

# ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

## Release

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

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## **BOARD REPORT**

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I wish to congratulate the highly dedicated team at Release under Niamh Eastwood's dynamic leadership for continuing to grow in what is a very tough funding environment, especially in relation to the delivery of legal services at the local level. It is the Board's view that this increase in service delivery is not only a result of the legal team's professionalism and dedication, but also because there is a clear need from clients for assistance with complex legal matters particularly at a time when the social welfare landscape has been fundamentally reformed. The success of the legal team has been recognised in the 'Centre of Excellence' award from the London Legal Support Trust after a rigorous audit of the service. The Board would like to congratulate Release's head of legal services, Kirstie Douse, the solicitors and paralegals at the organisation.

Our communications and campaigning work was significant throughout 2014 and is evidence of Release's importance in pushing the UK drug policy debate forward towards one where the principles of public health, human rights and human dignity underpin our drug laws, and one that accepts people who use drugs should not be criminalised. The Parliamentary campaign and the letter to the Prime Minister which was signed by over 90 high profile individuals in June 2014 underscores Release's ability to galvanise support for reform across different sectors, from the legal profession, to medical professionals, to law enforcement, and, of course, celebrities. Most importantly, many of those who attended the demonstration outside of Parliament are those who access our services and who are at the frontline of the damage done by punitive criminal justice responses to drug use.

Returning to the issue of funding, 2014/15 was one of the most successful years for raising funds. We are pleased that the organisation has become financially stable, although we are very aware to the fact that diligence is needed to ensure that this position is sustained. We thank the funders for their support in 2014. We will continue to work in an innovative manner to develop projects that support our core principles and are attractive to funders – this is evident in our youth stream of work, [Y-Stop](#), and our international work [TalkingDrugs](#).

Finally, the Board would like to thank all of the staff for their commitment, enthusiasm and belief that we can help improve our clients' lives by making sure that their voices are heard whether in their legal cases, with their treatment providers or in the policy environment.

Ronnie Hooberman  
Chairman of the Release Board

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT**

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I wish that I could say it was an exciting time to work in the drugs field, but sadly when we compare it to reform progress on the international scene, the domestic drug policy landscape is both a scandal and a tragedy. In 2014 there were nearly a 1,000 heroin and/or morphine related deaths, a 64% increase on two years ago, and the highest number since records began. Yet, politicians continue say that our 'drug policy is working, drug use is falling' while wilfully turning a blind eye to these disgraceful figures. The media pick up on these trends, yet by and large fall short of condemning government policy for its obvious failings highlighting a disregard for the lives of those who are some of the most vulnerable in our society. It is clear to us at Release that when deaths are increasing, the treatment field is becoming more politicised -- and in some cases more punitive in their response to people who use drugs -- and when we are continuing to needlessly criminalise tens of thousands of people needlessly every year, then our drug policies are failing.

I say 'needlessly' because this is what Home Office officials have essentially stated in their own 2014 report 'Drugs: International Comparators', which found that there was no relationship between 'the toughness of a country's enforcement against drug possession, and levels of drug use in that country'. The day the paper was launched there was a Parliamentary debate on the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 organised by Caroline Lucas MP and supported by a number of NGOs including Release. Some 20 MPs attended, a derisory fraction of the 650 total number of MPs. A demonstration of contempt for those most damaged by our drug laws? Perhaps. And whilst people die, or become sick, or end up in prison we hear that the policy is working, the government only interested in the debate when they want to appear tough on drugs. But we know that it is not tough on drugs but on people, people who should be treated with dignity and respect whether they use problematically or recreationally. We know criminalisation can push people further away from services that reduce harms and we know that young people are at greater risk because of poor drugs education and advice, inadequate harm reduction responses, including a lack of drug testing schemes, and because a criminal record can be devastating for future employment and education opportunities. All of this for what, exactly? Because the criminal law has a deterrent effect? Well, even the Home Office knows that is not true.

In 2016 the UK will have a new drugs strategy and member states of the UN will gather in New York to discuss the international drug control framework. Other countries are exploring alternative policies to the UK with far better health and societal outcomes -- many of those countries who have ended the criminalisation of people who use drugs do not have the levels of drug-related deaths we have, for instance. We will continue to fight for the rights of people who use drugs, to push the debate and we ask you to help us in any way you can -- your time, your skills, and yes, your money!

Ronnie Hooberman, Chair of the Release Board, has highlighted in his report the strong position Release is in and some of the great work we did in 2014/15. I want to echo his thanks to the brilliant team at Release that I am privileged to work with. And to those at the forefront of this problem, the people we work with, those who access our services and those who contribute to our campaigns, all I can say is that it is humbling to hear your stories and devastating when we see the full impact of this awful policy environment on your lives. We will do everything we can to mitigate the harms of politicised drug laws and work toward achieving evidence-based policies that will ensure better outcomes for all.

Niamh Eastwood  
Executive Director

## **OUR WORK**

### **1. ADVICE & REPRESENTATION SERVICES**

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#### **LEGAL SERVICE**

In July 2014/15 Release continued with delivery of the Lottery funded pilot programme, starting surgeries in the London boroughs of Lewisham, Newham and Wandsworth. Additionally, the successes of the service in Ealing were recognised by the host treatment provider who funded the surgery beyond the initial pilot period. Unfortunately, due to cuts in drug-treatment budgets, the service in Islington was only able to continue for a short period and Barking & Dagenham could not secure funding. Whilst this is disappointing, both service managers advised that they had only positive comments to make about the service and if they were able to fund it in future they would be happy for the service to return. The Head of Legal Services has regularly kept in touch with the services in relation to this and we hope that we can return to these boroughs at a later date.

Last year we assisted nearly 1,700 clients through the legal surgery programme. Within the programme overall, 24% accessed the service for welfare benefits matters (including representation at tribunals); 18% for housing advice and assistance (including disrepair and other disputes with landlords); 19 % for matters related to homelessness (including initial applications and reviews of decisions); 30% for debt matters; 7% for family law matters; 1% for criminal legal advice and 8% for other legal issues (including complaints against the police and criminal injuries claims). Most service users present more than two issues.

The demand for assistance with appeals against welfare benefit decisions continued throughout this year and the numbers assisted increased yet again. The team attended to provide representation at 27 first-tier social security tribunals in the last 12 months. Whilst this represents a decrease from the previous year, this is demonstrating the knock-on effect of a new appeal process rather than a reduction in need. From the end of 2013, people wishing to appeal a decision that they were not entitled to a sickness benefit such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Disability Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) could no longer go straight to the tribunal. Instead, they must now apply to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for a mandatory reconsideration of the decision. By adding another stage the whole process is delayed, so the cases do not reach even the appeal stage until much later, let alone have a hearing date.

There is no set timeframe for decisions to be reconsidered, and no process to prioritise a case, so we have experienced waits as long as 12 weeks before a client's case has been reconsidered and can then proceed. During an ESA appeal for example, claimants are entitled to an appeal rate of the benefit, however this does not apply during mandatory reconsideration. Therefore additional assistance has been provided to clients in this situation to enable them to temporarily apply for alternative benefits and other emergency funding from local authorities. Unfortunately this has coincided with a general reduction in local funding for these schemes, although as each are locally administered not all clients will receive equal treatment and assistance, and so a greater level of work is required to obtain support.

Overall, this has led to a greater number of clients needing longer term and additional assistance from the legal team, combined with increasing demand for the service, breadth and complexity of caseload.

### **EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE**

The Expert Witness Service continues to expand and is an important source of income for the organisation. The reputation of the Expert Witness team, led by Gary Sutton Head of Drugs Services, is strong and they provide objective and up-to-date information in cases involving; supply of drugs; cultivation/production of cannabis; the use of adulterants and proceeds of crime.

### **DRUGS ADVICE SERVICE**

Release launched a counselling service in 2012/13, which continues to be funded at its location in a GP practice in West London. The Head of Drugs at Release, who is a qualified counsellor, continues to deliver this service throughout 2014/15. The counselling delivered is aimed at patients of GPs who are not ready to enter structured treatment programmes. This is another source of funding and ensures that the organisation diversifies in terms of income generation.

### **NATIONAL LEGAL AND DRUGS HELPLINE**

The helpline is still the only element of Release's work that is unfunded. However, we believe that this service goes to the core of what Release does: providing quality expert and legal advice to the public for free, and enables us to keep up to date with what is happening regarding people who use drugs. In 2013/14 we received 5,376 enquiries via our helpline and email enquiries. During 2014/15 this has increased by 11% to 5,980 enquiries.

Throughout 2014 we continued to trial an out of hour's service through the holiday periods and whilst continuing to receive a few calls we did not have the level of engagement that exists during the working week. Also, all of the calls were of a legal nature and none were urgent. This is one reason we are not pursuing the expansion of the helpline hours in the same manner that we were. It is something we would like to implement in the future but we acknowledge that this would take up a reasonable amount of staff resources and, as stated previously, we think this is only possible with funding for the advice services provided through the helpline and online. The issue of resources is particularly pertinent for the Head of Legal and the Head of Drugs who currently are focussed on other priorities.

It is also worth noting that people tend to use the internet to source information and the Release website has certainly been accessed by significant numbers in relation to information provision. For example, nine of the top ten most popular pages of the website relate to legal information and have all seen a significant increase in traffic in the last 12 months. The top page is the [list of controlled substances](#) which has seen a 136% increase in traffic from 39,812 visitors in 2013/14 to 94,286 this year. This is a similar pattern across all the advice pages with '[what happens at court](#)', the 7<sup>th</sup> most popular page, seeing traffic increase by 385% from 8,650 to 41,994 visitors. It is our view that for the moment the website is sufficient to fill the information provision for 'out of hours' purposes. In fact, the increased numbers to the helpline and email enquiries is certainly partly as a result of the increased website traffic. To ensure that we are getting feedback from this form of engagement we will be introducing 'rate this page' software in 2015/16.

In the medium term (unless the funding situation changes) we will not be considering extending the helpline delivery.

### **WHERE WE ARE AT NOW**

One of the highlights of 2014/15 was being recognised as a 'Centre of Excellence' by the London Legal Support Trust; this was achieved after a thorough external audit of our legal services and was accompanied by a core grant of £10,000.00 for the organisation. It is expected that we will achieve a Advice Quality Standard kite mark by the end of 2015. This success has been largely achieved through the dedication, professionalism and compassion demonstrated by the legal team.

The delivery of legal and welfare outreach services based at drug treatment programmes across London is one of Release's main service activities. As highlighted in last year's report, the funding from the Big Lottery Community Development Fund has been instrumental in assisting in the development of the programme, with a four-year grant to deliver 12 pilot programmes. The first 3 of these pilots were delivered in 2013/14 and we secured funding to continue delivery of two of them in 2014/15. A further three pilots were launched in July in 2014/15 in Lewisham, Wandsworth and Newham, and we are pleased to confirm that again two areas – Lewisham and Newham – have confirmed that they wish to commission our legal services for 2015/16. In early 2015 we also secured a generous grant to deliver a project that enhances the rights of people who sex work, and in collaboration with Open Doors Sex Work Project we launched three new legal surgeries aimed specifically at this group. This brings the total number of legal surgeries in the London area to 15 specialist sites seeing approximately 2,000 clients a year.

In the current funding environment, where budgets for drug treatment are no longer ring-fenced, it is extremely important that Release demonstrates the impact of its work in terms of public health outcomes. Our Head of Legal Services produced a document last year highlighting how improvement in housing issues, increased income, and the resolution of legal services can contribute to and improve public health outcomes. This year our Head of Finance is due to publish a community investment analysis, a report funded by Kensington and Chelsea's Public Health Board. It is due to be released in November 2015 but the initial analysis shows that for every £1 spent on legal services results in savings of £11.00 to both local Government and the State. We are of the view that this piece of work – along with the high quality of service delivered by the legal team -- will be incredibly persuasive to funders, both statutory and non-statutory. However, we are very aware that the funding environment is likely to become even more challenging in the next 5 years.

We continue to explore funding streams to develop a virtual legal service which would allow Release to deliver this unique and highly regarded stream of work outside of London.

As highlighted in last year's report the updating of legal publications and the development of new tools of support were something we were very keen to do. We are pleased to say that the Pilgrim Trust-funded sex workers project includes an update of 'Sex Workers and the Law' which we are developing in collaboration with a number of sex worker-led organisations including the English Collective of Prostitutes and our partners at Open Doors. This is due for launch in Spring 2016 and will be accompanied by a sex worker's rights card.

We are also very grateful to the Legal Education Foundation who have provided a significant grant to develop a guide to assist people who have to represent themselves at Court for possession of drugs (legal aid is rarely available in these matters). The guide will be available in a booklet format and will be available in an app which will allow people to navigate the procedure by answering simple questions on their case and circumstances. The aim of this project is to help people feel that they have some ability to negotiate the process including trying to get the matter reconsidered for a lesser penalty by the prosecution or the Courts. This project is due to launch in mid-2016.

## 2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT (Y-STOP)

This stop and search project that we began in 2013 has expanded significantly over the last 12 months, with a number of tools and resources being developed over this period. Following an eight month consultation involving over 80 young people across London on their experiences of stop and search and how they could be improved, Release has led an extremely collaborative project that aimed to address their needs through tools and training, equipping them with skills to deal with difficult police interactions.



Travel wallet & Search card  
with YSTOP principles –

The young consultees have been involved at all stages of this project, including coming up with the name, design, content and presentation. Since the consultation we have continued to provide opportunities for a number of them to take on additional roles such as peer trainers, supporting on web and app development, and media, public speaking and communications activities to develop their professional skills.

Since 'Y-STOP' launched in June 2014 we have produced a travel wallet that contains the main principles for dealing with a stop and search; a S.E.A.R.C.H. acronym which stands for: Stay calm; Eye contact; Ask questions; Record/Receipt; Confidence; Hold to account; with a more detailed '[Search Card](#)' inserted into this. Additionally, we have produced a [legal manual](#) for practitioners detailing the law around stop and search including case studies; educational resources for teachers comprising two lesson plans that cover [police community relations, stop and search law](#) and the [human impact of the police practice](#); a more informal [session plan](#) for youth workers and a training manual for peer trainers. In September 2014 we launched a dedicated Y-Stop [website](#) which also features [stories](#) from young people who have been stopped and searched, creating a space for experiences to be shared and impact on the individual to be recognised.

In January 2015 we shot the Y-Stop film, launched as a short [two-part film](#) on Youtube in March following three young people experiencing stop and search. The films were hugely successful, reaching 20,000 views in the first week. In addition to their success on social media, the films are used as a training resource in both our own Y-Stop training programme and have been employed in workshops and academic courses run by other organisations.

We had a fantastic cast including: Percelle Ascott from Youngers and the BBC's Mandem on the Wall, Ricky Groves from Eastenders, and Nick Nevern who has starred in The Sweeny, and Hooligan Factory.



On the film set with UK Fully Focused and the cast of YSTOP

The Y-Stop training programme has been extremely successful this year. Based on the 6 S.E.A.R.C.H. principles, the peer training sessions have been constantly evolving as Y-Stop expands its range of tools available for young people. Methods such as group work, film screenings and discussion, role play exercises and reflection are employed in our sessions delivered to a broad age range of 11-25 year olds and the training centres on participants' own experiences with the police. The peer training has reached over 600 young people so far in a range of settings including youth clubs, schools, universities, pupil referral units and supported housing provisions across England and Wales. In addition, 50 young people have received our train the trainer sessions in London, Cardiff, Bristol and Northampton, enabling them to deliver peer training in their own communities and helping Y-Stop reach a wider audience.

Our debrief sessions during training received very positive feedback, with 80% of students being able to recall all of S.E.A.R.C.H. principles from memory and 95% stating they would share these principles with friends and family. In assessing participants' learning, we can demonstrate that they learn new information to help them steer their interactions with police to a smoother and faster conclusion, with tips such as how to safely record the police, observe a stop and search of a stranger, not giving their personal details to the police, and asking for an officer of the same sex to conduct the search being practical tips they were excited to take away with them. Participants have commented that they particularly like the behavioural focus of the training as opposed to a traditional 'know your rights' approach as they find it easier to apply in a highly stressful situation and also find it useful advice for a range of confrontational interactions beyond stop and search.

This year has also seen the Y-Stop project engage specifically with the Somali community, in recognition of challenging relations with the police and the impact of the khat ban in 2014 on the community. We have been consulting widely in London, Bristol and Cardiff with Somali parents, youth and community workers to understand the problems they face and the type of support needed. The outcomes of these discussions will be distinct resources produced in Somali; a parents' guide to stop

and search and a pocket Search Card for young people, as well as a series of advice sessions delivered in these cities in collaboration with local lawyers.

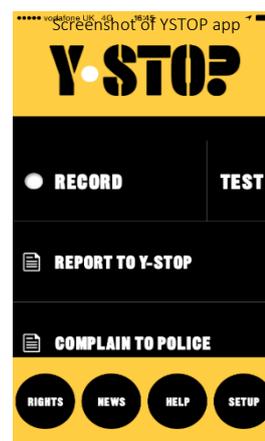
This period has also seen us develop a Y-Stop app in collaboration with the team that has produced the New York Civil Liberties Union 'Stop & Frisk' app. The app, developed for iOS and Android, aims to support young people to record videos of, and report, their police interactions, having their submissions be looked over by experts who can provide advice. The app will also allow users to complain directly to the police if they wish, with a copy of the complaint sent to Release for third party oversight.

### WHERE WE ARE NOW

The Y-Stop films, since launching at the end of March 2015, have been viewed nearly 100,000 times on YouTube in addition to training and events.

In August 2015 we launched the Y-Stop app at Notting Hill Carnival, handing out Y-Stop merchandise with QR codes so it could be downloaded immediately. In its first two months the app generated significant media coverage and had been downloaded almost 4000 times.

In terms of hard copies distributed, our pocket materials have been extremely popular with over 30,000 search cards dispersed and 10,000 travel wallets. As usual all our publications are free and we just ask people to cover the postage. We are delighted with the Y-STOP project and believe the high quality and engaging materials are a result of a detailed consultation process in the preceding year and continued involvement of young people.



### 3. INTERNATIONAL MEDIA PLATFORM (TALKINGDRUGS)

TalkingDrugs – Release's international platform – grew considerably in strength during 2014/15, with audience numbers increasing 25% to around 500,000 visitors from across the globe in the year. This is partly a result of the redesign of the website undertaken by the new project coordinator, a refocusing of content and editorial style to become more engaging, and increased online activity through the project's social media channels.

The website aims to engage the public on issues related to drugs, policy and harm reduction, with stories covering developments and trends in these issues around the world. New content is uploaded regularly and can be accessed in 10 languages, with the main traffic coming from English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Thai platforms, the latter in particular seeing an enormous increase in engagement of 500% compared to the previous 12-month period. The decision to decrease the number of languages TalkingDrugs content can be read in has been made with a view to ensuring the project delivers exciting and dynamic content across as many of its platforms as possible. The success of this refocusing can be seen in increased audience numbers.

Most importantly, TalkingDrugs serves as a key platform for highlighting the valuable work of partner organisations around the world and elevating the voices of those most impacted by drug laws. With regards to the former, TalkingDrugs successfully highlighted on separate occasions open letters from civil society to UNAIDS, the Global Fund, and the Indonesian president condemning the death penalty, as well as being the first to report on new harm reduction initiatives in Kenya, and key global campaign launches. Additionally, there has been a strong drive to increase the number of stories from those adversely affected by drug laws, especially those who use certain drugs like heroin, crack and methamphetamine. These stories are extremely important in challenging stigma and the public's perception of people who use drugs, which in our view is one of the drivers that preserve the status quo.

TalkingDrugs also served as a key campaign tool for partner organisations, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Volunteers are a very important aspect of TalkingDrugs and without their support this project would not be as successful as it is. Volunteers are based both at the office and around the world, and come from a range of backgrounds including those in education, people who have experience of problematic drug use, and those working in the drugs field. It is the commitment of these people that has really enhanced the project over the last few years.

In the coming months, a significant focus of the TalkingDrugs project will be the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs set to take place in April 2016. The project coordinator will be heavily involved in working with partner organisations around the world to develop communications and campaigning strategies in the lead up to the UNGASS, and TalkingDrugs will launch its own video project that will provide the public with an opportunity to get involved in the debate and call on their governments to push for drug policy reform. Talks have begun with Virgin about bringing in new voices for this project, in particular high-profile individuals who can help increase the reach and impact of the movement.

## **FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMMES**

Release has now run a number of fellowship programmes in conjunction with the Global Drug Policy Program at OSF. The fellowships are aimed at advocates working in related fields to drug policy such as penal reform or human rights. To date we have hosted five two-week long fellowships with attendees from Latin America and the West and East African region. Fellows attend the course in London and meet with colleagues from Harm Reduction International, Transform and the International Drug Policy Consortium, as well as meeting advocates, academics and policymakers. The programme has been hugely successful with many fellows returning to their own country's to implement campaigns to reform drug policing or laws, or to improve access to harm reduction services. Release staff provide six months' worth of support following the fellowship to attendees in relation to their national work.

## 4. **CAMPAIGNING**

Release took the lead on organising a number of actions on the 26 June 2014 in the UK to coincide with the United Nations International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The actions highlighted the [IDPC](#) campaign 'Support. Don't Punish'



a global campaign supported by drug policy and harm reduction organisations across the globe – more than 100 cities supported the action. In order to gain significant press coverage Release organised a letter to the Prime Minister signed by over 80 high profile organisations and individuals calling for the end of criminal sanctions for drug possession offences and urging that the UK engage meaningfully in the process leading to the United Nations General Assembly Special Assembly ('UNGASS') on Drugs in April 2016. The letter was signed by organisations from a range of fields including NGOs like Reprise, through to the Prison Governors Association and the National Black Police Association. Individuals who signed included MPs, Peers and personalities such as Richard Branson and Sting. The letter attracted a significant amount of media attention as detailed below.

As well as the letter we also organised a demonstration outside Parliament highlighting the fact that in 2002 David Cameron supported drug policy reform when not in Government, but now as Prime Minister he had distanced himself from that stance. We were delighted that a number of TV crews attended the demonstration and interviewed key staff about the event and the global day of action.

As well as securing significant media coverage on the day of action, the letter was also endorsed by the then Deputy Prime Minister on LBC radio and the signatories to the letter resulted in a number of new voices to the debate. In particular, the Black Police Association has since been very vocal about the failure of the drug laws in the UK.

TalkingDrugs served a vital tool to help elevate the campaign online by providing people with the function to tweet the campaign messaging directly to Theresa May, David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Yvette Cooper on June 26. This page was accessed by nearly 2,000 people on the day.

### NEWSPAPERS:

- [“Decriminalise drug possession, campaigners tell David Cameron”](#) – The Guardian
- [“Russell Brand Among 90 Celebrities And Politicians Calling For UK Drug Law Reform On Day Of Global Action”](#) – The

Huffington Post (Made Front Page on Website)

- [“Russell Brand and Richard Branson write letter to David Cameron calling for drug possession to be legalised”](#) – The Independent

- [“Celebrities sign letter calling for drug law change”](#) – BBC News UK
- [“Richard Branson: ‘War’ has failed – we need a new drugs strategy”](#) – London Evening Standard
- [“Cameron told to honour his drug reform past”](#) – Politics.co.uk
- [“Drug laws shake-up call to Cameron”](#) – The Courier UK
- [“Celebrities And Politicians Press Cameron For Drug Law Reforms”](#) – Law on the Web
- [“Celebrities sign letter calling for drug law change”](#) – ngr Guardian News
- [“Pussy Riot Lead Day Of Global Action In Call To End The War On Drugs \(PICTURES\)”](#) – Huffington Post UK
- [“Russell Brand - Stars Demand Change To U.K Drug Policies”](#) – Contact Music
- [“Stars demand change to drug policies”](#) - Express
- [“Should drug possession be legalised?”](#) – Telegraph
- [“Drug laws shake-up call to Cameron”](#) – Belfast Telegraph
- [“Celebrities slam failed war on drugs in letter to David Cameron”](#) – City A.M.
- [“Decriminalise drug possession, campaigners tell David Cameron”](#) - Guardian
- [“Russell Brand, Richard Branson and Sting call for drug possession to be decriminalised”](#) – The Mirror
- [“Russell Brand and Sting call for drug law reform on global day of action”](#) – Digital Spy
- [“Poll: Legalise Drug Possession?”](#) – Independent
- [“Jail chiefs and police back stars' call to legalise drugs: Russell Brand and Sir Richard Branson among signatories of letter urging Cameron to change law”](#) – Daily Mail
- [“Sting joins Branson and Brand in plea to decriminalise drugs”](#) – The Yorkshire Post
- [“London: City of Protest”](#) – Viral Global News
- [“Russell Brand calls Fox News ‘a fanatical terrorist propagandist organisation’ after charged Iraq rant”](#) - Independent

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS:**

- [“Famosos piden la despenalización de la posesión de drogas”](#) - Diario de Mallorca
- [“Decenas de personalidades piden a Cameron que regule la posesión de drogas”](#) - EL PAÍS Internacional
- [“Worldwide Protests Erupt Over the Racist, Devastating, Failed War on Drugs”](#) – San Diego Press
- [“Celebrities push for enlightened drug reform”](#) – Cayman News Service
- [“Cities Worldwide Protest the War on Drugs”](#) – World Policy Blog
- [“Stars demand change to U.K. drug policies”](#) – Hollywood.com
- [“Know your weed by smell: UK police want public to sniff out cannabis farms”](#) – RT
- [“Sir Richard Branson, Russell Brand, Sting want drug laws changed”](#) – News.com.au

**RADIO:**

- [“Call Clegg”](#) – on LBC Radio
- [“Good Morning Scotland”](#) – BBC Scotland
- [BBC Radio Cumbria](#)

- [BBC Cambridge](#)
  - [London Live Breakfast](#)
  - BBC 24 hour news (not available online)
- T.V:**
- [BBC World News](#)

One of the highlights of the Parliamentary calendar in the last year was the drugs debate organized by Caroline Lucas MP. [TalkingDrugs](#), our international online media site, took a leading role in the communications around the debate. Working with Transform, Virgin and Caroline Lucas' office [we developed a film](#) to encourage people to contact their MPs encouraging them to attend the debate. The film featured Anne Marie Cockburn, mother of Martha who died at 15 of an MDMA overdose, Richard Branson and Caroline Lucas. We then hosted the video on TalkingDrugs and introduced a tool to allow people to email their MPs directly from the website asking them to attend the debate on the 30 October - over 2000 emails were sent.

The morning of the debate saw a briefing with MPs where presentations were made by Release's Executive Director and Transform's Head of External Affairs. On the same day the Home Office released a study that had been initiated by the Liberal Democrats and has seen Ministers and officials travel to over eleven countries to assess their drug policies. The countries ranged from Japan and Sweden, both of whom take a more draconian prohibitionist approach to drug use, through to Portugal, Uruguay and US state of Colorado who are at the forefront of reform. The report had no conclusions but did state that the toughness or otherwise of the laws seemed to have very little impact on prevalence rates. This resulted in a significant amount of media which provided an opportunity to highlight the findings of the report and the debate. Release staff provided comment and interviews for the following:

[Sky News Tonight](#)

[London Live Breakfast](#)

[Channel 5](#)

ITV Lunch Time

BBC London Radio

BBC Wales Radio

[Independent](#)

[Newsweek](#)

Advocating for harm reduction initiatives was also a focus of our work in the last 12 months. This was largely done through our membership of the Harm Reduction Group (members include the National AIDs Trust, the Hep C Trust, the Substance Misuse Management in General Practice, Harm Reduction International & others). One of our aims this year was to influence Public Health England (PHE) to change its language around drug treatment to include references to harm reduction, and we have had some success in this area with PHE committing to involving the group in developing language in the future. This commitment was made by the Director of Public Health, Duncan Selbie, at a meeting attended by Release's Executive Director and three other members of the Harm Reduction Group.

Release is also an active member of the Naloxone Action Group which aims to ensure that Naloxone (a drug that can reverse a heroin overdose) is available to those who need it, including active drug users; those in treatment including opioid substitution therapy ('OST'); hostel workers; families and friends.. However, the availability of the drug is limited with some health areas (of which there are 150) not providing this lifesaving medication mainly on the grounds of cost (although the cost is £14

per injection and a dose lasts 2 – 3 years if not used). Release took the lead on identifying which areas are not providing Naloxone by sending out Freedom of Information requests to all 150 health areas. Through that process we identified that 72 areas were not providing Naloxone. In order to challenge this Release presented at the national drug users' conference on the issue and explained how we would like to take a legal action against an area for failure to provide the drug. We are currently working with a number of drug user activist groups to identify a potential case, however the coverage of our presentation in [the media](#) has led to a number of areas rolling Naloxone out to its clients. In addition to this, we used TalkingDrugs as a vehicle to engage people on the issue again providing the tools allowing people to write to their MPs to support a motion in Parliament around the scaling up of Naloxone nationally.

Release briefed both the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party in the lead up to the General Election. Release was asked to present on drug policy and policing to Labour's Shadow Minister for Justice to help inform their manifesto.

## **5. RESEARCH AND POLICY**

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We had hoped to launch our report looking into the socio economic status of people caught in possession of drugs. Based on data we had obtained in 2011 (2009/10 data) from the Metropolitan Police Service ('MPS'), which showed the occupation and penalty for those caught in possession of a controlled drug, we found that 93% were from the lowest four socio-economic groups whilst 7% are from the higher status groups. Analysis into penalty-type demonstrated that those from the highest social class were three times more likely to receive a caution compared to those who were unemployed for the possession of drugs. This propensity for the lower socio-economic groups to receive harsher sanctions is despite the fact they are more likely to be in possession of cannabis, whilst those in the highest social class are more likely to be in possession of Class A substances, in particular cocaine. The data was presented at the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP) in Rome in May 2014 and was reported by Vice Magazine ([https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/class-drugs-release](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/class-drugs-release)) in June 2014.

However, the policy team at Release felt that the paper would be stronger if we were able to analyse and compare more recent data. As such we resubmitted the original Freedom of Information ('FOI') request but altered the date range. The MPS refused our request on the grounds that providing the demographics of those stop and searched would undermine the police's ability to investigate street possession of drugs. We have submitted an appeal which the MPS are currently considering but the whole process has taken ten months, hence the delay. Once the data is obtained – we are confident our appeal grounds are strong – then we will work fast to produce the socio-economic paper. In addition, we will be able to provide an update on drugs policing in the capital including the racial disparity that exists in stop and search for drugs and the penalties people receive for possession – our [original report](#) into this issue found black people received more severe penalties than white people. The MPS data is particularly important; whilst the overall number of stop and searches has fallen significantly in London the percentage of searches for drugs has increased from approximately 50% in 2010 to over 60% in 2014/15.

We are about to launch the updated version of our paper on decriminalisation, which will revisit the countries highlighted in our 2012 report providing new evidence of the positive outcomes related to those jurisdictions that have implemented an effective non-criminal justice model. A number of new countries will be added to the review including Switzerland, Jamaica and Costa Rica. We expect to launch in Spring 2016. It is worth noting that the 2012 report was cited in a WHO report in summer 2014 which called for the decriminalisation of drug possession and use offences globally and more recently in the submission from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in advance of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs.

More broadly Release staff have been active in engaging policymakers both in Government, the opposition party and official bodies appointed by Government. Release, in partnership with [StopWatch](#), was heavily involved in the Home Secretary's review into the use of stop and search and working with the Liberal Democrats we secured a review of the use of strip search as part of stop and search. The review was undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary ('HMIC') and Release's work in this area has continued over the last 12 months. We were invited to be on the external review panel for the HMIC's inspection into the use of stop and search which considered the use of strip search and also traffic stops – the use of these powers are driven mainly by drugs legislation. This work was carried out between July 2014 and March 2015 resulting in a damning report from the HMIC about the failure of police forces to properly implement their earlier 2013 recommendations and highlighting the serious and inadequate safeguarding around the use of strip search as part of stop and search. Release has been asked by the HMIC to continue to act as an observer for the external group. A new legitimacy review is scheduled to take place in September 2015 which will focus on stop and search and we are pushing for drug legislation to be at the centre of any analysis of the use of this power. Release are now perceived as one of the leading NGOs working in the use of the power, especially because of the research we produced in collaboration with the London School of Economics and Political Science ('LSE') and our youth stream of work – Y-STOP - that focuses on empowering young people to understand their rights on stop and search, how to implement those rights safely and how to complain if unhappy.

Release staff responded to a number of Government consultations and proposed legislation including:

- [The Criminal Justice & Courts Bill 2013](#)
- [Review of Drug Treatment Guidelines \('Orange Guidelines'\)](#)
- [Code A PACE Codes of Practice Consultation](#)
- [Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights](#)

Finally, one of the focuses of our work at the moment is the Psychoactive Substances Bill, which proposes to ban all psychoactive substances (food and alcohol have to be exempted) and has moved through Parliament at a startling speed having only received its first reading at the Lords on 28 May 2015. It has now completed its legislative passage through the Lords and has had both its 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> readings at the Commons; it is now at Committee Stage. To date our concern is that this is a badly drafted, unworkable piece of legislation which when adopted by other countries has not impacted on prevalence but rather increased the harms of these substances. Release has submitted several

briefings, in conjunction with Transform Drug Policy Foundation, and has submitted amendments to the proposed legislation.

Release has met with Baroness Meacher, who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform, and Baroness Hamwee, the Home Affairs Spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, and Lord Brian Paddick (Lib Dem) and worked with this group of peers to lay [amendments](#) in relation to the Bill.

Release has also been asked to participate in a new expert panel set up by the Liberal Democrats to look into cannabis policy in the UK. We have also been approached by a number of police forces about possible research opportunities around the policing of cannabis. This work will be carried out in conjunction with LSE.

## **6. ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE**

Release staff continue to promote the work of the organisation and raise issues related to drug policy, in the media and through attending conferences. In the last 12 months, as well as the media links provided above and below, Release has been invited for media comment on:

- Radio 4 – Today
- ITN Lunchtime news
- Sky news
- BBC Lunchtime news
- Radio 4 – World at One
- BBC News 24
- Radio 5
- Voice of Russia
- Channel 5
- Various local radio stations

In terms of UK conferences and events, Release staff have presented at the Home Affairs Select Committee Conference, the Royal United Services Institute ('RUSI'), Chatham House (several times), the London School of Economics and Political Science, Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol and Drugs, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Enquiry into children and the police, the Royal College of GPs conference, European Parliament Information Office conference, Health Poverty Action Conference, a conference organised by the Chief Constable of Durham, International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy (Essex University), the Drink and Drugs News conference, and at Sands Cymru's conference in Swansea. Our Youth Coordinator for Release who leads on Y-STOP has presented at over a dozen community events including The R Word, youth arts event as part of "End Racism This Generation", Sadler's Wells and the Spark social justice festival, East London.

The Executive Director was again asked to present to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs on the social harms created by the UK's current drug policy. This is a stream of work that the ACMD is pursuing and it is expected a report will be published, with Release feeding into the process. The Head of Drugs Services is on the drug treatment in closed environments (prisons) specialist group as part of the Royal College of GPs review into this area.

Release staff have also presented internationally on the organisation's work and engaged in public debates on drug policy reform. This includes panel discussions on communications strategy and disproportionate drug law policing in the UK at a Youth and Justice Forum in Istanbul last year, along

with participating in the European Research Area Network on Illicit Drugs (ERANID) meeting in Lisbon about research priorities. Other conferences we have participated in include the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna; a Sex Workers symposium, Paris; an UNGASS strategy meeting in New York; and a panel at the ISSDP conference in Rome. The Executive Director was also asked to teach on the Central European University's Summer School in Budapest on their Drug Policy and Human Rights Course. All of the international participation is funded by those hosting the events.

Outside of its presence at conferences and public forums, Release is actively involved in developing a global communications strategy with partner organisations across the world for the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in April 2016.

Release continues to pursue a collaborative approach and have worked again this year with the Global Commission on Drug Policy on their next report on access to essential medicines which was launched October 2015.

Once again we are delighted at the performance of the Release website both in terms of numbers and engagement. The overall number of visitors has increased by 29% from 503,290 visitors in the period April 2013 – March 2014 to 648,820 visitors for the same period this year. Our view is one contributing factor to this increase is that the Release website has been fully configured to enhance the user's experience specifically for portable devices, such as tablets and mobile smart phones. The continued development of this functionality and navigation has resulted in a marked increase of portable devices accessing the website, and now accounts for nearly 50% of all website traffic.

In terms of social media, the number of Facebook followers has increased from 4550 to 10,963, a significant increase and evidence of more effective engagement with our social media audience. The number of Release Twitter followers has increased from 8500 to 12,770 followers in the last year.

Release also runs other accounts on Twitter including the TalkingDrugs project (our international project) which has just over 9,600 followers (up from 6000 in the last 12 months) and the Executive Director's account which has over 3,300 followers.

Unsurprisingly, as the profile of the organisation grows this puts greater pressure on the resources of the organisation with an increase in the number of people seeking advice, an increase in media enquiries and an increase in requests to participate in events. As such we have to become more selective in terms of whom we respond to in relation to media calls and what events we participate in.

That being said, the level of media and political engagement in the last 12 months has continued to be positive as demonstrated by the information provided above. Added to this, Release staff are increasingly being sought to participate in high level research/policy discussions as evidenced by our involvement in the ACMD social harms group, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's Stop and Search External Reference Group, the College of Policing's Stop and Search group and the ERANID project.

Finally, our relationship with funders continues to be effective and we are pleased that Release has become a relatively stable financial organisation. We continue to have good relations with local

providers and those who fund us currently. This year we received a large three-year grant from the Pilgrim Trust, this type of project funding helps the organisation focus on securing (relatively) long term core funding.

## **7. TRAINING**

Release continued to provide specialist training courses on a variety of themes relating to drugs, the law and human rights. Please see our section on our Stop and Search work for more information on the training programme we are delivering under the Y.STOP project.

### **RELEASE TRUSTEES (2014 – 2015)**

Dr Christine Ford  
Roger Golland  
James Hardy (Treasurer)  
Edward Henry  
Ronald Hooberman (Chairman)  
Andrew MacDonald  
Amber Marks  
David Rowntree  
Viveen Taylor

### **Release Staff (2014 – 2015)**

Donna Crentsil-Keane  
Natasha Dhumma  
Kirstie Douse  
Niamh Eastwood  
Keith Edwards  
Edward Fox  
Kwadwo Koram  
Lorna Macfarlane  
Caitlin Oddy  
Daniel Rourke  
Gary Sutton  
Basak Tas  
Dan Williams

We are very grateful for the support given to us by our various funders, including charitable bodies, statutory agencies and individual and corporate supporters who recognise the importance of the work of Release and enable us to provide the services and activities described in this report.

# Release

LEGAL EMERGENCY &  
DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

1966619 (Registered No.)

CHARITY NUMBER

801118

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

Proudly supported with grants from



European Commission's  
Youth in Action Programme





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## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

<b>REGISTERED CHARITY NAME</b>	Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited
<b>CHARITY NUMBER</b>	801118
<b>COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER</b>	1966619
<b>PRINCIPAL &amp; REGISTERED OFFICE ADDRESS</b>	124-128 City Road London EC1V 2NJ
<b>TRUSTEES AT DATE OF APPROVAL OF REPORT</b>	Dr Christine Ford Roger Golland James Hardy (Treasurer) Edward Henry Ronald Hooberman (Chairman) Anna Ling Andrew MacDonald Amber Marks David Rowntree Viveen Taylor
<b>SECRETARY</b>	M & N Secretaries Limited
<b>AUDITOR</b>	Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd 21 Garland Court 1 Premiere Place London E14 8SA
<b>BANKERS</b>	Co-operative Bank PLC PO Box 250 Delf House Skelmersdale WN8 6WT  Charities Aid Foundation 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ

## TRUSTEES REPORT

The trustees, who are also Directors for the purposes of the Companies Act, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2015.

Release is the national centre of expertise on drugs and drugs law and is an independent registered charity that was founded in 1967. The principal aims of the company are to provide free and confidential legal, educational, welfare and expert drugs advice and information to any person, body, organisation or company in the areas of drug use, civil liberties, human rights and the criminal law. Release campaigns on issues that affect those we represent, including reform of the UK's current drug policy.

The organisation provides free at the point of delivery services to individuals/groups, informative educational programmes to young and marginalised Black Minority and Ethnic (BME) groups, and a number of free policy & educational publications.

Our unique and specialist service activities include:

- national drug and legal helpline; drug expert witness; community engagement programmes for young and marginalised groups; and London-centric legal welfare and counselling outreach services within alcohol and drug treatment environments.

The objectives of our services and programmes are to:

- advance and support the health (physical and mental), economic, environmental and wellbeing needs of individuals experiencing substance misuse and dependency; those in recovery, and their families; and
- develop programmes for young and marginalised groups that have/may come into contact with the criminal justice system because of drugs policing through the provision of information, training, and publications adopting a harm reduction approach.

Our drug policy campaigns are geared towards stimulating public awareness and debate, whilst offering alternative approaches to our current national drug policies. We also provide briefings to parliamentarians and have worked closely with the All Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform (APPGDPR) and the Global Commission on Drug Policy.

Release is a member of AdviceUK, Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals (FDAP) and Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA). Individual members of staff have professional memberships with The Law Society; Expert Witness Institute (EWI); British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), The Bar Council; and the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP).

Release is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority ([618823](#)) to provide debt advice. The organisation has also been categorised as a Centre of Excellence by the London Legal Support Trust.

The organisation is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, as well as being part of the Vienna and New York NGO Committees on Drugs.

Release staff are also consultative members of the following groups:

- British Transport Police (BTP) Stop and Search Community Consultation Group
- College of Policing Stop and Search Strategic Scrutiny Group
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Police External Reference Group on Stop and Search
- London Joint Working Group on Alcohol related Liver Disease (ALD)
- Naloxone Action Group (NAG) England
- Royal College of GP's Secure Environments Group (SEG)
- United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs  
NGO Communications Working Group
- United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs  
NGO Campaign Branding Working Group
- Liberal Democrats Expert Panel on Cannabis

## **FUNDS AND RESERVES**

The Board of Directors believes that the charitable company should hold financial reserves because it has no endowment funding and is entirely dependent upon income from grants, sponsorship, donor funding and other income, which is inevitably subject to fluctuation from year to year. The Board of Directors believes that the minimum level of reserves should be the equivalent of two months' operating costs, calculated and reviewed annually. However in the last 12 months, through strategic financial management, we are pleased to say that Release has increased this to three months' worth of operating costs, and it is our plan to continue to have maintain reserves at this level. The Board of Directors seeks to retain accumulated funds at the desired level in stages consistent with the company's overall financial position and its need to maintain and develop its charitable activities.

## **THE CHARITY'S ASSETS**

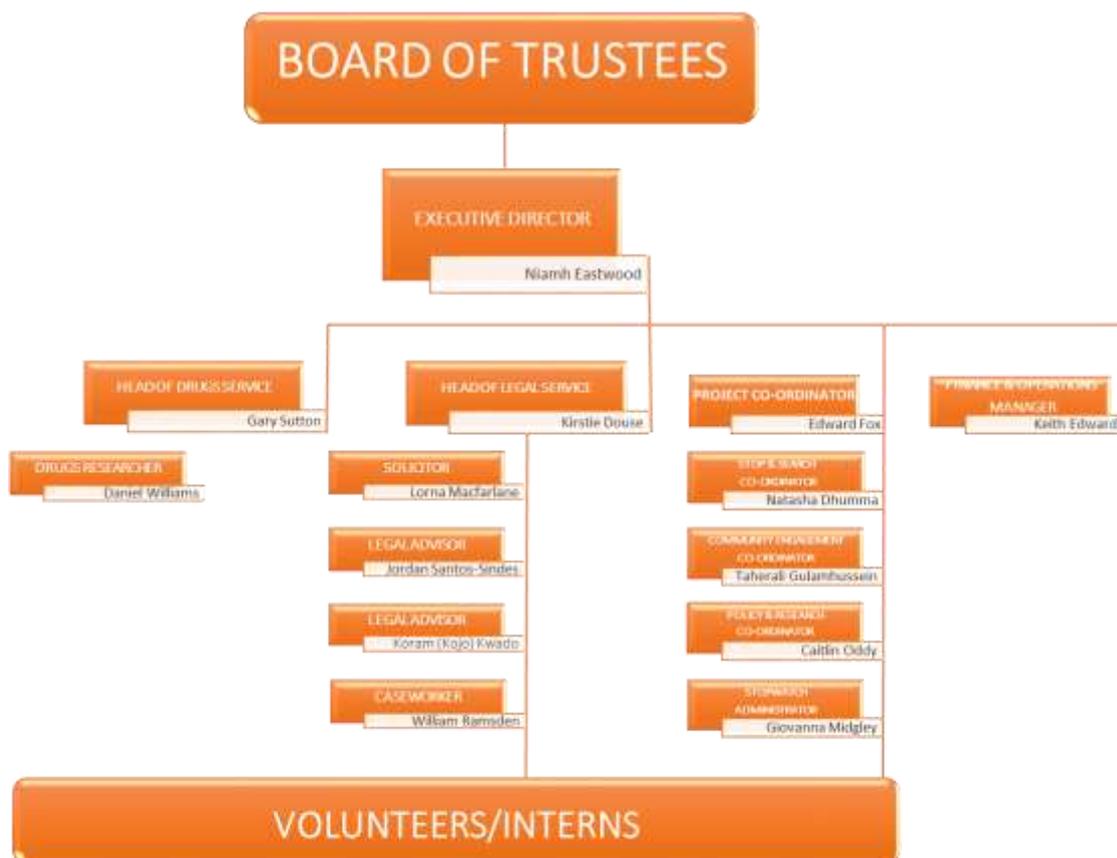
Acquisitions and disposals of fixed assets during the year are recorded in the notes to the financial statements.

## **VOLUNTEER HELP**

Release is grateful to the many volunteers who dedicate their time to the organisation and support the various aspects of the organisation's work – their contribution cannot be overstated. In 2014/15 we continued to have a high level of engagement with both volunteers and interns. Approximately 50 volunteers supported the legal team, the drugs team and Release's international project TalkingDrugs. Many of those involved assisted in the delivery of our services, manning the helpline under supervision, or drafting letters on behalf of our clients. Those volunteering for the TalkingDrugs project were instrumental in developing content for the website. Once again the organisation was also lucky to have a number of sponsored interns work at the charity; their role was to undertake specific research activities and many of them have contributed to the policy work. As previously stated, the financial benefit to the organisation of the volunteer programme is immeasurable.

## **MAIN RISKS**

The Board of Directors has conducted its own review of the major risks to which the charitable company is exposed and systems have been established to mitigate those risks. Significant external risk to funding has led to the development of a strategic plan that will allow for concentration and focus on particular areas of activity, and also for diversification of funding. Internal risks are minimised by the implementation of strict financial procedures, clear lines of management and staff supervision and appraisals. A yearly review of the risk analysis is carried out by senior management and the Board.

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Release takes decisions through regular meetings as follows:

- Quarterly board meetings - Executive Director/Head of Legal in attendance
- Annual General Meeting – Executive director/Head of Legal in attendance
- Ad hoc meetings with board members and executive director
- Monthly team meetings - all staff
- Monthly team meetings - drugs team
- Monthly team meetings - legal team
- Weekly meetings Executive Director - Head of Legal Services
- Weekly meetings Executive Director - Finance/Operations
- Weekly meetings Executive Director - Head of Drugs Services
- Weekly meetings with staff and volunteers

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**APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES**

The Memorandum and Articles of Association requires that there be at least three trustees. Every trustee is appointed for a term of five years by a resolution of the trustees passed at a special meeting. In selecting a new trustee, the trustees take into account the benefits of appointing a person who is able, by virtue of his or her personal or professional qualifications, to make a contribution to the pursuit of the objects or management of the charity.

New trustees are expected to spend an induction day at the Release offices meeting with the Executive Director and other key staff, as well as attending one of the outreach programmes. The induction process also includes familiarisation with the organisation's work and history.

Trustees are also expected to attend organisational strategy meetings as required, as well as the scheduled quarterly board meetings - one to include the AGM.

Trustees are expected where possible to attend Release events and become involved with additional project work relevant to a trustee's skills/choice.

**FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

At any time it is important to ensure that diverse streams of income are identified, this something which is even more critical in light of the current economic climate. Release has been successful in stabilising income streams over the past few years, however, as already stated, much of this is project or restricted funding. In the next 12 months Release will be doing more to identify and apply for core funding, and we believe that as our reputation for new, exciting and impactful streams of work is cemented we will be more likely to secure this type of funding.

**RESULTS**

Net incoming resources of the company for the year were £22,785 (2014 – net outgoing resources £17,883) details of which are given in the financial statements below.

Free reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 amounted to £86,256 (2014 - £63,731).

Further details of funding sources and expenditure incurred to achieve the charity's key objectives are disclosed hereunder and in the notes to the financial statements

**PUBLIC BENEFIT**

The Board of Directors are satisfied that in setting the objectives and planning the activities of Release these are fully compatible with the purposes of the charity and are fully compliant with the Charities Act 2011 public benefit requirement.

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## ACTIVITIES AND REVIEW OF THE YEAR

**The company operated satisfactorily during the year to 31 March 2015.**

Release's financial position in 2014/15 continued to stabilise with the organisation demonstrating a small surplus year on year. Through stringent fiscal management and by diversifying and underpinning its service provision the organisation is enhancing its presence and attracting new donors and funders. However, we know we can do more and whilst much of the successful fundraising to date has been for specific projects our short to medium term plan is to focus more on securing core funding. This will be a significant factor in strengthening the organisation more in the coming years.

The principal aims of the company are to provide free and confidential legal, educational and welfare advice and information to any person, body, organisation or company in the areas of drug use, civil liberties, human rights and the criminal law.

## OUR WORK

### 1. ADVICE & REPRESENTATION SERVICES

#### LEGAL SERVICE

In July 2014/15 Release continued with delivery of the Lottery funded pilot programme, starting surgeries in the London boroughs of Lewisham, Newham and Wandsworth. Additionally, the successes of the service in Ealing were recognised by the host treatment provider who funded the surgery beyond the initial pilot period. Unfortunately, due to cuts in drug-treatment budgets, the service in Islington was only able to continue for a short period and Barking & Dagenham could not secure funding. Whilst this is disappointing, both service managers advised that they had only positive comments to make about the service and if they were able to fund it in future they would be happy for the service to return. The Head of Legal Services has regularly kept in touch with the services in relation to this and we hope that we can return to these boroughs at a later date.

Last year we assisted nearly 1,700 clients through the legal surgery programme. Within the programme overall, 24% accessed the service for welfare benefits matters (including representation at tribunals); 18% for housing advice and assistance (including disrepair and other disputes with landlords); 19% for matters related to homelessness (including initial applications and reviews of decisions); 30% for debt matters; 7% for family law matters; 1% for criminal legal advice and 8% for other legal issues (including complaints against the police and criminal injuries claims). Most service users present more than two issues.

The demand for assistance with appeals against welfare benefit decisions continued throughout this year and the numbers assisted increased yet again. The team attended to provide representation at 27 first-tier social security tribunals in the last 12 months. Whilst this represents a decrease from the previous year, this is demonstrating the knock-on effect of a new appeal process rather than a reduction in need. From the end of 2013, people wishing to appeal a decision that they were not entitled to a sickness benefit such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Disability Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) could no longer go straight to the tribunal. Instead, they must

now apply to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for a mandatory reconsideration of the decision. By adding another stage the whole process is delayed, so the cases do not reach even the appeal stage until much later, let alone have a hearing date.

There is no set timeframe for decisions to be reconsidered, and no process to prioritise a case, so we have experienced waits as long as 12 weeks before a client's case has been reconsidered and can then proceed. During an ESA appeal for example, claimants are entitled to an appeal rate of the benefit, however this does not apply during mandatory reconsideration. Therefore additional assistance has been provided to clients in this situation to enable them to temporarily apply for alternative benefits and other emergency funding from local authorities. Unfortunately this has coincided with a general reduction in local funding for these schemes, although as each are locally administered not all clients will receive equal treatment and assistance, and so a greater level of work is required to obtain support.

Overall, this has led to a greater number of clients needing longer term and additional assistance from the legal team, combined with increasing demand for the service, breadth and complexity of caseload.

#### **EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE**

The Expert Witness Service continues to expand and is an important source of income for the organisation. The reputation of the Expert Witness team, led by Gary Sutton Head of Drugs Services, is strong and they provide objective and up-to-date information in cases involving; supply of drugs; cultivation/production of cannabis; the use of adulterants and proceeds of crime.

#### **DRUGS ADVICE SERVICE**

Release launched a counselling service in 2012/13, which continues to be funded at its location in a GP practice in West London. The Head of Drugs at Release, who is a qualified counsellor, continues to deliver this service throughout 2014/15. The counselling delivered is aimed at patients of GPs who are not ready to enter structured treatment programmes. This is another source of funding and ensures that the organisation diversifies in terms of income generation.

#### **NATIONAL LEGAL AND DRUGS HELPLINE**

The helpline is still the only element of Release's work that is unfunded. However, we believe that this service goes to the core of what Release does: providing quality expert and legal advice to the public for free, and enables us to keep up to date with what is happening regarding people who use drugs. In 2013/14 we received 5,376 enquiries via our helpline and email enquiries. During 2014/15 this has increased by 11% to 5,980 enquiries.

Throughout 2014 we continued to trial an out of hour's service through the holiday periods and whilst continuing to receive a few calls we did not have the level of engagement that exists during the working week. Also, all of the calls were of a legal nature and none were urgent. This is one reason we are not pursuing the expansion of the helpline hours in the same manner that we were. It is something we would like to implement in the future but we acknowledge that this would take up a reasonable amount of staff resources and, as stated previously, we think this is only possible with funding for the advice services provided through the helpline and online. The issue of resources is particularly pertinent for the Head of Legal and the Head of Drugs who currently are focussed on other priorities.

It is also worth noting that people tend to use the internet to source information and the Release website has certainly been accessed by significant numbers in relation to information provision. For example, nine of the top ten most popular pages of the website relate to legal information and have all seen a significant increase in traffic in the last 12 months. The top page is the [list of controlled substances](#) which has seen a 136% increase in traffic from 39,812 visitors in 2013/14 to 94,286 this year. This is a similar pattern across all the advice pages with '[what happens at court](#)', the 7<sup>th</sup> most popular page, seeing traffic increase by 385% from 8,650 to 41,994 visitors. It is our view that for the moment the website is sufficient to fill the information provision for 'out of hours' purposes. In fact, the increased numbers to the helpline and email enquiries is certainly partly as a result of the increased website traffic. To ensure that we are getting feedback from this form of engagement we will be introducing 'rate this page' software in 2015/16.

In the medium term (unless the funding situation changes) we will not be considering extending the helpline delivery.

### **WHERE WE ARE AT NOW**

One of the highlights of 2014/15 was being recognised as a 'Centre of Excellence' by the London Legal Support Trust; this was achieved after a thorough external audit of our legal services and was accompanied by a core grant of £10,000.00 for the organisation. It is expected that we will achieve a Community Legal Services kite mark by the end of 2015. This success has been largely achieved through the dedication, professionalism and compassion demonstrated by the legal team.

The delivery of legal and welfare outreach services based at drug treatment programmes across London is one of Release's main service activities. As highlighted in last year's report, the funding from the Big Lottery Community Development Fund has been instrumental in assisting in the development of the programme, with a four-year grant to deliver 12 pilot programmes. The first 3 of these pilots were delivered in 2013/14 and we secured funding to continue delivery of two of them in 2014/15. A further three pilots were launched in July in 2014/15 in Lewisham, Wandsworth and Newham, and we are pleased to confirm that again two areas – Lewisham and Newham – have confirmed that they wish to commission our legal services for 2015/16. In early 2015 we also secured a generous grant to deliver a project that enhances the rights of people who sex work, and in collaboration with Open Doors Sex Work Project we launched three new legal surgeries aimed specifically at this group. This brings the total number of legal surgeries in the London area to 15 specialist sites seeing approximately 2,000 clients a year.

In the current funding environment, where budgets for drug treatment are no longer ring-fenced, it is extremely important that Release demonstrates the impact of its work in terms of public health outcomes. Our Head of Legal Services produced a document last year highlighting how improvement in housing issues, increased income, and the resolution of legal services can contribute to and improve public health outcomes. This year our Head of Finance is due to publish a community investment analysis, a report funded by Kensington and Chelsea's Public Health Board. It is due to be released in November 2015 but the initial analysis shows that for every £1 spent on legal services results in savings of £11.00 to both local Government and the State. We are of the view that this piece of work – along

with the high quality of service delivered by the legal team -- will be incredibly persuasive to funders, both statutory and non-statutory. However, we are very aware that the funding environment is likely to become even more challenging in the next 5 years.

We continue to explore funding streams to develop a virtual legal service which would allow Release to deliver this unique and highly regarded stream of work outside of London.

As highlighted in last year's report the updating of legal publications and the development of new tools of support were something we were very keen to do. We are pleased to say that the Pilgrim Trust-funded sex workers project includes an update of 'Sex Workers and the Law' which we are developing in collaboration with a number of sex worker-led organisations including the English Collective of Prostitutes and our partners at Open Doors. This is due for launch in Spring 2016 and will be accompanied by a sex worker's rights card.

We are also very grateful to the Legal Education Foundation who have provided a significant grant to develop a guide to assist people who have to represent themselves at Court for possession of drugs (legal aid is rarely available in these matters). The guide will be available in a booklet format and will be available in an app which will allow people to navigate the procedure by answering simple questions on their case and circumstances. The aim of this project is to help people feel that they have some ability to negotiate the process including trying to get the matter reconsidered for a lesser penalty by the prosecution or the Courts. This project is due to launch in mid-2016.

## 2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT (Y-STOP)

This stop and search project that we began in 2013 has expanded significantly over the last 12 months, with a number of tools and resources being developed over this period. Following an eight month consultation involving over 80 young people across London on their experiences of stop and search and how they could be improved, Release has led an extremely collaborative project that aimed to address their needs through tools and training, equipping them with skills to deal with difficult police interactions.



Travel wallet & Search card  
with YSTOP principles –

The young consultees have been involved at all stages of this project, including coming up with the name, design, content and presentation. Since the consultation we have continued to provide opportunities for a number of them to take on additional roles such as peer trainers, supporting on web and app development, and media, public speaking and communications activities to develop their professional skills.

Since 'Y-STOP' launched in June 2014 we have produced a travel wallet that contains the main principles for dealing with a stop and search; a S.E.A.R.C.H. acronym which stands for: Stay calm; Eye contact; Ask questions; Record/Receipt; Confidence; Hold to account; with a more detailed '[Search Card](#)' inserted into this. Additionally, we have produced a [legal manual](#) for practitioners detailing the law around stop and search including case studies; educational resources for teachers comprising two lesson plans that cover [police](#)

[community relations, stop and search law](#) and the [human impact of the police practice](#); a more informal [session plan](#) for youth workers and a training manual for peer trainers. In September 2014 we launched a dedicated Y-Stop [website](#) which also features [stories](#) from young people who have been stopped and searched, creating a space for experiences to be shared and impact on the individual to be recognised.

In January 2015 we shot the Y-Stop film, launched as a short [two-part film](#) on Youtube in March following three young people experiencing stop and search. The films were hugely successful, reaching 20,000 views in the first week. In addition to their success on social media, the films are used as a training resource in both our own Y-Stop training programme and have been employed in workshops and academic courses run by other organisations.

We had a fantastic cast including: Percelle Ascott from Youngers and the BBC's *Mandem on the Wall*, Ricky Groves from *Eastenders*, and Nick Nevern who has starred in *The Sweeney*, and *Hooligan Factory*.



On the film set with UK Fully Focussed and the cast of YSTOP

The Y-Stop training programme has been extremely successful this year. Based on the 6 S.E.A.R.C.H. principles, the peer training sessions have been constantly evolving as Y-Stop expands its range of tools available for young people. Methods such as group work, film screenings and discussion, role play exercises and reflection are employed in our sessions delivered to a broad age range of 11-25 year olds and the training centres on participants' own experiences with the police. The peer training has reached over 600 young people so far in a range of settings including youth clubs, schools, universities, pupil referral units and supported housing provisions across England and Wales. In addition, 50 young people have received our train the trainer sessions in London, Cardiff, Bristol and Northampton, enabling them to deliver peer training in their own communities and helping Y-Stop reach a wider audience.

Our debrief sessions during training received very positive feedback, with 80% of students being able to recall all of S.E.A.R.C.H. principles from memory and 95% stating they would share these principles with friends and family. In assessing participants' learning, we can demonstrate that they learn new

information to help them steer their interactions with police to a smoother and faster conclusion, with tips such as how to safely record the police, observe a stop and search of a stranger, not giving their personal details to the police, and asking for an officer of the same sex to conduct the search being practical tips they were excited to take away with them. Participants have commented that they particularly like the behavioural focus of the training as opposed to a traditional ‘know your rights’ approach as they find it easier to apply in a highly stressful situation and also find it useful advice for a range of confrontational interactions beyond stop and search.

This year has also seen the Y-Stop project engage specifically with the Somali community, in recognition of challenging relations with the police and the impact of the khat ban in 2014 on the community. We have been consulting widely in London, Bristol and Cardiff with Somali parents, youth and community workers to understand the problems they face and the type of support needed. The outcomes of these discussions will be distinct resources produced in Somali; a parents’ guide to stop and search and a pocket Search Card for young people, as well as a series of advice sessions delivered in these cities in collaboration with local lawyers.

This period has also seen us develop a Y-Stop app in collaboration with the team that has produced the New York Civil Liberties Union ‘Stop & Frisk’ app. The app, developed for iOS and Android, aims to support young people to record videos of, and report, their police interactions, having their submissions be looked over by experts who can provide advice. The app will also allow users to complain directly to the police if they wish, with a copy of the complaint sent to Release for third party oversight.

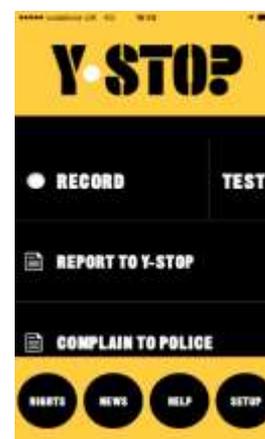
### WHERE WE ARE NOW

The Y-Stop films, since launching at the end of March 2015, have been viewed nearly 100,000 times on YouTube in addition to training and events.

In August 2015 we launched the Y-Stop app at Notting Hill Carnival, handing out Y-Stop merchandise with QR codes so it could be downloaded immediately. In its first two months the app generated significant media coverage and had been downloaded almost 4000 times.

In terms of hard copies distributed, our pocket materials have been extremely popular with over 30,000 search cards dispersed and 10,000 travel wallets. As usual all our publications are free and we just ask people to cover the postage. We are delighted with the Y-STOP project and believe the high quality and engaging materials are a result of a detailed consultation process in the preceding year and continued involvement of young people.

Screenshot of YSTOP app



### **3. INTERNATIONAL MEDIA PLATFORM (TALKINGDRUGS)**

TalkingDrugs – Release’s international platform – grew considerably in strength during 2014/15, with audience numbers increasing 25% to around 500,000 visitors from across the globe in the year. This is partly a result of the redesign of the website undertaken by the new project coordinator, a refocusing of content and editorial style to become more engaging, and increased online activity through the project’s social media channels.

The website aims to engage the public on issues related to drugs, policy and harm reduction, with stories covering developments and trends in these issues around the world. New content is uploaded regularly and can be accessed in 10 languages, with the main traffic coming from English, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Thai platforms, the latter in particular seeing an enormous increase in engagement of 500% compared to the previous 12-month period. The decision to decrease the number of languages TalkingDrugs content can be read in has been made with a view to ensuring the project delivers exciting and dynamic content across as many of its platforms as possible. The success of this refocusing can be seen in increased audience numbers.

Most importantly, TalkingDrugs serves as a key platform for highlighting the valuable work of partner organisations around the world and elevating the voices of those most impacted by drug laws. With regards to the former, TalkingDrugs successfully highlighted on separate occasions open letters from civil society to UNAIDS, the Global Fund, and the Indonesian president condemning the death penalty, as well as being the first to report on new harm reduction initiatives in Kenya, and key global campaign launches. Additionally, there has been a strong drive to increase the number of stories from those adversely affected by drug laws, especially those who use certain drugs like heroin, crack and methamphetamine. These stories are extremely important in challenging stigma and the public’s perception of people who use drugs, which in our view is one of the drivers that preserve the status quo.

TalkingDrugs also served as a key campaign tool for partner organisations, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Volunteers are a very important aspect of TalkingDrugs and without their support this project would not be as successful as it is. Volunteers are based both at the office and around the world, and come from a range of backgrounds including those in education, people who have experience of problematic drug use, and those working in the drugs field. It is the commitment of these people that has really enhanced the project over the last few years.

In the coming months, a significant focus of the TalkingDrugs project will be the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs set to take place in April 2016. The project coordinator will be heavily involved in working with partner organisations around the world to develop communications and campaigning strategies in the lead up to the UNGASS, and TalkingDrugs will launch its own video project that will provide the public with an opportunity to get involved in the debate and call on their governments to push for drug policy reform. Talks have begun with Virgin about bringing in new voices for this project, in particular high-profile individuals who can help increase the reach and impact of the movement.

## FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMMES

Release has now run a number of fellowship programmes in conjunction with the Global Drug Policy Program at OSF. The fellowships are aimed at advocates working in related fields to drug policy such as penal reform or human rights. To date we have hosted five two-week long fellowships with attendees from Latin America and the West and East African region. Fellows attend the course in London and meet with colleagues from Harm Reduction International, Transform and the International Drug Policy Consortium, as well as meeting advocates, academics and policymakers. The programme has been hugely successful with many fellows returning to their own country's to implement campaigns to reform drug policing or laws, or to improve access to harm reduction services. Release staff provide six months' worth of support following the fellowship to attendees in relation to their national work.

## 4. CAMPAIGNING

Release took the lead on organising a number of actions on the 26 June 2014 in the UK to coincide with the United Nations International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The actions highlighted the [IDPC](#) campaign 'Support. Don't Punish' a global campaign



supported by drug policy and harm reduction organisations across the globe – more than 100 cities supported the action. In order to gain significant press coverage Release organised a letter to the Prime Minister signed by over 80 high profile organisations and individuals calling for the end of criminal sanctions for drug possession offences and urging that the UK engage meaningfully in the process leading to the United Nations General Assembly Special Assembly ('UNGASS') on Drugs in April 2016. The letter was signed by organisations from a range of fields including NGOs like Reprieve, through to the Prison Governors Association and the National Black Police Association. Individuals who signed included MPs, Peers and personalities such as Richard Branson and Sting. The letter attracted a significant amount of media attention as detailed below.

As well as the letter we also organised a demonstration outside Parliament highlighting the fact that in 2002 David Cameron supported drug policy reform when not in Government, but now as Prime Minister he had distanced himself from that stance. We were delighted that a number of TV crews attended the demonstration and interviewed key staff about the event and the global day of action.

As well as securing significant media coverage on the day of action, the letter was also endorsed by the then Deputy Prime Minister on LBC radio and the signatories to the letter resulted in a number of new

voices to the debate. In particular, the Black Police Association has since been very vocal about the failure of the drug laws in the UK.

TalkingDrugs served a vital tool to help elevate the campaign online by providing people with the function to tweet the campaign messaging directly to Theresa May, David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Yvette Cooper on June 26. This page was accessed by nearly 2,000 people on the day.

#### NEWSPAPERS:

- [“Decriminalise drug possession, campaigners tell David Cameron”](#) – The Guardian
- [“Russell Brand Among 90 Celebrities And Politicians Calling For UK Drug Law Reform On Day Of Global Action”](#) – The Huffington Post (Made Front Page on Website)
- [“Russell Brand and Richard Branson write letter to David Cameron calling for drug possession to be legalised”](#) – The Independent
- [“Celebrities sign letter calling for drug law change”](#) – BBC News UK
- [“Richard Branson: ‘War’ has failed — we need a new drugs strategy”](#) – London Evening Standard
- [“Cameron told to honour his drug reform past”](#) – Politics.co.uk
- [“Drug laws shake-up call to Cameron”](#) – The Courier UK
- [“Celebrities And Politicians Press Cameron For Drug Law Reforms”](#) – Law on the Web
- [“Celebrities sign letter calling for drug law change”](#) – ngr Guardian News
- [“Pussy Riot Lead Day Of Global Action In Call To End The War On Drugs \(PICTURES\)”](#) – Huffington Post UK
- [“Russell Brand - Stars Demand Change To U.K Drug Policies”](#) – Contact Music
- [“Stars demand change to drug policies”](#) - Express
- [“Should drug possession be legalised?”](#) – Telegraph
- [“Drug laws shake-up call to Cameron”](#) – Belfast Telegraph
- [“Celebrities slam failed war on drugs in letter to David Cameron”](#) – City A.M.
- [“Decriminalise drug possession, campaigners tell David Cameron”](#) - Guardian
- [“Russell Brand, Richard Branson and Sting call for drug possession to be decriminalised”](#) – The Mirror
- [“Russell Brand and Sting call for drug law reform on global day of action”](#) – Digital Spy
- [“Poll: Legalise Drug Possession?”](#) – Independent
- [“Jail chiefs and police back stars' call to legalise drugs: Russell Brand and Sir Richard Branson among signatories of letter urging Cameron to change law”](#) – Daily Mail
- [“Sting joins Branson and Brand in plea to decriminalise drugs”](#) – The Yorkshire Post
- [“London: City of Protest”](#) – Viral Global News
- [“Russell Brand calls Fox News ‘a fanatical terrorist propagandist organisation’ after charged Iraq rant”](#) - Independent

#### INTERNATIONAL PRESS:

- [“Famosos piden la despenalización de la posesión de drogas”](#) - [Diario de Mallorca](#)
- [“Decenas de personalidades piden a Cameron que regule la posesión de](#)

- [drogas](#) - EL PAÍS Internacional
- ["Worldwide Protests Erupt Over the Racist, Devastating, Failed War on Drugs"](#) – San Diego Press
- ["Celebrities push for enlightened drug reform"](#) – Cayman News Service
- ["Cities Worldwide Protest the War on Drugs"](#) – World Policy Blog
- ["Stars demand change to U.K. drug policies"](#) – Hollywood.com
- ["Know your weed by smell: UK police want public to sniff out cannabis farms"](#) – RT
- ["Sir Richard Branson, Russell Brand, Sting want drug laws changed"](#) – News.com.au

## RADIO:

- ["Call Clegg"](#) – on LBC Radio
- ["Good Morning Scotland"](#) – BBC Scotland
- [BBC Radio Cumbria](#)
- [BBC Cambridge](#)

## T.V:

- [BBC World News](#)
- [London Live Breakfast](#)
- BBC 24 hour news (not available online)

One of the highlights of the Parliamentary calendar in the last year was the drugs debate organized by Caroline Lucas MP. [TalkingDrugs](#), our international online media site, took a leading role in the communications around the debate. Working with Transform, Virgin and Caroline Lucas' office [we developed a film](#) to encourage people to contact their MPs encouraging them to attend the debate. The film featured Anne Marie Cockburn, mother of Martha who died at 15 of an MDMA overdose, Richard Branson and Caroline Lucas. We then hosted the video on TalkingDrugs and introduced a tool to allow people to email their MPs directly from the website asking them to attend the debate on the 30 October - over 2000 emails were sent.

The morning of the debate saw a briefing with MPs where presentations were made by Release's Executive Director and Transform's Head of External Affairs. On the same day the Home Office released a study that had been initiated by the Liberal Democrats and has seen Ministers and officials travel to over eleven countries to assess their drug policies. The countries ranged from Japan and Sweden, both of whom take a more draconian prohibitionist approach to drug use, through to Portugal, Uruguay and US state of Colorado who are at the forefront of reform. The report had no conclusions but did state that the toughness or otherwise of the laws seemed to have very little impact on prevalence rates. This resulted in a significant amount of media which provided an opportunity to highlight the findings of the report and the debate. Release staff provided comment and interviews for the following:

Sky News Tonight  
London Live Breakfast  
Channel 5  
ITV Lunch Time

BBC London Radio  
BBC Wales Radio  
Independent  
Newsweek

Advocating for harm reduction initiatives was also a focus of our work in the last 12 months. This was largely done through our membership of the Harm Reduction Group (members include the National AIDs Trust, the Hep C Trust, the Substance Misuse Management in General Practice, Harm Reduction

International & others). One of our aims this year was to influence Public Health England (PHE) to change its language around drug treatment to include references to harm reduction, and we have had some success in this area with PHE committing to involving the group in developing language in the future. This commitment was made by the Director of Public Health, Duncan Selbie, at a meeting attended by Release's Executive Director and three other members of the Harm Reduction Group.

Release is also an active member of the Naloxone Action Group which aims to ensure that Naloxone (a drug that can reverse a heroin overdose) is available to those who need it, including active drug users; those in treatment including opioid substitution therapy ('OST'); hostel workers; families and friends.. However, the availability of the drug is limited with some health areas (of which there are 150) not providing this lifesaving medication mainly on the grounds of cost (although the cost is £14 per injection and a dose lasts 2 – 3 years if not used). Release took the lead on identifying which areas are not providing Naloxone by sending out Freedom of Information requests to all 150 health areas. Through that process we identified that 72 areas were not providing Naloxone. In order to challenge this Release presented at the national drug users' conference on the issue and explained how we would like to take a legal action against an area for failure to provide the drug. We are currently working with a number of drug user activist groups to identify a potential case, however the coverage of our presentation in [the media](#) has led to a number of areas rolling Naloxone out to its clients. In addition to this, we used TalkingDrugs as a vehicle to engage people on the issue again providing the tools allowing people to write to their MPs to support a motion in Parliament around the scaling up of Naloxone nationally.

Release briefed both the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party in the lead up to the General Election. Release was asked to present on drug policy and policing to Labour's Shadow Minister for Justice to help inform their manifesto.

## 5. RESEARCH AND POLICY

We had hoped to launch our report looking into the socio economic status of people caught in possession of drugs. Based on data we had obtained in 2011 (2009/10 data) from the Metropolitan Police Service ('MPS'), which showed the occupation and penalty for those caught in possession of a controlled drug, we found that 93% were from the lowest four socio-economic groups whilst 7% are from the higher status groups. Analysis into penalty-type demonstrated that those from the highest social class were three times more likely to receive a caution compared to those who were unemployed for the possession of drugs. This propensity for the lower socio-economic groups to receive harsher sanctions is despite the fact they are more likely to be in possession of cannabis, whilst those in the highest social class are more likely to be in possession of Class A substances, in particular cocaine. The data was presented at the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP) in Rome in May 2014 and was reported by Vice Magazine ([https://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/class-drugs-release](https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/class-drugs-release)) in June 2014.

However, the policy team at Release felt that the paper would be stronger if we were able to analyse and compare more recent data. As such we resubmitted the original Freedom of Information ('FOI') request but altered the date range. The MPS refused our request on the grounds that providing the demographics of those stop and searched would undermine the police's ability to investigate street

possession of drugs. We have submitted an appeal which the MPS are currently considering but the whole process has taken ten months, hence the delay. Once the data is obtained – we are confident our appeal grounds are strong – then we will work fast to produce the socio-economic paper. In addition, we will be able to provide an update on drugs policing in the capital including the racial disparity that exists in stop and search for drugs and the penalties people receive for possession – our [original report](#) into this issue found black people received more severe penalties than white people. The MPS data is particularly important; whilst the overall number of stop and searches has fallen significantly in London the percentage of searches for drugs has increased from approximately 50% in 2010 to over 60% in 2014/15.

We are about to launch the updated version of our paper on decriminalisation, which will revisit the countries highlighted in our 2012 report providing new evidence of the positive outcomes related to those jurisdictions that have implemented an effective non-criminal justice model. A number of new countries will be added to the review including Switzerland, Jamaica and Costa Rica. We expect to launch in Spring 2016. It is worth noting that the 2012 report was cited in a WHO report in summer 2014 which called for the decriminalisation of drug possession and use offences globally and more recently in the submission from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in advance of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs.

More broadly Release staff have been active in engaging policymakers both in Government, the opposition party and official bodies appointed by Government. Release, in partnership with [StopWatch](#), was heavily involved in the Home Secretary's review into the use of stop and search and working with the Liberal Democrats we secured a review of the use of strip search as part of stop and search. The review was undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary ('HMIC') and Release's work in this area has continued over the last 12 months. We were invited to be on the external review panel for the HMIC's inspection into the use of stop and search which considered the use of strip search and also traffic stops – the use of these powers are driven mainly by drugs legislation. This work was carried out between July 2014 and March 2015 resulting in a damning report from the HMIC about the failure of police forces to properly implement their earlier 2013 recommendations and highlighting the serious and inadequate safeguarding around the use of strip search as part of stop and search. Release has been asked by the HMIC to continue to act as an observer for the external group. A new legitimacy review is scheduled to take place in September 2015 which will focus on stop and search and we are pushing for drug legislation to be at the centre of any analysis of the use of this power. Release are now perceived as one of the leading NGOs working in the use of the power, especially because of the research we produced in collaboration with the London School of Economics and Political Science ('LSE') and our youth stream of work – Y-STOP - that focuses on empowering young people to understand their rights on stop and search, how to implement those rights safely and how to complain if unhappy.

Release staff responded to a number of Government consultations and proposed legislation including:

- [The Criminal Justice & Courts Bill 2013](#)
- [Review of Drug Treatment Guidelines \('Orange Guidelines'\)](#)
- [Code A PACE Codes of Practice Consultation](#)
- [Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights](#)

Finally, one of the focuses of our work at the moment is the Psychoactive Substances Bill, which proposes to ban all psychoactive substances (food and alcohol have to be exempted) and has moved through Parliament at a startling speed having only received its first reading at the Lords on 28 May 2015. It has now completed its legislative passage through the Lords and has had both its 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> readings at the Commons; it is now at Committee Stage. To date our concern is that this is a badly drafted, unworkable piece of legislation which when adopted by other countries has not impacted on prevalence but rather increased the harms of these substances. Release has submitted several briefings, in conjunction with Transform Drug Policy Foundation, and has submitted amendments to the proposed legislation.

Release has met with Baroness Meacher, who chairs the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform, and Baroness Hamwee, the Home Affairs Spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, and Lord Brian Paddick (Lib Dem) and worked with this group of peers to lay [amendments](#) in relation to the Bill.

Release has also been asked to participate in a new expert panel set up by the Liberal Democrats to look into cannabis policy in the UK. We have also been approached by a number of police forces about possible research opportunities around the policing of cannabis. This work will be carried out in conjunction with LSE.

## 6. ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

Release staff continue to promote the work of the organisation and raise issues related to drug policy, in the media and through attending conferences. In the last 12 months, as well as the media links provided above and below, Release has been invited for media comment on:

- Radio 4 – Today
- ITN Lunchtime news
- Sky news
- BBC Lunchtime news
- Radio 4 – World at One
- BBC News 24
- Radio 5
- Voice of Russia
- Channel 5
- Various local radio stations

In terms of UK conferences and events, Release staff have presented at the Home Affairs Select Committee Conference, the Royal United Services Institute ('RUSI'), Chatham House (several times), the London School of Economics and Political Science, Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol and Drugs, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Children's Enquiry into children and the police, the Royal College of GPs conference, European Parliament Information Office conference, Health Poverty Action Conference, a conference organised by the Chief Constable of Durham, International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy (Essex University), the Drink and Drugs News conference, and at Sands Cymru's conference in Swansea. Our Youth Coordinator for Release who leads on Y-STOP has presented at over a dozen community events including The R Word, youth arts event as part of "End Racism This Generation", Sadler's Wells and the Spark social justice festival, East London.

The Executive Director was again asked to present to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs on

the social harms created by the UK's current drug policy. This is a stream of work that the ACMD is pursuing and it is expected a report will be published, with Release feeding into the process. The Head of Drugs Services is on the drug treatment in closed environments (prisons) specialist group as part of the Royal College of GPs review into this area.

Release staff have also presented internationally on the organisation's work and engaged in public debates on drug policy reform. This includes panel discussions on communications strategy and disproportionate drug law policing in the UK at a Youth and Justice Forum in Istanbul last year, along with participating in the European Research Area Network on Illicit Drugs (ERANID) meeting in Lisbon about research priorities. Other conferences we have participated in include the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna; a Sex Workers symposium, Paris; an UNGASS strategy meeting in New York; and a panel at the ISSDP conference in Rome. The Executive Director was also asked to teach on the Central European University's Summer School in Budapest on their Drug Policy and Human Rights Course. All of the international participation is funded by those hosting the events.

Outside of its presence at conferences and public forums, Release is actively involved in developing a global communications strategy with partner organisations across the world for the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in April 2016.

Release continues to pursue a collaborative approach and have worked again this year with the Global Commission on Drug Policy on their next report on access to essential medicines which was launched October 2015.

Once again we are delighted at the performance of the Release website both in terms of numbers and engagement. The overall number of visitors has increased by 29% from 503,290 visitors in the period April 2013 – March 2014 to 648,820 visitors for the same period this year. Our view is one contributing factor to this increase is that the Release website has been fully configured to enhance the user's experience specifically for portable devices, such as tablets and mobile smart phones. The continued development of this functionality and navigation has resulted in a marked increase of portable devices accessing the website, and now accounts for nearly 50% of all website traffic.

In terms of social media, the number of Facebook followers has increased from 4550 to 10,963, a significant increase and evidence of more effective engagement with our social media audience. The number of Release Twitter followers has increased from 8500 to 12,770 followers in the last year.

Release also runs other accounts on Twitter including the TalkingDrugs project (our international project) which has just over 9,600 followers (up from 6000 in the last 12 months) and the Executive Director's account which has over 3,300 followers.

Unsurprisingly, as the profile of the organisation grows this puts greater pressure on the resources of the organisation with an increase in the number of people seeking advice, an increase in media enquiries and an increase in requests to participate in events. As such we have to become more selective in terms of whom we respond to in relation to media calls and what events we participate in.

That being said, the level of media and political engagement in the last 12 months has continued to be positive as demonstrated by the information provided above. Added to this, Release staff are increasingly being sought to participate in high level research/policy discussions as evidenced by our involvement in the ACMD social harms group, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's Stop and Search External Reference Group, the College of Policing's Stop and Search group and the ERANID project.

Finally, our relationship with funders continues to be effective and we are pleased that Release has become a relatively stable financial organisation. We continue to have good relations with local providers and those who fund us currently. This year we received a large three-year grant from the Pilgrim Trust, this type of project funding helps the organisation focus on securing (relatively) long term core funding.

## **7. TRAINING**

Release continued to provide specialist training courses on a variety of themes relating to drugs, the law and human rights. Please see our section on our Stop and Search work for more information on the training programme we are delivering under the Y.STOP project.

We are very grateful for the support given to us by our various funders, including charitable bodies, statutory agencies and individual and corporate supporters who recognise the importance of the work of Release and enable us to provide the services and activities described in this report.

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## THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the charity during the period were as follows:

Dr Christine Ford  
Roger Golland  
James Hardy (Treasurer)  
Edward Henry  
Ronald Hooberman (Chairman)  
Andrew MacDonald  
Amber Marks  
David Rowntree  
Viveen Taylor

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Trustees Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the charitable company's auditors in connection with preparing their report) of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware, and
- the trustees have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charitable company's auditors are aware of that information.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the board on 07 December 2015 and signed on their behalf by:

Ronald Hooberman  
Chairman of Trustees

## **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD**

### **RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### **BASIS OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT**

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

### **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT**

In our opinion the financial statements:

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Acthave not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Paul Brown, BComm.  
Certified Public Accountant (CPAA)  
Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd  
21 Garland Court  
1 Premiere Place  
London E14 8SA  
Date: 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES**

(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

		Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2015	Total Funds 2014
	Note	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
Incoming resources from generating funds:					
Voluntary income	2	77,608	371,787	449,395	255,767
Activities for generating funds	3	118,204	131,019	249,223	255,529
Investment income	4	126	-	126	71
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>		<b><u>195,938</u></b>	<b><u>502,806</u></b>	<b><u>698,744</u></b>	<b><u>511,367</u></b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
Costs of generating funds:					
Costs of generating voluntary income	5	(4,972)	(4,458)	(9,430)	(3,917)
Fundraising costs	6	(5,769)	-	(5,769)	(5,666)
Charitable activities	7	(149,422)	(499,707)	(649,129)	(504,796)
Governance costs	9	(11,631)	-	(11,631)	(14,871)
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		<b><u>(171,794)</u></b>	<b><u>(504,165)</u></b>	<b><u>(675,959)</u></b>	<b><u>(529,250)</u></b>
<b>NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR/NET EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR</b>					
		24,144	(1,359)	22,785	(17,883)
Transfers between funds		-	1,619	-	-
<b>Net movement in the year</b>		<b><u>22,525</u></b>	<b><u>260</u></b>	<b><u>22,785</u></b>	<b><u>(17,883)</u></b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
Total funds brought forward		63,731	20,417	84,148	102,031
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b><u><u>86,256</u></u></b>	<b><u><u>20,677</u></u></b>	<b><u><u>106,933</u></u></b>	<b><u><u>84,148</u></u></b>

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses in the year and therefore a statement of total recognised gains and losses has not been prepared.

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

**BALANCE SHEET**

			<b>2015</b>		<b>2014</b>
		£	£	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>Note</b>				
Tangible assets	<b>13</b>		5,218		6,321
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	<b>14</b>	44,266		61,040	
Cash at bank		81,784		51,260	
		<u>126,050</u>		<u>112,300</u>	
<b>CREDITORS: Amounts falling due</b>					
within one year	<b>15</b>	<u>(24,335)</u>		<u>(34,473)</u>	
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>			101,715		77,827
<b>NET ASSETS</b>			<u><u>106,933</u></u>		<u><u>84,148</u></u>
<b>FUNDS</b>					
Restricted income funds	<b>18</b>		20,677		20,417
Unrestricted income funds	<b>19</b>		86,256		63,731
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>			<u><u>106,933</u></u>		<u><u>84,148</u></u>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 07 December 2015 and signed on their behalf by:

James Hardy

Trustee

Company Registration Number: 1966619

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## 1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

### **Basis of Accounting**

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008), the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in March 2005 (SORP 2005) and the Companies Act 2006.

### **Cash flow statement**

The trustees have taken advantage of the exemption in Financial Reporting Standard No 1 (revised) from including a cash flow statement in the financial statements on the grounds that the charity is small.

### **Capital grants**

These are credited to restricted funds. Depreciation of fixed assets purchased with the capital grants is then charged to these funds.

### **Incoming resources**

Incoming resources represents the total income receivable during the year which is recognised on the accruals basis of accounting.

Revenue and capital grants are recognised as income when notification is received. The income is matched with the relevant expenditure for which the grant has been received.

Donated assets are included at the value to the company where this can be quantified and a third party is bearing the cost. No amounts are included in the financial statements for services donated by volunteers as it is not practical to ascertain the value of these services.

### **Deferred incoming resources**

Deferred incoming resources arise on income received but which may be allocated to a number of future periods in accordance with the terms of the grant or donation. The element of the income that is for a future period is deferred so as to match it to the periods covered by the terms of the income.

### **Resources expended**

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is stated exclusive of VAT. Any irrecoverable VAT is included as a cost.

Wherever possible, expenditure is allocated specifically to the relevant activities for which it is incurred. Where costs cannot be directly attributed they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of the resources. Overhead costs in the statement of financial activities are apportioned on the basis of staff time spent on each activity.

### **Fixtures**

Depreciation is calculated so as to write off the cost of an asset over the useful economic life of that asset as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment - 25% per annum on cost

Items costing less than £250 are not capitalised, but charged in full to the income and expenditure account for the year in which the cost is borne.

**Operating lease agreements**

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged against profits on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

**Irrecoverable VAT**

Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the profit and loss account on an accruals basis.

**Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds comprise accumulated surpluses on general funds and these are available for use in the furtherance of the general charitable objectives of the company.

Restricted funds are those that can only be used for restricted purposes within the objects of the company. Restrictions arise when specified by donors or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Designated funds are set up out of general funds by the directors for specific purposes. The purposes are described in the notes to the accounts.

Where a fund is anticipated to expend more resources than it has received, a transfer is made from general unrestricted funds to cover any shortfall on the project.

Further explanation on the nature and purpose of each of the restricted funds is included in the notes to the financial statements.

**2 VOLUNTARY INCOME**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Donations</b>				
Neil Kreitman	10,000	-	10,000	10,000
Other small donations	20,162	-	20,162	6,596
	<u>30,162</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>30,162</u>	<u>16,596</u>
<b>Grants Receivable</b>				
Alison Mary Holt - Legacy	-	-	-	3,375
Esmee Fairbairn	40,000	30,000	70,000	40,000
European Commission	-	-	-	50,101
Foundation Open Society Institute	-	259,677	259,677	140,135
Gilead Sciences	-	-	-	5,000
Big Lottery Fund	-	34,210	34,210	-
Robert Brodie - Legacy	7,446	-	7,446	-
Trust for London	-	30,000	30,000	-
YouthRISE	-	17,900	17,900	-
Other grants receivable	-	-	-	560
	<u><b>77,608</b></u>	<u><b>371,787</b></u>	<u><b>449,395</b></u>	<u><b>255,767</b></u>

**3 INCOMING RESOURCES FROM ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Consultancy	19,995	-	19,995	10,540
Expert Witness Income	73,530	-	73,530	69,875
Hosting & Support Income	20,833	-	20,833	31,250
Legal Surgery income	-	130,213	130,213	141,979
Online Merchandise	93	-	93	443
Publication Income	21	-	21	51
Training and conferences	2736	806	3542	1391
Other income	996	-	996	-
	<u><b>118,204</b></u>	<u><b>131,019</b></u>	<u><b>249,223</b></u>	<u><b>255,529</b></u>

**4 INVESTMENT INCOME**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Bank interest	126	126	71

**5 COSTS OF GENERATING VOLUNTARY INCOME**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Campaigns	1,586	2,876	4,462	1,900
Equipment Hire	1,035	-	1,035	1,035
Hospitality	2,201	400	2,601	774
Marketing	150	1,182	1,332	208
	<u><b>4,972</b></u>	<u><b>4,458</b></u>	<u><b>9,430</b></u>	<u><b>3,917</b></u>

**6 FUNDRAISING COSTS**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
Fundraising event	<u>5,769</u>	<u>5,769</u>	<u>5,669</u>

**7 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Information, advice and advocacy	88,170	443,022	531,192	425,855
Support costs	61,252	56,685	117,937	78,941
	<u><b>149,422</b></u>	<u><b>499,707</b></u>	<u><b>649,129</b></u>	<u><b>504,796</b></u>

**8 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY TYPE**

	<b>Activities Undertaken Directly</b>	<b>Support Costs</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Information, advice and advocacy	<u><b>425,855</b></u>	<u><b>78,941</b></u>	<u><b>504,796</b></u>	<u><b>504,796</b></u>

**9 GOVERNANCE COSTS**

	<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	<b>Restricted Funds</b>	<b>Total Funds 2015</b>	<b>Total Funds 2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Gifts & Donations	-	-	-	-
Staff salaries	9,305	-	9,305	9,305
Professional fees	726	-	726	716
Legal fees	-	-	-	0
Audit/IE fees	1,600	-	1,600	4,850
	<u><b>11,631</b></u>	<u><b>-</b></u>	<u><b>11,631</b></u>	<u><b>14,871</b></u>

**10 NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Net incoming resources are stated after charging		
Depreciation	1,739	3,692
Indep. Examiners remuneration (See below)	1,600	4,850
	<u><b>1,600</b></u>	<u><b>4,850</b></u>

**11 INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REMUNERATION**

<b>Foxboro Accountants:</b>		
Independent Examination	1,600	-
<b>Cheyettes Ltd:</b>		
Audit of Financial Statements	-	4,850
	<u><b>-</b></u>	<u><b>4,850</b></u>

**12 STAFF COSTS AND EMOLUMENTS**

Total staff costs were as follows:	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Wages and salaries	316,989	319,841
Social security costs	30,365	31,002
	<u><b>347,354</b></u>	<u><b>350,843</b></u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Direct charitable work & administration	<u><b>13</b></u>	<u><b>13</b></u>

None of the trustees received any remuneration, benefits or expenses during the year.

No employee received emoluments exceeding £60,000 during the year

**13 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS – HELD FOR OWN**

<b>COST</b>	
<b>At 1 April 2014</b>	46,651
Additions	637
Disposals	-
<b>At 31 March 2014</b>	<u><b>47,288</b></u>
<b>DEPRECIATION</b>	
<b>At 1 April 2014</b>	40,330
Charge for the year	1,739
On disposals	-
<b>At 31 March 2015</b>	<u><b>42,069</b></u>
<b>NET BOOK VALUE</b>	
<b>At 31 March 2015</b>	<u><u><b>5,218</b></u></u>
<b>At 31 March 2014</b>	<u><u><b>6,321</b></u></u>

**14 DEBTORS**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade debtors	33,852	40,969
Other debtors	6,216	6,814
Prepayments	4,198	13,257
	<u><u><b>44,266</b></u></u>	<u><u><b>61,040</b></u></u>

**15 CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Trade creditors	4,907	14,245
Other taxes and social security	12,909	13,766
Other creditors		696
Accruals	6,519	5,766
	<u><u><b>24,335</b></u></u>	<u><u><b>34,473</b></u></u>

**16 PENSIONS**

The charitable company makes pension contributions for employees into individual personal pension plans. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company in independently administered funds.

**17 COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES**

At 31 March 2014 the charity had annual commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as set out below.

	Land & Buildings £	Other Items £	Land & Buildings £	Other Items £
<b>Operating leases which expire:</b>				
Between 1 - 5 years	46,680	1,005	46,680	1,005
In more than 5 years	-	-	-	-
	<u>46,680</u>	<u>1,005</u>	<u>46,680</u>	<u>1,005</u>

**18 RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS**

	At 01 April 2014 £	Incoming Resources £	Outgoing Resources £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2015 £
African Fellowship	-	39,768	(34,106)	-	5,662
Big Lottery Fund	8,756	34,210	(36,346)	-	6,620
EC Youth in Action	36,474	17,900	(47,414)	-	6,960
European Youth	(1,619)	-	-	1,619	-
Global Web Outreach	(16,501)	81,325	(64,824)	-	-
Latin American Fellowship Programme	(3,780)	22,985	(22,985)	-	(3,780)
Legal Outreach Surgeries	(77,307)	130,213	(121,864)	-	(68,958)
Stop-Watch	750	130,847	(109,330)	-	22,267
Street Law	46,730	45,558	(40,382)	-	51,906
Time for Better Laws	26,914	-	(26,914)	-	-
	<u>20,417</u>	<u>502,806</u>	<u>-504,165</u>	<u>1,619</u>	<u>20,677</u>

**18 RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS (continued)**

**Restricted Project Funds:** These comprise donations received for the specific projects that the charitable company administers. These are as follows:

**African fellowship:** See Latin American Fellowship below

**Big Lottery Fund:** This funding is to develop the legal welfare outreach service by deploying three pilot surgeries every year for four years into designated deprived boroughs in London. Through demonstrating the effect of the service it is anticipated that local funding would be secured to continue the piloted services.

**EC Youth in Action:** This project is funded by the European Commission and involves five youth lead organisations involved with drug harm reduction working in partnership to develop best practice training and engagement material that will be available in four languages and disseminated via dedicated on-line platform.

**Global Web Outreach:** This is a project to develop a website ([www.talkingdrugs.org](http://www.talkingdrugs.org)) for a Global web presence.

**(Latin American) Fellowship Programme:** The purpose of the programme is to support those working in sectors related to drug policy in order to improve their advocacy skills and to enhance their capacity in working with the media on drug policy. The fellowship seeks to add to a core group of existing high-profile drug policy activists in the Latin American region, including people not necessarily working full-time on drug related issues. The fellowship programme has been extended to include people from West Africa.

**Stopwatch:** During the year Release hosted Stopwatch, and assisted the organisation to achieve charitable incorporation. StopWatch is a coalition of legal experts, academics, citizens and civil liberties campaigners. We aim to address excess and disproportionate stop and search, promote best practice and ensure fair, effective policing for all.

**Streetlaw (Y-Stop):** This project aims to help young people to deal effectively with being stopped and searched and, where appropriate, challenge police behavior that falls below an acceptable standard in a safe and positive way. The project will build public awareness and understanding within families and communities of the realities of stop and search, fostering an environment that supports young people to deal with such interactions.

**Time for Better Laws:** is a Release led campaign calling for a review of drug policy in the UK with a specific focus on decriminalisation of drug possession. The campaign is supported by a research plan which will see the publication of 3 reports: the first, a paper on decriminalisation, demonstrating that the law enforcement model adopted has little impact on the levels of drug use within a country and yet the criminalisation of people who use drugs causes significant harms to the individual and society (this paper was launched in July 2013). This project was funded by the JP Getty Junior Trust.

## 19 UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	At 01 April 2014 £	Incoming Resources £	Outgoing Resources £	Transfers £	At 31 March 2015 £
General Fund	63,731	195,938	(171,794)	- 1,619	86,256
	<u>63,731</u>	<u>195,938</u>	<u>(171,794)</u>	<u>(1,619)</u>	<u>86,256</u>

**20 LEGAL OUTREACH SURGERY INCOME**

The following organisations contributed to the Legal Outreach Surgeries:

Big Lottery Fund	Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea
CRI (Ealing)	Tower Hamlets DIP
Lambeth Primary Care Trust	TurningPoint (Soho)
London Legal Support Trust	Westminster Drug Project
Pilgrim Trust	

**21 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS**

	<b>Fixed Assets</b>	<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>Total</b>
Restricted Funds	-	20,417	20,417
Unrestricted Funds	6,321	57,410	63,731
	<u><b>6,321</b></u>	<u><b>77,827</b></u>	<u><b>84,148</b></u>

**22 COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE**

Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited is a company limited by guarantee and accordingly does not have a share capital.

Every member of the company undertakes to contribute such amount as may be required not exceeding £1 to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up while he or she is a member, or within one year after he or she ceases to be a member.