

# Annual Report

with Full Financial Statements

01 April 2018 - 31 March 2019

**61 Mansell Street**  
**London E1 8AN**

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**Email** [ask@release.org.uk](mailto:ask@release.org.uk)

**Release**  
**Drugs, the Law & Human Rights**

Release is the national centre of expertise on drugs and drugs law. The organisation, founded in 1967, is an independent and registered charity.

Through our services the team provides free non-judgmental, specialist advice and information to the public and professionals on issues related to drug use and to drug laws.

The organisation campaigns directly on issues that impact on our clients - it is their experiences that drive the policy work that Release does and why we advocate for evidence-based drug policies that are founded on principles of public health rather than a criminal justice approach.

Release believes in a just and fair society where drug policies should reduce the harms associated with drugs, and where those who use drugs are treated based on principles of human rights, dignity and equality.

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 NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs (VNGOC) and the New York NGO Committee on Drugs (NYNGOC).

Release continues to support some of the most vulnerable in society through its legal and drug services. This work is becoming increasingly difficult, putting more pressure on our services, for a myriad of reasons, including: universal credit; the bedroom tax; the dire increase of the number of people who are homeless; cuts to drug treatment services and to legal aid. Despite these challenges, the team has adapted to meet the needs of our clients and have worked tirelessly to ensure their rights are realised. That being said, the funding environment for our services is tough and the national helpline remains unfunded, despite the vital advocacy services we provide for those facing difficulties with their treatment providers.

The challenges within this sector are, however, resulting in a greater amount of political engagement on the issue of drug treatment and drug policy in general. And I am pleased that Release remains at the forefront of these discussions as outlined in the policy section of this report.

One major event this year was Release relocating to new offices in Aldgate after over 30 years of being based in the Old Street area. I would like to thank the team at Release, in particular, the Finance and Operations Manager for all the work it took to complete the move and the refurbishment of the new office.

This is my last year as Chairman of the Release Board, but I remain on the Board to ensure a managed transition and because I whole-heartedly support the work of the organisation. I am pleased to say that the position of Chair has been taken on by Viveen Taylor, who has significant experience of the third sector and who previously was the Chair of the National Drugs and Race Equality Coalition.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Board, the staff and the volunteers at Release for the stellar work they have done during my time as Chairman.

Ronald Hooberman

Chairperson

This year has been another busy period for the organisation, and it is an honour to work with such a committed and passionate team of people. Our services continue to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised in society. This year we launched our first legal outreach welfare service at a homeless centre, The Connection at St Martin's, in London and we are delighted to be widening the range of partners that we worked with. The impact of the legal services can be clearly seen in the relevant section of this report – we continue to get people who are homeless housed, to advocate for the rights of people in terms of accessing their benefits and ensure that those at risk of losing their home don't end up doing so.

As highlighted in the Board report, funding for this work is increasingly challenging largely as a result of the devastating impact of cuts to drug treatment budgets. It is testament to the quality of the services that we provide that we have retained so many contracts this year.

The drugs teams continues to provide advocacy for people who use drugs, who are having problems with their treatment provider. This often involves supporting people who are in great distress and the team handle these cases with compassion, dignity and professionalism. The terrific feedback outlined in the report is a credit to the work they do. This work is completely unfunded but we see it as one of our core obligations and we are proud to advocate for people's rights within the health system.

The policy and communications teams have also been incredibly busy as the issue of drug policy and harm reduction continue to climb up the political agenda. Please take the time to read some of the papers and briefings we have produced this year, which are outlined in the policy section below. The need for more evidence based approaches - including drug consumption rooms, the scaling up of naloxone provision and the need to end the criminalisation of people who use drugs – is vital if we are to address the scandalous situation with drug related deaths. It is abhorrent that for the seventh year in a row we are having to say that drug related deaths are once again the highest since records began.

I would like to thank all of our funders for continuing to support our work, and I would particularly like to thank the Northmoor Trust for their significant donation to Release this year.

Finally, I would like to thank Ronnie Hooberman, our outgoing Chairperson, his support over the years has been immeasurable. We have been through a myriad of highs and lows, there are no words for how much his guidance has meant to me personally. I am grateful to Ronnie for staying on the Board. I am very excited to work with our new Chairperson, Viveen Taylor, in the coming months and years.

Niamh Eastwood

- The relief of persons suffering from poverty, sickness and distress including but not restricted to those suffering from drug abuse, by the provision of free legal and welfare advice, and the assistance and all other services necessary for the relief of such persons, as defined herein.
- The advancement of public education in the areas of work abovementioned and in particular with regard to new trends in those areas.
- The advancement of the education of persons working or concerned in the above mentioned areas especially in relation to the new trends in those areas.

And

- To promote co-operation and understanding between any persons and/or organisations in the areas of drug dependence and abuse, civil liberties and the general criminal law by providing for
  - (i) the exchange and dissemination of relevant information,
  - (ii) the maintenance of liaison with statutory authorities (local or otherwise),
  - (iii) the giving of advice and assistance in respect of the formation of a policy to cope with new trends in the areas of drugs use, civil liberties, and the general criminal law.

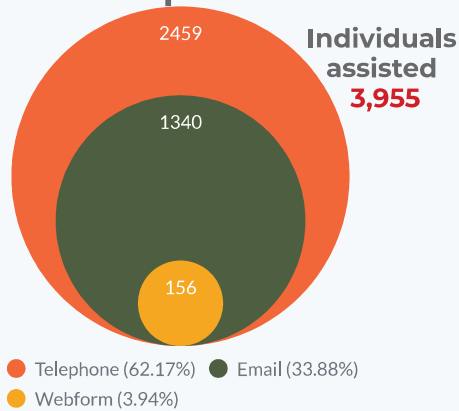
# OUR IMPACT

01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

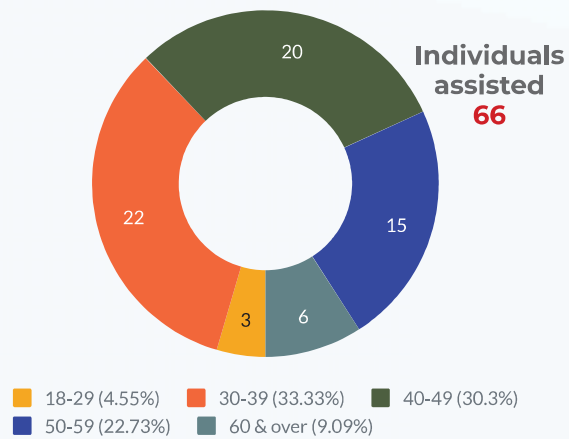
Our unique and specialist services include: a national drug and legal helpline; London centric legal welfare and counselling outreach services (within alcohol and drug treatment environments; homeless day shelters; sex worker projects); drug expert witness; community engagement programmes for young and marginalised groups.

Here's a quick snap shot of some of our service & programme achievements for the year below.

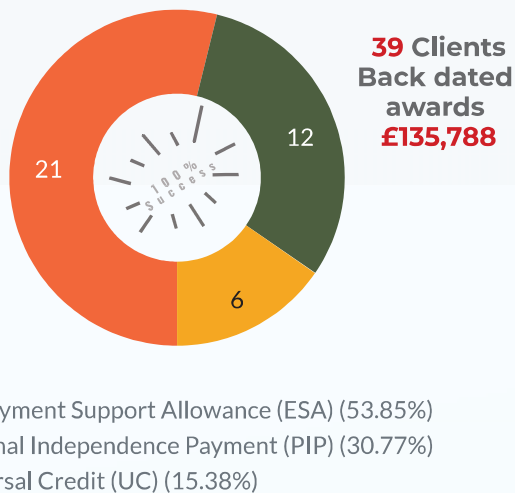
## National Drugs & Legal Helpline



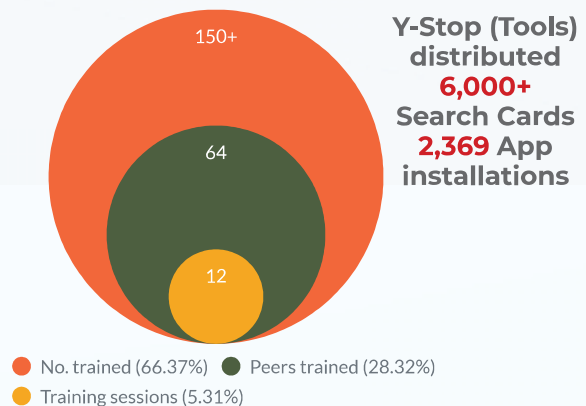
## Homeless clients



## Representation at Social Security Tribunals



## Y-Stop/Youth engagement



## SERVICES (DRUG)

01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

We are exceptionally fortunate to have multi-disciplinary drugs team, and through their collective experiences, and specialist professional knowledge are able to provide advice and assistance to an increasing number of clients.

During the year, the drugs team assisted **848** individuals either seeking advice, assistance and/or (counselling) support either for themselves, or for family or friends. The main form of contact was via our help portals (telephone, email & webform). In addition they also produced **66** expert witness reports, and attended **7** criminal court hearings providing testimony.



**848**  
People assisted  
**12**  
Advocacy  
cases

Our free **advice and advocacy service** was contacted by 848 individuals seeking assistance either for themselves, or a family member or friend. The main areas of enquiry involved drugs taken by family members; health and social problems associated with drugs; individuals experiencing changes to prescription and/or continued access to medication; drug testing (workplace and driving) and the test results.

**Service user comment....** "Being able to speak out loud, openly, to a non-judgmental, knowledgeable, supportive person like you Claire, was a tremendous help!!!!!! The support Release provides is invaluable. Thank you to Dan also for being as supportive and non-judgmental towards ....., when he was finally able to make a call to you. I believe you helped him no end!!!

The **free counselling service** is delivered both physically (in a host GP surgery in Westminster - one day a week) and 5 days a week via the telephone.

Clients of the Westminster (alcohol detoxification) service are engaged through referrals from the host service itself and other health service providers within the London borough.



**Report on inspection carried out on 20 March and 21 March 2019 and 05 April 2019, CQC.**

**'We saw areas of outstanding practice:....'** The service was run by a GP, clinical nurse specialist and a counsellor who assessed and supported alcoholics through detox and offered aftercare with group and individual counselling. We saw that up to April 2015 of the 115 patients who started a community detox programme, 111 completed and 56% of them were still abstinent after six months.'



**100+**  
**one-to-one sessions**

Our **telephone counselling service** supports individuals that are unable to attend on-site assistance, and are engaged with the service after seeking assistance via our help services. The service provided 100+ one hour support sessions.

**Service user comment....** 'Especially Claire Robbins, who unstintingly gave me her time one very hot afternoon in the summer when I sat in the garden, wept, and talked to her over the phone. More importantly, she allowed my son to talk, I suspect the first time anyone has listened to him.'

## SERVICES (DRUG)

01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

The specialist expert witness service receives instructions from solicitors and barristers seeking expert assistance in predominantly criminal cases ranging from simple possession through to proceeds of crime cases with the majority of instructions funded by the Legal Aid Agency.

66  
Expert Reports

7  
Court Testimonies



The drugs team have also delivered both in-house and external training. The in-house training is specially designed for our legal team and volunteers, and consists of basic drug awareness, substance dependency (psychological and physical) through to harm reduction principles.

The external training is designed around the participants knowledge but can range from basic drug awareness, substance dependency (psychological and physical), harm reduction principles through to client advocacy and server user peer led advocacy.

### The Drugs Team

#### Claire Robbins

Member of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Reg. No. 2012858  
Member of the Nursing & Midwifery Council Reg. No. 75A2152E

#### Daniel Williams (Drugs Researcher)

Accredited Drug & Alcohol Professional (FDAP) Certification number 2005

#### Gary Sutton (Head of Drug Services)

Member of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)  
Reg. No. 00619385

Member of the Expert Witness Institute (EWI) Reg.No. 00007245



Affiliate Member Organisation (Reg. No. 239)  
Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals (FDAP)



# SERVICES (LEGAL)

01 April 2018 to 31 March 2019

Our legal team consists of dedicated and motivated qualified and trainee solicitors, and legal advisors that deliver the legal surgeries and operate the help service. They are supported by a committed body of undergraduate and postgraduate law volunteers.

The legal team assisted individuals seeking advice or information via our help portals (telephone, email & webform) on a number of different legal issues. Approximately, 10% were seeking assistance on behalf of family members.



The top 5 queries can be summarised as:

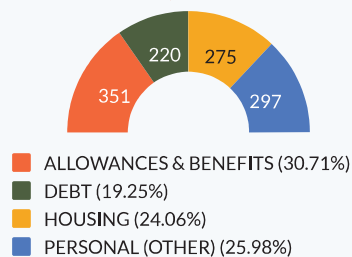
1. Been stopped and/or arrested and awaiting interview
2. Effect on caution/charge/conviction on DBS disclosures/future employment
3. Charged awaiting trial and potential sentencing
4. Drug driving – what it means to be ‘in charge of the vehicle’, testing and effects of driving ban/effect on employment
5. Cannabis cultivation and potential sentencing

3,107 individual queries



## Total legal matters presented

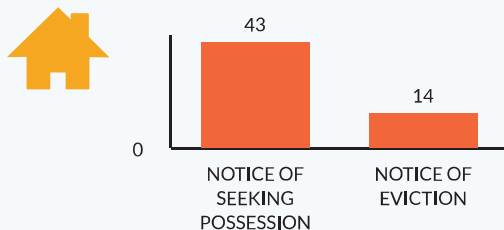
1,143



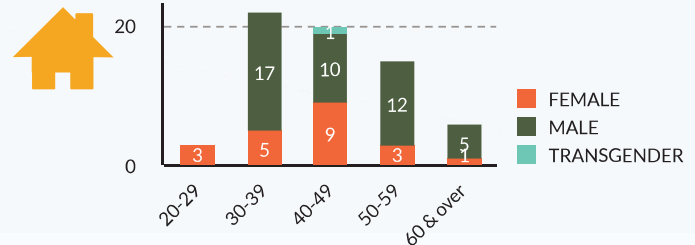
The legal team also deliver our legal welfare service into 13 (host) alcohol and drug treatment centres across 9 London boroughs. The service is completely free at the point of delivery to service users of the centres. Legal matters presented broadly fall into 4 categories; namely Housing (including homelessness), debt, welfare benefits/allowances (including appeal tribunals) and personal matters, such as employment, family, injury etc.

Below are some examples of the various matters we helped with by category

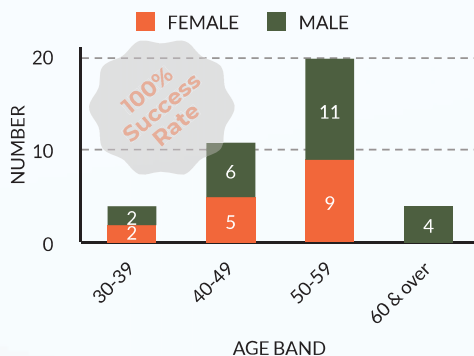
### 57 CLIENTS ASSISTED WITH EVICTION/POSSESSION NOTICES



### 66 HOMELESS CLIENTS ASSISTED INTO ACCOMMODATION



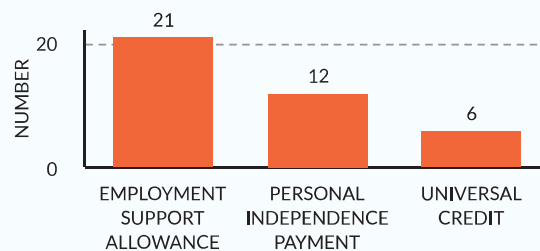
### 39 CLIENTS REPRESENTED AT SOCIAL SECURITY APPEAL TRIBUNALS



### TOTAL BACK DATED APPEAL AWARDS

£135,788

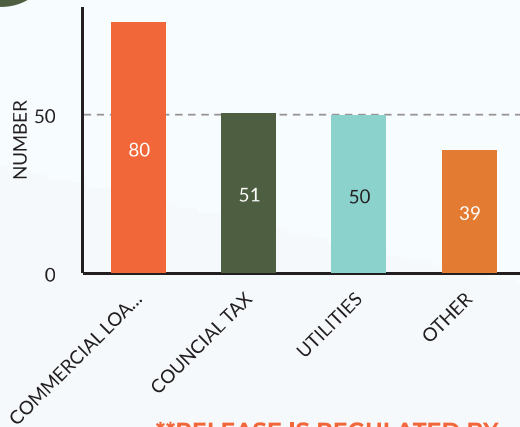
### SOCIAL SECURITY APPEAL TRIBUNALS BY TYPE



# SERVICES (LEGAL)



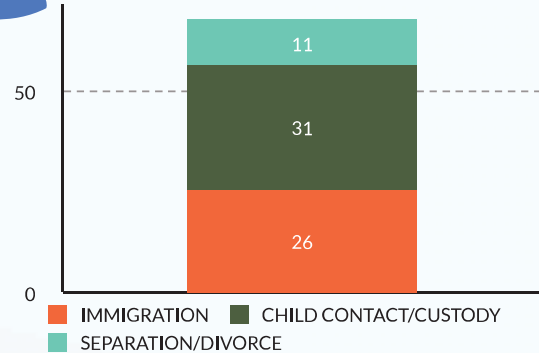
## 220 DEBT MATTERS ENTERED INTO MANAGEMENT PLANS



**\*\*RELEASE IS REGULATED BY FINANCIAL CONDUCT AUTHORITY (618823) TO PROVIDE DEBT ADVICE & HELP**



## THE 3 MAIN PERSONAL MATTERS PRESENTED



**\*\*CLIENTS WHO PRESENTED WITH IMMIGRATION MATTERS WERE REFERRED TO A SPECIALIST PROVIDER FOR ASSISTANCE**

## Legal Welfare Outreach Service was delivered in the following London boroughs

- Brent** 2 delivery sites (includes specialist homeless service)
- Camden** 2 delivery sites (accepts referrals from 4 other borough services)
- Ealing** 2 delivery sites (includes a women only service)
- Lambeth** 1 delivery site
- Newham** 2 delivery sites
- Tower Hamlets** 1 delivery site (accepts client referrals from 4 other borough services)
- Waltham Forest** 1 delivery site
- Wandsworth** 1 delivery site
- Westminster** 1 delivery site (located in a homeless day shelter)

### The Legal Team

- Donna Crentsil-Keane** (Supervising Solicitor)
- Jordan Santos** (Legal Advisor)
- Kirstie Douse** (Head of Legal - Solicitor Advocate)
- Lorna Macfarlane** (Supervising Solicitor)
- Stephen Cutter** (Solicitor)
- Winnie Schmidt** (Trainee Solicitor)



We hold the Advice Quality Standard, which provides you with assurance that we have met certain criteria that demonstrates a commitment to quality.

# YOUTH (Y-STOP) PROGRAMME

Y-Stop (developed in partnership with Stopwatch) is a youth-led stop and search project, that has been developed by young people for young people, and aims to equip them with the tools to deal with police interactions in a safe and confident manner. We refer to this as a harm reduction approach. Between April 2018 and March 2019 Y-Stop has trained at least 150 young people aged 10-30 directly through the Y-Stop training programme. In the same period we had 64 peer-trainers on record with an additional 10 waiting to be trained. Aside from training, the project has continued to distribute free materials that educate people on how to handle police stop and searches more positively. During the reporting period over 6,000 search cards have been distributed nationally to a range of recipients including concerned parents seeking knowledge, youth centres and local youth offending teams. The Y-Stop app – which allows people to record and report stop and searches - registered an additional 2,369 app installation.



**12**  
**Training Events**  
delivered in  
**Birmingham**  
**Leicester**  
**London**



**150+**  
**Young people**  
**(10-30 year olds)**  
received training



**64**  
**Peer Trainers**  
Trained



**2,369**  
**Android & IOS**  
Downloads

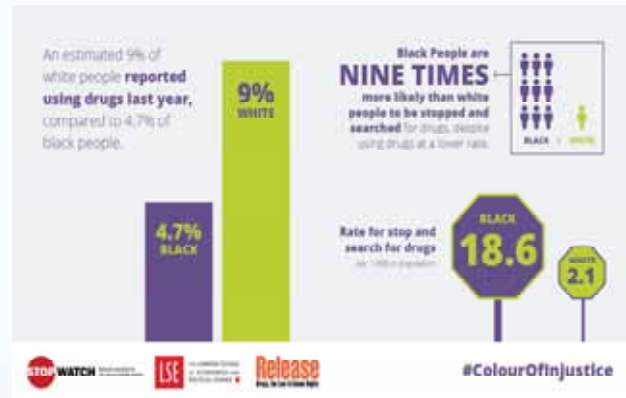
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**Youth Lead**

**Amal Ali** (Research Associate & Youth Lead)

# POLICY & RESEARCH

In 2018/19 we launched two major publications. In October 2018 we launched **“The Colour of Injustice: ‘Race’, drugs and law enforcement in England and Wales”**, which was produced in partnership with StopWatch and the London School of Economics’ International Drug Policy Unit. This updated Release’s previous policy paper on ethnic disproportionality in drugs policing and prosecutions in England and Wales. It is of real concern that the findings of the report once again demonstrated that drugs policing is driving racial disparity in the criminal justice system, and that the rates of disproportionality had increased since our report in 2014. The report garnered significant media attention with an exclusive in the Guardian, leading to media coverage in other national papers, and coverage of the report on Channel 4 News.



	Charges creating TTBs and training (all substances)	Total opiate charges in England	Proportion of opiate charges creating TTBs and training
All opiate	15279	141189	11%
Male	10857	102803	11%
Female	4422	38386	12%

Table 1: Proportion of opiate charges in training to community averages across England that created safe home education and training in 2017/18 by gender (National Drug Treatment Monitoring System)

We also published our second in depth look at the availability and coverage of naloxone – an opioid overdose reversal medication – both in the community and in prison settings. The report **“Finding a Needle in a Haystack: Takehome naloxone in England 2017/18”** led to Release setting up a working group of experts and people with lived experience to develop best practice guidelines in the provision of naloxone. We look forward to reporting on this stream of work in our next annual report.

This year was an extremely busy period as political engagement around drug policy and public health responses to drugs increased. In 2018/19, Release produced 16 briefings and responses to consultations. This included submissions to Select Committee Inquiries, briefings for parliamentary debates, and submissions to Public Health England and the Sentencing Council. For examples of our work in this area please visit our Policy Responses section of our website.

## BRIEFINGS

- All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform on Heroin Assisted treatment in March 2019
- Drug treatment services for a Westminster debate

## RESPONSES

- Scottish Government’s Draft Drug Strategy in October 2018
- Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care’s open consultation on proposed changes to the Public Health Outcomes Framework
- Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services consultation on its 2019/20 policing inspection programme and framework
- Public Health England’s consultation on its proposed changes to the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System
- Sentencing Council’s consultation on plans to provide expanded explanations in offence specific guidelines in England and Wales.
- Royal College of Psychiatrists’ call for evidence for their ‘Review of Cannabis: medicinal cannabis and cannabis for recreational use’

# POLICY & RESEARCH

## WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

- Home Affairs Committee request for their 'Serious Violence inquiry'
- Home Affairs Committee for their 'The Macpherson Report inquiry'
- Health and Social Care Committee for their 'Medical cannabis inquiry'
- Scottish Affairs Committee for their inquiry into 'Drug use and misuse in Scotland'
- Justice Committee for their inquiry into 'Prison governance'
- Independent review, led by Professor Dame Carol Black, into 'the ways in which drugs are fuelling serious violence'

At a local level, we continue to work with police forces and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's) who are implementing diversion schemes for people caught in possession of drugs and who are promoting harm reduction responses for people who use drugs problematically. Release staff also participated in discussions with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, the National Police Chief Councils, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Home Office. Staff also worked with politicians across all the political parties and provided technical assistance to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform.

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### The Policy & Research Team

**Amal Ali** (Research Associate & Youth Lead)

**Niamh Eastwood** (Executive Director)

**Zoe Carre** (Policy & Research Lead)

# COMMUNICATIONS

## TALKING DRUGS

Release's main communications platform TalkingDrugs – a multilingual news website dedicated to covering global developments related to drug policy and harm reduction – continued to grow its reach and influence in the last 12 months. In 2018/19 we had approximately 600,000 visitors to the website. The site has provided clear and detailed coverage of drug policies, drug use trends, and harm reduction initiatives that have taken place around the world.

In several instances, TalkingDrugs was the first English-language site to report on certain developments – including Portugal's largest political party endorsing cannabis regulation, and the introduction of a harm reduction initiative for cocaine use in Spain. Our interview with Dr Ben Sessa on MDMA clinical trials to treat alcohol dependency, resulted in further coverage in Newsweek and Russia Today. Also, an article published about the Malaysian man Muhammad Lukman's death sentence for distributing cannabis oil to patients, received massive support on social media, including from one of the country's most high-profile MPs, Nurul Izzah. Izzah later announced that she was writing to the Attorney General "to secure a pardon based on the merits of his case and predicament". During the following month, the Malaysian government announced that it would review its prohibition of medical cannabis, and said it would abolish the death penalty entirely. The article gained over 48,000 page views in its first two weeks of publication, and became the most-read article on TalkingDrugs in 2018 and was linked to in Malaysian media.

Volunteers have been essential to TalkingDrugs' success. The volunteers in our office have developed their research and writing skills, improved their knowledge of international drug policy issues, and contributed numerous important articles to the publication. Several have gone on to continue their career in drug policy reform, journalism, or non-profit communication roles. Additionally, translation volunteers – based remotely – have been invaluable to developing TalkingDrugs as a global resource.

With over a dozen volunteers during this period, a minimum of five English-language articles were translated almost every week into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, or Polish. Many of these volunteers have used their experience with TalkingDrugs to continue forging their careers as professional translators. We look forward to TalkingDrugs continuing to grow over the coming years, and for the website to continue giving a platform for young writers and translators who seek to build their skillset while contributing to a meaningful project.

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### COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

The Release website is a significant resource for people seeking information about drugs and the law. In the last 12 months' traffic increased with 567,515 visitors to the website. Fourteen out of the fifteen most visited pages related to drugs and the law. This is indicative of the increasing use of digital resources to seek advice and information. The website is regularly updated to ensure the public benefit from recent policy and legal changes to the law. Release is also active on social media with almost 25,000 followers on Twitter, 12,000 on Facebook, and 2,400 followers on Instagram.



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### GENERAL MEDIA



Staff provided comment or were interviewed for all the major newspapers including the Guardian, the Telegraph, Times and Independent. Interviews were also provided to popular online media sites, such as Vice. Local press also sought comment on issues related to drugs, drug policy and harm reduction. TV appearances were made by the Executive Director and Head of Legal Services on various news programmes including Channel 4, BBC and Sky.

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Communications Lead

Avinash Tharoor - Policy and Communications Officer

## INTERNATIONAL



Since 2013, Release has hosted fourteen fellowships, with over fifty people attending from South East Asia, Latin America and West and East Africa.

The two fellowship programmes are delivered annually with specific emphasis on participants from West Africa and South East Asia. Each programme lasts 2 weeks in duration and has 4 participants from each of the continental regions. Each programme is designed to be educational and developmental for the participants. Participants who attend the programmes either work or have an active interest in drug policy or related fields such as penal reform or human rights, and come from an array of backgrounds ranging from journalism, Government advisers, enforcement agencies, politicians, and non-governmental organisations, to name but a few.

The programmes themselves also provides the participants with the opportunity to receive training and presentations with colleagues from Harm Reduction International, Transform and the International Drug Policy Consortium, as well as academics and policymakers.

The programme outcomes has seen many of the participants returning to their regions and actively addressing the issue of drug policy in their countries, either through campaigns, media appearances, legal reform or improving access to harm reduction services.

Release staff actively support these initiatives through the provision of six months of post-programme mentoring.

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### LAWYERING ON THE MARGINS

In November 2018, Release, in partnership with Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM), organised a four-day convening in Jakarta, Indonesia, of lawyers working with marginal groups including people who use drugs, sex workers and the LGBTIAQ+ community. In total there were 34 participants from across the world in attendance and the meeting was an opportunity to share strategies and to learn from each other. The convening was a high success and has assisted in developing a network of lawyers working with key populations. This work was funded by the Open Society Foundations.



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### EXPERT TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES

Release's Executive Director continued to provide technical assistance to government agencies in Ghana providing advice on the drafting of new legislation which will seek to decriminalise drug use and possession in the country. If the Bill succeeds at the Ghanaian Parliament, Ghana will be the first country in the continent to decriminalise the use and possession of controlled drugs for personal use. The Executive Director also met with the working group commissioned to explore decriminalisation in Norway where she discussed the experience of other jurisdictions that have adopted such an approach.



# ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Release recognises its responsibilities to the environment and fundamentally understands there is an onus to lead with well-designed environmental strategies and operational management structures, and that these frameworks must form an integral and fundamental part of our organisation ethos.

To achieve the abovementioned, we continually strive to ensure that we have a minimal impact on the environment, and our aim is to continue to improve our environmental performance by:

- Complying with the requirements of all environmental legislation.
- Assessing the environmental effects of our organisation's operations.
- Actively promoting recycling throughout the entire organisation.
- Conserving natural resources through increased energy efficiency and water management.
- Managing waste and avoiding the use of hazardous substances.
- Implementing the use of recycled materials where appropriate.
- Continually seeking to improve environmental performance.
- Allocating adequate resources to fulfil this policy.
- Monitoring progress and review performance annually.

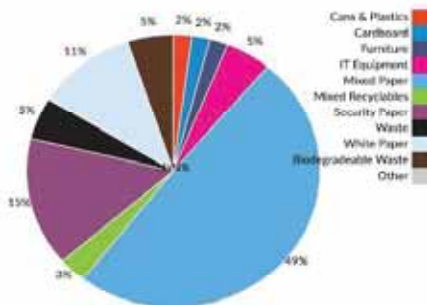


So, in order to achieve the above, we selected Bulb energy to supply our office with renewable electricity. It should be noted that we use **no gas** at our office. On top of the green energy supply, we have installed Rointe D Series radiators throughout the building making use of "Fuzzy Logic Energy Control", a low consumption energy saving technology which allows the optimisation of the radiator's power consumption.

Additionally, we use all low voltage equipment including energy efficient LED lighting, which has resulted in the organisation reducing its environmental (carbon) foot print by 8.3 tonnes of CO2 through a combination of renewable energy, and low consumption.

Also, we actively recycle as many items as possible. Our recycling rate for the year increased to 95% up from 89% on the previous year. Paper Round (founded by Friends of the Earth) is the commercial recycling company we use.

Breakdown of materials



1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019

**95 %**  
**Recycling rate**  
**for the year**  
**Up 6% on**  
**previous year**



Total recycling  
**4,520 kg**



Trees saved  
**44**



CO<sub>2</sub> savings  
**5,740 kg**



Recycling per employee  
**5.8 kg/wk**





## TRUSTEES

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

Natasha Dhumma	Ronald Hooberman
Roger Golland	Anna Ling
Stephen Goschalk (Treasurer)	Amber Marks
James Hardy	David Rowntree
Edward Henry	Dame Ruth Runciman
David Hibbert	Viveen Taylor (Chairperson)

## STAFF

Amal Ali	Lorna Macfarlane
Zoe Carre	Claire Robbins
Donna Crentsil-Keane	Jordan Santos
Stephen Cutter	Winnie Schmidt
Kirstie Douse	Gary Sutton
Niamh Eastwood	Avinash Tharoor
Keith Edwards	Daniel Williams

## BANKERS

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
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## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Paul Brown, BComm.  
Certified Public Accountant (CPAA)  
Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd  
704 Ontario Tower  
4 Fairmont Ave  
London E14 9JA

## FUNDERS

Barrow Cadbury Trust	London Legal Support Trust
City Bridge Trust	The Northmoor Trust
Esmee Fairbairn	Open Society Foundation
Legal Education Foundation	

# INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REPORT

## 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 Act have 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  
704 Ontario Tower  
4 Fairmont Avenue  
London E14 9JA

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2019

		UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2019	TOTAL FUNDS 2018
	NOTE	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
VOLUNTARY INCOME	2	337,867	343,925	681,792	420,008
ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS	3	92,920	68,330	161,250	182,366
INVESTMENT INCOME	4	200	-	200	101
<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>		<b>430,987</b>	<b>412,255</b>	<b>843,242</b>	<b>602,475</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
<b>COSTS OF GENERATING FUNDS</b>					
Costs of generating voluntary income	5	4,299	3,783	8,082	7,897
Fundraising Costs	6	6,178	-	6,178	5,659
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	7/8	127,238	472,587	599,825	595,657
GOVERNANCE COSTS	9	11,817	1,104	12,921	11,225
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		<b>149,532</b>	<b>477,474</b>	<b>627,006</b>	<b>620,438</b>
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	10	281,455 -	65,219	216,236 -	17,963
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net Movement in the year		281,455 -	65,219	216,236	17,963
Fund Balances Brought forward at 1st April		120,812	50,176	170,988	188,951
<b>FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31ST MARCH</b>		<b>402,267 -</b>	<b>15,043</b>	<b>387,224</b>	<b>170,988</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

## BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31ST MARCH 2019

	£	2019 £	£	2018 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>				
Tangible Fixed Assets (note 9)		£ 43,932		£ -
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>				
Debtors (See Note 10)	£ 56,856		£ 47,874	
Cash at Bank and in hand (See note 11)	£ 302,513		£ 150,598	
	<u>£ 359,369</u>		<u>£ 198,472</u>	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>				
Creditors - falling due within one year (See Note 12)	-£ 16,076		-£ 27,484	
		<u>£ 343,293</u>		<u>£ 170,988</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>£ 387,224</u>		<u>£ 170,988</u>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>				
Restricted Funds (See Note)		-£ 15,043		£ 50,176
Unrestricted Funds:		<u>£ 402,267</u>		<u>£ 120,812</u>
		<u>£ 387,224</u>		<u>£ 170,988</u>

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

For the financial year in question the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

No members have required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 10 December 2019 and signed on their behalf by:

Stephen Goschalk  
Trustee (Treasurer)

# Release

LEGAL EMERGENCY &  
DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

1966619 (Registered No.)

CHARITY NUMBER

801118

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2019

Proudly supported with grants from





## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

**REGISTERED CHARITY NAME** Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited  
**CHARITY NUMBER** 801118  
**COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER** 1966619  
**PRINCIPAL & REGISTERED OFFICE ADDRESS** 61 Mansell Street  
London  
E1 8AN

**TRUSTEES AT DATE OF APPROVAL OF REPORT** Natasha Dhumma  
Roger Golland  
Stephen Goschalk (Treasurer)  
James Hardy  
David Hibbert  
Ronald Hooberman  
Anna Ling  
Amber Marks  
David Rowntree  
Dame Ruth Runciman  
Viveen Taylor (Chairperson)

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER** Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd  
704 Ontario Tower  
4 Fairmont Ave  
London E14 9JA

**BANKERS** 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

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## TRUSTEES (DIRECTORS) 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 2019.

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 people of colour, and a number of free policy & educational publications.

Our unique and specialist service activities include:

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

The purpose (objective) of our services and programmes are to meet and deliver a public benefit through:

- 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). Our legal services have been awarded the Advice Quality Standard and the 'Centre of Excellence' status by the London Legal Support Trust. 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 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:

- The Home Office's External Reference Group on the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme
- The National Council of Chief Constable's Stop and Search Strategic Scrutiny Group
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Police External Reference Group on Stop and Search
- British Transport Police (BTP) Stop and Search Community Consultation Group
- National Harm Reduction Group (the National AIDs Trust is the secretariat)
- Naloxone Action Group (NAG) England
- Royal College of GP's Secure Environments Group (SEG)



**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 unrestricted reserves should be the equivalent of 6 months' operating costs, calculated and reviewed annually. In the last 12 months this objective has been achieved. 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.

**INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING**

Release is extremely thankful to the numerous volunteers who dedicate their time to the organisation and support the various aspects of the organisation's work – their contribution cannot be overemphasised. In 2018/19 we continued to have a high level of engagement with both volunteers and interns. Approximately 30 volunteers (both in the office and working remotely) 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. The organisation was fortunate 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 quarterly 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 Service in attendance
- Annual General Meeting – Executive director/Head of Legal Service 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

## 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**

Over the previous 7 years, Release has ensured that it had diversified its income streams, so as to mitigate any funding shortfalls that could affect the activities of the organisation. This diversification continues in light of the continued current economic climate. This diversification strategy has assisted in stabilising the organisation, although much of the funding is for time limited project and/or activity work. Release has been successful in securing multi-year programme and core funding and this is attributable to the organisations reputation for developing, delivering and collaborating with new, exciting and impactful streams of work, which has been recognised by our funders. Moving forward the organisation will be developing new strands of work for the different sections, which will expose the sections to new funding streams.

### **RESULTS (excluding restricted funds)**

Net incoming resources of the company for the year were £281,455 (2018 – net incoming resources £33,326) details of which are given in the financial statements below.

Free reserves at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 amounted to £402,267 (2018 - £120,812).

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 (Trustees) 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.

### **ACTIVITIES AND REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

**The company operated satisfactorily during the year to 31 March 2019.**

Release's financial position improved in 2018/19 with the organisation achieving a surplus year on year. Through informed financial management and by developing, 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 programme, core and research funding. This will be a significant factor in enabling the organisation to deliver 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 (United Kingdom)

### ADVICE & REPRESENTATION SERVICES

#### 1. LEGAL WELFARE OUTREACH

In 2018/19 Release continued to deliver legal welfare outreach services across London. The number of services increased to from seven to nine and operate in the following boroughs: Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth, Brixton, Lambeth, Camden, Westminster, Brent, Newham and Waltham Forest. We were delighted to launch our first legal welfare outreach service in a homeless centre, and continue to deliver services at drug treatment services and sex work projects. The establishment of the homeless service at The Connections at St Martins was as a result of securing funding from the City Bridge Trust, funding from the Trust also allowed us to launch new services in Tower Hamlets. Our goal of establishing a service at The Connections was largely in recognition that 60 per cent of those dying from heroin related deaths are not engaged in drug treatment services, and so more needs to be done to connect with populations who are at risk.

In the last 12 months we assisted with 1205 separate legal issues this year, of which 34 per cent of cases involved housing issues (including homeless applications); 26 per cent tackled debt issues; 19 per cent social security cases; the remaining 21 per cent of legal issues addressed a range of matters including immigration (referral cases); family; criminal law; and complaints against the police.

We have also carefully tracked the monetary outcomes resulting from our interventions, and are delighted to have obtained just over £218,000 for our clients in the form of backdated benefit awards, payments to meet shortfall between rent and housing benefit, and debts written off. We continued to have success at social security tribunals, winning a 100 per cent of such cases.

#### 2. DRUGS SERVICES

The counselling service has now entered its 12<sup>th</sup> year of being delivered at a large GP practice in West London. The service is delivered by the Head of Drugs Service who is a qualified psychotherapist, and who continued to deliver this service throughout 2018/19 working directly with people affected by problems with alcohol. The counselling service is another source of funding for Release and ensures that the organisation diversifies its income generation. In February 2019, the Drugs Service recruited a new part-time member of the team who is a qualified physical health and mental health nurse to assist with the increasing helpline requests especially around treatment provision.

#### 3. EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE

In 2018/19 we continued to provide expert testimony in criminal proceedings involving drugs and were involved in 56 cases, this includes a number of cases under the Proceed of Crime Act 2002. The expert witness service has remained stable in recent years, and is a reliable stream of income for the organisation.



#### 4. NATIONAL LEGAL AND DRUGS HELPLINE

Whilst the helpline remains unfunded, it is still a service that is much needed as evidenced by the demand for advice and support. In the last 12 months, we have received in the region of 6000 calls, emails, and online submissions seeking support for a range of issues. As in the previous years, the growth of email and online enquiries continues to be a significant medium for those seeking advice, with over a third of enquiries submitted in this manner (all are responded to within one working day). People accessing the helpline services continue to seek advice on criminal proceedings involving drugs, employment issues involving drug tests and drug use, advice on treatment issues including a reduction in opiate substitute prescribing and onerous conditions attached to treatment.

The team at Release view the helpline as an important source of information that ensures that we keep up to date with patterns of drug consumption and changes in the market, so whilst unfunded it is critical that we continue to provide the service both for our own professional development and for the fact it is needed.

#### 5. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ONLINE ADVICE TOOLS – THE LEGAL AIDE APP

In April 2018, our new legal aid app was launched which seeks to support people who have been arrested or charged for possession of drugs for personal use. The app is reinforced by a number of other tools including a guide detailing the law on possession of drugs and the potential outcomes depending on the substance or Class of drug involved (this includes template letters that people can use to correspond with the authorities), and supported by videos outlining the different stages of the process to make the information easily accessible.

#### 6. Y-STOP

Y-Stop is youth-led stop and search project that has been developed by young people for young people and aims to equip them with the tools to deal with police interactions in a safe and confident manner. We refer to this as a harm reduction approach. Between April 2018 and March 2019 Y-Stop has trained at least 150 young people aged 10-30 directly through the Y-Stop training programme. In the same period we 64 peer-trainers on record with an additional 10 waiting to be trained. Aside from training, the project has continued to distribute materials that educate people on how to handle police stop and searches more positively. During the reporting period over 6,000 search cards have been distributed nationally to a range of recipients including concerned parents seeking knowledge, youth centres and local youth offending teams. The Y-Stop app – which allows people to record and report stop and searches registered an additional 2,369 app installation.

#### 7. RESEARCH & POLICY

During the year, we continued to undertake and develop our research capabilities around harm reduction and criminal justice issues as they intersect with drug policy.

In partnership with LSE and [StopWatch](#) we published [‘The Colour of Injustice: “Race”, Drugs and Law Enforcement in England and Wales’](#). This research highlighted the disproportionate impact of drugs policing and drugs prosecutions on people of colour. Worryingly, the rates of racial disparity have increased for drug stop and searches for black people since our last research on this issue was published in 2014. Despite using less drugs than the white population, black people are now nine times more

likely to be searched and 12 times more likely to be prosecuted for cannabis possession compared to white people. The findings of the report were covered by the Observer and other national media outlets.

In April 2018 Release published, in partnership with the National Unions of Students, the findings of the first ever wide-scale survey of student drug use in the UK. The report '[Taking the Hit: Student Drug Use and How Institutions Respond](#)' includes the results of a survey of 2,810 UK-based students, which explores students' attitudes to, and experiences of, drugs. The report also looks at the institutional support available at 151 universities and colleges, and their disciplinary responses to students who use drugs. The vision for this research is to be able to build campaigns, policies and communities that keep students safe and challenge the stereotypes around drug use. Once again there was significant media coverage of the findings of the report in the national media including coverage by the BBC, Guardian and the Mirror.

Finally, 2018/19 was a busy year for the Release policy team with a number of parliamentary inquiries; parliamentary debates and national consultations. For details of the briefings and reports we submitted please visit [Release's policy responses](#) section of the website.

At a local level, we continue to work with police forces who are implementing diversion schemes for people caught in possession of drugs and who are promoting harm reduction responses for people who use drugs problematically.

## 8. RELEASE WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The Release website is a significant resource for people seeking information about drugs and the law. In the last 12 months' traffic increased with 567,515 visitors to the website. Fourteen out of the fifteen most visited pages related to drugs and the law. This is indicative of the increasing use of digital resources to seek advice and information. The website is regularly updated to ensure the public benefit from recent policy and legal changes to the law.

Release is also active on social media with almost 25,000 followers on Twitter, 12,000 on Facebook, and 2,400 followers on Instagram.

## OUR WORK (INTERNATIONAL)

### 1. TALKINGDRUGS

Release's online platform TalkingDrugs – a multilingual news website dedicated to covering global developments related to drug policy and harm reduction – continued to grow its reach and influence in 2018/19.

The site has provided clear and detailed coverage of drug policies, drug use trends, and harm reduction initiatives that have taken place around the world. In several instances, TalkingDrugs was the first English-language site to report on certain developments – including Portugal's largest political party



endorsing cannabis regulation, and the introduction of a harm reduction initiative for cocaine use in Spain.

Additionally, TalkingDrugs is a public health resource – we have created several guides (in multiple languages) to help people reduce the risks of their drug use.

Volunteers have been essential to TalkingDrugs' success. The volunteers in our office have developed their research and writing skills, improved their knowledge of international drug policy issues, and contributed numerous important articles to the publication. Several have gone on to continue their career in drug policy reform, journalism, or non-profit communication roles.

Additionally, translation volunteers – based remotely – have been invaluable to developing TalkingDrugs as a global resource. With over a dozen volunteers during this period, a minimum of five English-language articles were translated almost every week into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, or Polish. Many of these volunteers have used their experience with TalkingDrugs to continue forging their careers as professional translators.

We look forward to TalkingDrugs continuing to grow over the coming years, and for the website to continue giving a platform for young writers and translators who seek to build their skillset while contributing to a meaningful project.

## 2. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

In 2018/19 Release continued to host fellowship programmes in conjunction with the Open Society Foundation's (OSF) Global Drug Policy Program. The fellowships are aimed at advocates working in drug policy or related fields such as penal reform or human rights, and fellows attend the course in London for two weeks, meeting with colleagues from Harm Reduction International, Transform and the International Drug Policy Consortium, as well as academics and policymakers.

Two programmes were hosted in 2018/19, with targeted participants from West Africa and South East Asia. The fellowship continued to be successful, with many of the attendees pushing the issue of drug policy reform upon returning to their countries, either through campaigns, media appearances, legal reform or improving access to harm reduction services. Release staff actively support these initiatives through the provision of six months of post-programme mentoring.

## 3. TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO OTHER COUNTRIES

Release's Executive Director continue to provide technical assistance to government agencies in Ghana providing advice on the drafting of new legislation which will seek to decriminalise drug use and possession in the country. If the Bill succeeds at the Ghanaian Parliament, Ghana will be the first country in the continent to decriminalise the use and possession of controlled drugs for personal use. The Executive Director also met with the working group commissioned to explore decriminalisation in Norway where she discussed the experience of other jurisdictions that have adopted such an approach.

#### 4. LAWYERING ON THE MARGINS

In November 2018, Release, in partnership with Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM), organised a four-day convening in Jakarta, Indonesia of lawyers working with marginal groups including people who use drugs, sex workers and the LGBTIAQ+ community. In total there were 34 participants from across the world in attendance and the meeting was an opportunity to share strategies and to learn from each other. The convening was a high success and has assisted in developing a network of lawyers working with key populations. This work was funded by the Open Society Foundations.

#### **MEDIA WORK**

Staff provided comment or were interviewed for all the major newspapers including the Guardian, the Telegraph, Times and Independent. Interviews were also provided to popular online media sites, such as Vice. Local press also sought comment on issues related to drugs, drug policy and harm reduction. TV appearances were made by the Executive Director and Head of Legal Services on various news programmes including Channel 4, BBC and Sky.

#### **EVENTS, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS**

Staff continued to participate in conferences and seminar related to harm reduction and drug policy both internationally and nationally. Attendances at conferences outside the UK are funded by external agencies, as are many of the national events that we participate in.



## THE TRUSTEES

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

Natasha Dhumma  
Roger Golland  
Stephen Goschalk (Treasurer)  
James Hardy  
Edward Henry  
David Hibbert  
Ronald Hooberman  
Anna Ling  
Amber Marks  
David Rowntree  
Dame Ruth Runciman  
Viveen Taylor (Chairperson)

### 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.

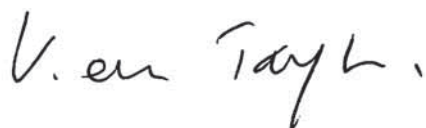
The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding 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 examination information (information needed by the charitable company's independent examiners in connection with preparing their report) of which the charitable company's independent examiners are unaware, and
- the trustees have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant examination information and to establish that the charitable company's independent examiners 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 Monday 09 December 2019 and signed on their behalf by:



Viveen Taylor  
Chairperson 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 Act have 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  
704 Ontario Tower  
4 Fairmont Ave  
London E14 9JA

Date: 9/12/19



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2019

		UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2019	TOTAL FUNDS 2018
	NOTE	£	£	£	£
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
VOLUNTARY INCOME	2	337,867	343,925	681,792	420,008
ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS	3	92,920	68,330	161,250	182,366
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<b>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</b>		<b>430,987</b>	<b>412,255</b>	<b>843,242</b>	<b>602,475</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
<b>COSTS OF GENERATING FUNDS</b>					
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CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	7/8	127,238	472,587	599,825	595,657
GOVERNANCE COSTS	9	11,817	1,104	12,921	11,225
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>		<b>149,532</b>	<b>477,474</b>	<b>627,006</b>	<b>620,438</b>
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	10	281,455 -	65,219	216,236 -	17,963
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net Movement in the year		281,455 -	65,219	216,236	17,963
Fund Balances Brought forward at 1st April		120,812	50,176	170,988	188,951
<b>FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31ST MARCH</b>		<b>402,267 -</b>	<b>15,043</b>	<b>387,224</b>	<b>170,988</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**

AS AT 31ST MARCH 2019

	NOTE	£	2019 £	£	2018 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Fixed Assets	13		43,932		-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	14	56,856		47,874	
Cash at Bank and in hand		<u>302,513</u>		<u>150,598</u>	
		359,369		198,472	
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>					
Creditors - falling due within one year	15 -	16,076		27,484	
			<u>343,293</u>		<u>170,988</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>					
			<u>387,224</u>		<u>170,988</u>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>					
Restricted Funds		-	15,043		50,176
Unrestricted Funds:			<u>402,267</u>		<u>120,812</u>
			<u>387,224</u>		<u>170,988</u>

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

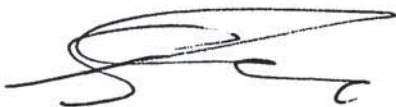
For the financial year in question the company was entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

No members have required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies regime.

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 10 December 2019 and signed on their behalf by:



Stephen Goschalk  
Trustee (Treasurer)

Date: 9 December 2019

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.

**Fixed Assets**

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

Leasehold Improvements – depreciated over the period of the lease. Items costing less than £500 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**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2019 £	Total Funds 2018 £
<b>Donations</b>				
HRI	34,334		34,334	-
Tuckers Solicitors			-	5,000
Anonymous Donation			-	54,000
Macarthy's Laboratories			-	5,000
Other small donations	3,533	5,675	9,208	6,130
	<u>37,867</u>	<u>5,675</u>	<u>43,542</u>	<u>70,130</u>
<b>Grants Receivable</b>				
City Bridge Trust		43,500	43,500	
Lloyds Foundation		19,600	19,600	
Esmee Fairbairn	50,000		50,000	50,000
Big Lottery Fund		-	-	11,837
Legal Education Foundation		36,940	36,940	36,709
Barrow Cadbury Trust		7,250	7,250	
The Pilgrim Trust		-	-	26,894
London Legal Support Trust		11,499	11,499	11,043
The Northmoor Trust	250,000		250,000	15,000
Paul Hamlyn Foundation		-	-	25,000
Open Society Foundation		213,777	213,777	172,101
Other small grants	-	5,684	5,684	1,294
	<u>300,000</u>	<u>338,250</u>	<u>638,250</u>	<u>349,878</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>337,867</u>	<u>343,925</u>	<u>681,792</u>	<u>420,008</u>

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

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2019 £	Total Funds 2018 £
			-	-
Legal Surgey Income		66,968	66,968	67,113
Consultancy	7,140		7,140	8,670
Training & Conferences	122	1,362	1,484	4,147
Expert Witness Income	59,939		59,939	54,600
Online Merchandise	2,385		2,385	3,174
Other Income	-	-	-	12,472
			-	-
	<u>69,586</u>	<u>68,330</u>	<u>137,916</u>	<u>150,176</u>
Hosting & Support Income	23,334	-	23,334	32,190
Miscellaneous Income	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>92,920</u>	<u>68,330</u>	<u>161,250</u>	<u>182,366</u>

**4 INVESTMENT INCOME**

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS £	TOTAL FUNDS 2019 £	TOTAL FUNDS 2018 £
Bank Interest	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>101</u>

**5 COSTS OF GENERATING VOLUNTARY INCOME**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2019 £	Total Funds 2018 £
Campaigns	-	-	-	-
Consultancy Fees	450	728	1,178	4,213
Equipment Hire	-	-	-	-
Hospitality	1,457	94	1,551	3,100
Marketing	2,392	2,961	5,353	584
	<u>4,299</u>	<u>3,783</u>	<u>8,082</u>	<u>7,897</u>

**6 FUNDRAISING COSTS**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2019 £	Total Funds 2018 £
Fundraising	6,178	-	6,178	6,178
	<u>6,178</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,178</u>	<u>6,178</u>



## 7 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2019	Total Funds 2018
	£	£	£	£
Information, advice and advocacy	82,574	436,567	519,141	492,582
Support costs	38,310	42,375	80,685	103,075
	<u>120,884</u>	<u>478,942</u>	<u>599,826</u>	<u>595,657</u>

## 8 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY TYPE

	ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DIRECTLY	SUPPORT COSTS	Total Funds 2019	Total Funds 2018
	£	£	£	£
Information, advice and advocacy	519,141	80,685	599,826	595,657
	<u>519,141</u>	<u>80,685</u>	<u>599,826</u>	<u>595,657</u>

## 9 GOVERNANCE COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2019	Total Funds 2018
	£	£	£	£
Gifts & Donations	-	-	-	-
Staff salaries	9,305	-	9,305	9,305
Professional fees	1,920	-	1,920	1,920
Legal fees	-	-	-	-
	<u>11,225</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>11,225</u>	<u>11,225</u>

## 10 NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR

	2019	2018
	£	£
Net incoming resources are stated after charging		
Depreciation	3,137	1,740
Independent Examination Fees	1,600	1,600
	<u>4,737</u>	<u>3,340</u>

## 11 INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REMUNERATION

	2019	2018
	£	£
Independent Examination	<u>1,600</u>	<u>1,600</u>

## 12 STAFF COSTS AND EMOLUMENTS

	2019	2018
Maximum Number of Employees	14	13
Average Number of Employees	12.3	12.7
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Wages & Salaries	359,111	350,133
Social Security costs	32,036	32,135
Pension Contributions	6,176	5,703
	<u>397,323</u>	<u>387,971</u>

No employee received emoluments exceeding £60,000 during the financial year (2018 - None).  
None of the trustees received any remuneration, benefits or expenses during the year.

## 13 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS – HELD FOR OWN USE

	COST	£
At 1 April 2018		47,288
Additions		47,069
Disposals		
At 31 March 2019		94,357
	DEPRECIATION	
At 1 April 2018		47,288
Additions		3,137
Disposals		
At 31 March 2019		50,425
	NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2018		-
At 31 March 2019		43,932

## 14 DEBTORS

	2019	2018
	£	£
Trade Debtors	36,146	43,676
Other Debtors	1,960	-
Prepayments	18,750	4,198
	<u>56,856</u>	<u>47,874</u>

## 15 CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2019	2018
	£	£
Trade Creditors	2,652	5,552
Other taxes and social security	13,424	11,932
Other creditors	-	-
Accruals	-	10,000
	<u>16,076</u>	<u>27,484</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 2019 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	63,647	1,005	63,647	1,005
In more than 5 years	-	-	-	-
	<u>63,647</u>	<u>1,005</u>	<u>63,647</u>	<u>1,005</u>

**18 RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS**

	At 1/4/18	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	Transfers	At 31/3/19
<b>Open Society Foundation</b>	169,909				169,909
Talking Drugs	-	95,909	115,814	109,375	-
African Fellowship	-	37,105	33,329	35,996	-
Asian Fellowship	-	40,728	33,168	33,168	-
Community Engagement		31,532	31,532		-
Lawyering on the Margins	90,449	-	90,449		-
<b>Legal Education Foundation (Legal)</b>					
Justice First Fellowship	2,114	36,940	39,054		-
Legal Education App	1,913	5,684	7,597		-
City Bridge Trust (Legal)		43,500	36,250		7,250
<b>Lloyds Bank Foundation (Legal)</b>		19,600	4,900		14,700
Legal Outreach Services (other)	-	40,467	84,690	82,530	-
<b>Barrow Cadbury Trust (Y-Stop)</b>	-	7,998	6,623		1,375
<b>TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>	<u>50,176</u>	<u>412,255</u>	<u>477,474</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>15,043</u>

**RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS (continued)**

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

**Barrow Cadbury Trust (Y-Stop)**

- The 2 year grant funding which commenced 01 November 2018 is to continue and expand training in the Y-Stop method in the West Midlands. The project aims to shift the interactions that young people have with the police by improving communication enabling young people to be less fearful and confrontational. Y-Stop is a stop and search project by young people for young people, developed in partnership by Stopwatch and Release.

**City Bridge Trust (Legal)**

- The funding is for 3 years which commenced 01 June 2018 towards a solicitor salary to develop and deliver the legal welfare outreach service into 3 designated boroughs (Westminster, Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets) in London.

**Legal Education Foundation (Legal):**



- Funding was provided to develop an app for those representing themselves in court criminal proceedings specifically for drug related offences.
- Continued funding is provided by the foundation to support a training contract for a trainee solicitor with specific emphasis on developing and advancing access to justice.

**Lloyds Bank Foundation (Legal):**

- The 3-year grant is for co-funding to scale up the services to weekly sessions in Brent and Ealing providing legal advice, assistance and representation addressing issues such as homelessness, housing insecurity, debt and access to welfare benefits. The service provided includes representation in matters that do not currently attract legal aid, for example, representation at Social Security Tribunals.

**Open Society Foundation:**

Provided a single 1 year grant for the continuation of TalkingDrugs, and the fellowship programmes for 2018/19 and the distribution of the funds is allocated by programme.

- **TalkingDrugs:** This is a project to develop a website ([www.talkingdrugs.org](http://www.talkingdrugs.org)) for a Global web presence.
- **Fellowship Programmes (African & Asian):** Two programmes were delivered during the year – one in Summer (Asian) and one in Winter (African) The purpose of the programmes 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.
- **Lawyering on the margins:** This 2-year project which commenced in the winter 2016 held an interim developmental meeting in Montreal 2017 at the HRI conference to develop materials and a workshop for initially 25 participants to be held in Indonesia in autumn 2018. A final 34 participants attended the workshop. The purpose of the project is to develop a network of lawyers to peer support each other through best practice.

## 19 UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	At 1/4/18	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	Transfers	At 31/3/19
	120,812	430,987	149,532		402,267

## 20 LEGAL OUTREACH SERVICE INCOME

The following organisations, trusts & foundations contributed to the Legal Outreach

Surgeries:

City Bridge Trust

CGL Newham

Lloyds Bank Foundation

London Legal Support Trust

South London & Maudsley NHS

Foundation (Lambeth & Wandsworth)

## 21 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets	Net Current Assets	Total Funds
	£	£	2019
			£
Restricted Funds	-	15,043	15,043
Unrestricted Funds	43,932	358,335	402,267
	<u>43,932</u>	<u>343,292</u>	<u>387,224</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.