

ANNUAL REPORT

2015/16

Release

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BOARD REPORT

It is a pleasure to be able to report that Release continues to be financially stable, continues to provide innovative and much-needed services to people affected by drugs and the drug laws, and is at the forefront of drug policy reform in the UK and abroad. As it enters its 50th year, Release continues to advocate for those most heavily persecuted by drug law enforcement – young people, those living in deprivation and those from black and ethnic minority communities - who were the focus of policing when the organisation was founded in 1967.

This year the organisation secured funding from the Pilgrim Trust, the Legal Education Foundation, and the Access to Justice Foundation, all of which comes in addition to continued funding from the Big Lottery Fund, the Open Society Foundations, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and the London Legal Services Trust. The funding from these donors, coupled with the income raised from the delivery of services, has ensured that the organisation has a diverse portfolio and the ability to implement exciting new projects. We thank all of those who fund the work that we do.

The organisation's ability to ensure that projects are cutting edge and are utilising new technological mediums is a testament to the staff's innovation in project development, as evidenced by the new Y-Stop app discussed in the report. I am particularly excited that next year we will be launching a new app to aid those who are taken to court for possession of drugs and who are no longer entitled to legal aid.

Some of the highlights from the last twelve months have been the launch of the aforementioned Y-Stop app, the legal team being awarded the Advice Quality Standards mark, the work that the legal and policy team did around the Psychoactive Substances Bill (now Act), and working with a number of partners across the globe to advance drug policies grounded in evidence, human rights and public health. Those partnerships ranged from providing legal and policy support to advocacy groups in Ghana and Mexico, to working with the Global Commission on Drug Policy on their 2015 report critiquing how the international drug control regime hinders access to essential medicines.

Finally, the Board thanks all of the Release staff and volunteers for their continued dedication to ensuring that the lives of people who use drugs are made better through the resolution of legal issues and/or by advancing policies that will reduce the harms that they experience because of punitive treatment and legal environments.

Ronald Hooberman

Chairman

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

It has been another busy year at Release. The first thing I would like to do is thank my wonderful colleagues for all of their commitment, professionalism and passion in advocating for the rights of people who use drugs. It is a truly amazing team and I am honoured to work with all of them.

Last year I wrote about the bleak state of drug policy in the UK, highlighting the harms of the Government's approach at a time of rising drug-related deaths. It is shocking that in the 12 months since writing that piece, the Government has done nothing to address this crisis. In fact, I am saddened to say that the rates of drug-related deaths have increased for the third year running and now far outstrip road traffic fatalities. In 2015 there were 3,674 registered deaths due to drug poisoning in England and Wales – 2,479 of these deaths involved illegal drugs. Once again heroin and/or morphine deaths increased significantly, with 1,201 recorded in 2015, an increase of 107 per cent in three years.

This crisis continues to be largely ignored by Government and media and we think we know why. Those who are dying are seen as expendable - they are people who are stigmatised and marginalised, their voices are ignored when they are alive and when they are dead nobody cares. It would be wrong of me to say that we are going to be their voice. What we can and will do, though, is continue to support people who use drugs and try to elevate their voices so that they are respected and treated with dignity. We will continue to advocate for reform, especially in light of this ongoing tragedy, recognising that substandard health services - where people are often subject to punitive regimes driven by ideology - are failing those they have a duty of care towards. As always in our advocacy we will push for reform of the drug laws and demand an end to the unnecessary and harmful criminalisation of people who use drugs.

There is some hope against this backdrop, however, as we are seeing some changes in policing at a local level. At least two police forces in England and Wales have implemented diversion programmes for people who are caught in possession of drugs. If we can build evidence from these local initiatives and demonstrate that criminalisation is unnecessary and damaging within this country then this will inevitably influence those in Westminster.

Furthermore our work on drug stop and searches and the fact that racial disparity in the criminal justice system is driven by drugs policing has had a significant impact on the policing landscape. We will continue to inform police at every level of the damaging effect the street policing of drugs has on communities, particularly as it fundamentally undermines the relationship between police forces and the communities they are meant to protect.

As with every year Release continued to provide direct services to people affected by drug use and the drug laws, and last year we assisted in the region of 7,000 people through the helpline and through providing legal representation at our outreach surgeries. It is this aspect of the work that is most rewarding as we know that every day we are helping to make positive changes in people's lives by getting them housed, getting their benefits reinstated or supporting them through a criminal prosecution. It is their experiences that informs our policy work and their strength and dignity that inspires us.

We were particularly proud to launch our new Y-Stop app at Notting Hill Carnival, which will assist people in filming police stop and search interactions and give them an option to submit complaints when those interactions go wrong. We also launched an update to our 2012 report on

decriminalisation models around the world, which includes new country profiles and provides further evidence for the positive social, health and economic outcomes when this policy approach is implemented effectively.

Finally, 2017 will mark our 50th anniversary, a monumental achievement for a small organisation working in this field, and a testament to the societal importance of our organisation. Moving forward we feel that the best way of celebrating five decades is for Release to continue to advocate for drug policies grounded in social justice principles and evidence - this is how the organisation started in 1967 and it is how it will operate in the future.

Niamh Eastwood

Executive Director



Some of the Release team with fellows attending our drug policy programme.

ADVICE & REPRESENTATION SERVICES

LEGAL SURGERIES

During 2015/16 our legal surgeries continued to be delivered through a variety of contracts and pilot programmes funded by charitable trusts and foundations. The previous year's lottery-funded pilots in Newham and Wandsworth were commissioned directly by the host drug treatment centres, which was a great success considering the funding cuts faced by treatment providers. In July 2015, three new pilots were launched under this programme, in the London boroughs of Enfield, Greenwich and Kingston. We also began delivery of legal surgeries - funded by the Pilgrim Trust - specifically for sex workers in East London to address not only the traditional social welfare issues but also problems with criminalisation and the use of anti-social behaviour legislation against this group.



Kirstie Douse, Head of Legal, presenting on legal rights of people who use drugs

Last year client numbers remained constant at just under 1,700, and a wide range of issues were dealt with. Of the total number of clients, 21 per cent accessed the legal service for welfare benefits matters; 40 per cent for housing advice and assistance (including 22 per cent for homelessness applications and reviews); 19 per cent for debt matters; 4 per cent for family law matters; 4 per cent for criminal legal advice; 5 per cent for immigration (which were referred); and, 9 per cent for other legal issues, including complaints against the police, criminal injuries claims, and civil litigation. We have identified that housing and homelessness issues are generally on the increase, and anticipate that this will continue into the next year. In addition to the advice and assistance provided, we also represented 34 people in appeals (Employment and Support Allowance, and Personal Independence Payment) at social security tribunals and were successful in 100 per cent of cases compared to the national average of 52 per cent of cases found in favour of the claimant.

In early 2016 we completed our in-depth evaluation report focussing on the delivery of the legal surgery in one treatment centre in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It was based on a social and economic return on investment analysis in relation to local and national government expenditure and concluded that for every £1 spent on the surgery there was a saving/return of £11.12. As part of this work we also surveyed 90 service users of the project, with eight clients undertaking an in-depth interview and providing feedback on soft outcomes as part of the process. Eighty-five per cent of clients believed the legal surgery had a positive effect on their treatment, while other reported improvements included: 66 per cent experienced an increased feeling of wellbeing; 44 per cent had

improved confidence/empowerment; 29 per cent increased income; 26 per cent improved living environment; and, 17 per cent reported enhanced social interaction. It is this aspect of the service outcomes that really matter - it is not just about resolving the legal issue but by doing so making people feel safer, more stable and more confident. For many that can be life changing.

What sets Release's legal interventions apart from other legal providers is that our clients know we advocate for their rights more broadly and that there is no judgement on their choices.

EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE

The reputation of the Expert Witness team, led by Head of Drugs Services Gary Sutton, is strong and they provide objective and up-to-date information in cases involving, among other issues, the supply of drugs. Particularly of note this year has been cases involving the cultivation/production of cannabis and an increased interest in home-grown medicinal cannabis; the increasing use of 'cutting agents'/adulterants in class A and B drugs; and, a year-on-year increase in drug proceeds of crime act (PoCA) cases. Many of the latter do not in practice target the upper echelons of the drugs trade, despite the Act's intentions, but rather domestic growers, desperate couriers and street-level user/dealers. At the other end of spectrum, we have been instructed to quantify 'criminal benefit' in a number of large importation cases and some upper-end cannabis 'production' cases. Whilst there was a downturn in cases we were instructed on – largely linked to a reduction in legal aid and the introduction of the Criminal Court fees – the team worked on a number of more complex cases, notably those involving PoCA proceedings, meaning the overall income of the service was not as reduced as it could have been.

DRUGS ADVICE COUNSELLING 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 Services at Release, who is a qualified psychotherapist, continued to deliver this service throughout 2015/16 primarily working with people affected by problems with alcohol. The counselling delivered is aimed at patients of GPs who are resistant to attending 'specialist' drug and alcohol treatment programmes, mainly because of a preference for our way of working with them, but also because of previous negative experiences of these services and confidentiality concerns. The counselling service is another source of funding for Release and ensures that the organisation diversifies its income generation.

NATIONAL LEGAL AND DRUGS HELPLINE

The helpline continues to be a popular resource for the public and professionals. The number of queries we received remained steady for 2015/16 at approximately 5,700 calls, emails and online enquiry forms dealt with by the team. Interestingly, email and online submissions increased and now account for almost a third of all communications we receive from members of the public seeking advice or support. This is indicative of the increasing use of digital resources to seek advice and information.

The legal team assisted with a variety of issues, though queries around cannabis cultivation, alleged possession with intent to supply drugs, and the impact of criminal records for drug offences were

particularly common. Concern about the latter subject, especially around employment and travel, emphasises the negative effect that a criminal record can have on someone and highlights the importance of our call for the removal of criminal sanctions for drug possession.

The drugs team continued to take on casework via the helpline, supporting people in a range of circumstances, but more often than not where they were having difficulties with their treatment providers. This is an area of growing concern for us and we are seeing evermore punitive conditions being applied to those accessing treatment, ranging from threatened reductions in the dose of opiate substitution medications prescribed, to shifting people from weekly or monthly prescriptions to daily supervised consumption for no apparent clinical reason.

The helpline continues to be unfunded but as we have repeatedly stated we will continue to provide this service as there is an evidenced demand for it and it keeps us up to date with what is going on in relation to the landscape of drug use and drug law enforcement.

As stated in previous reports people are also using the Release website as a source of information. The traffic to Release website as a whole fell slightly in 2015/16, which was largely due to the fact the previous year had experienced a surge in numbers on two occasions which distorted the figures. The number of people visiting the site was 501,783. Once again the legal advice pages dominated those visited with [list of controlled substances](#) once again being the most popular page with just over 87,000 unique visits. Other areas that featured in the top 10 pages accessed were: [what happens at court](#); how the [sentencing guidelines impact on cannabis offences](#); the law on [possession with intent to supply drugs](#); analysis of the [Psychoactive Substances legislation](#); and, [sentencing](#). Taken together this demonstrates that many members of the public are accessing advice on drugs and the law via the website rather than using the direct advice services Release provides. These pages are updated regularly.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

During 2015/16 we worked on an update to our 'Sex Workers and the Law' booklet and rights card, which was possible because of the Pilgrim Trust's funding for the sex workers legal project. This will be published at the beginning of 2017.

We also received funding from The Legal Education Foundation for a self-representation guide around drug possession offences in the Magistrates' Court. This addresses the gap in assistance created by the absence of legal aid for drug possession cases, unless there is a real risk of a custodial sentence. This publication will be complemented by a mobile app which allows the user to get advice and assistance at each stage of their case, from the police station right through to sentencing. The aim is to achieve the best possible outcome for the individual and their circumstances. We will also be able to track engagement and outcomes to inform our policy and campaign work. We expect this resource to launch in January 2017.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Release's youth work largely focuses on our stop and search programme, [Y-Stop](#), which we run in partnership with [StopWatch](#). Launched in 2014 the primary aim of Y-Stop is to empower young people to handle encounters with the police in a positive way so as to reduce the risks they face, whilst at the same time holding the police to account through monitoring and enabling people to complain about police stop and search conduct where necessary and appropriate to do so. Release is involved in this work in recognition of the fact that approximately 60 per cent of all stop and searches are for drugs.

The past year has seen Y-Stop arrive at several milestones and successfully reach thousands of young people, primarily with the launch of two flagship products and the expansion of our peer training programme.

Firstly, in March 2015 we launched a short [two-part film](#) that aims to teach young people how to manage police interactions safely. The film follows three young people through their stop and search experience and introduces its audience to the [six key principles](#) that underpin the whole project. Starring well-known actors from Mandem on the Wall, Youngers and Eastenders, the film has reached over 105,000 views on YouTube to date. Whilst it has been well received among youth audiences, youth workers and charities, we have also been approached by policing bodies who wish to use it in training and awareness-raising work with officers. In addition to the film's success on social media, it has been viewed by hundreds more through being employed as a training resource in workshops and academic courses run by other organisations.



Still from the Y-Stop film

Secondly, Y-Stop has created a simple tool for young people to complain about their stop and search experience. This is as a result of our conversations with young people who told us they do not trust the official complaint system neither do they find it accessible. The [Y-Stop App](#) launched at the end of August 2015 at Notting Hill Carnival where a Y-Stop promotional team, which included representatives of Release and StopWatch, distributed 1,000 wristbands with QR codes so that carnival-goers could download the app immediately, 1,000 badges and 1,000 stickers. In the short period since its launch, the app has been downloaded 8,000 times, and even "trended" in the iTunes App Store in early November, highlighting that police accountability is an issue that resonates with many. The app and

Y-Stop more broadly also received significant press coverage from outlets such as [Sky News](#) (which reported on it as part of the wider Black Lives Matter movement), Wired, Russia Today, Tech Times and [BuzzFeed](#). To date we have received 1,778 videos and 143 reports and are assisting people in bringing complaints when they wish to do so.



Natasha Dhumma, Project Advocacy Manager, being interviewed on Sky News about the launch of the Y-Stop App.

This year we have also expanded and improved our peer training programme; 700 young people have been trained across the UK (over 500 were based in London), with 60 people remaining engaged through receiving “train-the-trainers” sessions (including youth and community workers). Our two-hour peer training sessions use film, group discussion and roleplay exercises to teach participants the six principles for stop and search and how to apply them. From debrief sessions during training, feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with 80 per cent of students being able to recall all six [S.E.A.R.C.H.](#) principles from memory and 95 per cent stating they would share these principles with friends and family. We have also been able to assess participants’ learning through interactive evaluation techniques, identifying specific tips they have picked up to help them steer their interactions with police to a smoother and faster conclusion. 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.

Integral to all of our outreach activities are our pocket materials and we have to date distributed 30,000 [Search Cards](#) and almost all of our initial run of 10,000 [Oyster Card wallets](#), both of which underscore the enormous demand. We have recently translated our Search Card into Somali, which will improve our engagement with this particular hard-to-reach community. The translation was undertaken in consultation with Somali communities in London.

The popularity of our training programme has resulted in additional resources being deployed to support peer trainers and volunteers, including facilitation training and the payment of honorariums to incentivise the most disadvantaged young people to remain involved in Y-Stop. Further, we are keen to produce training tools such as flash cards, which can be used in our sessions with younger children.



Launching the Y-Stop app at Notting Hill



Y-Stop training

As the App has become more popular we are also looking to expand the team to handle reports and videos, following up with users to provide support where necessary. As a result of our progress across the different Y-Stop activities, we are looking for additional funding to sustain its growth and ensure we can meet demand and disseminate all of our tools in 2016. We are very grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation who have provided funding for the project for the next two years, and will be approaching further funders in the coming months.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

TALKINGDRUGS

Release's online platform TalkingDrugs – a multilingual news website dedicated to covering global developments related to drug policy and harm reduction – continued to build on the successes seen in 2014/15, with audience numbers growing approximately 10 per cent to 550,000 visitors across all languages in 2015/16. Most promisingly, while 2014/15's increase in traffic was marked by notable spikes in the number of people visiting the site on certain days, 2015/16 saw a stabilising of the visitor numbers and a trend that suggests this upward trajectory will continue and solidify.

TalkingDrugs was the first website to break key drug policy developments in English, including Colombia's move toward [regulating medicinal cannabis](#) and Brazil's Supreme Court [debate on decriminalization](#). In each case, the website beat the Associated Press and other major outlets to the news, an indication of Release's close ties to the drug policy reform movement around the world. TalkingDrugs was additionally linked in a number of major online news outlets, including [VICE](#), the [Washington Post](#) and [Mashable](#). This is indicative of the website's reputation as a key resource on drug-related issues.

Though we have seen successes in relation to TalkingDrugs as a well-regarded and competitive news site, it is first and foremost a platform to highlight the work of partner organisations around the world and to elevate the voices of people who have been adversely effected by drug laws. Among the work and campaigns highlighted were the introduction of public sharps bins in Dublin; efforts to open a supervised injection facility in New York; the e-petition in the UK calling on MPs to debate cannabis regulation; and, civil society open letters to the Global Fund. This underscores TalkingDrugs' vital role in filling the media void and keeping the public up to date with important advocacy developments.

One of the unique pieces of work that TalkingDrugs produced in 2015/16 was the international online video campaign ahead of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in

New York in April 2016. The project involved releasing a series of short videos of people calling on their respective governments to push for tangible reform at the historic event and utilised the *Stop the Harm* open source brand (discussed in more detail, below). Efforts were made – primarily through working with Virgin and Richard Branson - to engage high profile voices to participate and help with the project's reach and impact, though unfortunately we were unable to secure as many as we would have liked. Still, we managed to produce and release 130 videos with representation from 39 countries, and we saw strong engagement from the activist community in the three months leading up to the UNGASS.

In terms of the breakdown of devices used to access the TalkingDrugs website as a whole, for the first time in TalkingDrugs' history the majority of people (51 per cent) accessed the site from their smart phones. As more and more people are using their mobile devices to access news this shows that TalkingDrugs is keeping pace with technological developments in having a responsive site. There are plans to tweak and improve this further in the future, though we are moving ahead with a strong foundation in this respect.

Volunteers are vital to the success of TalkingDrugs. They 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.



Release staff presenting at Royal Holloway University & King's College London.

Over the coming 12 months there are plans to redesign TalkingDrugs and to introduce a static content section that will not only help enhance the site's reputation as a valuable resource, but also ensure that web traffic can continue to steadily increase in the future.

GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

Release served as technical advisor to the Global Commission on Drug Policy in 2015 on their report exploring the impact of international drug control on access to essential medicines. The report - [The negative impact of drug control on public health: The global crisis of avoidable pain](#) – was launched in October 2015 at the International Harm Reduction Conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Release has continued to serve in this capacity for the Commission and is working on its 2016 report on drug decriminalisation.

COLLABORATION ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS

In the year leading up to the UNGASS, Release was actively involved with partner organisations in the international communications working group to devise what would eventually become the open source brand and platform, *Stop the Harm*, to highlight reform campaigns from around the world. This brand was aimed first and foremost at mobilizing and uniting the diverse movement across the world working on drug policy-related issues, before informing and engaging the general public. Release not only fed into the brainstorming around brand and messaging, but also was instrumental in writing and pulling together copy for the web platform www.stoptheharm.org. Upon the launch of *Stop the Harm*, Release and TalkingDrugs actively promoted it where possible on social media and, as previously mentioned, adopted the brand for the UNGASS video advocacy project in order to tie it to the broader global reform movement.

Additionally, Release worked with Harm Reduction International (HRI) to develop short advocacy videos to promote the International Harm Reduction Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2015. This involved filming, editing and disseminating batches of videos every fortnight and resulted in almost 50 videos being released which collectively achieved over 10,000 views. At the conference itself, Release helped manage internal and external communications, including social media and audio-visual content in the conference's exhibition area.

One of the greatest successes in the stream of work with HRI was organising a Thunderclap immediately prior to the conference to promote their *Harm Reduction Decade* initiative that was launched at the conference's close. The Thunderclap achieved a social media reach of over 7 million people thanks to Release and HRI successfully obtaining the online support of high profile figures such as Richard Branson and Kofi Annan.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

In 2015/16 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 2015/16, with participants from East and West Africa, and Latin America. 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.

The success of the five programmes hosted between 2013 and the end of 2015/16 saw the initiative continue to receive funding and expand to East and Southeast Asia and South Africa in 2016/17.

COLLABORATION ON INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Release supported partners working on harm reduction and drug policy in a number of countries across the world, specifically in relation to policy and legal reform.

As part of the aforementioned fellowship programme, Release staff continued to work with previous attendees of the fellowship in Ghana throughout 2015. This stream of work primarily involved drafting

briefings for parliamentarians in the country who were considering introducing new drugs legislation which would have seen mandatory minimums of 10 years in prison for possession of any quantity of illicit drug. Release, with our in-country partners, drafted a briefing that scrutinised the proposals and provided evidence for alternatives to imprisonment, including diversion away from the criminal justice system. This work culminated in the Executive Director being invited to the capital Accra to present to the Parliamentary Committee responsible for this proposed legislation. The Bill has now been redrafted and we are encouraged to hear that the new version includes diversion from incarceration.

Release also submitted an [amicus brief in a Mexican Supreme Court case](#) involving a legal challenge brought by [SMART](#) against the government for its refusal to grant a license to four individuals to allow them to grow cannabis for personal consumption. The Court held in favour of the claimants, stating that Mexico's laws were in breach of the constitution and that the ban on recreational use of cannabis was contrary to the principle of personal autonomy. The decision was limited to the four claimants in the case, giving them the right to produce, possess and use cannabis; however, the case does set the foundation for further challenges to be brought and may result in a Supreme Court decision which would ultimately end the prohibition on cannabis, and possibly other drugs, in Mexico.

Finally, in Ireland the Parliament's Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality held an inquiry into alternatives to criminalisation of drug possession offences. Release, working with our colleagues at [Harm Reduction International](#), the [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) and [Transform](#), produced a [joint submission](#) detailing the positive evidence for ending the use of criminal sanctions for possession of drugs. Release continues to work with our partners in Ireland, including [CityWide](#), to support the fantastic work that they are doing and to push for the reform of the drug laws.



Drug policy advocates, including Release's Executive Director, meeting the President of Ireland at a conference in Dublin

POLICY & RESEARCH

Much of Release's policy work throughout 2015/16 was reactive, primarily due to the surprising result of the 2015 general election; the Conservative's against-the-odds victory and subsequent mandate saw the Psychoactive Substances Bill introduced as one of the first pieces of legislation under the new Government. The Bill sought to prohibit the novel psychoactive substances (NPS) market through a

blanket ban, and meant that our engagement with parliamentarians was focused [on briefing members of both Houses on the Bill's significant shortcomings.](#)

The Bill was initially brought before the House of Lords where it had three readings, and Baroness Meacher, working with Release, laid a number of proposed amendments. The Lords could not challenge the legislation in its entirety, though, as the proposal to ban NPS was contained within the Conservative Manifesto. Thus, the aim of the briefings and amendments at this stage was to limit the reach of the legislation as much as possible.

The Bill itself bans all psychoactive substances including alcohol, tobacco, some foods, medicines, and even controlled drugs, all of which had to be explicitly excluded from the legislation. The aim of our advocacy in the Lords was primarily to question the Government's approach on the basis that their definition of 'psychoactivity' was unenforceable and therefore the legislation should be suspended to allow for a comprehensive review of the country's drug policy as a whole. We were pleased that a number of Peers did highlight the problems that existed within the legislation and called for an overhaul of UK drug policy, arguing that this was an opportunity for the Government to decriminalise all controlled drugs. This was a particularly pertinent argument as the act of possession was not an offence within the Bill. The level of debate on drug policy reform in the Lords was impressive and our briefing and amendments were cited on a number of occasions. Unfortunately, for political - and indeed ideological - reasons the Government pushed ahead with the legislation and only a few minor amendments were made to the Bill at the Lords.

The second phase of the Bill was through the Commons. Again Release briefed MPs, meeting with members of the Scottish National Party, Labour's frontbench spokesperson for drugs, the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats. However, little traction was made at the Commons in respect of amendments, and the Bill received Royal Assent in January 2016.

Though the Bill's passage was extremely disappointing, the engagement with parliamentarians throughout this process led to Release developing significant contacts in Parliament moving forward, especially with MPs who were elected in 2015.

Release's Executive Director, along with Professor David Nutt, Chief Constable Mike Barton and others, was invited in 2015 to participate on the Liberal Democrats' expert panel reviewing how a regulated cannabis market would work in the UK. The panel resulted in a report endorsing cannabis regulation that attracted significant media coverage and was adopted as official party policy.

Outside of Release's direct engagement with parliamentarians, we successfully produced an update to our 2012 report on decriminalisation, [*A Quiet Revolution: Drug Decriminalisation Across the Globe*](#). The updated publication included new country profiles – including Jamaica, Costa Rica and Ecuador – and was launched in spring 2016 and presented in front of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna by our Policy and Communications Manager. The report also gained a reasonable amount of media coverage, being picked up by online outlets in the UK, US and Latin America.



Edward Fox, Policy and Communications Manager, presenting Release's new report on decriminalisation at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Vienna, March 2016.

Release continued to highlight the negative impact of drugs policing and the fact that drugs stop and searches dominated the overall search figures. We were particularly pleased that the College of Policing, responsible for developing standards and training for police forces, announced that 'smell of cannabis' should not, on its own, be grounds for a stop and search. This is something we continuously brought up at the College's Stop Search Strategic Scrutiny Group, of which we are a member. We also continued to engage with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary ('HMIC') and will be feeding into their next review of stop and search in 2017.

Along with briefing Parliamentarians on several occasions in relation to the Psychoactive Substances Bill and [submitting evidence](#) to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the proposed legislation, Release also submitted the following:

- A response to [the independent review](#) into the employment outcomes of drug and alcohol addiction, or obesity;
- A supporting submission to the National AIDS Trusts' (NAT) requesting of a new [sub-indicator within the Public Health Outcomes Framework \(PHOF\)](#) to record and monitor drug-related deaths. The call for this indicator was ultimately successful, with drug-related deaths included in the PHOF 2016.
- The aforementioned joint submission to the [Irish Parliament's Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality](#) that presented the case for drug decriminalisation in Ireland.

MEDIA WORK

As previously mentioned, the respective launches of the Y-Stop app and report on decriminalisation garnered reasonable media attention. The former included appearances on Sky News and Russia Today, and a write ups in Wired and Buzzfeed UK, while the latter was covered online by outlets in the UK, US and Latin America.



Niamh Eastwood, Executive Director,
on BBC Newsnight.

Release staff also continued to be called upon to comment in the media throughout 2015/16 on issues related to, among others, the Psychoactive Substances Bill, cannabis regulation, decriminalisation, and drugs policing. Among the media outlets Release staff featured in were:

- BBC Newsnight
- New York Times
- VICE (US and UK)
- Guardian
- BBC Radio
- ITV
- TeleSur
- Huffington Post

Release also worked with The Economist to analyse data on the disproportionality of drugs policing based on the class of substance, which suggested that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are typically targeted in drugs policing.

EVENTS, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Our staff contributed to dozens of panels, seminars and conferences around the UK and further afield, and held several talks and lectures at UK universities, including University College London, the London School of Economics, Durham University, Liverpool John Moore's University and Queen's University Belfast. Conferences in which we participated included service user-led conferences; the HIT conference in Liverpool; the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna; the International Harm Reduction Conference in Malaysia (where we assisted with their communications strategy); an event at the European Parliament Information Office; the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) conference; the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)/Substance Misuse Management in General Practice (SMMGP) 20th National Drug and Alcohol Conference; the Centre for Legal Studies conference in Buenos Aires; and, conferences addressing a range of issues such as sex work, policing and the new legislation around psychoactive substances. In addition, we presented at the Times Cheltenham Science Festival as well as dozens of community events such as The R Word, a youth arts event as part of "End Racism This Generation", Sadler's Wells, and, the Spark social justice festival, East London. We continued to work on the issue of drugs policing through our youth programme and more broadly with Operation Black Vote, attending events they facilitated with

young people to discuss drug policy. Attendances at conferences outside the UK are funded by external agencies as are many of the national events that we participate in.



Edward Fox, Policy and Communications Manager, presenting on the harms of criminalisation (Warsaw).

RELEASE LEGAL EMERGENCY AND DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED
ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

TRUSTEES

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

RELEASE STAFF

Donna Crentsil-Keane	Lorna Macfarlane
Natasha Dhumma	Caitlin Oddy (left September 2015)
Kirstie Douse	William Ramsden
Niamh Eastwood	Jordan Santos
Keith Edwards	Gary Sutton
Helena Forrester (left November 2015)	Daniel Williams
Edward Fox	

VOLUNTEERS

Alicia Cristina Gallardo	Marzena Ciurkot-Kubek
Andre Gomes	Alex Vaughan
Jennifer Neuman	Erin O'Mara
Benjamin Taub	Claire Robbins
Patrick Carnegy	Edward Tomlinson
Luke Horswell	Sophie Angus
Julian Kaser	Holly Barber
Mehwish Malik	Henrietta Bennett
Olivia Bumpus	Ed Brown
Danilo Akira Ikedo	Mei Chung
Kristin Marin	Jodie Cudworth (remote)
Joy Desseigne	Richard Frenkel
Duangta Pawa	Glen Hart
Priya Thethi	Katie Hooley
Hannah Taylor	Kyriakoula Lemos
Sarah Reneaume	Lydia Ryan
Agata Vyhankova	Mishkin Taylor
Maria Doležych	Tamara Yavuz

RELEASE LEGAL EMERGENCY AND DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED
ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

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

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd
21 Garland Court
1 Premiere Place
London E14 8SA

OUR FUNDERS

Our thanks go to the following foundations, trusts, organisations and individuals who have provided grants to Release this year:

Access to Justice Foundation
Big Lottery Fund
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
Gilbert Edgar Trust
Legal Education Foundation

London Legal Support Trust
Neil Kreitman Foundation
Pilgrim Trust
Trust for London

We would also like to thank the many individuals who have made donations and supported our campaigns.

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
21 Garland Court
1 Premiere Place
London E14 8SA

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

		2016	2015
	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES			
VOLUNTARY INCOME	49,947	430,624	480,571
ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS	110,974	119,941	230,915
INVESTMENT INCOME	112	-	112
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	161,033	550,565	711,598
RESOURCES EXPENDED			
COSTS OF GENERATING FUNDS			
Costs of generating voluntary Income	9,401	3,332	12,733
Fundraising Costs	5,666	-	5,666
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	117,835	460,269	578,104
GOVERNANCE COSTS	11,147	440	11,586
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	144,049	464,041	608,090
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR	16,984	86,524	103,509
Transfers between funds	-	-	-
Net Movement in the year	16,984	86,524	103,509
Fund Balances Brought forward at 1st April	86,256	20,677	106,933
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD			
AT 31ST MARCH	103,240	107,201	210,442
			108,532

These summarised financial statements may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited. For further information, the full annual financial statements, the independent examiners' report on those financial statements and the Directors annual report should be consulted all of which are available on the Release website. The full annual financial statements, from which these summary financial statements are derived were approved on 14 December 2016 and have been submitted to the Charity Commission and Companies House.

Approved by the board on 14 December 2016 and signed on their behalf by:

Ronald Hooberman
Chairman of Trustees

RELEASE LEGAL EMERGENCY AND DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED
ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

BALANCE SHEET

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31ST MARCH 2016

	NOTE		2016		2015
		£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Fixed Assets	13		3,480		5,218
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	14	33,547		44,266	
Cash at Bank and in hand		194,481		81,784	
		228,029		126,050	
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors - falling due within one year	15	-	21,066	-	24,335
NET ASSETS					
			206,963		101,715
			210,442		106,933
REPRESENTED BY:					
Restricted Funds	18		107,201		20,677
Unrestricted Funds:	19		103,240		86,256
			210,442		106,933

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 14 December 2016 and signed on their behalf by:

James Hardy

Trustee (Treasurer)

Company Registration Number: 1966619

Release

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

LEGAL EMERGENCY &
DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED

1966619 (Registered No.)

CHARITY NUMBER

801118

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

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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	124-128 City Road London EC1V 2NJ
TRUSTEES AT DATE OF APPROVAL OF REPORT	Natasha Dhumma Roger Golland James Hardy (Treasurer) Edward Henry David Hibbert Ronald Hooberman (Chairman) Anna Ling Amber Marks David Rowntree Viveen Taylor
AUDITOR	Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd 21 Garland Court 1 Premiere Place London E14 8SA
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

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 2016.

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 and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, 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 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). 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 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
- 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 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.

INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

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 2015/16 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. 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 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

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, 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 £103,509 (2015 – net incoming resources £24,384) details of which are given in the financial statements below.

Free reserves at 31st March 2016 amounted to £103,240 (2015 - £86,256).

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.

ACTIVITIES AND REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The company operated satisfactorily during the year to 31 March 2016.

Release's financial position in 2015/16 continued to stabilise with the organisation demonstrating a marginal 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**ADVICE & REPRESENTATION SERVICES****1. LEGAL SURGERIES**

During 2015/16 legal surgeries continued to be delivered through a variety of contracts and pilot programmes funded by charitable trusts and foundations. The previous year's lottery-funded pilots in Newham and Wandsworth were commissioned directly by the host drug treatment centres, which was a great success considering the funding cuts faced by treatment providers. In July 2015 three new pilots were launched under this programme, in the London boroughs of Enfield, Greenwich and Kingston. We also began delivery of legal surgeries - funded by the Pilgrim Trust - specifically for sex workers in East London to address not only the traditional social welfare issues but also problems with criminalisation and the use of anti-social behaviour legislation against this group.

Last year client numbers remained constant at just under 1,700, and a wide range of issues were dealt with. Of the total number of clients, 21 per cent accessed the legal service for welfare benefits matters; 40 per cent for housing advice and assistance (including 22 per cent for homelessness applications and reviews); 19 per cent for debt matters; 4 per cent for family law matters; 4 per cent for criminal legal advice; 5 per cent for immigration (which were referred); and, 9 per cent for other legal issues, including complaints against the police, criminal injuries claims, and civil litigation. In addition to advice and assistance provided, we also represented 34 people in appeals (Employment and Support Allowance, and Personal Independence Payment) at social security tribunals and were successful in 100 per cent of cases compared to the national average of 52 per cent of cases found in favour of the person claiming the benefit.

In early 2016 we completed our in-depth evaluation report focussing on the delivery of the legal surgery in one treatment centre in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea. It was based on a social and economic return on investment analysis in relation to local and national government expenditure and concluded that for every £1 spent on the surgery there was a saving/return of £11.12.

Next year the legal team are excited to launch a new interactive guide to support people who have to represent themselves in criminal proceedings for possession of drugs – these types of prosecutions will generally not attract legal aid. The guide will be available online and through a new app, this innovative work demonstrates how Release are responding to the use of technological tools for the delivery of legal services. We will also be exploring the possibility of developing a new in-house housing service to assist those who are homeless and representing people facing possession proceedings in court.

2. DRUGS SERVICES

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 Services at Release, who is a qualified psychotherapist, continued to deliver this service throughout 2015/16 primarily working with people affected by problems with alcohol. The counselling delivered is aimed at patients of GPs who are resistant to attending ‘specialist’ drug and alcohol treatment programmes, mainly because of a preference for our way of working with them, but also because of previous negative experiences of these services and confidentiality concerns. The counselling service is another source of funding for Release and ensures that the organisation diversifies its income generation.

3. NATIONAL LEGAL AND DRUGS HELPLINE

The helpline continues to be a popular resource for the public and professionals. The number of queries we received remained steady for 2015/16 at approximately 5,700 calls, emails and online enquiry forms dealt with by the team. Interestingly, email and online submissions increased and now account for almost a third of all communications we receive from members of the public seeking advice or support. This is indicative of the increasing use of digital resources to seek advice and information.

The legal team assisted with a variety of issues, though queries around cannabis cultivation, alleged possession with intent to supply drugs, and the impact of criminal records for drug offences were particularly common. Concern about the latter subject, especially around employment and travel, emphasises the negative effect that a criminal record can have on someone and highlights the importance of our call for the removal of criminal sanctions for drug possession.

The drug teams continued to take on casework via the helpline, supporting people in a range of circumstances but more often than not where they were having difficulties with their treatment providers. This is an area of growing concern for us and we are seeing evermore punitive conditions being applied to those accessing treatment - this can range from threatened reductions in the dose of opiate substitution medications prescribed, to shifting people from weekly or monthly prescriptions to daily supervised consumption for no apparent clinical reason.

The helpline continues to be unfunded but as we have repeatedly stated we will continue to provide this service as there is an evidenced demand for it and it keeps us up to date with what is going on in relation to the landscape of drug use and drug law enforcement.

As stated in previous reports people are also using the Release website as a source of information. The number of people visiting the site was 501,783. Once again the legal advice pages dominated those visited with [list of controlled substances](#) once again being the most popular page with just over 87,000 unique visits. Other areas that featured in the top 10 pages accessed were: [what happens at court](#); how the [sentencing guidelines impact on cannabis offences](#); the law on [possession with intent to supply drugs](#); analysis of the [Psychoactive Substances legislation](#); and, [sentencing](#). Taken together this demonstrates that many members of the public are accessing advice on drugs and the law via the website rather than using the direct advice services Release provides. These pages are updated regularly.

RESEARCH, POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS

Much of Release's policy work throughout 2015/16 was reactive, primarily due to the surprising result of the 2015 general election; the Conservative's against-the-odds victory and subsequent mandate saw the Psychoactive Substances Bill introduced as one of the first pieces of legislation under the new government. The Bill sought to prohibit the novel psychoactive substances (NPS) market through a blanket ban, and meant that our engagement with parliamentarians was focused [on briefing members of both Houses on the Bill's significant shortcomings](#).

The aim of our advocacy was primarily to question the Government's approach on the basis that their definition of 'psychoactivity' was unenforceable and therefore the legislation should be suspended to allow for a comprehensive review of the country's drug policy as a whole. We were pleased that a number of Peers did highlight the problems that existed within the legislation and called for an overhaul of UK drug policy, arguing that this was an opportunity for the Government to decriminalise all controlled drugs. This was a particularly pertinent argument as the act of possession was not an offence within the Bill. The level of debate on drug policy reform in the Lords was impressive and our briefing and amendments were cited on a number of occasions. Unfortunately, for political - and indeed ideological - reasons the Government pushed ahead with the legislation and only a few minor amendments were made to the Bill at the Lords.

Release also briefed MPs, meeting with members of the Scottish National Party, Labour's frontbench spokesperson for drugs, the Green Party and the Liberal Democrats. However, little traction was made at the Commons in respect of amendments, and the Bill received Royal Assent in January 2016.

Release's Executive Director, along with Professor David Nutt, Chief Constable Mike Barton and others, was invited in 2015 to participate on the Liberal Democrats' expert panel reviewing how a regulated cannabis market would work in the UK. The panel resulted in a report endorsing cannabis regulation that attracted significant media coverage and was adopted as official party policy.

Outside of Release's direct engagement with parliamentarians, we successfully produced an update to our 2012 report on decriminalisation, [*A Quiet Revolution: Drug Decriminalisation Across the Globe*](#). The updated publication included new country profiles – including Jamaica, Costa Rica and Ecuador – and was launched in spring 2016 and presented in front of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna by our Policy and Communications Manager. The report also gained a

reasonable amount of media coverage, being picked up by online outlets in the UK, US and Latin America.

Release continued to highlight the negative impact of drugs policing and the fact that drugs stop and searches dominated the overall search figures. We were particularly pleased that the College of Policing, responsible for developing standards and training for police forces, announced that 'smell of cannabis' should not, on its own, be grounds for a stop and search. This is something we continuously brought up at the College's Stop Search Strategic Scrutiny Group, of which we are a member. We also continued to engage with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary ('HMIC') and will be feeding into their next review of stop and search in 2017.

Along with briefing Parliamentarians on several occasions in relation to the Psychoactive Substances Bill and [submitting evidence](#) to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the proposed legislation, Release also submitted the following:

- A response to [the independent review](#) into the employment outcomes of drug and alcohol addiction, or obesity;
- A supporting submission to the National AIDS Trusts' (NAT) requesting a new [sub-indicator within the Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) to record and monitor drug-related deaths. The call for this indicator was ultimately successful, with drug-related deaths included in the PHOF 2016.
- A joint submission to the [Irish Parliament's Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality](#) that presented the case for drug decriminalisation in Ireland.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

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 build on the successes seen in 2014/15, with audience numbers growing approximately 10 per cent to 550,000 visitors across all languages in 2015/16. Most promisingly, while 2014/15's increase in traffic was marked by notable spikes in the number of people visiting the site on certain days, 2015/16 saw a stabilising of the visitor numbers and a trend that suggests this upward trajectory will continue and solidify.

TalkingDrugs was the first website to break key drug policy developments in English, including Colombia's move toward [regulating medicinal cannabis](#) and Brazil's Supreme Court [debate on decriminalization](#). In each case, the website beat the Associated Press and other major outlets to the news, an indication of Release's close ties to the drug policy reform movement around the world. TalkingDrugs was additionally cited in a number of major online news outlets, including [VICE](#), the [Washington Post](#) and [Mashable](#). This is indicative of the website's reputation as a key resource on drug-related issues.

Volunteers are vital to the success of TalkingDrugs. They 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.

Over the coming 12 months there are plans to redesign TalkingDrugs and to introduce a static content section that will not only help enhance the site's reputation as a valuable resource, but also ensure that web traffic can continue to steadily increase in the future.

2. GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

Release served as technical advisor to the Global Commission on Drug Policy in 2015 on their report exploring the impact of international drug control on access to essential medicines. The report - [The negative impact of drug control on public health: The global crisis of avoidable pain](#) – was launched in October 2015 at the International Harm Reduction Conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Release has continued to serve in this capacity for the Commission and is working on its 2016 report on drug decriminalisation.

3. COLLABORATION ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS

In the year leading up to the UNGASS, Release was actively involved with partner organisations in the international communications working group to devise what would eventually become the open source brand and platform to highlight the reform campaigns from around the world, *Stop the Harm*.

Additionally, Release worked with Harm Reduction International (HRI) to develop short advocacy videos to promote the International Harm Reduction Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2015. At the conference itself, Release helped manage internal and external communications, including social media and audio-visual content in the conference's exhibition area.

4. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

In 2015/16 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 2015/16, with participants from East and West Africa, and Latin America. 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.

The success of the five programmes hosted up until the end of 2015/16 saw it continue to receive funding and expand to East and Southeast Asia and South Africa in 2016/17.

5. COLLABORATION ON INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Release supported partners working on harm reduction and drug policy in a number of countries across the world, specifically in relation to policy and legal reform.

The Executive Director assisted advocates in Ghana, drafting briefings for parliamentarians in the country who were considering introducing new drugs legislation which would have seen mandatory minimums of 10 years in prison for possession of any quantity of illicit drug. This work culminated in the Executive Director being invited to the capital Accra to present to the Parliamentary Committee responsible for this proposed legislation. The Bill has now been redrafted and we are encouraged to hear that the new version includes diversion from incarceration.

Release also submitted an [amicus brief in a Mexican Supreme Court case](#) involving a legal challenge brought by [SMART](#) against the government for its refusal to grant a license to four individuals to allow them to grow cannabis for personal consumption. The Court held in favour of the claimants, stating that Mexico's laws were in breach of the constitution and that the ban on recreational use of cannabis was contrary to the principle of personal autonomy.

Finally, in Ireland the Parliament's Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality held an inquiry into alternatives to criminalisation of drug possession offences. Release, working with our colleagues at [Harm Reduction International](#), the [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) and [Transform](#), produced a [joint submission](#) detailing the positive evidence for ending the use of criminal sanctions for possession of drugs. Release continues to work with our partners in Ireland, including [CityWide](#), to support the fantastic work that they are doing and to push for the reform of the drug laws.

EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE

The reputation of the Expert Witness team, led by Head of Drugs Services Gary Sutton, is strong and they provide objective and up-to-date information in cases involving, among other issues, the supply of drugs. Particularly of note this year has been cases involving the cultivation/production of cannabis and an increased interest in home-grown medicinal cannabis; the increasing use of 'cutting agents'/adulterants in class A and B drugs; and, a year-on-year increase in drug proceeds of crime act (PoCA) cases. Many of the latter do not in practice target the upper echelons of the drugs trade, despite the Act's intentions, but rather domestic growers, desperate couriers and street-level user/dealers. At the other end of spectrum, we have been instructed to quantify 'criminal benefit' in a number of large importation cases and some upper-end cannabis 'production' cases. Whilst there was a downturn in cases we were instructed on – largely linked to a reduction in legal aid and the introduction of the Criminal Court fees – the team worked on a number of more complex cases, notably those involving PoCA proceedings, meaning the overall income was not as reduced as it could have been.

YOUTH STREAM

Release's youth work largely focuses on our stop and search programme, [Y-Stop](#), which we run in partnership with [StopWatch](#). Launched in 2014 the primary aim of Y-Stop is to empower young people to handle encounters with the police in a positive way that reduces the risks they face, whilst

at the same time holding the police to account through monitoring and enabling people to complain about police stop and search conduct where necessary and appropriate to do so. Release is involved in this work in recognition of the fact that approximately 60 per cent of all stop and searches are for drugs.

The past year has seen Y-Stop arrive at several milestones and successfully reach thousands of young people, primarily with the launch of two flagship products and the expansion of our peer training programme.

Firstly, in March 2015 we launched a short [two-part film](#) that aims to teach young people how to manage police interactions safely. Starring well-known actors from Mandem on the Wall, Youngers and Eastenders, the film has reached over 105,000 views on YouTube to date. It has been well received among youth audiences, youth workers and charities. In addition to the film's success on social media, it has been viewed by hundreds more through being employed as a training resource in workshops and academic courses run by other organisations.

Secondly, Y-Stop has created a simple tool for young people to complain about their stop and search experience. The [Y-Stop App](#) launched at the end of August 2015 at Notting Hill Carnival, in the short period since its launch, the app has been downloaded 8,000 times, and even "trended" in the iTunes App Store in early November, highlighting that police accountability is an issue that resonates with many. The app and Y-Stop more broadly also received significant press coverage from outlets such as [Sky News](#) (which reported on it as part of the wider Black Lives Matter movement), [Wired](#), [Russia Today](#), [Tech Times](#) and [BuzzFeed](#). To date we have received 1,778 videos and 143 reports and are assisting people in bringing complaints when they wish to do so.

This year we have also expanded and improved our peer training programme; 700 young people have been trained across the UK (over 500 were based in London), with 60 people remaining engaged through receiving "train-the-trainers" sessions (including youth and community workers).

As a result of our progress across the different Y-Stop activities, we are looking for additional funding to sustain its growth and ensure we can meet demand and disseminate all of our tools in 2016. We are very grateful to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation who have provided funding for the project for the next two years, and will be approaching further funders in the coming months.

MEDIA WORK

Release staff continued to be called upon to comment in the media throughout 2015/16 on issues related to, among others, the Psychoactive Substances Bill, cannabis regulation, decriminalisation, and drugs policing. Release was featured at some point in all major outlets, some examples include BBC Newsnight, the New York Times, The Guardian, BBC News and radio, Vice and the Huffington Post.

EVENTS, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Our staff contributed to dozens of panels, seminars and conferences around the UK and further afield, and held several talks and lectures at UK universities, including University College London, the London School of Economics, Durham University, Liverpool John Moore's University and Queens

University Belfast. Conferences that we participated included service user-led conferences; the HIT conference in Liverpool; the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna; the International Harm Reduction Conference in Malaysia; an event at the European Parliament Information Office; the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (ICRSE) conference; the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)/Substance Misuse Management in General Practice (SMMGP) 20th National Drug and Alcohol Conference; the Centre for Legal Studies conference in Buenos Aires; and, conferences addressing a range of issues such as sex work, policing and the new legislation around psychoactive substances. In addition, we presented at the Times Cheltenham Science Festival as well as dozens of community events such as The R Word, a youth arts event as part of "End Racism This Generation", Sadler's Wells, and, the Spark social justice festival, East London. We continued to work on the issue of drugs policing through our youth programme and more broadly with Operation Black Vote, attending events they facilitated with young people to discuss drug policy. 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:

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 14 December 2016 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:

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

			2016	2015
INCOMING RESOURCES	NOTE	£	£	£
VOLUNTARY INCOME	2	49,947	430,624	480,571
ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS	3	110,974	119,941	230,915
INVESTMENT INCOME	4	112	-	112
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		161,033	550,565	711,598
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
COSTS OF GENERATING FUNDS				
Costs of generating voluntary Income	5	9,401	3,332	12,733
Fundraising Costs	6	5,666	-	5,666
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	7/8	117,835	460,269	578,104
GOVERNANCE COSTS	9	11,147	440	11,586
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		144,049	464,041	608,090
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR		16,984	86,524	103,509
Transfers between funds		-	-	-
Net Movement in the year		16,984	86,524	103,509
Fund Balances Brought forward at 1st April		86,256	20,677	106,933
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31ST MARCH		103,240	107,201	210,442
				108,532

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

	NOTE		2016 £	2015 £
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Fixed Assets	13		3,480	5,218
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	14	33,547	44,266	
Cash at Bank and in hand		194,481	81,784	
		228,029	126,050	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Creditors - falling due within one year	15	- 21,066	- 24,335	
		206,963	101,715	
NET ASSETS		<u>210,442</u>	<u>106,933</u>	
REPRESENTED BY:				
Restricted Funds	18	107,201	20,677	
Unrestricted Funds:	19	103,240	86,256	
		<u>210,442</u>	<u>106,933</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 14 December 2016 and signed on their behalf by:

James Hardy
Trustee
Date:

Company Registration Number: 1966619

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

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Donations				
Neil Kreitman	-		-	10,000
Other small donations	5,805	1,196	7,001	20,162
	5,805	1,196	7,001	30,162
Grants Receivable				
Esmee Fairbairn	40,000		40,000	70,000
European Commission		-	-	-
Big Lottery Fund		46,969	46,969	34,210
Robert Brodie - Legacy			-	7,446
Paul Hilder - Legacy	4,142		4,142	-
Access To Justice Foundation		5,000	5,000	-
Legal Education Foundation		42,000	42,000	-
The Pilgrim Trust		32,509	32,509	-
Foundation Open Society Institute		265,450	265,450	259,677
Trust for London		37,500	37,500	30,000
YouthRISE			-	17,900
	44,142	429,428	473,570	419,232
	49,947	430,624	480,571	449,395

3 INCOMING RESOURCES FROM ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Publication Income		2,000	2,000	21
Legal Survey Income	9,000	111,667	120,667	130,213
Consultancy	8,500	-	8,500	19,995
Training & Conferences	1,611	6,274	7,885	3,542
Expert Witness Income	48,514		48,514	73,530
Online Merchandise			-	93
Other Income	1,231	-	1,231	996
	68,856	119,941	188,797	228,390
Hosting & Support Income	42,118	-	42,118	20,833
Miscellaneous Income	-	-	-	0
	110,974	119,941	230,915	249,223

4 INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Bank Interest	112	112	126

5 COSTS OF GENERATING VOLUNTARY INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Campaigns	2,640	359	2,999	4,462
Equipment Hire	1,532	-	1,532	1,035
Hospitality	1,518	437	1,955	2,601
Marketing	3,711	2,537	6,248	1,332
	9,401	3,333	12,734	9,430

6 FUNDRAISING COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Fundraising	5,666	-	5,666	5,679
	5,666	-	5,666	5,679

7 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
Information, advice and advocacy	92,413	396,800	489,213	531,192
Support costs	25,423	63,468	88,891	117,937
	117,836	460,268	578,104	649,129

8 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY TYPE

	ACTIVITIES		Total Funds 2016 £	Total Funds 2015 £
	UNDERTAKEN DIRECTLY	SUPPORT COSTS		
	£	£		
Information, advice and advocacy	489,212	88,892	578,104	649,129
	489,212	88,892	578,104	649,129

9 GOVERNANCE COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2016	Total Funds 2015
	£	£	£	£
Gifts & Donations	-	-	-	-
Staff salaries	9,305	-	9305	9,305
Professional fees	241	440	681	681
Legal fees	-	-	-	0
Indep. Examiners fees	1,600	-	1600	1,600
	11,146	440	11,586	11,586

10 NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR

	2016	2015
	£	£
Net incoming resources are stated after charging		
Depreciation	1,739	1,739
Independent Examination Fees	1,600	1,600
	3,339	3,339

11 INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REMUNERATION

	2016	2015
Independent Examination	1,600	1,600

12 STAFF COSTS AND EMOLUMENTS

	2016	2015
	£	£
Wages and salaries	366,098	316,989
Social security costs	34,697	30,635
	<hr/> 400,795	<hr/> 347,624

The average monthly number of employees during
the year was:

	2016	2015
	No	No
Direct charitable work & administration	16	15

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

Cost	£
At 1 April 2015	47,288
Additions	-
Disposals	
At 31 March 2016	47,288

Depreciation	£
At 1 April 2015	42,069
Additions	1,739
Disposals	
At 31 March 2016	43,808

NET BOOK VALUE	£
At 31 March 2015	5,218
At 31 March 2016	3,480

14 DEBTORS

DEBTORS	2016	2015
Trade Debtors	24,605	33,852
Other Debtors	4,744	6,216
Prepayments	4,198	4,198
	<hr/> 33,547	<hr/> 44,266

15 CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2016	2015
Trade Creditors	4,397	4,907
Other taxes and social security	12,354	12,909
Other creditors		
Accruals	<u>4,400</u>	<u>6,519</u>
	21,150	24,335

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
	£	£	£	£
Operating leases which expire:				
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 1/4/15	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	Transfers	At 31/3/16
Big Lottery Fund	6,620	46,969	47,476		6,113
EC Youth in Action	6,960	63	7,023		-
Open Society Foundation	-	169,909	-		169,909
Global Web Outreach (Talking Drugs)	-	81,367	86,167		4,800
Latin American Fellowship Program	-	3,780	19,690	15,910	-
African Fellowship	5,662		5,662		-
Legal Outreach Surgeries	-	68,958	192,308	190,668	67,318
StopWatch	22,267	120	19,089		3,298
Street Law (Y-Stop)	51,906	40,140	92,046		-
	<u>20,677</u>	<u>550,566</u>	<u>464,041</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>107,202</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) 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.

Open Society Foundation: Provided a single grant for the continuation of TalkingDrugs, and the fellowship programmes for 2016/17.

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 behaviour 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.

19 UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	At			At
	01 April	Incoming	Outgoing	31 March
	2015	Resources	Resources	2016
	£ 86,256	£ 161,033	£ 144,049	- £ 103,240

20 LEGAL OUTREACH SURGERY INCOME

The following organisations contributed to the Legal Outreach Surgeries:

Access to justice	Pilgrim Trust
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

21 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets £	Net Current Assets £	Total Funds 2016 £
Restricted Funds	-	107,201	107,201
Unrestricted Funds	<u>3,480</u>	<u>99,761</u>	<u>103,240</u>
	3,480	206,962	210,442

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.