to reclaim a life of dignity**. Subsequently, we guide them in constructing **secure, content, and meaningful lives** within the confines of the UK.

Where Our Clients Come From



Enquiry Areas



Our charity's objects, as defined in the Memorandum of Association are:

- To preserve and protect the **physical and mental health** of those who are seeking asylum or who are granted refugee status and their dependents living, working, or studying (temporarily or permanently) in England and Wales (hereinafter, the 'Beneficiaries').
- To advance the **education and training** of those persons defined in Object 1 as Beneficiaries.
- To advance the **education of the public** in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.
- The **relief of financial hardship** to those persons defined in Object 1 as Beneficiaries.
- The **provision of facilities** for recreation or other leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons defined in Object 1, who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship, or social and economic circumstances.

Clients Satisfaction Survey

2024-25

To measure the impact of our work, each project employs an internal evaluation framework that outlines specific aims, outcomes, and outputs with corresponding indicators. Every activity is monitored through a plan that includes monthly and yearly targets, with reporting requirements agreed upon with our funders. We regularly review the indicators for each outcome and track the progress of our clients.

To gather data for the evaluation, we randomly selected **280 clients from the pool of 1224 new clients**. This included individuals who accessed more than one service at NCG. A team of volunteer interviewers then reached out to these individuals, resulting in **174 participants** who responded and actively participated in the evaluation process. The evaluation revealed that **89%** of our clients are **very satisfied** with our services. The full evaluation report is available at our offices for further review.



Our Achievements at a Glance

April 2024 - March 2025



4,000+

Individuals participating in our wide range of services



1,869

Asylum seekers accommodated across 5 Barnet hotels



24,611

Advice and general inquiries were dealt with



£71,965

Raised in financial assistance for individual clients



GSK

An award winner of GSK Impact Award 2023



2,328

Bilingual counselling sessions benefiting 261 clients



173

Participants took part in 31 cooking sessions



388

Participants attended 36 psycho-educational IAPT workshops



133

Participants took part in several educational outings



29

participants in the Mums' & Tots' ESOL group



143

Participants attended 41 Gardening sessions



25

Participants attended 15 Yoga sessions



1,949

Total participations, engaging over 180 young people in our 227 youth activities



258

Individuals attended both formal and informal ESOL sessions



96

Women took part in 38 Jasmine Women's Group sessions



11

Volunteers transitioned into paid roles



102

Volunteers engaged in various NCG activities, with 76 actively participating



All

Volunteers completed level one adult and children safeguarding training

Admin Team



Freshta Khandhari
Admin Coordinator



Farhnaz Orandi
General Administrator

During the 2024-25 period, our dedicated administrative team once again proved to be the **backbone of our organisation**. Their **professionalism, efficiency, and care** ensured that projects ran **smoothly**, client interactions were handled with **warmth** and **precision**, and day-to-day operations remained **well-coordinated**.

The work of our administrative and support staff often happens quietly behind the scenes, yet it is **absolutely vital to the success of our charity**. Their **attention to detail, adaptability, and commitment** create the solid foundation on which all our programmes and services depend.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to every member of the admin team for their invaluable contributions throughout the year. A special thank-you goes to our Admin Coordinator, **Freshta Khandhari**, for her exceptional leadership, dedication, and steadfast support.

Thank you Admin Team! Your work keeps everything moving forward!



London Legal Support Sponsored Walk (2024)

“Because every step counts.”

The London Legal Walk is an annual 10km fundraising event that brings together thousands of legal professionals, charities, and community organisations in support of free frontline legal advice services. On 18 June 2024, over **18,000 walkers** set off from Carey Street, behind London's Royal Courts of Justice, **united in their commitment to access to justice**. This year marked **NCG's 16th consecutive participation**, with a dedicated team of eight walkers proudly taking part. Together, they **raised an impressive £2487.50 in sponsorships**, directly supporting NCG's vital advisory services for individuals who have fled persecution, sought asylum, and are working to rebuild their lives in safety.



We extend our sincere gratitude to our **walkers** for their energy and dedication, and to our generous **sponsors**, whose support makes this work possible.



Advice, Information and Guidance Team



Roya Ebrahimi
Advice Manager



Sarah Ali
Advice Manager



Jawharah Albakri
Refugee Advisor



Anastasiia Zasiedko
Refugee Advisor



Ahmad Masoud
Refugee Advisor



Isabelle De Lima Pereira
Outreach Support



Abdul Qodoos
Outreach Support



Defalla Mohamed
Outreach Support

The 2024-2025 period was a challenging yet highly productive year for our Advice and Outreach Team. The team worked tirelessly in an environment of increasing demand, driven by the growing number of newly arrived asylum seekers accommodated in hotels across London. This surge placed significant pressure on our services, yet the team continued to provide consistent, high-quality support to those in need.

Through our Advice and Outreach Services, the team supported an outstanding **3,831 individuals**, and in total, the service responded to **24,611 enquiries**, ensuring that clients received accurate and timely information to help them make informed decisions about their lives in the UK.

Contingency Hotels Outreach Service

The outreach team carried out services over the three contingency hotels within the London Borough of Barnet, providing support to more than **1,869 asylum seekers** and responding to over **12,809 individual enquiries**. Many of the residents in these hotels are newly arrived asylum seekers with a range of complex needs, including access to **healthcare, education, legal advice, mental health support, and community integration**. The outreach service plays a vital role in helping individuals navigate these challenges, ensuring they receive **timely information, practical assistance, and emotional support** during a period of significant uncertainty.

This essential service is funded by **Barnet Council**, enabling us to deliver compassionate, effective support to those seeking **safety and stability** in our community. Despite the heavy caseload and the growing complexity of clients' needs, the team remained professional, compassionate, and solutions-focused. Their **resilience and commitment** ensured that every client who approached NCG received a respectful and supportive response.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all Advice Team members and volunteers, whose dedication and generosity of time have been invaluable. Their contributions have strengthened our capacity to reach and support more clients, and their empathy and enthusiasm continue to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve. In particular, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Advice Team Managers, **Roya Ebrahimi** and **Sarah Ali**, for their outstanding leadership, professionalism, and unwavering commitment.

Their guidance has been instrumental in maintaining the high standards of service and care that define NCG's work. We also extend our deep gratitude to **Barnet Council** and the **Home Office** for their financial support, which has been essential in enabling the continued delivery of our Advice and Outreach services to those most in need.

Clients' Satisfaction Rate

From 1 (least) to 10 (most),
how would you rate your
satisfaction with
the following:



Partnership with Migrant Help

In partnership with **Migrant Help**, the Advice Team played a crucial role in ensuring that **newly arrived asylum seekers received the essential support they needed**. Our advice team supported **62 clients with their ASFI applications**, enabling clients to access **Section 95 support, HC2 certificates, and ASPEN cards**. This vital work helped prevent many vulnerable individuals and families from falling into destitution while awaiting decisions on their asylum claims.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to **Migrant Help** for their financial support and partnership, which has been instrumental in enabling us to deliver this important work.

E-Visa Support Project

Funded by the Home Office under the e-Visa contract, we successfully delivered this project to support **over 165 clients in accessing their e-visas and responded to 141 enquiries to help resolve technical or practical challenges they encountered**.

This support made a tangible difference, enabling clients to move on with their lives, opening bank accounts, applying for Universal Credit, and progressing toward greater independence and stability after being granted refugee status.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the **Home Office** for their financial support, which has been essential in enabling us to provide this valuable service.



Partnership with Solicitors' Firms

Legal Advice Surgeries: This year, New Citizens' Gateway established a valuable collaboration with **Londonium Solicitors**, a London-based firm that runs a monthly legal surgery from our office. These sessions have quickly become an essential service for our community, offering asylum seekers direct access to expert legal advice on new asylum claims and appeals.

Each month, the solicitors met with over 20 clients and provided legal support and representation to more than **200 individuals**. At a time when accessing legal aid solicitors has become increasingly difficult, leaving many asylum seekers without the support they need, this initiative has been vital in ensuring that some of the most vulnerable members of our community can secure the legal assistance they urgently require.

We extend our sincere thanks to Londonium Solicitors for their commitment, expertise, and generosity in supporting our clients.

Housing Legal Advice Surgeries: We continued our collaboration with **Lawstop Housing Solicitors**, who deliver a monthly legal surgery from our office for refugees facing housing issues or needing to challenge local council decisions. Over the past year, Lawstop has successfully supported **41 refugees** to secure safer and more suitable living conditions that meet their individual support needs.

Operating under legal aid, their expertise has been invaluable at a time when access to housing solicitors is becoming increasingly limited. This collaboration has added significant value to our services, ensuring that our clients can access the specialist housing advice and representation they urgently need but might otherwise be unable to obtain.

We extend our sincere thanks to Lawstop for their dedication, professionalism, and continued support in helping refugees achieve stability and security in their housing.

Case Study 1

Iyed Sliti; Fighting for his dreams

My name is Iyed Sliti. I am a fighter, and I have a big dream to be famous and become a world champion in ONE Championship. ONE Championship is a big international fighting competition, and to join, you have to be a strong fighter. I know I am strong, and I work very hard to reach the top.

I started my fighting career when I was just 5 years old. I didn't just do one sport; I trained in Kung Fu, Uzakanbidu, Kickboxing, and now Muay Thai. I was successful in all of them. People knew me in my country, and I even went on TV twice to show how good I was.

But life was not easy. My parents had to make a very hard decision, and we had to leave our country. When I came to the UK, I couldn't train for at least two months.

When I started school here, my PE teacher helped me a lot. He helped me to register at **Knowlesy Academy**. This gym is very special because many champions train there, like **Jonathan Haggerty, Liam Nolan, and Lyndon Knowles**.

I have fought in many places in the UK, like Leeds and Birmingham. But most of the time, I cannot join competitions because it costs too much. We need to pay for the fees, transport, and accommodation. **NCG has helped me many times, and I am very grateful for their support.**

I want to thank everyone who has supported me, especially my parents, the gym, my PE teacher and the New Citizen's Gateway.



Bilingual Counselling Service

During 2024-25, our outstanding team of **22** bilingual counsellors, including both highly experienced professionals and dedicated trainees, provided life-changing, **culturally sensitive psychological support in clients' native languages**, including Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Dari, English, Farsi, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Kurdish, Pashto, Punjabi, Somali, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Urdu. This trauma-informed and inclusive approach meant that clients were **heard, understood, and supported** in ways that truly **honoured their cultural and emotional realities**.

The impact of our service this year has been remarkable. We received **443 referrals**, with **60 clients** funded under the NHS Talking Therapy one-to-one programme. Of those referred, **261** attended an initial assessment and **194 completed their full course of counselling**, totalling an impressive **2,328 bilingual sessions**. Our **completion rate of 81%**, with a dropout rate of just 19%, is far better than the **national average of 63.3%**, a testament to the quality, trust, and care our counsellors provide. Recovery outcomes were equally strong: **55.3% of clients achieved recovery, rising to 64% among those supported through the ICB one-to-one model**, compared with a **national recovery rate of 47%**. These figures highlight the effectiveness of our approach and the extraordinary dedication of our team.

NCG ICB Clients Recovery rate : 64%

NCG Overall Recovery rate One-to-One : 55.3%

NHS Recovery rate: 47%

We continue to support clients with some of the most complex and urgent psychological needs. More than one in five presented with suicidal ideation or a history of suicide attempts, and over 11% had a history of self-harm.

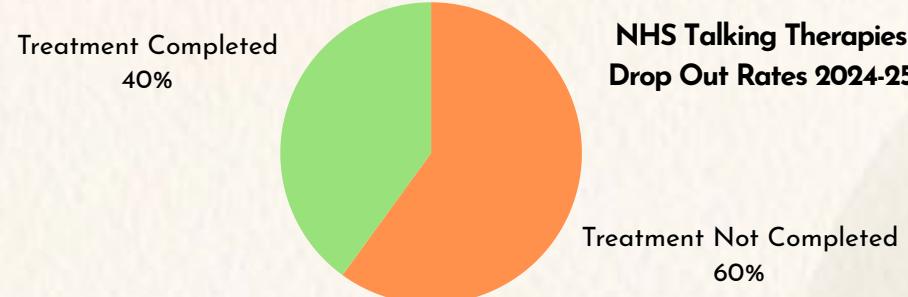


Shahrzad Khamoush
Therapeutic Services Manager

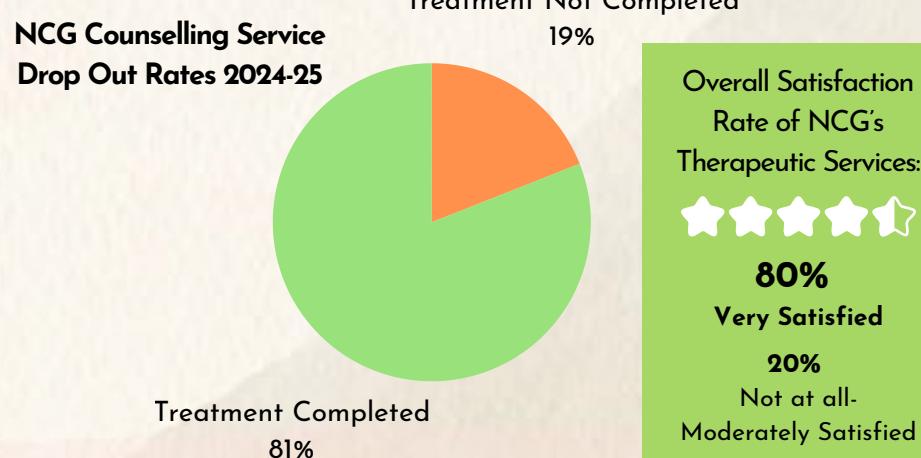


Ellie Safe
Counselling Coordinator

NHS Talking Therapies Drop Out Rates 2024-25



NCG Counselling Service Drop Out Rates 2024-25



Overall Satisfaction Rate of NCG's Therapeutic Services:



80%

Very Satisfied

20%

**Not at all-
Moderately Satisfied**

These profound challenges are compounded by the broader climate of rising far-right hostility and increasingly harsh immigration policies, which place additional strain on already vulnerable individuals. In this difficult context, our service stands as a safe, compassionate, and vital lifeline—offering not just therapy, but hope, resilience, and dignity.



We are immensely grateful to our funders, the **Henry Smith Charity** and **NHS Barnet (ICB)**, for making this work possible, and to our Counselling Coordinator, **Ellie Safe**, and our Therapeutic Services Manager, **Shahrzad Khamoosh**, whose inspirational leadership underpins everything we do.

NHS Talking Therapy Psycho-Educational Workshops

As part of our **Step Two IAPT service**, we delivered **low-intensity psychological support** to individuals experiencing mild to moderate levels of depression and anxiety. Over the course of the year, a total of **420 individuals registered for workshops**. Of these, **388 attended one or more of the 36 sessions offered**. Workshops were delivered in both Farsi and English and addressed a range of key mental health topics, including stress, anger management, panic, PTSD, phobias, self-care, grief, anxiety, and relationships.

These workshops aimed to improve participants' understanding of mental health and to equip them with essential coping tools. To evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention, participants were asked to complete a feedback form at the end of each session. The responses indicated that the majority found the workshops helpful in managing their mental health and enhancing their coping strategies.

Reflective Supervision to Mentors

Our partnership with **Clear Voice** has been a truly valuable and inspiring collaboration. Recognising the **emotional and psychological impact of interpreting and mentoring**, Clear Voice approached NCG to provide reflective supervision for their trainee mentors—experienced interpreters preparing to take on this important new role.

Throughout the year, we provided over **50 hours of individual and group reflective supervision** on a fortnightly basis, offering a supportive space to reflect on the practical, organisational, and psychological challenges participants encountered. This process not only enhanced their professional growth but also safeguarded their well-being, enabling them to step into mentoring roles with greater confidence and resilience.

This partnership has proven to be a wonderful example of how reflective support can make a lasting difference, and we look forward to continuing to provide this invaluable service to both trainee and qualified mentors in the future.

'Speaking in my own language during counselling felt like finally being able to breathe. It gave me the safety to open up, to cry, and to heal. In that familiar voice, I found the strength to face what I thought I couldn't.'





Partnership with Brent Council



Through our official **partnership with Brent Council**, NCG played a key role in **supporting Ukrainian refugees** as part of the "Homes for Ukraine" (HFU) Project. This collaboration marked an important step in linking NCG's culturally informed mental health services with Brent Council's community wellbeing initiatives.

Under this partnership, NCG received **16 referrals for Ukrainian-speaking clients seeking mental health support**. Of these, **13 clients engaged fully and successfully completed a structured 12-session therapeutic programme delivered in their mother tongue**, ensuring **culturally and linguistically appropriate care**. In total, **169 sessions were delivered**, comprising **13 initial assessments and 156 counselling sessions**.

The programme achieved an impressive **87.5% recovery rate**, demonstrating both the effectiveness of the intervention and the value of culturally attuned, trauma-informed care for displaced individuals.

Feedback from participants reflected high levels of satisfaction, with several clients expressing a desire for continued support should the project be extended.

This successful collaboration not only underscores the positive outcomes achieved through joint working between NCG and Brent Council but also highlights the ongoing need for accessible, culturally sensitive mental health services within the Ukrainian refugee community.



Case Study 2

M.P.'s Story

A few years ago, I was going through a really tough time, both emotionally and mentally. I was finding it hard to cope, and that's when I realised I needed help.

I have been in touch with New Citizens Gateway (NCG) for many years and have been using their services. It was through NCG that I discovered their **counselling service**.

I used the counselling service twice. I had two kind counsellors who spoke my language, and I had 12 sessions with each of them. **The sessions were a safe place where I could talk freely without being judged**. My counsellors helped me understand my feelings and taught me ways to cope. Through counselling, I started to understand myself better and learned how to manage my emotions. It gave me a sense of clarity and strength I didn't know I had.

I know that some people might feel shy or scared to ask for help, especially since mental health support is still taboo in many communities. I want to encourage everyone to seek help as soon as they need it.

I am very grateful to NCG, my counsellors, and everyone who supported me. **Their care and dedication have truly changed my life.**



NCG Youth Wellbeing Project (YWP)



Maryam Ansari
Youth Wellbeing Manager



Joseph Shotton
Refugee Youth Worker

The NCG Youth Wellbeing Programme (YWP) had a very innovative and productive year in 2024-25 as we introduced nuanced aspects to new and existing projects while offering well-rounded services to young refugees and asylum seekers in London. The YWP is aimed at young people from a refugee or asylum-seeking background, providing holistic services to support their overall mental health and wellbeing, as well as promoting integration, community building and social cohesion. Our services include weekly youth social clubs and football clubs, online ESOL lessons, one-to-one youth counselling, educational workshops, psychoeducation sessions, outings

and trips, school holiday activities, performing arts, volunteering opportunities and seasonal kids' activities in asylum seeker hotels.

Over the past year, we have held feedback sessions to encourage young people to be involved in co-designing our youth programme, thus offering additional opportunities and projects that are wholly in line with what they want to see. From April 2024-2025, we engaged over **180 individual young people** and received **144 new referrals**. **227 different sessions/activities** were delivered, reaching a **total attendance of 1949**.

During this period, we continued to build on existing partnerships while at the same time fostering new collaborations, thus further expanding the programme and its reach. Our joint projects and sessions with our long-term partners, such as Chickenshed theatre, Brook Sexual Health, the Roundhouse, LiFT Cic, Proud Places Heritage of London Trust, Papatango, Go Live Theatre, Barnet Bulldogs and New Horizons Youth Centre continued to grow as we strove to offer our young people a diverse and enriching programme of activities.

Though we continued our partnership with **Middlesex University** for part of the year, we also expanded into new venues for our weekly sessions, namely the **West Hendon Community Hub** and **Whitefield School**, in order to offer improved and cost-effective access and facilities for our youth club and football sessions.



Our ongoing partnership with **Chickenshed** Inclusive Theatre also led to nuanced projects and performances this year, with our intergenerational and intercultural two-part play about the refugee experience performed during **Refugee Week in 2024**. This year, we also started a new project together with **Barnet Virtual Schools**, delivering accessible Psychoeducation and Self-care sessions tailored to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers aged 16+ in Barnet and Southgate Colleges.

Our YWP project's success has been made possible through the generous support of our funders, **GLA's Violence Reduction Unit**, **BBC Children in Need**, and **The John Lyon's Charity**. We are deeply grateful to them, and to our dedicated Youth staff team – in particular, our Youth Wellbeing Manager, **Maryam Ansari**, for their steadfast commitment to both the charity and the project.



Refugee Experience Performance during Refugee Week - In Partnership with Chickenshed

Weekly Social Club

The NCG Youth Club provides a range of enriching activities for a diverse group of young refugees and asylum seekers aged **11 to 20**, including **unaccompanied minors** and **separated children**. The social club convenes every Thursday evening at the West Hendon Community Hub, where we offer opportunities for young people to **socialise, learn new skills, and integrate into a wider community**.

Throughout the 2024-25 period, we conducted **44 youth club sessions**, with a **total attendance of 401**. These were often either run by our dedicated youth team and volunteers, or we invited in guest facilitators to offer customised sessions and activities in line with their skillsets. Sessions varied and included opportunities for young people to engage with **arts, crafts, sports, workshops, fun games, music, drama, film, cultural enrichment, skills enhancement**, and much more.

Workshops & Information Sessions

Through the reporting period, we ran a series of workshops and information sessions targeted specifically at **vulnerable young people with limited access to educational settings** and young people from **diverse language backgrounds**. By partnering with specialised organisations such as **Brook**, **Family Action**, and **Refugee Education UK**, we delivered several information sessions and workshops on **sexual health, healthy relationships, puberty, misogyny, UK elections, CV writing and employment, and access to higher education**, among others. Utilising our staff team's own skillsets, we also ran sessions on **budgeting and achieving goals**. This year, we additionally launched our **6-week psychoeducation and self-care programme** for young refugees and asylum seekers at two different sites of Barnet and Southgate College in collaboration with Barnet Virtual Schools.

We also facilitated several **creative workshops** throughout the year. In collaboration with the **Roundhouse**, we ran a series of **filmmaking workshops** together, where young people had the chance to explore representations of the theme of '**home**' through storytelling, interview skills, and animation. The film was screened at our Refugee Week Celebration in 2024 at the Finchley Reform Synagogue.



We also ran two rounds of **monologue-writing workshops together with Papatango**, where young people were taught and supported to write their own monologues. These were then printed in booklets and performed by professional actors, whose films were screened for young people at a later stage.



We partnered with **Go Live Theatre** in the summer, where facilitators ran a series of drama-themed games, with the aim of **enhancing leadership skills among young people**. At a later stage, the young people took ownership of these learnings and facilitated a similar workshop for a visiting youth group from Belfast.

Youth English Language Lessons (ESOL)

We offer accessible ESOL (English as a Second Language) lessons online to empower young refugees and asylum seekers to **integrate** and form a vital part of the community. During the 2024-25 period, we provided **69 online ESOL** courses catering to both beginner-intermediate levels (entry level 1) and advanced learners (level 2+), with a total of **264 participants**. Classes were interactive and led by qualified teachers and volunteers, supporting students to enhance their communication, listening, reading, and writing skills while also providing many with the **confidence** to navigate **schoolwork, exams** and even **daily life**.



Our deepest gratitude goes out to our dedicated volunteer ESOL Teachers, **Linda Carey** and **Orna Almagor**, for their unwavering support and contribution.

Outreach & First Give

This year the NCG youth team expanded its outreach to schools, colleges and other youth groups to spread awareness about our charity and raise awareness about the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in the U.K. Between 2024-2025, the NCG Youth team visited **three schools in Barnet** to participate in **First Give** Initiatives, where charities were invited to talk about their cause and **raise funds from student donors**. NCG was well-received by students and staff in all schools.



NCG Youth Football Club

Football continues to be one of our most popular activities, with an average of **20 attendances per session**. Our Youth Team delivers **weekly football clubs**, led by a qualified coach who provides guidance and assistance to the young participants, with support from our Youth worker and volunteers. The football club takes place every Friday at Whitefield School, Brent Cross. This not only offers a chance to have fun and exercise but also leads to improved **well-being and social integration**.

Between 2024-2025, the Youth Wellbeing Project successfully delivered a total of **38 football club sessions**, leading to an impressive **total attendance of 771**.

Throughout this period, we held **8 football tournaments**, with NCG teams playing friendly matches with **New Horizons Youth Centre, Young Roots**, a visiting youth group from **Belfast** and **Lift CIC**. On each occasion, we distributed certificates of attendance to every participant, as well as medals or trophies to the winning teams, ending the session by offering all teams pizza and drinks and a chance to socialise and get to know each other afterwards.

A special thanks to the Youth team for their hard work in running our football sessions and to our partners for participating or helping to organise the tournaments. Our gratitude is extended particularly to coach **Ashley Levien**, whose dedication and hard work has been invaluable to our work with young people.



'I feel the love from every employee there and this comforts me as I am far from my family, my mother and my brothers whom I miss and all the employees or volunteers have humanity beyond limits and are friendly and focus on the youth and educating them and the activities that motivate the person to life.'

'Thank you very much for your efforts.'

Youth Excursions and School Holiday Activities

In 2024-2025, the Youth team delivered **21 outings and holiday activities** with a total of **199 attendees**. These outings and events were scheduled mainly during evenings, weekends, and school/college holidays to ensure maximum participation. The plans for the outings were mainly born out of young people's own feedback as well as previous trips where we had observed popular engagement. The wide range of outings included **interfaith cooking sessions during the holy month of Ramadhan, horse riding at Ebony Horse Club, Hiking, Kayaking with Phoenix Canoe Club, an outing to a restoration site at Christchurch Fountain with Proud Places, a visit to the Natural History Museum, a day-trip to Brighton** and many more.

Given that the majority of our young people are from a Muslim background, we organised cooking sessions and an **Iftar** on two occasions during Ramadhan in 2024-2025. On both occasions we collaborated with **local youth groups**, including the **Jewish youth group from Finchley Reform Synagogue** and **F.U.S.E. youth group** where young people had the chance to come together, explore cultural diversities and build bridges.

Our Brighton Day trip proved a great success as well, as we managed to take over **33 children and young people** on the trip. We also offered a buffet lunch, a trip to the Brighton Palace Pier, and an opportunity for sunbathing to 19 of the young people, while others chose to stay with their parents, who were also offered a space on the coach, particularly if the children were younger.

Building on previous feedback from the young people, we also ran **5 mixed Basketball sessions** during the summer period together with the **Barnet Bulldogs at Saracens High School**, funded by **Sports England**. The idea was to bring local youth together with our refugee youth to build bridges and practise sports. There was a qualified coach at each session running drills, warm-ups and games, and vegetarian meals were provided at the end.

Some of our winter outings this year included **ice skating at Alexandra Palace**, a visit to the **London Eye** and a **walk around central London**. Throughout the year, we also went on several outings to the **theatre and West End**, to see, for instance, *Fan Girls* and *The Play that Goes Wrong*. As in most years, we also went to see the **Chickenshed Christmas play** in the winter. For some young people, it was their first time going to the theatre and therefore was exciting on many levels.

These diverse activities played a crucial role in fostering social skills, fun and integration for our young individuals. Their active participation not only improved their mental and emotional well-being but also improved their independence and communication skills and gave them unique opportunities to become familiarised with several diverse aspects of life and culture in the U.K.
We extend heartfelt gratitude to our funders, in particular **John Lyon's Charity, partners, youth volunteers, and dedicated youth team for their hard work and great spirits.**

Youth Volunteering and Kid's Activities in Hotels

Our Youth Volunteering programme has continued this year in line with our double aim to run kids' **activities in asylum seeker hotels during holiday periods**, while also giving our more mature young people opportunities to **support meaningful activities and build their skillset**. These sessions were planned during school holiday periods and half-terms, where children had less to do, and our young volunteers were more available, and were carried out directly in common spaces of these hotels to ensure easy access for children and parents. During the reporting period, we ran a total of **five sessions of kids' games and activities across three hotels, engaging a total of 20 youth volunteers and more than 47 children**. With each volunteering session, we held briefings and debriefings with our young volunteers, gathering feedback on their experience and trying to adapt future sessions to meet their expectations and needs.



Young Person:

'At home I feel tension. When I come here, I am very happy. I practice English. Staff here like my brothers and sisters. When home office asks me if I have brothers and sisters, I said I have my brothers and sisters back home but also here.'

Intergenerational-Intercultural Drama Group in collaboration with Chickenshed Theatre

Our existing partnership with Chickenshed inclusive theatre group expanded this year to include the setting up of **our own NCG drama group**, bringing together people from different generations and cultural backgrounds to engage in **music, storytelling and performing arts**. In the lead-up to Refugee Week 2024, we held 8 mixed rehearsals together with Chickenshed Theatre and a final performance on 20th June. The story was a two-part play co-designed by staff and clients; '**The Boat**', which told the harrowing story of refugees' journey to Europe, and '**The Camp**', which was about refugee experiences in refugee camps in Europe. Through these rehearsals refugee and migrant clients from all age groups and backgrounds had the opportunity to come together with a local theatre group, together telling an important story while building bridges between communities.



This year, as in previous years, NCG also attended Chickenshed's annual Christmas play, '**Pan**', together with our clients and drama group. **We are deeply grateful to Chickenshed Theatre for our long-term collaboration and hope to continue for many years to come.**

Barnet & Southgate College Self-care and Psycho-education Course

This year, we delivered a new project in collaboration with **Barnet Virtual School** and **Barnet and Southgate College**. The programme comprised a 6-week psychoeducation course centred specifically on equipping young people with tools to support their **own wellbeing and integration**. The programme was delivered in two branches of Barnet and Southgate College, Wood Street and Colindale, from November to December 2024 and then again from February to April 2025. Topics covered included building a **self-care toolkit**, **culture and belonging**, **healthy eating and exercise**, **stress response theory**, and **emotional support and counselling**. After an initial assessment, we also added elements of **goal setting** and how to get **quality sleep** to the programme, at the young participants' own request. Attendance ranged from between 7-17 young people in each session, including Looked After young people aged 16+, as well as others from a refugee or asylum-seeking background. In total, we engaged **40+ young people** in this project. Through pre- and post-assessment forms completed by regular attendees, we noted how the vast majority of young people's **knowledge levels had increased**, and a **high level of satisfaction was expressed** in the course. Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to **Barnet Virtual School** for funding the project, and to **Barnet & Southgate College** for hosting us.

Youth Evaluation Survey

The Youth Wellbeing Project is a complex project consisting of multiple activities and services to support the **psycho-social** needs of young asylum seekers and refugees. Within each regular activity (ESOL, Youth Club, Football, Youth Volunteering, and Outings), there are multiple sub-activities, individual workshops, and events. Due to the capacity within the youth team and a high number of individual workshops/activities, it is not possible for the youth team to evaluate every individual activity independently.



In response to this, the youth team has developed multiple methods of evaluation of the activities, services, and young persons' development within these activities. The youth team evaluates the young people's progress using the quarterly Youth Satisfaction surveys; feedback made during activities, staff observations, regular face-to-face young person feedback sessions, reflective meetings, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.



Young Person: 'It is very important for young people like us to have an opportunity to learn the new culture and get integrated into the society.'

Between April 2024 and March 2025, a total of **101** young people responded to the Youth Satisfaction Survey. An overwhelming **95%** of the respondents said they had seen **positive outcomes** from joining the NCG youth activities. These included feeling happier, having fun, learning new skills, making new friends, reducing loneliness, making a positive impact on their community, and improving English language skills. **94%** reported that **being part of NCG's youth club had improved their overall well-being**. This feedback highlights the positive impact the project has had on young people's mental and physical health, addressing their emotional needs and fostering a supportive environment.

The Youth Team successfully implemented its evaluation plan during this reporting period. Their key measurement objectives included **improving health and well-being, enhancing young people's engagement, increasing social skills and knowledge, and identifying mechanisms of change**.

More than 90% of young people reported satisfaction with the learning provided.



'The staff and volunteers show incredible kindness and humanity, always treating us with respect and warmth. They are dedicated to supporting young people, helping us learn, grow, and stay motivated through meaningful activities. Their encouragement makes a real difference in my life. I'm truly grateful for all the hard work and compassion they show every day.'



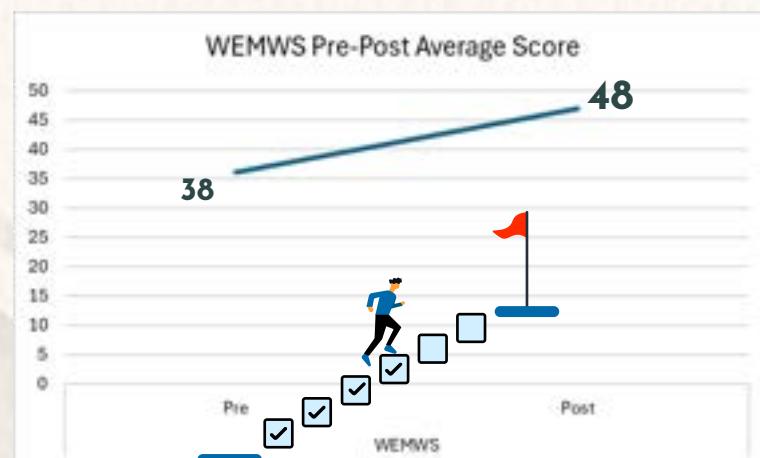
Youth Counselling Service

The Youth Counselling Service, implemented between April 2024 and March 2025, aimed to provide **weekly counselling sessions to young refugees and asylum seekers in their own native languages**. A total of **38 referrals** were received during this period, out of which **21 received counselling sessions**, and **13 completed their sessions**.

To assess the impact of the Youth Counselling Service, participants were asked to rate their mental well-being using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) before and after the completion of their counselling sessions. The **Pre/Post ratio**, which represents the average well-being score before and after counselling, showed **an initial average score of 36, which increased to 46 after the completion of the 12 counselling sessions**. Notably, all but one participant demonstrated an improvement in their well-being scores from pre-counselling to post-counselling, indicating a **positive change** in their mental well-being.

The most significant improvement in an individual client's well-being score was recorded as **+23**, with a **pre-counselling score of 19 and a post-counselling score of 42**. This highlights the **effectiveness of the counselling sessions in enhancing the mental well-being** of this particular participant.

In conclusion, the Youth Counselling Project effectively addressed the mental well-being needs of the young participants, as evidenced by the significant improvements in their well-being scores. The positive outcomes achieved by the project highlight the importance of providing accessible and culturally appropriate counselling services to youth.



The Youth Counselling service was generously supported by **John Lyon's charity** and **Children In Need**.



ESOL Provision



Sara Hessabi
ESOL Manager

For many refugees and asylum seekers, learning English is one of the most urgent needs when rebuilding their lives in the UK. Effective communication is key to accessing education, employment, and community life. Recognising this, NCG has proudly provided ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes for 18 consecutive years, supporting learners to develop confidence, independence, and a sense of belonging.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, NCG received **463 referrals** for ESOL classes and successfully supported **258 learners** across levels from Pre-Entry to Level 1.

Each learner was carefully assessed and placed at the appropriate level to ensure meaningful progress. Our ESOL provision included both informal classes, delivered face-to-face and online by a **dedicated team of volunteer teachers**, and a **Mothers and Toddlers Group run in partnership with Hyde Children's Centre**. This unique programme supported **14 mothers and 15 children** throughout the year, offering mothers the opportunity to learn English while their children were cared for in a safe, nurturing crèche led by a qualified nursery teacher and volunteers. We also provided ESOL lessons through our **youth activities**, ensuring that young refugees and asylum seekers had opportunities to strengthen their language skills in an engaging and supportive environment.

Attendees agreed that they had **74% growth in their confidence** in speaking English, **74% growth in reading**, and **72% growth in writing** in English. Together, these programmes continued to make a meaningful difference in helping newcomers gain the language skills and confidence to participate fully in community life.



'Being part of the ESOL classes has truly boosted my confidence. I can now express myself more clearly in English, both in and outside the classroom. I've noticed real progress in my speaking and writing, and I feel proud of how far I've come. These classes have made a big difference in my life.'



'The ESOL programme has helped me feel more comfortable and confident using English, improving my vocabulary and communication skills, and encouraging me to believe in my abilities.'

Mums' & Tots' ESOL Programme

During 2024-25, our Mums' and Tots' ESOL programme, delivered in partnership with **The Hyde Children's Centre**, continued to provide vital Pre-Entry English language learning for **asylum seeker and refugee mothers**. Fourteen women participated in weekly two-hour sessions each Friday during term time, building their confidence and communication skills in a warm and supportive environment. A key strength of the programme is its integrated crèche provision, which supported **15 children** throughout the year. While mothers focused on learning English, their preschool-aged children were safely cared for and engaged in early-learning activities, including nursery rhymes and play-based learning, all delivered by **a qualified nursery teacher and dedicated volunteers**. This unique model enabled mothers to learn without worry, knowing their children were thriving in a safe and nurturing setting.

End-of-course assessments showed measurable progress across all four language skills, and feedback from participants highlighted the programme's strong impact:

- "The English class helped me improve my confidence in speaking" – **72% of learners agreed.**
- "The teacher was very helpful and explained things clearly" – **88% agreed.**



We warmly thank our **anonymous funder**, whose long-standing support has ensured the continued success of this programme. We are equally grateful to The Hyde Children's Centre for their invaluable partnership, and to our dedicated childminders for providing high-quality childcare that enables mothers to learn with confidence. Finally, we extend our appreciation to our volunteers, our ESOL teachers as well as **Sara Hessabi**, our ESOL Manager, for her committed leadership and outstanding management of the project.

'The mums and tots program, together with the English classes for mums, has truly changed my life. While my child is looked after by warm, patient carers in a safe and fun space, I'm able to focus on improving my English without worry.'

'Before joining, I struggled to communicate and felt isolated, but now I feel more confident, independent, and connected to the community. This program supports both mothers and children in such a thoughtful way, and I'm incredibly grateful for everything it has given us.'



ESOL Accredited Courses- Trinity College

In 2024, NCG successfully delivered **two Trinity College London-accredited ESOL courses**, offering structured learning and a **pathway to recognised certification**. Each course ran for **100 hours of hybrid learning** (five hours in-person and five hours online weekly), fully aligned with the National ESOL Core Curriculum.

A total of **18 students completed the programme**, maintaining excellent attendance and **achieving a 100% pass rate** in their Reading exams at Entry Levels 1, 2, and 3. Evaluations and satisfaction surveys highlighted **significant improvement in language skills, confidence, and engagement**, with learners praising both the quality of teaching and the supportive classroom environment.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our ESOL Manager, **Sara Hessabi**, for her exceptional leadership and dedication, and to all our **volunteer teachers, assistants, and community partners**, including **Hyde Children's Centre** and **The Gospel Church**, whose generosity and collaboration made this programme possible. We extend special thanks to our funders, **Finchley Reform Synagogue (FRS)** and **The Trace Charitable Trust**, whose invaluable financial support ensured the continued delivery of this vital service.



Trinity College London
Transforming lives through the power of communication and performance

Case Study 3

In December 2024, we supported a vulnerable Afghan family of five who had recently reunited in the UK through the family reunion process. Having experienced multiple traumatic events while fleeing Afghanistan, the family faced significant challenges integrating into life in the UK.

Our Adviser worked closely with professionals across Barnet to provide coordinated support that addressed their immediate and long-term needs. Initial support focused on **securing their immigration status by resolving eVisa issues, registering the family with a GP and dentist, and assisting with welfare benefit applications** to establish financial stability.

Education was a key focus; **the youngest child was enrolled in a local school, and the older children were supported in applying to college to continue their education and develop English skills**. One child also joined the ESOL course within the **NCG Youth Wellbeing Project**.

The family was supported in setting up and managing utilities and council tax, ensuring they understood their responsibilities. Additionally, we helped them apply for housing through Barnet Council, advocating for accommodation that met their needs.

Through this **holistic and collaborative approach**, the family is now legally settled, financially supported, engaged in education, and on a clear path toward secure housing and long-term integration in the UK.



Sowing Seeds Ecotherapy Project

This year, our Sowing Seeds Ecotherapy project has been nothing short of wonderful, offering refugees and asylum seekers a vital chance to step outside, connect with nature, and nurture both their mental and physical well-being. For many participants, most of whom are living with significant mental health challenges, the project provided a green and welcoming environment that **lifted spirits, reduced isolation, and encouraged resilience**.

Between April and October 2024, we ran **41 gardening sessions and 28 garden-based cooking sessions**, engaging **143 individuals**, with **36 attending regularly**. For asylum seekers in particular, many of whom had been spending long hours confined indoors in asylum hotels, these sessions became a lifeline: **a place to share experiences, rediscover familiar practices from their home countries, and find renewed hope and energy through hands-on activities in nature**.

The project has been truly transformative, showing **the healing power of green spaces in helping people rebuild their lives**. We are deeply grateful to our **funders**, our incredible **volunteers**, and our Operations Manager, **Farida Stanikzai**, whose commitment and care made this project such a success.



'In the garden, I watch the vegetables grow as if I am raising a child. I speak to the flowers, and in their growth, I find my own healing.'

'Here, among friends and the plants, I don't feel alone. I feel strong. I feel alive. The garden has not only healed my heart but has given me hope for the future.'



Farida Stanikzai
Operations Manager

Cooking Project

NCG's cooking project demonstrates how food can act as a powerful bridge between communities, helping to improve mental health, wellbeing, and tackle loneliness. For many asylum seekers living in full-board accommodation, one of the greatest losses they experience is the simple joy of cooking their own food. Without access to a kitchen, they are unable to prepare traditional dishes that connect them to their culture, memories, and identity.

In 2024-2025, NCG ran a series of **31 cooking and baking sessions**. A total of **173 refugees and asylum seekers** from various countries came together to cook and share their national dishes, making each session a rich cultural exchange. Participants not only enjoyed the taste of familiar meals but also felt proud to share the food of their homeland with others. These sessions took place at NCG allotment, Finchley Reform Synagogue, and JW3, providing **welcoming spaces for learning new skills, building friendships, and creating a sense of community**.

We are extremely grateful to **JW3** and **Finchley Reform Synagogue** for their generous partnership, welcoming refugees into their beautiful centres. Their well-equipped kitchens, along with the support of friendly staff and volunteers, made each session enjoyable and successful.



'After eight months of not having a kitchen, just hearing the sound of cutting vegetables gave me a comfort I can't even put into words. It made me feel alive and at home again.'

Celebrating Together: Iftar Events for Asylum Seekers



Over the past year, NCG organised **five Iftar events** for **816 asylum seekers staying in hotels**. While the majority of families usually break their fast together as a family in their home countries, many of the people we support are away from their loved ones and miss this special time. These events were not only for those who were fasting but also welcomed others from different faiths, **creating a space to celebrate together and promote unity**.

We are extremely grateful to our **private donors**, whose generous sponsorship made these Iftar events possible. Many donors joined the celebrations in person, sharing Iftar with the asylum seekers in the hotels and listening to their stories.

At the end of the fasting month, with the help of **King Alfred School**, their students kindly prepared **300 Eid gifts** for the children. NCG was able to give these gifts to all the children staying in the hotels, bringing them joy and smiles. We are very thankful to the school and its students for thinking of refugee children and helping make this special celebration even more memorable.



CommUnity Quilt Project

Barnet with NCG

In August 2024, far-right violence and hatred spread across the country. We saw terrible attacks on mosques and hotels where asylum seekers were living, and Finchley became one of the affected areas, which shook our community deeply.

Despite this, Barnet refused to be divided by fear. In response, many communities, local residents, including New Citizens Gateway, came together to create **The CommUnity Quilt Project that celebrates our unity, strength, and the diverse cultures of Barnet, strengthening connections and promoting unity**. NCG was proud to be part of the project. We ran **four workshops** where **30 women** from all walks of life participated, sharing their personal stories, creativity, and commitment to solidarity. Each quilt patch they created became a symbol of **resilience, connection, and standing together as one community**.

The project finished with a lively parade, as the completed quilt banners were carried through the streets of Barnet. Participants came together to celebrate, showing the wider community the strength of coming together and sparking conversations about inclusion and support for everyone.



Supporting Mental Wellbeing Through Yoga

At NCG, we understand that the process of resettlement can bring significant mental health challenges for refugees. In response, we delivered a series of yoga sessions across 2024-2025, designed to **strengthen mental resilience**, support emotional wellbeing, and foster a renewed sense of **empowerment**. Our experience shows that yoga is highly popular among participants, consistently drawing strong interest and engagement.

Across the year, **15 yoga sessions** were held, each welcoming an average of **20-25 participants**. These inclusive classes provided a calm, supportive environment where individuals could relax, reconnect with their bodies, and find moments of peace amid the pressures of rebuilding their lives. Adapted practices, including chair yoga, ensured that participants with limited mobility were fully able to engage.

Pre- and post-session questionnaires were completed by 25 regular attendees who took part in at least six classes. Their feedback showed clear improvements in feelings of calmness, positivity, and relaxation, with **90% of respondents reporting benefits** across all measures and expressing **high satisfaction** with the instructor's ability to tailor movements to diverse needs.

'I have problems with my knees and thought yoga would be impossible for me. But with chair yoga, I can join every session without pain. It makes me feel included, strong, and not left behind.'





Health and Wellbeing

As a key partner of the **Barnet Wellbeing Hub**, our organisation continues to dedicate a significant portion of its work to addressing health-related issues within refugee and asylum-seeking communities. This year, 11.8% of our inquiries were health-related and were responded to through our various services and initiatives. During 2024-25, our health and wellbeing activities included:

- Expanding our **“Holistic Model of Support”** to further promote the mental well-being of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Continuing our mental health support initiative for **young refugees**, providing **consistent emotional and psychological assistance**.
- Delivering specialised **ESOL classes in partnership with Barnet Public Health**, focused on enhancing vocabulary for medical appointments and health-related discussions.
- Actively **contributing to the planning of the Barnet Mental Health Event**, promoting awareness and collaboration across the sector.
- Implementing **ecotherapy activities**, such as community **gardening**, to support individuals experiencing mental health challenges, alongside **food and nutrition workshops** designed to improve overall wellbeing.
- Participating in the **Refugee Mental Health & Place Network**, organised by **King's College London**.
- Engaging in the **Barnet Mental Health Strategic Partnership**, contributing to **cross-sector collaboration and strategy development**.
- Providing tailored **one-to-one emotional support and counselling** for both youth and adults.
- Delivering **psychoeducational workshops as part of the NHS Talking Therapy provision** to promote mental health awareness and resilience.
- Running **weekly therapeutic group sessions for vulnerable groups**, including refugee women, and survivors of domestic violence, torture, and rape, through our **Jasmine Women's Group**, which offers activities such as **music therapy, yoga, mindfulness, art and crafts, poetry, and dance**.
- Strengthening **research partnerships with institutions such as St Mary's University, Middlesex University, Brunel University, UCL, and King's College London**.
- Participating in the **RECONNECT Research Advisory Panel**, led by St Mary's University, contributing lived experience and community perspectives to research and service development.
- **Collaborating with Brent Council** to deliver bilingual counselling to Ukrainian residents in the borough.
- Contributing to the development of the **Barnet Suicide Prevention Strategy**.
- Participating in the **Mayor of London's Advisory Panel Health Collective**, ensuring refugee and migrant voices are represented in city-wide health planning.

In addition to these initiatives, NCG continued to work closely with **NHS Barnet and Barnet Public Health** to improve community wellbeing. We have also contributed to initiatives such as **HealthWatch Barnet**, the **Suicide Prevention Scheme**, and **World Mental Health Day** events.

Through this extensive engagement, NCG serves as a **trusted partner and resource for health professionals**, supporting them to better understand and respond to the complex needs of refugees and asylum seekers in our community.

World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day, observed annually on 10 October, aims to raise awareness of mental health issues and encourage efforts in support of emotional wellbeing worldwide. The 2024 theme, set by the World Health Organisation, was **"Mental health is a universal human right,"** highlighting the importance of ensuring that everyone, everywhere, has access to quality mental health care and support. Through the **Barnet Wellbeing Hub**, NCG contributed to the planning and celebration of World Mental Health Day 2024, held on 10 October at the Meritance Centre, Church End, Hendon (NW4 4JT). The event brought together community members, local partners, and supporters to promote understanding, inclusion, and compassion for individuals facing mental health challenges.

The day provided an opportunity for NCG to showcase the range of services offered in support of mental and emotional wellbeing, particularly the work we do with refugees and asylum seekers coping with the effects of trauma, displacement, and uncertainty. By joining World Mental Health Day 2024, **NCG showed its ongoing commitment to helping people care for their mental health and to creating a community where everyone can thrive.**



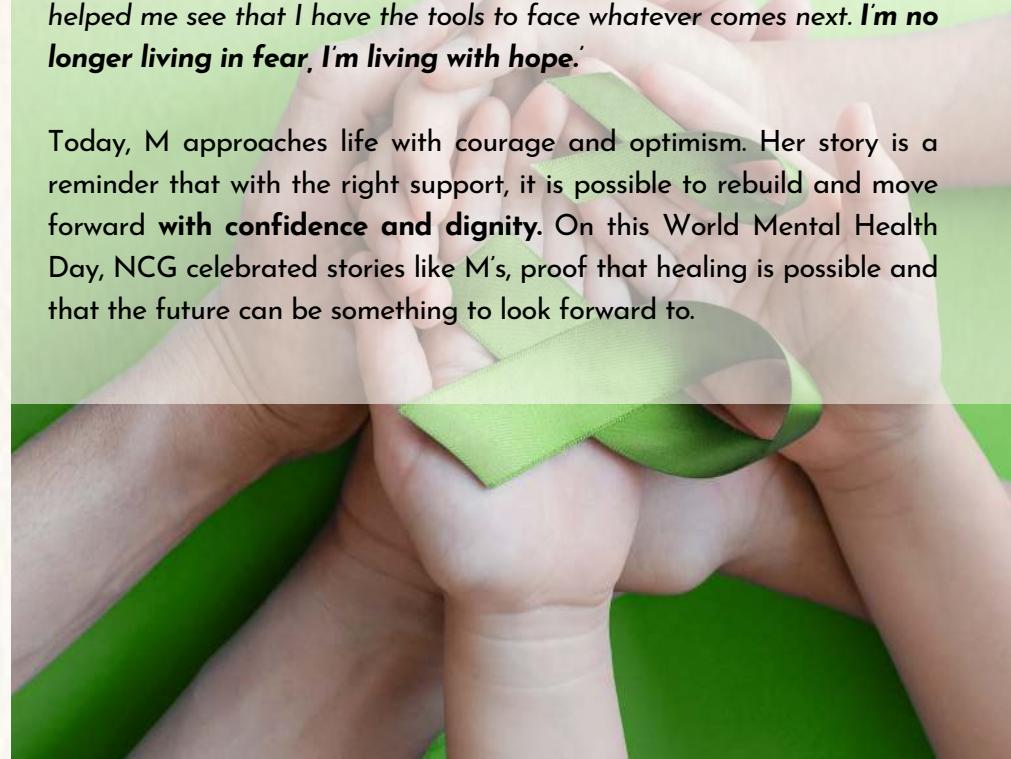
A Success Story

M's Journey of Hope

A success story from one of NCG's counselling clients, shared on World Mental Health Day in October 2024, reflects the life-changing impact of our work. When M first came to NCG, life felt like a daily struggle. She was overwhelmed by worry and self-doubt, unsure if change was possible. **Through counselling at NCG, M found a safe space to speak openly and begin to heal.** Session by session, she unpacked the weight of her past, understood the roots of her fears, and slowly rediscovered her strength.

'I used to be terrified of what was ahead,' M shared. 'Counselling helped me see that I have the tools to face whatever comes next. I'm no longer living in fear, I'm living with hope.'

Today, M approaches life with courage and optimism. Her story is a reminder that with the right support, it is possible to rebuild and move forward with **confidence and dignity.** On this World Mental Health Day, NCG celebrated stories like M's, proof that healing is possible and that the future can be something to look forward to.



A Borough of Sanctuary

Last year, Barnet was officially awarded Borough of Sanctuary status in recognition of its ongoing efforts to welcome people seeking safety and a new home. The Council has consistently demonstrated its commitment to supporting sanctuary seekers in the borough, helping them to integrate and thrive within the community.

A clear example of this commitment is the Council's commissioning of NCG and the Persian Advice Bureau since 2020 to provide dedicated support and assistance to asylum seekers residing in 5 hotels in Barnet.

NCG is proud to be part of the Borough of Sanctuary Network, working closely with the Council to welcome sanctuary seekers and help them build better lives in Barnet.

Through the Network, the borough invites charities such as NCG, along with individuals with lived experience, to take part in focus groups and meetings, ensuring their voices are heard in planning and decision-making. We look forward to continuing this partnership to make Barnet a truly welcoming and inclusive place for all.

NCG Staff Retreat

Thanks to the generous support of **The Mercers' Company**, in August last year, **23 of our staff and volunteers** enjoyed a well-deserved retreat at Bore Place, a historic and tranquil venue surrounded by 500 acres of lush green countryside. The beautiful setting provided the perfect space to **relax, recharge, and connect**, giving everyone the chance to step away from daily routines, unwind, reflect, and strengthen bonds in a calm and inspiring environment.

The retreat offered an important opportunity for our team to take a break from the pressures of daily work and spend quality time together. Staff participated in a variety of activities, shared meals, and enjoyed the natural surroundings, helping everyone to re-energise, reflect on their achievements over the past year, and return to work with renewed focus and motivation.

This retreat not only supported the well-being of our staff but also reinforced **teamwork, collaboration, and the sense of community** that underpins the work we do every day. We are extremely grateful to The Mercers' Company for making this experience possible, providing our team with the time and space to rest, connect, and be inspired.



'It was so refreshing to have a break in such a beautiful place. Spending time together outside the office really helped me feel inspired and connected to the team.'

Mercy Mission Projects

Family Reunion

For refugees and asylum seekers with family members living overseas, being separated from loved ones can be extremely challenging, especially when those family members hold valid family reunion visas.

With the generous financial support of Mercy Mission, NCG was able to cover the cost of flights, helping to reunite 3 families (11 members) and support them in rebuilding their lives with hope and security.

Emergency Support

Throughout the year Mercy Mission also funded **emergency clothing, food and essential items for newly arrived asylum seekers**, supporting **109 individuals**, many of whom arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs, sometimes only flip-flops. By filling these immediate gaps, the project ensured that vulnerable people were not left literally destitute upon arrival.

Supporting Medical Professionals

Mercy Mission generously supported **12 refugee health professionals**, mainly doctors, to join the **OET (Occupational English Test)** programme and other essential healthcare courses, including the **PLAB 1 and PLAB 2** exams. This funding helped them gain the **language skills** and professional qualifications they need to continue their careers in the UK healthcare system.

By overcoming barriers to employment, these highly skilled professionals were able to regain confidence, continue their professional development, and contribute their expertise to the NHS and the wider community. This support not only transformed the lives of individual doctors but also strengthened the UK's healthcare workforce by integrating experienced, diverse, and committed medical professionals. One Afghan refugee doctor reflected: '*Mercy Mission's support allowed me to pass my exams, gain registration, and take the first steps toward my dream of practising medicine in the UK.*'

Overall, **132 individuals** benefited from the project, predominantly low-income refugees and asylum claimants in the UK.

We are deeply grateful to **Mercy Mission** for their generosity and support. Their funding has made a real difference in the lives of vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, enabling families to be reunited, children to return to school, and newly arrived individuals to begin their lives in the UK with dignity and hope. Thank you, Mercy Mission, for helping NCG transform lives and provide urgent support to those who need it most.



Last year, NCG was recognised as Mercy Mission's 'Domestic Charity of the Year,' a testament to our dedication to empowering refugees and asylum seekers across the UK

Celebrating Refugee Week

Every year, NCG celebrates Refugee Week by highlighting the talents and achievements of refugees through music, art, stories, dance, poetry, and other cultural expressions. Last year, on 20th June, we marked the occasion with a special community event at **Finchley Reform Synagogue**, welcoming over **166 guests**, including stakeholders, volunteers, service users, faith groups, and members of the public. We extend our sincere thanks to Finchley Reform Synagogue for providing their beautiful venue and helping to make this celebration welcoming, inclusive, and truly memorable.

The event created an inspiring space where refugees shared their success stories, achievements, and contributions to life in the UK. A highlight was a musical performance by Syrian refugee **Rama Alcoutabi**, founder of Music for Peace, together with her music partner **Marion Christofi**, showcasing the rich talent and culture that refugees bring with them. We were also delighted to welcome Ziba Tabrizi, a solo professional dance specialist and leading exponent of dance from Afghanistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and neighbouring regions, who gave an unforgettable performance.

Also, in partnership with the **Chickenshed** Theatre group, we presented a moving play about migration, which touched the audience and helped them understand the challenges refugees face. In addition, we exhibited the creative work of refugees, including art and writing, all reflecting the theme of Refugee Week 2024, "**Our Home**." Additionally, we arranged for two of our refugee volunteers, both professional performing artists, to perform at two care homes in Barnet, sharing music and dance from their home countries. Their performances brought joy and a sense of connection to older residents, highlighting the positive contributions refugees make to our community.

We thank **Barnet Council** for providing funding and **Chickenshed** for their great collaboration, which made this event successful.



Staying Connected

Vodafone SIM Cards Support Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Throughout the year, NCG has been able to provide free more than **800 Vodafone SIM data cards** to the people we support, thanks to the generous support of Vodafone through their Everyone Connected initiative. This initiative helps tackle digital exclusion across the country, ensuring that those who are isolated or without reliable connectivity can stay in touch with loved ones, access essential services, and participate in community activities.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to **Vodafone** for their generosity and commitment to helping refugees and asylum seekers stay connected, reducing isolation, and improving well-being.



Training for professionals

As a leading organisation in refugee support, NCG continues to provide comprehensive training on the **UK Asylum Support System**. This year, our sessions reached NCG volunteers as well as volunteers from **Volunteering Barnet /Groundwork London**, helping them develop the skills and knowledge to support refugees effectively.

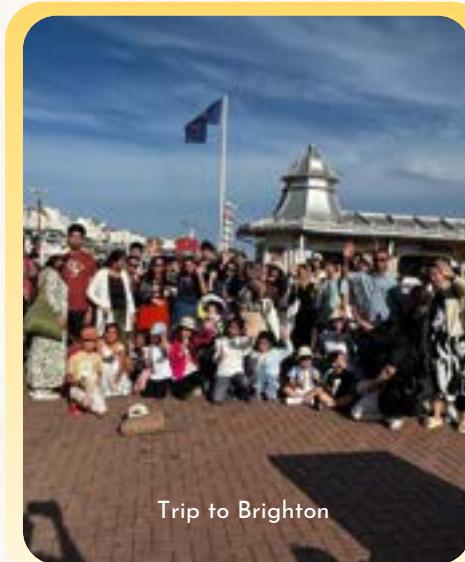
The training is interactive and practical, covering key topics such as **the global asylum context, the reasons refugees are forced to flee their countries, and a detailed overview of the UK's asylum legislation and decision-making process**, from the initial application to the final outcome. These programmes are part of NCG's ongoing commitment to **empowering local communities**, ensuring volunteers and staff have the tools and understanding needed to provide high-quality support to refugees and asylum seekers.

NCG Educational Outings Learning, Fun and New Experiences

Last year, NCG organised a range of educational outings to give families, women, and children opportunities to explore, learn, and enjoy experiences they might not otherwise be able to afford. These outings were especially valuable for families facing financial constraints, providing them with a chance to spend quality time together, discover new places, and create lasting memories.

Last year, NCG took **133 participants** from the Mums and Toddlers Group, families staying in hotels, Allotment Group and the Women's Group on a series of exciting educational outings. Families visited **Brighton Beach**, enjoying the sea, sand, and time together; went kayaking at **The Phoenix Outdoor Centre**, with thanks to The Phoenix for their support; and explored **Kew Gardens** through the **Community Access Scheme**, discovering beautiful plants and learning about nature.

These outings gave participants the chance to try new experiences, feel more confident, and meet new people. Families said they left with happy memories, smiles, and a sense of togetherness they might not have had otherwise. NCG is proud to provide these opportunities, helping families enjoy enriching experiences despite financial challenges.



Trip to Brighton



Trip to Kew Gardens

Jasmine Women's Group

For many refugee women, the journey of resettlement is marked by profound emotional, physical, and mental challenges.

Displacement often brings loss, uncertainty, and the difficult task of rebuilding life within an unfamiliar culture and environment. In the midst of these struggles, finding a sense of **stability, belonging, and hope** becomes essential.

For the past **16 consecutive years**, NCG has proudly offered that space through the **Jasmine Women's Group**, a **safe, supportive, and empowering community where refugee women come together** every Friday from 10:30 to 12:30. The group provides a platform to **share experiences, build friendships, and support one another in healing and integration**.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, a total of **96 women** from **14 different nationalities** participated across **38 sessions**. A survey of 26 participants revealed **significant improvements in social integration, emotional well-being, and personal growth after nine months of consistent participation**. Tailored educational workshops and capacity-building sessions have further strengthened participants' **confidence, adaptability, and overall quality of life**.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to **Tanya Novick**, our dedicated Women's Group Coordinator; to **Sacred Heart Church, Mill Hill**, for their generous hosting; and to our wonderful **Jasmine volunteers** for their unwavering commitment and compassionate support in making this programme a continued success.



Taking part in the Quilt of Peace project brought back beautiful memories of my school sewing classes and the times my mother taught me how to sew.

I travel from far away to join because this group gives me energy and makes me feel alive.

When we visited Kew Gardens, I touched the flowers and prayed for NCG to always shine like the sun, because this is where I find hope and strength.

The Jasmine Women's Group is my hope. Every Friday, I count down the days just to be here. Every week, I learn something new.

International Women's Day

NCG Women's Group celebrated **International Women's Day** on 28th February. The event was held slightly earlier than March so that women from all faiths could join before the start of the fasting month. A total of **63 women attended**, coming together to celebrate, share experiences, and be inspired by one another. The day was full of inspiration and celebration. Councillor **Zahra Beg**, Cabinet Member, gave a speech about Fairness, Equal Opportunities, and Empowerment. Refugee women shared their stories of courage and resilience, showing how strong and determined they are. We also enjoyed cultural dances from different countries, bringing colour and joy to the event. We heard the story of **Saeeda Etebari**, an internationally famous jewellery designer, named one of BBC's 100 Inspiring and Influential Women of 2021. Her journey is a shining example of perseverance and talent. **Khadiga Ahmad**, a refugee from Sudan, also spoke about her work for asylum seekers, from fighting for better food in hotels to standing in front of the Mayor of London to ask for free bus travel.

It was a wonderful day to celebrate the **strength, creativity, and achievements of women from all backgrounds**.

End-of-Year Celebration

On the evening of 19th December 2024, NCG held its **End-of-Year Party for all clients**, including those staying in hotels and new arrivals. **86 people**, including many children, joined the celebration.

The evening was full of generosity, warmth, and fun, with food, music, and activities for everyone. Children received gifts, kindly provided by **The United Synagogue, Goods for Good, Young Barnet Foundation, Sebby's Corner, and other supporters**.

It was a joyful evening that brought everyone together, creating a welcoming and festive atmosphere for all.

A special thank you to **Finchley Reform Synagogue** for kindly providing the venue for our End-of-Year Celebration and for the support and involvement of their volunteers, which helped make the event enjoyable and welcoming for everyone.



Clothes and School Essentials Distribution

Many families in contingency hotels have very limited financial support and often cannot afford even basic clothing for themselves or their children. Throughout the year, NCG provides essential clothing and vouchers to asylum seekers living in hotels, including school uniforms, bags, and shoes for children. These donations help parents meet these essential needs. This year, we were proud to assist over **700 people**, helping children start the school term feeling confident, cared for, and ready to learn.

We are deeply grateful to **St. Matthias Church** for generously providing a free venue for storage and distributions, and to our donors, including **Care4Claise, Goods for Good, and Shrimad Rajchandra Love and Care**. We also extend a huge thank you to NCG volunteers and Care4Claise volunteers, whose support makes this work possible.



Case Study 4

Mr. M's Journey and Challenges

M is a **31-year-old qualified surgeon from Libya**. He fled Libya due to escalating threats from armed groups and militias targeting medical professionals and civilians. The environment was marked by **instability, harassment, and life-threatening risks**.

M applied for asylum in the UK and was housed in one of the hotels in Barnet. He was referred to the programme by the **NCG outreach advisor** at the hotel and as soon as he got his decision he applied for the **OET program**. M had always expressed **a strong desire to resume his profession as a neurosurgeon**, a field in which he holds **significant expertise, including frontline experience during the Libyan revolution**.

Despite his qualifications, he encountered immediate barriers to re-entering the workforce. Even when wanting to volunteer in the NHS, he was advised that completing the OET was a prerequisite.

He is now preparing not only for the OET, but also for his MRCS (Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons) exams concurrently.



I know what I want to do and I know I have to work very hard to achieve it, and all I need is some support from programs such as this one to help me achieve my goal. I can't wait to get back to work and do what I love, inshAllah.' M

Our Advocacy for Clients

In line with our five-year strategy, during 2024-25 we continued to strengthen our role as a voice for our clients, advocating for their rights and ensuring their lived experiences inform local and regional policy decisions.

We have been actively engaged with policymakers, strategic partners, and networks to influence meaningful change. Our CEO sits on the **Mayor of London's Migration Advisory Panel**, contributing to the city's approach to supporting migrants and refugees. She is also a **Community Member** on the **BBC Children in Need Panel**, where she helps review funding applications and contributes to the development of strategies and policies.

In addition, our CEO is a member of the **MigRefHealth Advisory Panel**, working in collaboration with **Middlesex University**, **Anglia Ruskin University**, and the **University of Greenwich** as part of their research to improve health outcomes for migrants and refugees.

At the local level, we remain closely involved in **Barnet Council strategy groups**, ensuring our clients' needs are reflected in community development and inclusion strategies. We are proud partners in several advocacy networks and campaigns, including the **London Asylum Civil Society Forum**, the **Barnet Suicide Prevention Strategy Group**, and the **Mental Health Partnership Forum**. As a member of the Immix Group, we collectively support campaigns that drive systemic change and improve the lives of vulnerable communities.

Our **Food and Travel Campaign**, delivered in partnership with **Citizens UK** and other local partners, continues to highlight the barriers faced by asylum seekers in accessing essential services and support.

Through these platforms and partnerships, we remain committed to championing the rights and wellbeing of our clients, ensuring their voices are heard and represented at every level of decision-making

More on Campaign for Free Bus Travel for Asylum Seekers

This year, NCG continued to work with **Citizens UK Barnet** and community partners to **campaign for free bus travel for asylum seekers across London**. The campaign highlights the daily challenges faced by asylum seekers, who often receive very limited financial support, making it difficult to cover everyday needs, including transport. At NCG, we see the impact of this every day. Many asylum seekers we support are unable to attend ESOL classes, GP appointments, or solicitors' meetings simply because they cannot afford the bus fare.

We strongly believe that a lack of access to affordable transport isolates asylum seekers and prevents them from rebuilding their lives.

Through Citizens UK, our staff and community leaders have joined local actions and assemblies to call on **Transport for London (TfL)** and the **Mayor of London** to make public transport more accessible.

This campaign aligns closely with NCG's values of **empowerment and social justice**. We are proud to stand alongside our community and partners in ensuring that no one is excluded due to poverty or immigration status



Volunteering Programme

The NCG Volunteering Programme continues to be a cornerstone of our holistic support model, empowering individuals from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds to work alongside native English-speaking volunteers, contributing meaningfully to their communities while building confidence, skills, and social networks.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, **102 individuals** engaged with our volunteering programme. Of these, **76 were regularly active**, supporting a wide range of services and projects across the organisation.

This year's volunteer team represented over **22 languages** and brought with them a wealth of lived experience and diverse skills. Their contributions were vital to the success of our **ESOL classes, advice and outreach work in asylum hotels, the Mums and Toddlers Group, counselling, youth and women's services, gardening sessions, community events, and more**. Volunteers also provided essential **multilingual support**, interpreted for clients, facilitated workshops, delivered food and gift parcels, and supported NCG's **service evaluations**.



We are proud to report that during 2024-25, our dedicated volunteers contributed 3030 hours to support NCG, equivalent to over 1.5 full-time positions, a testament to their commitment and the value they bring to the organisation.



Impact on Volunteers

Our volunteering programme remained a powerful pathway to integration, skill-building, and employment:

11 refugee volunteers transitioned into paid employment, including **3 roles within NCG**. All volunteers received **Safeguarding Level 1 training**.

Many participated in upskilling activities, including **five completed Level 2 Teaching Assistant Diplomas**, **two completed Food Safety training**, **1 completed the SRA course** and one gained **diplomas in Child Psychology, CBT, and Dyslexia Awareness**.

Volunteers also played key roles in leading and supporting campaigns, including our 'Hear Our Voices' listening campaign, the Travel Campaign, and Refugee Week, where several shared personal stories of resilience and growth. One volunteer, a refugee doctor, mentored nine other refugee medical professionals, providing peer guidance and encouragement.

Peer mentoring has grown significantly this year. Senior volunteers supported newcomers with safeguarding, IT navigation, and role preparation.

Volunteer Wellbeing and Community Building

Our approach recognised the complex needs of our volunteers. We introduced a tailor-made English support class to boost communication skills, especially for those aiming to transition into employment. Emotional wellbeing was supported with flexibility in roles and opportunities for social connection, such as the annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony, where refugee speakers shared how volunteering had transformed their confidence and career prospects.



'I volunteer with New Citizens Gateway not just because I want to give back, but because I believe in the power of community, and I'm not alone. I'm writing this on behalf of dozens of other volunteers who, like me, show up every week to do whatever we can to make someone's journey a little lighter.'

'Together, we are a team of many languages, many backgrounds, and many stories. Some of us were once newcomers ourselves. Others joined because we saw the need and wanted to be part of something meaningful. But no matter where we came from, we all believe in one thing: people deserve dignity, hope, and someone to walk alongside them.'

Inclusivity and Organisational Growth

We continued to work closely with **Volunteering Barnet** to promote volunteering opportunities among those seeking asylum and newly granted refugees. Our **Volunteer Focus Group** remained central to programme development, offering **regular feedback and shaping decisions, including contributions to the NCG Business Plan**. To recognise these contributions, NCG hosted a **Volunteer Appreciation Event** where refugee volunteers spoke about their personal journeys and the life-changing impact of volunteering. These moments underscored the transformative role of the programme in promoting confidence, inclusion, and aspiration.

Looking ahead, we are actively working toward **achieving the Investing in Volunteers (iIV) Quality Mark**. This reflects our commitment to best practice in **volunteer management and sustainability**.

We extend a special appreciation to **Farida Stanikzai**, our Operations Manager, for her exceptional dedication that has led to the success of our volunteering program.



List of Volunteers 2024-25

Trustees

Michael James Young
Sanja Dujmovic Potnar
Esmond Sidney Rosen
Geethawathy Thirusaba-Nathan
Fanta Sheriff
Dr Penelope Anne Trafford
Dr Sanjiv Ahluwalia
Tata Issa Sougui

Client Advisor

Alaa Alibrahim
Farhad Farewar
Barbara Rostas
Omran Abdullah
Lima Shirzoi
Daniel Mermelstein
Joaquina Carlos

Counsellors

Yasmin Sher
Zainab Alkhoei
Kavita Nair
Peter Fuggle

Women's Group

Tanya Novick
Kathy Lichman
Anahita Mollajan
Laura Rojan Akturan
Elsa Shamash
Mozghan Parsapour
Mastura Noorallam
Jennifer Yvonne Albert
Mahnaz Pedram
Delavar Haidary
Gulseka Satar
Golafshan Karami
Fariba Raffie
Nasrin Anwari
Maryam Farokhi Boloukahlou
Bushra Choudhury
Omeliez Idris

Gardening

Mohammad Bahmaninejad Fard
Gulseka Satar
Mahjabeen Saboor
Mozghan Parsapour
Mastura Noorallam
Mahnaz Pedram
Shafiqa Valizada
Turyalai Khaksar
Nasrin Anwari
Goitom Tesfay
Thomas Abebe Aklilu

ESOL Teachers

Bernadette Steiert
Dinaz Bomanji
Elizabeth Morrell
Faarid Hashim Patel
Helen Halpern
Helen Stone
Helen Wiseman
Linda Carey
Orna Almagor
Ros Staines
Ruth Kitching
Kholoud Porter
Shelly Fennell
Sima Rutherford
Catherine Howard

Interpreters

Alaa Alibrahim
Moussa Ahmad Diabi
Mohammad Hussein Idris Abbaker
Mohammad Said
Farhad Farewar
Mohsen Sanjaghi

Youth Work

Maria Pitsini
Sheku Kamara
Sarah Cohen
Hamidullah Qandahari
Hridai Tejas Somaiya

Volunteer Business Administrator

Inese Luse

External Consultant

John Conor Doyle

Mums' and Tots' Group

Fereshteh Ahmadi
Mozghan Parsapour

Support Worker

Khadija Ahmad
Saida Akkaz

Driver

Mohammad Bahmaninejad Fard
Shubhada Raymond

Horticulture Education Facilitator

Anni Butler

Artist

Leina Elgohari

Design/IT Support

Fouzia Arouche

Our deepest gratitude to all our volunteers.

We may make a living by what we receive, but we enrich lives, our own and others', by what we give.



2024-25 Volunteers' Party at Finchley Reform Synagogue



Case Study 5

Alaa Al-Ibrahim

When I first arrived in the UK as a refugee, I never imagined that one day I would be standing here, sharing my journey as both a **learner and a contributor to my community**.

A friend once asked me, "Why do you volunteer with refugees?"

The first thing that came to my mind was "Why not!!"

When I arrived in 2016, I was searching for **stability, connection, and a sense of belonging** in this new chapter of my life.

My first contact with NCG was through Farida. I still remember her kindness and the support she offered to Syrian families. **Her warmth and dedication were a beacon of hope for many of us**. I believe she saw potential in me when she learned that I could speak English and encouraged me to volunteer with NCG. To be honest, I was eager to contribute as well.

I started as an **interpreter**, helping bridge the language gap for many who, like me, struggled to navigate their new environment. Later, I assisted as a **teaching assistant** in the Sunday school for refugee children and eventually took on the role of an **advisor** at the bridging hotels. Joining the NCG team allowed me to give back and use my experiences to help others in similar situations. The belief that the NCG staff had in my abilities made me believe in myself. **It was this trust and support that empowered me** to offer guidance to newly arrived asylum seekers.

Supporting newly arrived asylum seekers in the hotels, and providing advice and guidance was deeply rewarding. Seeing a child's face light up after receiving a school bag or hearing a mother say "thank you" in her own language fills me with a profound sense of purpose. These moments remind me why I volunteer: **to bring comfort, hope, and a sense of belonging to those who need it most**.

Volunteering has not only allowed me to support others but also **helped me grow as an individual**. Each interaction, each story I hear, and each smile I witness reinforces my belief in the power of community and compassion. **My journey from a refugee searching for stability to an active contributor to my community has been transformative**, and I am grateful for the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Today, I speak to you as NCG's **Migrant Health & Wellbeing Navigator**, a job that feels as if it was tailored for me. Volunteering with NCG opened the door to this role, where I can apply my knowledge and also have space for creativity.

Finally, I would like to thank the entire NCG team, both staff and volunteers, for the opportunity to work alongside you and for the care and support you give to each other.

Donations

Throughout 2024/25, we have been deeply grateful for the remarkable financial support we received, totalling approximately **£71,965.83**, from an inspiring mix of individuals, community groups, and faith organisations. This generosity has been vital in sustaining our work, and we warmly thank everyone who has contributed to making our vision a reality.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to **Mr. & Mrs. Demashkieh** for their significant contribution of **£11,500**, and to the **Trace Charitable Foundation** for their generous donation of **£25,226**. We also extend special thanks to an **anonymous donor** for their kind gift of **£4,375**. We are sincerely thankful for the support from Muslim community donors, including the **Association of Asian Muslims of North London** and **Khawateen**, whose combined donation of **£6,999** made a meaningful difference. Our gratitude also goes to **Mercy Mission** for their contribution of **£1,500**, the **London Churches Refugee Fund** for **£1,000**, and **BeLifted** for their generous support of **£1,500**.

We are equally grateful to **Kol Nefesh Masorti Synagogue** for their donation of **£1,928**, **St Mary's Church** for **£2,500**, and **First Give** for their gift of **£1,102**. Finally, we wish to commend **Jodi Mishcon** for her impactful fundraising through the **Big Shop Appeal**, which raised **£5,293** in support of New Citizens' Gateway.

When it comes to food support, we are very grateful to **all the individuals, churches, mosques, synagogues, and food banks** who helped us provide food parcels to asylum seekers in need. Your donations made a real difference for people experiencing difficult times.

Our end-of-year celebration was filled with generosity and warmth. Held at **Finchley Reform Synagogue**, the event was made extra special thanks to gifts from **faith communities, Goods for Good, the Young Barnet Foundation, Sebby's Corner, The United Synagogue, St John's United Reformed Church, New Barnet**, and many kind-hearted supporters. Together, they helped create a welcoming and joyful day for everyone.

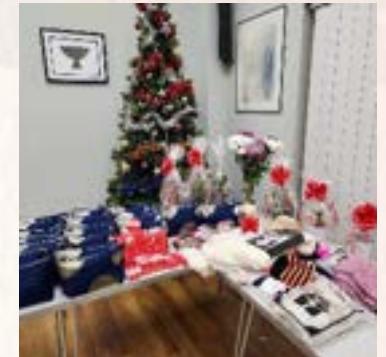
We would also like to thank the many **faith groups, organisations, and individuals** who supported us with financial gifts and in-kind donations. Your kindness helped us continue our work and reach more people in need.

Our sincere thanks go to **CJ & JD Novick, Russell & Cohen, Mitzvah Day, Iyengar Yoga Group, New North London Synagogue, The United Synagogue, Aralbridge Ltd, Barnet Refugee Welcome Board, Sacred Heart Church (Mill Hill), Barnet Libraries, St Mary's Church at Finchley, Manor Drive Methodist Church, St John's United Reformed Church, Masorti Judaism UK, Kew Gardens Community Access Scheme, Better World Charity, Age UK Barnet, Vodafone UK, Artsdepot, Shrimad Rajchandra Love and Care, King Alfred School, The Hygiene Bank Barnet, Care4Calais, Colindale Food Bank, Burnt Oak Community Food Bank, Finchley Food Bank**, and many others.

We are especially grateful to **Chipping Barnet Foodbank** for their generous donations of supermarket vouchers, SIM cards, and clothing, which provided much-needed support to asylum seekers and refugees. We would like to give our warm thanks to **Saint Matthias Colindale** for kindly providing storage space and allowing us to use their venue to distribute clothes to people in urgent need. Their help made it possible for us to continue this important service. We are also very thankful to **Goods for Good** for their ongoing kindness and support throughout the year. Their regular donations have made a big difference for the people and families we work with. From clothes and Christmas gifts to slippers, socks, toys, shoes, and trainers, their contributions have helped us meet essential needs with care and respect. We truly appreciate their continued partnership and generosity.

A Glance at NCG's Activities Over the Past Year





Barnet Refugee Service

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31st March 2025



Elif Kayikci
Finance Manager

BARNET REFUGEE SERVICE

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account)

For the year ended 31 March 2025

	Unrestricted Funds Note 2025	Restricted Funds 2025	Total Funds 2025	Total Funds 2024
	£	£	£	£
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM:				
Donations and legacies	2 358,704	446,824	805,528	880,395
Investments	3 11,676	-	11,676	10,671
Other	4 -	-	-	-
TOTAL	370,380	446,824	817,204	891,066
EXPENDITURE ON:				
Charitable activities	415,525	457,866	873,391	847,627
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	415,525	457,866	873,391	847,627
Net (expenditure)/income	(45,145)	(11,042)	(56,187)	43,439
Transfer between funds	14 -	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS	(45,145)	(11,042)	(56,187)	43,439
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS:				
TOTAL FUNDS AT 1 APRIL 2024	413,331	228,468	641,799	598,360
TOTAL FUNDS AT 31 MARCH 2025	£ 368,186	£ 217,426	£ 585,612	£ 641,799

The provided statement has been extracted from the accounts prepared by **Knox Cropper** and was approved by the **Trustees of Barnet Refugee Service** on **05/10/2025**.

The full report will be submitted to the **Charities Commission** and to **Companies House**. Copies of the full report can be obtained from the Chief Executive Officer of Barnet Refugee Service.

Geetha Saba-Nathan
Treasurer

Thank you to our Partners and Collaborators 2024-25

2second Chance	Child Poverty Action Group	JCORE	Saracens Sport Foundation
5E	Childs Hill Primary School	Jewish Volunteering Network	Schools and Early Years, Family Services, Barnet
Advice UK	Chipping Barnet/ The Trussell Trust Food Bank	Julia & Rana Solicitors	Screen Share UK
Afghan Association Pajwand	Churches Together	JW3	Sebby's corner
Age Concern	Citizens Advice	Kew Gardens Community Access Scheme	Shrimad Rajchandra Love & Care
Age UK Barnet	Citizens Advice Barnet	King Alfred School	Shubbak Festival
Alyth	Citizens UK	Kol Nefesh Masorti Synagogue	Social prescribers
Art Against Knives	Claremont High School	Lawstop	Solace Women's Aid
Artsdepot	Clear Voice Translations	Let's Talk IAPT	SR Love and Care
Association of Afghan Healthcare Professionals -UK	Clearsprings Ready Homes	LiFT Cic	St John's United Reformed Church-New Barnet
Association of Asian Muslims of North London- Khawateen	Colindale Communities Trust	Little Village	St Mary at Finchley
Atta & Co Solicitors	Colindale Food Bank	London Faith and Belief	St Mathias Church-Colindale
BACE	Colindale Library	London Youth	St Mungo's
Barnet 0-19 Early Help Service, Family, and Children's Services	Community Barnet	Londonium Solicitors	St. Mary's University
Barnet Bulldogs	Community Focus (ARTiculate)	Manor Drive Methodist Church	The Association of Jewish Refugees
Barnet Citizens Advice	Community Techaid	Masorti Judaism UK	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Barnet Council	Coram	Mercy Mission	The Everglade Medical Practice
Barnet East Locality Team	Crisis in Brent	Meridian Wellbeing	The Faith & Belief Forum
Barnet Education and Learning Service	DaCapo Music Foundation	Metropolitan Police	The Finchley Charities
Barnet Federated GPs	Doctors of the World	Middlesex University	The Flying Seagull Project
Barnet Healthwatch	Dr Azim and Partners	Migrant Help	The Hyde Children's Centre
Barnet Homes	Early Help HUB (West) Family Services	Migrant Voice	The Hyde School
Barnet Libraries	Early Help HUB(South), Family and Children's Services	Mind in Barnet	The Hygiene Bank Barnet
Barnet Mencap	East/Central Children and Families Hub (Early Help)	National Zakat Foundation	The Mercers' Company
Barnet Multi Faith Forum	ECPAT UK	Nawaal Benevolence Fund	The Mosaic Rooms
Barnet Recovery Centre	Edgware Community Hospital (sexual health clinic)	New Horizon Youth Centre	The Network
Barnet Refugee Welcome Board	Finchley Food Bank, and many more.	New North London Synagogue	The Northern Ireland Education Authority
Barnet Social Prescribing Service	Finchley Progressive Synagogue	NHS Foundation Trust	The Tavistock & Portman NHS
Barnet Social Services	Finchley Reform Synagogue	Nisa-Nashim	The Trussell Trust
Barnet & Southgate College	Foundation Trust	North Locality Link Worker	Trace Charitable Trust
Barnet Virtual School	Freedom from Torture	North London NHS Foundation Trust	Trinity Church Colindale
Barnet Volunteering	FUSE Youth Project	Papatango	Trinity Church North Finchley
Barnet Wellbeing Hub	GlaxoSmithKline	Papyrus UK	Turning Point
Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust	Go Live Theatre	Pendaar Publications	United Synagogue
BBC Children In Need	Goods for Good	Persian Advice Bureau	University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
BeLifted	Greater London Authority (GLA)	Phoenix Outdoor Centre	Victim Support
BOOST	GroundWork London	Ramfel	Vodafone UK
Bore Place	Helen Bamber Foundation	Red Cross	Volunteering Barnet
Bread n Butter	Henry Smith Charity	Refugee Action	Waging Peace
Breaking Barriers	Hendon Jobcentre	Refugee Council	Waterloo Community Counselling
Brent Council	Hendon School	Refugee Education UK	Watling Park School
British Red Cross	Hestia	Roundhouse	West Hendon Community Hub
Brook Sexual Health & Wellbeing	Homeless Action Barnet	Royal Free Charity	West London Welcome
Burnt Oak Community Food Bank	Home-Start Barnet, Brent, Enfield & Harrow	Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust	Wild About Our Woods
Care4Calais	Hopscotch	Ruth Hayman Trust	Yoga Headspace
Central and Northwest London NHS	Inclusion Barnet	Sacred Heart & Mary Immaculate R C Church	Young Barnet Foundation
Change Grow Live	International Gospel Church	Salvation Army	Young Roots
ChickenShed	Iyengar Yoga Group	Samafal	



A funder asked us if your charity was something that could fly, what would it be, and why?

We said: Our clients live in a hostile environment, our cause is the least popular, and our team deals with hate mail. But we keep going, believing strongly in humanity, so if we could fly, we would be a **phoenix**; we would rise from the ashes with every setback and represent renewal, optimism, and resilience. Like the legendary bird, our charity represents the capacity for transformation and victory over obstacles. Its flight symbolises the liberation and possibilities it offers to those escaping persecution and seeking sanctuary. It transcends borders, extending a lifeline to the vulnerable and guiding them toward safety, security, and a brighter tomorrow. Just as wings carry the distressed to safety, our charity serves as a beacon of hope, empathy, and unity for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers.



Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

•Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights•

