



Refugee Tales

**Visiting.
Listening.
Sharing.**

Building Community

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
Annual Review 2023



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

Registered Charity No. 1124328

Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in
England and Wales Company No. 4911257

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Who We Are

Our Vision

A society where people whose right to live in the UK is being questioned are treated with humanity and justice by all.

Our Mission

To improve the welfare and well-being of people affected by the immigration detention system through friendship, support and advocacy for fair treatment while calling for positive change and an end to indefinite detention.

Immigration detention in the UK

In the year ending March 2023, the UK detained 20,416 people in immigration detention in 7 Immigration Removal Centres. Only 21% of people who entered detention in 2023 were subsequently removed or voluntarily returned.

Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group

GDWG is a small charity with 5 full-time staff, 3 part-time staff, and 90 volunteers. Our volunteer visitors provide emotional and practical support to people held in two Immigration Removal Centres at Gatwick Airport: Brook House and Tinsley House. By the end of 2023, we had supported over 20,000 people with experience of detention since 1995. In 2023 alone, we supported 2,306 people during or after detention. GDWG is not politically affiliated and seeks to support people no matter what their race, creed, politics or country of origin. In 2023 GDWG was a Core Participant in the first Public Inquiry into detention that reported in September 2023.

In 2023 as we developed our next 5-year strategic plan, we asked our community what three words characterised the charity. Here's what they said:

Our Patrons



For nearly 30 Years, Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group has been a vital support to people fleeing conflict and persecution who have increasingly been met with closed doors. I am so proud to be associated with such an incredible organisation. The work is impressive as this Annual Report testifies and it is needed now more than ever.

Baroness Helena Kennedy KC



Closing all our borders or locking up asylum seekers in accommodation boats is not going to solve our problem. We need a proper system where asylum seekers could apply to enter the UK. I call on the government to deal with the long queue of those awaiting the results of their applications and to stop using foul language to address them. Breaking signed Treaties or Conventions shows the world that we care little about being a law-abiding country.

***Lord Navnit Dholakia PC, OBE, DL
Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats***



Another tough year -- a year that's yet again redefined tough times as even tougher than anyone thought times could be. But the spirit of Refugee Tales stays steady. The walks in solidarity continue. The determination towards friendship, towards open demeanour and open hospitality, keeps the heart beating, the road bearable, the spirit ingenious, kindly, strong. That's what Refugee Tales is, a communal heartbeat, a story that holds us together and warms us all. On we go!

Ali Smith

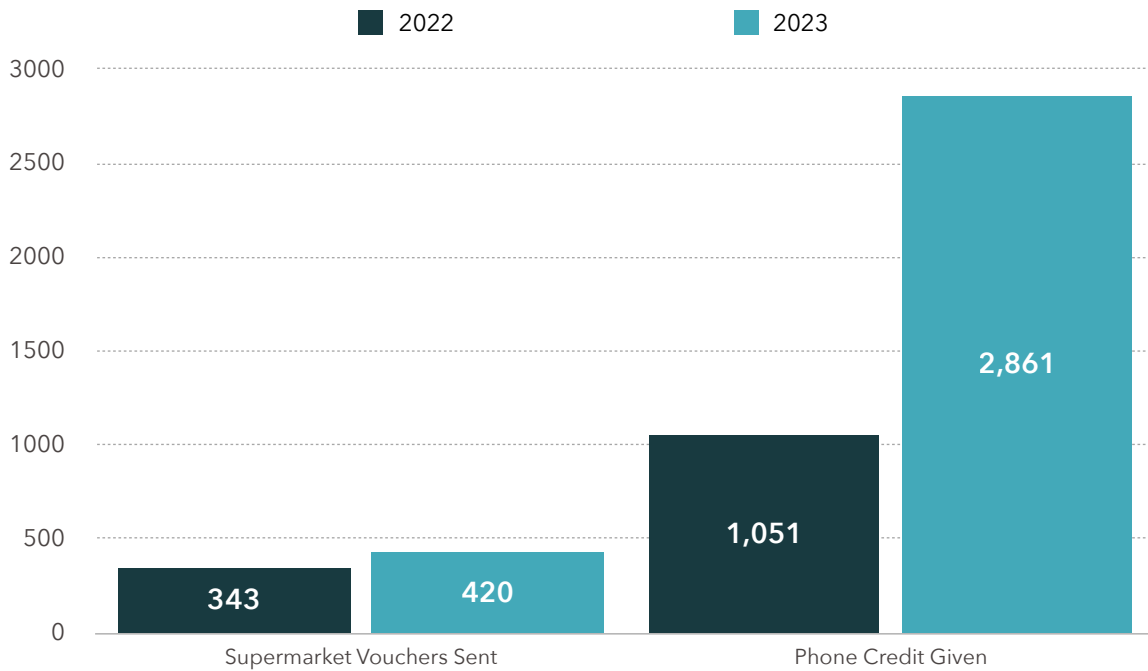


This is the start of the 30th anniversary year of GDWG. It is lamentable that your contributions to comfort others are still needed, but once again I congratulate and celebrate your essential and humane efforts.

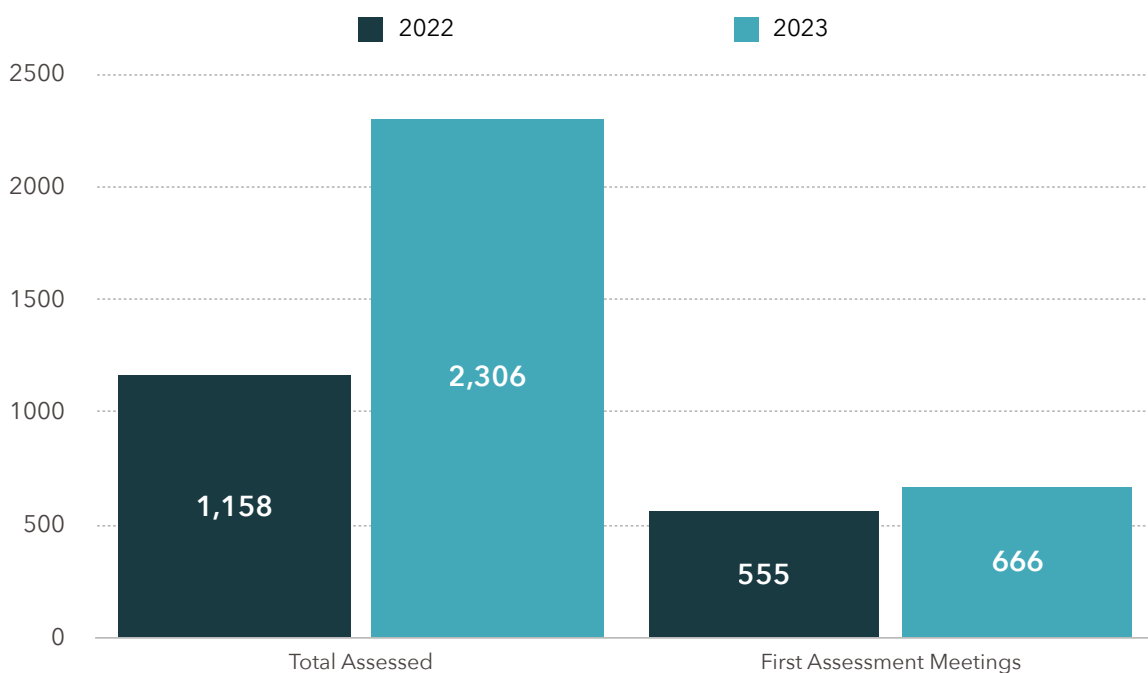
Abdulrazak Gurnah

2023 in Review

Number of Times Supermarket Vouchers Sent and Phone Credit Given



Number of People Assisted and First Assessment Meetings



In 2023 we helped **2,306** people in immigration detention.

Volunteer Visitors met **463** people in detention.

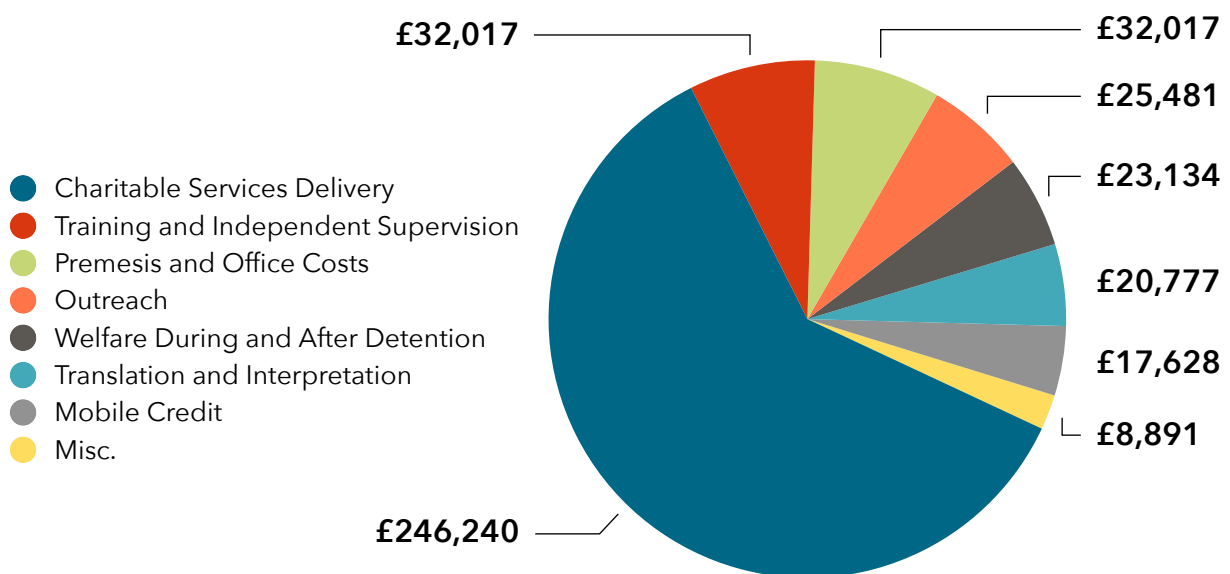
We gave out
2,661
mobile credit top-ups.

We gave out
1,091
packs of clothes.

We carried out **casework** for
902
people.

We referred people for **specialist support**
609 times.

We offered **post release support** to
388 people.





Our Work: In Detention

Working with Detained People

In 2023, GDWG started holding initial assessment meetings with detained people in an area of Brook House more accessible to detained people than the location of our previous assessment meetings. This took the number of these meetings from a previous 31 per month to over a hundred per month. With more referrals than ever, GDWG staff capacity was stretched to the limit.

We encountered recurring issues for detained people including long waits for release due to accommodation delays, poor access to good quality legal advice, people released from detention to homelessness, people with serious mental health conditions being detained for long periods, and ongoing concerns about safeguarding in detention including inadequate Rule 35 reports. Many of these issues were clearly described in the Brook House Public Inquiry Report released on 19 September that described a 'a wholesale breakdown in the system of safeguards designed to protect vulnerable detained people.' The year ended with the death of a man in hospital after he hanged himself in his cell. This death increased anxiety for detained people in Brook House and GDWG had to implement extra training for visitors supporting detained people who were in crisis and threatening self-harm.

Detained people repeatedly told us that their medical conditions were not treated appropriately and that the attitude from healthcare staff was too often one of disbelief. They described inadequate use of interpreters as a barrier to communication. With support from Lloyds Bank Foundation, GDWG started a research project into how people experienced the use of interpreters in detention. GDWG contributed to strategic litigation including litigation on access to section 98 accommodation for foreign national offenders held post-sentence in detention and we worked with Professor Lucy Williams on her Briefing Paper 'Women in Detention' alongside Samphire, The University of Kent and Justice First.

Case Studies

Y told our team that he couldn't read or write in English, so needed help applying for accommodation. He had tried to fill in an accommodation request form, but had received a message saying it wasn't filled in correctly. We filled in the form with Y and it was submitted. A few weeks later, the Home Office requested further information about the time when he was street homeless. This was distressing for Y as he had suffered poor mental health while homeless and said he did not know how to respond. We supported him to provide as much information as he could. Following this, Y's accommodation was granted, and he was released from Brook House to a Home Office address. After release he told us he was settling into his new area and thanked us for our support.

O contacted GDWG from detention to ask for a walking stick. We met with him the next day. He was struggling with mobility and also told us that after arriving in Brook House he had not received vital medication for 5 days, causing him considerable pain and difficulty with sleep. O had tried to speak with staff in the centre about his limited mobility and showed documents detailing his knee injury, but no mobility support had been offered. GDWG brought in a knee support and a walking stick to support his movement around the centre and communicated with centre management about his needs in order that provision could be made for O to move around the centre with less difficulty.

M contacted GDWG when he was distressed in detention having been given removal directions. He was trying to make contact with his daughter in the UK so did not feel ready to leave the country. While in prison he had not been able to access an immigration lawyer to regularise his status, or to reach a family lawyer to support his request to contact his daughter. He described the difficulties of language barriers, of not being able to understand documents or speak with a lawyer. M asked for support to access legal advice. GDWG referred him to an immigration lawyer who cancelled his removal directions. For long term immigration support, he was advised to apply for Extenuating Case Funding as his case was deemed out of the scope of legal aid. GDWG assisted M to complete the application and the funding was granted shortly after - allowing his lawyer to begin the application to regularise his stay in the UK.



Our Work: After Detention

The Self-Advocacy Group

Each year, the GDWG Self-Advocacy Group plan their training opportunities together to build advocacy work calling for a future without detention. First choice in 2023 was training in facilitation. After this, one self-advocate reflected: 'These trainings give me a bit of confidence to even understand myself.' In April, the Group visited illustrator Ruby Wright in her studio for an art workshop. By the end of the session, a beautiful Refugee Tales themed collage had been created: a self advocate said: 'I didn't feel like an immigrant, it was just a nice environment to be in... It was good to see people laughing and talking different languages... I felt comfortable and forgot most of my worries. It was a new me, it was like I was with my family. Everyone was an artist.' On 19 September 2023, the Brook House Public Inquiry, chaired by Kate Eves, published its report. The Public Inquiry made 33 recommendations in total, including the highly significant recommendation that the government should introduce a 28-day time limit for immigration detention. Pious and Ridy from the Self-Advocacy Group gave national media interviews about the realities of immigration detention and why fundamental change is essential. In October, the Group attended the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool to share information about immigration detention with MPs, parliamentary candidates and attendees. They hosted a stand, answered questions about detention and spoke about the emotional, financial and social costs of detention. A panel event was held, with speakers: Baroness Shami Chakrabarti, actor Toby Jones, GDWG Trustee Pious Keku, GDWG Director Anna Pincus and poet and co-editor of Refugee Tales, David Herd. Self-Advocacy Group attendees were able to speak to numerous politicians, attend other organisations' meetings, forge useful connections and gain new insights to inform their advocacy. The Self-Advocacy Group also attended Base Boxing in North London, for a fun boxing team-building session led by a member of the Self-Advocacy Group, Ridy. Ridy put us all through our paces with boxing exercises and a strength-building circuit course. Big Narstie even turned up for a morale boost halfway through! Founder of Base Boxing, Ridy wrote: 'We want to

extend our heartfelt thanks to the GDWG Self-Advocacy Group for choosing to spend their day with us. Your enthusiasm and spirit perfectly encapsulate what Base Boxing Club is all about. Together, we're not just building better boxers; we're building a stronger, more connected community. Here's to many more days of training, growth, and friendship at Base Boxing Club - where every punch is a step towards greatness, and every member is a champion in their own right.' In late 2023, the Group met parliamentarians to talk about the Public Inquiry Report. The meetings were vital in reminding MPs that the issues raised by the Walking Inquiry and Brook House Public Inquiry must be addressed, and in enabling them to hear directly from people who have been detained.

The Walking Inquiry

During 2023, our focus for the Walking Inquiry into Immigration Detention was on sharing its findings and recommendations, and spreading our call for change. In spring we launched our travelling exhibition, to reach new and different audiences. The multi-media exhibition used display boards, photos, audio recordings, video and printed materials to communicate the Walking Inquiry's key messages. It was an interactive exhibition, and we actively welcomed responses from everyone who saw it - people wrote comments on postcards, and some young children even drew thoughtful pictures about immigration detention.

We took the exhibition to the University of Kent in March, then to the Chapter House at Canterbury Cathedral just before Easter. Next it came to the University of Manchester, and in May to Stockton Baptist Church, before going to Arundel Museum in September. At each place, members of GDWG's Self-Advocacy Group and other volunteers staffed the exhibition. We spoke with exhibition visitors to answer questions and tell them about immigration detention. We sold Refugee Tales books, and shared copies of the Walking Inquiry report. We learnt a lot from taking the exhibition to varied venues around England. It felt particularly rewarding to introduce the exhibition to people who had known nothing about immigration detention, and to see their interest and experience their encouragement. Over 1775 people saw the travelling exhibition in 2023. We continue to look for opportunities to take it to new places.



WALKING
INQUIRY

WALKING
INQUIRY

Refugee Tales

In July 2023, Refugee Tales walkers took 5 days to journey from Crawley to Worthing pausing at Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill, Brighton, and Southwick. At least 120 people walked each day, and in the evenings we listened to Refugee Tales and live music and held space in solidarity with those currently detained. Hosts included Arthur Smith, Enver Solomon and a GDWG trustee and a walker both experts by experience of detention. Musicians included the Don Kipper band, the Battersea Beatbox Academy, Kora player Jali Mbye, student musicians from the Royal College of Music, and Scottish singer Julie Fowliss.

After the walk, a person with lived experience of detention who shared their tale said 'Hearing other people's testimony gives me hope... We are all seeking safety and a better life... You were beside me when my story was shared, I had to take courage and be brave. Hearing the tale, I was remembering everything and the way the guy was saying it, it was like I am seeing it for real. The journey to Refugee Tales was a success for me. I found love.'

We conducted a baseline and follow-up assessment with people who had experienced detention. Before the walk, 4 out of 14 respondents said walking had a positive impact on their physical health and 6 out of 14 on their mental health. Following the walk, all 14 respondents said walking with us had had a positive impact on their physical health and 13 out of 14 on their mental health.

Benjamin Cousen wrote that what was compelling about the walk was 'the simplicity of being there, of not forgetting, the relentlessness, if you like, of the walking year by year and presenting the possibility, gently but with an iron persistence of (an)other way(s)of being... It's a beautiful experiment, homogenous in purpose (although strong enough for dissent about matters of form and presentation to be voiced) but wonderfully multitudinous in its human makeup. Perhaps this will sound a little trite but I think I tentatively suggest that Refugee Tales are at the end of the day nothing more nor less than an experiment in love.'

Our Work: In Education

Schools, Colleges and Universities

In 2023, GDWG spoke with over 2,400 students from schools and colleges in Brighton, Reigate, London and Cambridge. We expanded our network to reach new schools, and long-term partnerships were strengthened.

In April 2023, GDWG and Refugee Tales were invited as part of the Cambridge Literary Festival to speak with students about the Litmus Creative Writing Project, thanks to a connection from the Refugee Tales Patron, Ali Smith. The theme for students to write about was 'Over the Border'. To give context on the theme, trustee and expert by experience, Pious Keku, and the poet and Refugee Tales co-editor, David Herd, initially spoke with students about Refugee Tales walks and the experiences people face in detention. Writer Bernardine Evaristo also read 'The Social Worker's Tale' from Refugee Tales. Students were invited to participate in small group workshops by GDWG on migration and detention in the UK in which they learned about the reasons why people seek safety in the UK, the differences between terms such as 'Refugee', 'Asylum Seeker' and 'Migrant'. Students then read 'The Dependant's Tale' as told to Marina Lewycka and learned about detention and its impacts. In discussions, students made reference to points raised by Pious earlier, specifically to how people could be detained multiple times, moved around the detention estate, and how people faced further restrictions on their rights and lifestyles even when they were released.

Students at the University of Brighton studying to become secondary and primary school teachers who were soon to begin placements in schools in Brighton and Crawley learned about immigration detention with GDWG, and discussed how students from different backgrounds can be affected by experiences of the immigration system. Reflecting on the session, one student said they will "think about the range of experiences a child may have been through before they arrive in your classroom, and what they may still be living through" The subject lead wrote: "I cannot express how much of an impact you had on the group and myself. Your knowledge, content and delivery were so brilliantly imparted and

gave us a really robust understanding of the challenges refugees and their families currently face. The anecdotal feedback from the group was so positive with many saying it was the best session they had had throughout their training."

We hope that our school talks will continue increasing awareness for students about migration and detention so they understand the human impact of immigration policies.



Chair's Report

What a busy and productive year. I succeeded our wonderful past Chair Marie Dewson late in 2023 to try to continue her successful tenure in the chair steering GDWG to be the well respected and active charity it is today. Thank you Marie.

The Board of Trustees continue to work tirelessly to help relieve the pain and suffering of indefinite detention, a goal we strive for every day. No passengers on this Board of Trustees! Each brings expertise and wisdom and active participation. We have welcomed two new trustees, both with new and different backgrounds to make our Board more reflective of our world today.

Our volunteer visitors continue to bring support to those in detention. Visiting is often uplifting to witness the courage and fortitude of those in detention but it can be emotionally challenging to sustain people who have no idea what the future holds. I am determined to continue to be a volunteer visitor to constantly remind myself why this charity exists. It is such a pleasure to spot another visitor in the Visits Hall and makes me very proud. I thank each and every one of you.

People volunteer with GDWG in many ways; sorting and delivering clothing needed in the detention centres, helping in the office and the amazing work with Refugee Tales and Walk With Us programmes. Support for Refugee Tales has grown and anyone who has spent even a short time with supporters and formerly detained people walking will know the strength and confidence it brings to all involved to speak out against the injustice.

I now must say how proud the trustees are of the team of employees led by our exceptional Director Anna Pincus. The reputation of GDWG is second to none and compliments from those in detention abound. We have new employees bringing even more passion to the team. We said goodbye to Franc and Josie who will be much missed and wish them well in their new adventures.

Finally, it is such a pleasure to be involved with GDWG and to look forward to a brighter future for those in detention and beyond.

Laura Moffatt

Director's Report

The moment in 2023 that remains in our memory was when a trustee of GDWG who had formerly been detained, walked into the Cambridge Union building to describe how detention is experienced. His voice was heard alongside the voices of Ali Smith and Bernardine Evaristo, and we reflected how far the GDWG Self-Advocacy Group has developed in confidence as it calls for change.

Other moments that remain with us were when the Walking Inquiry Multi-Media Exhibition went out in the world. We celebrated when Refugee Tales featured in a UNHCR outdoor photographic exhibition at More London with a footfall of over one million people per month. Our self-advocates with lived experience of detention represented GDWG at Labour Party Conference in Liverpool. And every day that these events gained media attention, in the background but with no less intensity, volunteer visits to people in detention continued quietly and relentlessly changing lives. Thank you to our volunteer visitors.

This was a year in which we started meeting people in detention for initial assessment visits in the main body of the centres making our support easier to access. For nearly 30 years, GDWG has been visiting, listening, sharing. The insights from this work informed our contribution as Core Participants to the Brook House Public Inquiry. In 2023 the Inquiry produced a three volume report with a weight of evidence and hope that we carry into the future as we wish GDWG will no longer be needed 30 years hence.

Thank you to Marie, our wonderful Chair of Trustees who stood down in 2023, to Laura who has taken over the role so smoothly and to our brilliant staff team and trustees. We thank Josie and Franc who moved on after having made significant impacts upon the charity and we welcomed Lauren and Lara to the team.

In 2023 our programme of monthly walks included solidarity walks held by supporters overseas. As we enter our 30th birthday year, our charity reaches beyond the locality of the detention centres where our volunteers visit, and yet visits and the people we visit remain at the heart of everything we do.

Anna Pincus

Treasurer's Report

2023 has continued the growth in activity that we saw in the latter part of 2022. Increased numbers of people have been detained with a resultant increase in support costs such as interpreting and mobile phone top-ups. We have seen an increase of 12% in our costs over 2022. Fortunately, our overall income also increased - by 13% with grant income increasing by 25%.

GDWG reported a surplus of £15,000 for 2023 against a surplus of £9,967 in 2022, with income of £443,427 (2022 £391,652) and costs of £428,427 (2022 £381,685). The difference between the results for 2023 and 2022 was £5,033, made up of an increase in income of £51,775 and an increase in costs of £46,742. The rise in income was due to an increase in grants from funders. The costs have increased due to additional staff and higher mobile phone top-up costs and interpreting costs.

The Charity's free reserves (unrestricted funds) were £185,317 at 31 December 2023 (2022 £169,036), representing approximately 5 months' expenditure, comfortably within our policy of holding 3 to 9 months' reserves. GDWG's financial position remains satisfactory, and we are extremely grateful to all our supporters, including grant funders and donors. We also acknowledge our volunteers who give up their time to support GDWG in many ways including visiting, sorting clothes, raising funds and giving talks.

Adrian Radford

Statement of Financial Activities for the Year Ended 31 December

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	2023	2023	2023	2022
	£	£	£	£
Income from:				
Grants, donations and legacies	156,305	279,906	436,211	385,188
Other trading activities	6,306	-	6,306	6,030
Investment income	910	-	910	434
Total	163,521	279,906	443,427	391,652
Expenditure on:				
Refugee Tales books	256	907	1,163	1,399
Charitable activities				
Refugee Tales	29,157	1,000	30,157	25,747
Other awareness fundraising events			-	-
Relief to immigrants and refugees	117,827	279,280	397,107	354,539
Total	147,240	281,187	428,427	381,685
Net income/(expenditure)	16,281	(1,281)	15,000	9,967
Total funds brought forward	169,036	1,281	170,317	160,350
Total funds carried forward	185,317	-	185,317	170,317
Balance Sheet as at 31 December				
	2023	2023	2022	2022
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets:				
Tangible assets		439		581
Current assets:				
Debtors	9,828		919	
Cash at bank and in hand	256,310		246,534	
	266,138		247,453	
Creditors falling due within one year	(81,260)		(77,717)	
Net current assets		184,878		169,736
Net assets		185,317		170,317
Funds:				
Restricted funds		-		1,281
Unrestricted funds		185,317		169,036
Fund balances at end of year		185,317		170,317

Our Thanks

We are grateful for the support of:

Recent funders:

The AB Charitable Trust
Adur and Worthing Council
Andrew and Kathleen Bacon
Jonathan and Sarah Bayliss
Ben & Jerry's Foundation Fund, a fund
of Tides Foundation
Bernadette Trust
Bromley Trust
Comic Relief
Crawley Borough Council
Diocese of Arundel and Brighton
Migrant Fund
Eleanor Rathbone Trust
Gatwick Airport Community Trust
Gatwick Foundation Fund
Good Things Foundation/National
Databank
The Henry Smith Charity
The Hillcote Trust
The Landmark Trust
Leeds Building Society
52 Lives
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England
and Wales
Longley Trust
Memery Crystal
National Lottery Community Fund
The Orange Tree Trust
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
The Rolfe Charitable Trust
The Saffron Stitch
Sam and Rosie Berwick
Shanly Foundation
Souter Charitable Trust
Sussex Community Foundation

Sussex NHS Health and Care
Partnership
Swan Mountain Trust
Three Oaks Trust
University of Kent
University of Surrey
William Reed Fund

GDWG Walking Ambassadors:

Andrea Dumbrell
Ridy Wasolua
Teresa Pilgrim

GDWG Patrons:

Lord Dholakia PC, OBE, DL
Baroness Helena Kennedy QC

Refugee Tales Patrons:

Ali Smith
Abdulrazak Gurnah

Our friends and colleagues:

Antonia Bunnin
Arundel Museum
Association of Visitors to Immigration
Detainees
Averroes Solicitors
Bail for Immigration Detainees
Bhatia Best Solicitors
Bhatt Murphy Solicitors
Bindmans Solicitors
Canterbury Cathedral
Care4Calais
Care Quality Commission
Central England Law Centre
Chris Nichols

Chris Orange
Comma Press
Crawley Community Action
Crawley URC
Creative Manchester
David Herd
Deighton Pierce Glynn Solicitors
Detention Action
Detention Forum
Doughty Street Chambers
Duncan Lewis Solicitors
Freedom from Torture
Garden Court Chambers
Hear Me Out
Helen Bamber Foundation
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
Ian Henderson
Immigration Law Practitioners
Association
Insta Law Solicitors
Justice First
Kamila Shamsie
Lauren Cape-Davenhill
Leigh Day Solicitors
Lewes Organisation in Support of
Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Lily Herd
Lucy Williams
Mark Hylands
Medical Justice
Morton Hall Visitors Group
Much Ado Books
Niamh Cusack
Nick Armstrong
Patsy Hickman
Public Law Project
Rainbow Migration
Ra Page
Refugee Council
Refugee Tales Cymru

Rene Cassin
Ricardo Vilela
Richard Place Dobson
Rosamund and John Macfarlane
Royal Society of Literature
Ruby Wright
Samphire
Samaritans
Scottish Detainee Visitors
Shami Chakrabarti
SOAS Detainee Support
Sophie Twine
Sue Wareham
TNA Solicitors
University of Kent
University of Law
University of Warwick
Val Coumont
Verne Visitors Group
Wilson Solicitors LLP
Women for Refugee Women

GDWG Trustees:

Laura Moffatt (Chair)
Michael Berkeley (Deputy-Chair)
Adrian Radford (Treasurer)
Felicity Dick
Greg Clough
Harry Crossley
Lorraine Dsouza Fernandes
Michael Heathcote
Pious Keku
Stephen Collis
Tom Hackett

Remembering

In memory of **Alfred** and **Nourradine** and our thoughts remain with their family and friends in their time of loss.

In memory of **Lisa**, a walker with Refugee Tales. We give thanks for conversations and friendship.

In memory of **Roger** for many year's service as a GDWG trustee and volunteer visitor.

Thank You

Everyone we work with and learn from.

All individuals and institutions who have donated money, clothing and other items to us.

Our volunteers, who do so much more for GDWG and Refugee Tales than we could ever ask.

