

Annual Report

01 April 2019 - 31 March 2020

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The logo for Release, featuring the word "Release" in a large, bold, orange sans-serif font. Below it, the tagline "Drugs, the Law & Human Rights" is written in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font. A vertical dotted orange line is positioned to the left of the logo.

Release
Drugs, the Law & Human Rights

This year has been an extremely difficult one for Release. The tragic death of Release's Head of Drugs Services, Gary Sutton, who had been with the organisation for over 20 years, was felt keenly by the staff and the Board. His contribution to the organisation has been immeasurable, quite simply Release would not be what it is today without the huge selfless contributions that Gary has made. Our thoughts continue to be focused on his family – Monique, Katie, and Emily.

This has all obviously happened against the backdrop of a global pandemic, which has impacted the community we work with significantly. During the first national lockdown, the staff mobilised quickly to ensure that those we support were able to access our services without interruption, ensuring the most vulnerable and marginalised were supported with their legal and drugs issues throughout this crisis. The Board and I have once again been impressed by the continued dedication, commitment and care demonstrated by the staff, in what has been a difficult period for everyone; going above and beyond to deliver a quality offer despite the personal challenges and unforeseen loss.

In the coming months and years, we will inevitably see an increased demand for our services as people are impacted by the financial fall out of the crisis, and the substantial trauma experienced by many manifests itself through increased substance use. However, I know the Release team will continue to be there to fight for the legal rights of people who use drugs and to advocate for policies that will improve the lives of those we represent, policies founded in principles of social and racial justice. We will do this work because we are committed to it, and we will do it in Gary's name.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention all of our funders and supporters. We want to thank each and every one, for helping us to navigate through a challenging economic period and for trusting Release to help continue the work of supporting those most underserved in society.

Viveen Taylor

Chairperson

Gary Sutton was an exceptional human being. He was intelligent, with a dry wit, a cheeky smile, and he cared deeply about the people Release works with. He was the embodiment of the organisation's values and his death this year has hit us all hard.

Gary, as the Head of Drugs Services, was the longest serving member of the team, having started at the organisation in 2000. I had worked with him for eighteen years – he taught me so much, he was my friend, mentor, and confidant and he will be missed deeply. He was the soul of the organisation. Gary's death has meant that 2020 has been an awful year for Release, and coupled with the impact of the pandemic, it has left us all a bit shattered.

Whilst I know these statements are meant to be about how well we are doing and how brilliant the work of the organisation is, it feels right to acknowledge the loss we have suffered at the organisation. We also recognise the tragedy of this year more broadly, means there is a collective loss that is felt by so many.

I have been amazed by my colleagues who have risen to the challenges of the last 12 months despite the distress that many of us have experienced. Their capacity to support and care for our clients, some of the most vulnerable in society, demonstrates a resilience and appetite for this work, to ensure the rights of those we work for, and to campaign for a better and fairer world. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to deliver services, and we have ensured the issues that people who use drugs (especially those who are dependent) face as a result of the crisis are put before policy makers.

And, last summer we stood in solidarity with racial justice activists, as allies, in response to the murder of George Floyd, because quite simply Black Lives Matter, and because drug policy is a tool of racial oppression.

We do this work because we care, because we believe in an equal and just society, and we do it in Gary's name.

Rest In Power Gaz

Niamh Eastwood

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

And

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

2020 was clearly an extraordinary and worrying period for the world, and it was no different for Release. In mid-March we pivoted all of our policy work to addressing COVID-19 and the impact it would have on people who use drugs (PWUDs), especially those who have dependency issues and those who are homeless.

Release moved to remote working a week before the official lockdown, because we support people who use drugs (PWUD), especially those who are dependent, and who are particularly vulnerable to the worst effects of COVID-19, we needed to introduce systems to reduce staff having physical contact with clients. We were able to transition to remote working with relative ease, and there was no interruption in the delivery of our community welfare legal service which supports some of the most vulnerable in London. We have continued to support the legal needs of the community we work with throughout the pandemic.

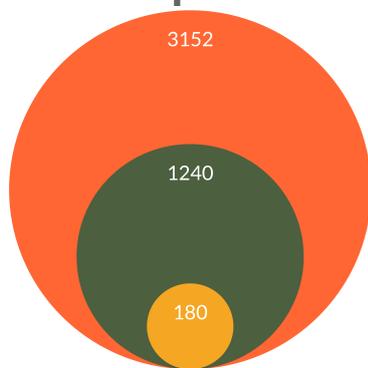
Our helpline, which provides support to people who are affected by the drug laws or who are having problems with their treatment provider, was extremely busy. At the beginning of lockdown we received increased calls from people on opiate substitution treatment (OST), such as methadone, who needed advocacy support to ensure their treatment provider transitioned them from daily medication collection to longer prescribing practices – this was crucial to ensure that physical contact with others was reduced to protect the health of this vulnerable population. Treatment providers should be lauded for their work to transition people to less restrictive prescribing practices, and for the collaboration we saw between agencies and ourselves.

COVID-19 also required us to repurpose our communications and policy work to address the impact of the virus and lockdown on PWUD. This has included: [submitting evidence to the Treasury Committee](#) about the impact of COVID-19 on people who are dependent on drugs; [producing cards for people who need to pick up OST or harm reduction equipment](#), highlighting this is an essential journey; [producing advice for people on OST](#) or those wishing to access it; [publishing harm reduction advice for PWUD](#) in the context of the coronavirus (translated into nine languages); and setting up national monitoring systems/networks and [a national survey to monitor the drugs market](#). This work has dominated Release's policy and communications outputs in 2020/21.

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

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

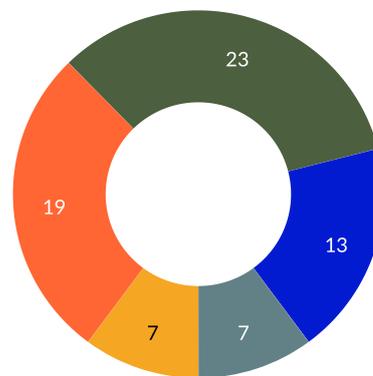
National Drugs & Legal Helpline



● Telephone (68.94%) ● Email (27.12%)
● Webform (3.94%)

Individuals assisted
4,572

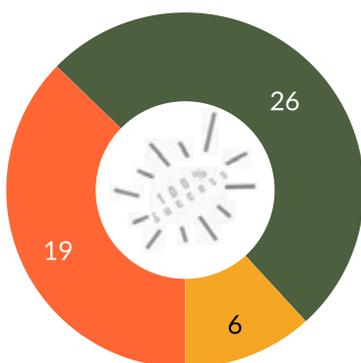
Homeless clients



■ 18-29 (10.14%) ■ 30-39 (27.54%) ■ 40-49 (33.33%)
■ 50-59 (18.84%) ■ 60 & over (10.14%)

Individuals assisted
69

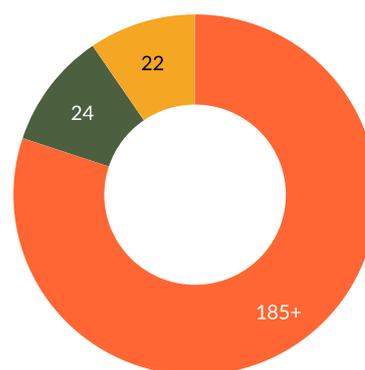
Representation at Social Security Tribunals



52 Clients
Back dated awards
£186,191

■ Employment Support Allowance (ESA) (37.25%)
■ Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (50.98%)
■ Universal Credit (UC) (11.76%)

Y-Stop/Youth engagement



Y-Stop (Tools) distributed
2,500+
Search Cards
14,196
App installations

■ No. trained (80.09%) ■ Peers trained (10.39%)
■ Training sessions (9.52%)

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the year, the drugs team assisted over **750+** individuals either seeking advice, assistance and/or (counselling) support either for themselves, or for family or friends. The main form of contact was via our help portals (telephone, email & webform). In addition they also produced **61** expert witness reports, and attended **9** criminal court hearings providing testimony.



750+
People assisted
15
Advocacy cases

Our free **advice and advocacy service** was contacted by over 750+ individuals seeking assistance either for themselves, or a family member or friend. The main areas of enquiry involved drugs taken by family members; health and social problems associated with drugs; individuals experiencing changes to prescription and/or continued access to medication; drug testing (workplace and driving) and the test results.

Service user comment...."I just wanted to say thank you (again) to your persistent and indefatigable team at Release...most especially to Claire and Dan. My pharmacist has phoned to say he has sourced some more of our script - entirely thanks to the efforts of your team members. Just knowing that Release exists...and is on our side, is a source of huge relief."

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

 **300 one-to-one sessions**

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

50 group sessions 

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

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



100+
one-to-one sessions

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

Service user comment...."Hi Claire just wanted to let you know that the meeting this morning went quite well we did not get all we wanted but but still a lot better than it was, thank you for all your effort I am feeling much more positive about my future, you are a true legend thank you."

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

61
Expert Reports

9
Court Testimonys



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

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

The Drugs Team

Claire Robbins

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

Daniel Williams (Drugs Researcher)

Accredited Drug & Alcohol Professional (FDAP) Certification number 2005
Provisional Member of the Expert Witness Institute (EWI) Reg.No. 10000571

Gary Sutton (Head of Drug Services)

Member of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)
Reg. No. 00619385
Member of the Expert Witness Institute (EWI) Reg.No. 00007245



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

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

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



The top 5 queries can be summarised as:

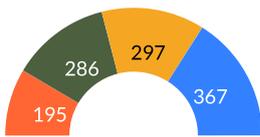
1. Been stopped and/or arrested and awaiting interview
2. Effect on caution/charge/conviction on DBS disclosures/future employment
3. Charged awaiting trial and potential sentencing
4. Drug driving – what it means to be 'in charge of the vehicle', testing and effects of driving ban/effect on employment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

3,000+ individual queries



Total legal matters presented

1,145



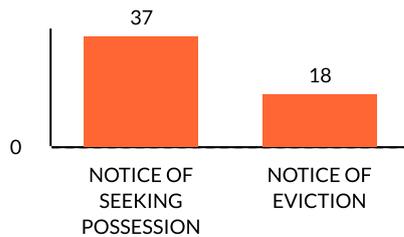
- ALLOWANCES & BENEFITS (17.03%)
- DEBT (24.98%)
- HOUSING (25.94%)
- PERSONAL (OTHER) (32.05%)

The legal team also deliver our legal welfare service into 13 (host) alcohol and drug treatment centres across 9 London boroughs. The service is completely free at the point of delivery to service users of the centres.

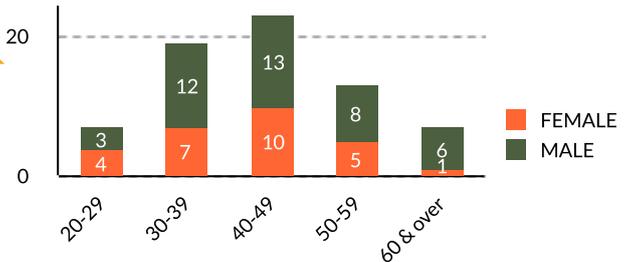
Legal matters presented broadly fall into 4 categories; namely Housing (including homelessness), debt, welfare benefits/allowances (including appeal tribunals) and personal matters, such as employment, family, injury etc.

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

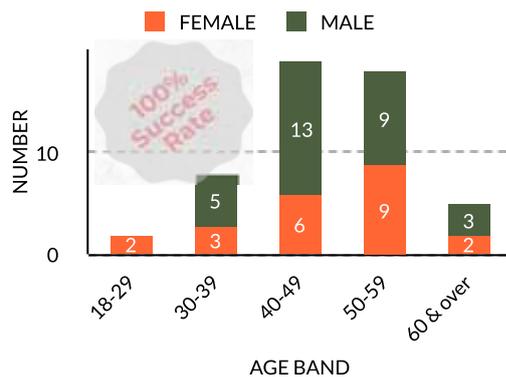
55 CLIENTS ASSISTED WITH EVICTION/POSSESSION NOTICES



69 HOMELESS CLIENTS ASSISTED INTO ACCOMMODATION



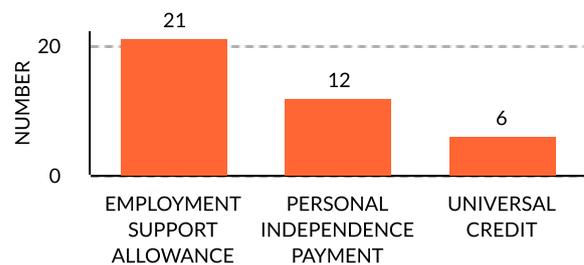
52 CLIENTS REPRESENTED AT SOCIAL SECURITY APPEAL TRIBUNALS



TOTAL BACK DATED APPEAL AWARDS

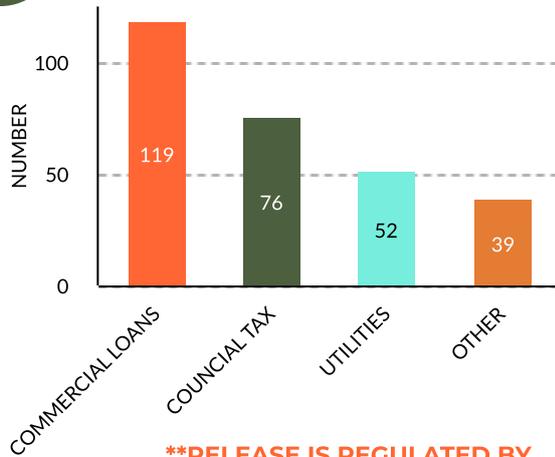
£186,191

SOCIAL SECURITY APPEAL TRIBUNALS BY TYPE





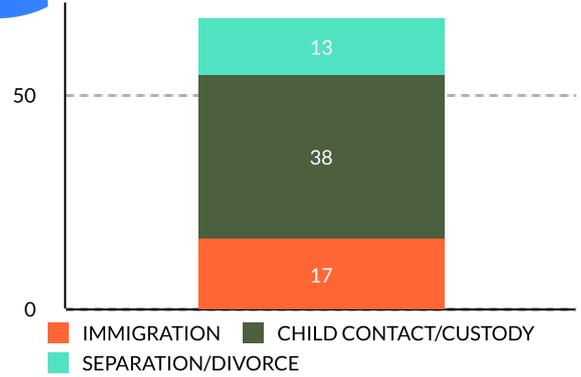
200+ DEBT MATTERS ENTERED INTO MANAGEMENT PLANS



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



THE 3 MAIN PERSONAL MATTERS PRESENTED



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

Legal Welfare Outreach Service was delivered in the following London boroughs

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

The Legal Team

Amelia Freeman (Trainee Solicitor)
Husein Meghji (Solicitor)
Kirstie Douse (Head of Legal - Solicitor Advocate)
Liam Carmody (Solicitor)
Rebekah Lee (Legal Caseworker)
Stephen Cutter (Supervising Solicitor)
Winnie Schmidt (Trainee Solicitor)



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

Y-Stop is youth-led stop and search project that has been developed by young people for young people and aims to equip them with the tools to deal with police interactions in a safe and confident manner. We refer to this as a harm reduction approach. In December 2019, we recruited a new Y-Stop assistant coordinator (Jesse Bernard) to support the work of the coordinator (Amal Ali) who has subsequently left the organisation in April 2020. Jesse now leads on the project. In the last report, we highlighted that Y.Stop would feature in a BBC documentary. It aired on 01 December 2019, and resulted in a significant uptake in the app, with a further 889 downloads, bringing the total downloads to 14,196. Between April 2019 and March 2020, 22 training sessions were undertaken with a total of 185 young people trained, a third took place in the West Midland, with the remaining sessions held in London. We also sent out over 2,500 search cards over the 12 month period.



22
Training Events
delivered in
Birmingham
Leicester
London



185+
Young people
(10-30 year olds)
received training



24
Peer Trainers
Trained



14,196
Android & IOS
Downloads

Youth Lead

Jesse Bernard (Research Associate & Youth Lead)

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

Release's Head of Legal Services provided oral testimony to the Health and Social Care Committee in 2019 highlighting our research into decriminalisation of drug possession offences – her evidence and our written testimony was referred to heavily in the [Committee's final report](#), which recommended decriminalisation of this offence. Our written evidence was also referred to on a number of occasions by the Scottish Affairs Committee's [Inquiry into Problem drug use in Scotland](#)



Following on from the publication of our [naloxone research](#) in March 2019 - which was our second deep dive into the availability of naloxone in the community and the first time we looked at access on prison release - we brought together a group of experts, a steering group, to develop good practice guidelines in the provision of this life saving medication. This work was undertaken in partnership with the National Addiction Centre. , Chaired by Sir Professor John Strang, the steering group event was held in London in April 2019, with 42 participants in attendance, from drug user activist networks, civil society, service providers, academia, pharmacy, housing, police, prison and governmental departments. Participants were invited to the steering group event to represent a range of backgrounds, expertise and UK regional perspectives

The final document, [Saving Lives: Best practice guidance on the provision of naloxone](#), was a product of this meeting and ongoing consultation with members of the group who fed into every stage of development. At a local level, we continue to work with police forces who are implementing diversion schemes for people caught in possession of drugs and who are promoting harm reduction responses for people who use drugs problematically.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

- [Joint Submission with Harm Reduction International to the United Nations Human Rights Committee](#) regarding the impact of the United Kingdom's drug policy on the enjoyment of civil and political rights (8th periodic review).
- [Submitted evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee's Inquiry on Drugs Policy](#).
- [Expert submission to the Labour Campaign for Drug Policy Reform](#)
- [Submission to the Dame Carol Black independent review of drugs \(phase 1\)](#).
- [Submission to the HIV Commission](#)

ORAL EVIDENCE

- Health and Social Care Select Committee Inquiry on Drug Policy
 - JUSTICE - Working Party Report - Tackling Racial Injustice: Children and the Youth Justice System
-

The Policy & Research Team

Amal Ali (Research Associate) - Left April 2020

Niamh Eastwood (Executive Director)



Release's online platform TalkingDrugs – one of the few multilingual news websites dedicated to covering global developments related to drug policy and harm reduction – continued to grow its reach and influence in 2019-20. The site has provided clear and detailed coverage of drug policies, drug use trends, and harm reduction initiatives that have taken place around the world. In particular, TalkingDrugs has provided a platform for people to tell their stories of how drugs and/or policies have affected their lives or their communities.

TalkingDrugs has published anti-racist, sex worker allied, trans-inclusive content that is grounded in a respect for people who use drugs and for those who are most egregiously impacted by punitive drug laws. Further, TalkingDrugs has continued to provide insight and analysis on community-led alternatives to punitive justice for drug policy and in wider discourse.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TalkingDrugs has also shared public health resources relating to drug use, harm reduction, and shared important research and information about how the pandemic is affecting those impacted by prohibition and drug law enforcement in specific ways. TalkingDrugs' editor has carried out various interviews and public conversations to broaden our audiences and expanded our online reach, with 1945 new followers on the @talking.drugs Instagram.

Our volunteers continue to be essential to TalkingDrugs' success. Many have developed their research and writing skills, improved their knowledge of international drug policy issues, and contributed numerous important articles to the publication. Those who volunteer their translation skills have been invaluable to developing TalkingDrugs as a global resource. Our English-language articles are regularly translated into Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Thai. Many of our volunteers have used their experience with TalkingDrugs to continue forging their careers as professional translators, journalists and advocates for drug policy reform.

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

COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS

The Release website remains an important resource for people seeking information about drugs and the law. During the 12-month period traffic remained relatively stable year on year with over 500,000 visitors to the website. Again, the most viewed pages related to drugs and the law. This is symptomatic of the increasing use of digital resources to seek advice and information. Specific content on the website is frequently updated to ensure the public benefit from latest policy and legal changes to the law.

Release is also active on social media with over 26,500 followers on Twitter, 13,000 on Facebook, and 2,800 followers on Instagram.



GENERAL MEDIA



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



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

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 2019-20, with targeted participants from West Africa and South East Asia. The fellowship continued to be successful, with many of the attendees pushing the issue of drug policy reform upon returning to their countries, either through campaigns, media appearances, legal reform or improving access to harm reduction services. Release staff actively support these initiatives through the provision of six months of post-programme mentoring.

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

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

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

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

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

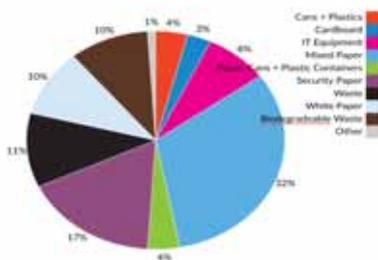


So, in order to achieve the above, we selected Bulb energy to supply our office with renewable electricity. It should be noted that we use **no gas** at our office. On top of the green energy supply, we have installed Rointe D Series radiators throughout the building making use of "Fuzzy Logic Energy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

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

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

Breakdown of materials



89 %
Recycling rate
for the year
↓
**Down 6% on
previous year**



1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020

Total recycling
2,060 kg



Trees saved
16



CO₂ savings
2,550 kg



Recycling per employee
2.6 kg/wk



TRUSTEES

01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

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

Natasha Dhumma
Roger Golland
Stephen Goschalk (Treasurer)
James Hardy
Ronald Hooberman

Anna Ling
Amber Marks
David Rowntree
Dame Ruth Runciman
Viveen Taylor (Chairperson)

STAFF

Jesse Bernard
Liam Carmody
Stephen Cutter
Kirstie Douse
Niamh Eastwood
Keith Edwards
Amelia Freeman

Rebekah Lee
Husein Meghji
Claire Robbins
Imani Robinson
Winnie Schmidt
Gary Sutton
Daniel Williams

BANKERS

Co-operative Bank PLC
PO Box 250
Delf House
Skelmersdale WN8 6WT

Charities Aid Foundation
25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill West Malling
Kent ME19 4JQ

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

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

FUNDERS

Barrow Cadbury Trust
City Bridge Trust
Esmee Fairbairn
Legal Education Foundation
Lloyds Bank Foundation

London Legal Support Trust
The Northmoor Trust
Trust for London
Open Society Foundation

Release

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

CHARITY NUMBER

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

LEGAL EMERGENCY AND
DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED

1966619 (Registered No.)

801118

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Proudly supported with grants from



MEMBERS OF THE BOARD AND PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS

REGISTERED CHARITY NAME	Release Legal Emergency and Drugs Service Limited
CHARITY NUMBER	801118
COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER	1966619
PRINCIPAL & REGISTERED OFFICE ADDRESS	61 Mansell Street London E1 8AN
TRUSTEES AT DATE OF APPROVAL OF REPORT	Natasha Dhumma Roger Golland Stephen Goschalk (Treasurer) James Hardy Ronald Hooberman Anna Ling Amber Marks David Rowntree Dame Ruth Runciman Viveen Taylor (Chairperson)
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER	Foxboro Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd 704 Ontario Tower 4 Fairmont Avenue London E14 9JA
BANKERS	Co-operative Bank PLC PO Box 250 Delf House Skelmersdale WN8 6WT Charities Aid Foundation 25 Kings Hill Avenue Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4JQ

TRUSTEES (DIRECTORS) REPORT

The trustees, who are also Directors for the purposes of the Companies Act, present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2020.

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

The organisation provides free at the point of delivery services to individuals/groups, informative educational programmes to young and marginalised people of colour, and a number of free policy & educational publications.

Our unique and specialist service activities include:

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

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

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

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

Release is a member of AdviceUK, Federation of Drug & Alcohol Professionals (FDAP) and Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA). Our legal services have been awarded the Advice Quality Standard and the 'Centre of Excellence' status by the London Legal Support Trust. Individual members of staff have professional memberships with The Law Society; Expert Witness Institute (EWI); British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), The Bar Council; and the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP).

Release is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority ([618823](#)) to provide debt advice.

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

Release staff are also consultative members of the following groups:

- The National Council of Chief Constable's Stop and Search Strategic Scrutiny Group
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Police External Reference Group on Stop and Search
- National Harm Reduction Group (the National AIDs Trust is the secretariat)
- Naloxone Action Group (NAG) England
- National Intelligence Network (Public Health England)
- Royal College of GP's Secure Environments Group (SEG)

FUNDS AND RESERVES

The Board of Directors believes that the charitable company should hold financial reserves because it has no endowment funding and is entirely dependent upon income from grants, sponsorship, donor funding and other income, which is inevitably subject to fluctuation from year to year. The Board of Directors believes that the minimum level of unrestricted reserves should be the equivalent of 6 months' operating costs, calculated and reviewed annually. The Board of Directors seeks to retain accumulated funds at the desired level in stages consistent with the company's overall financial position, the economic risk over the next 12 months as to its impact on sources of finance and its need to maintain and develop its charitable activities.

THE CHARITY'S ASSETS

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

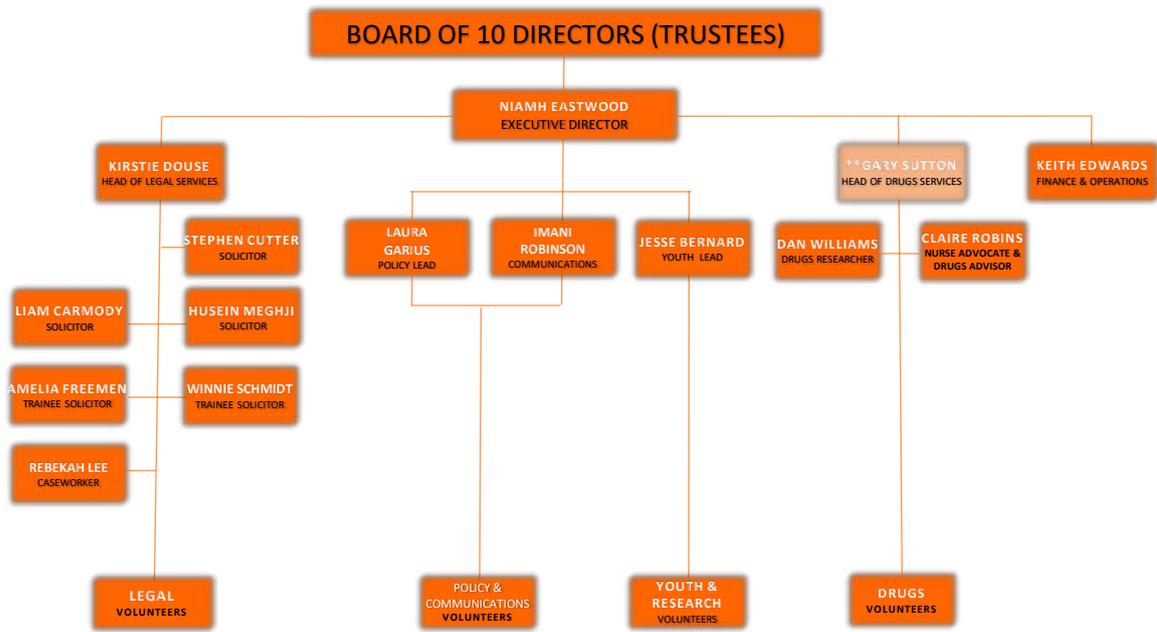
INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

Release is extremely thankful to the numerous volunteers who dedicate their time to the organisation and support the various aspects of the organisation's work – their contribution cannot be overemphasised. In 2019-20 we continued to have a high level of engagement with both volunteers and interns. Approximately 20 volunteers (both in the office and working remotely) supported the legal team, the drugs team and Release's international project TalkingDrugs. Many of those involved assisted in the delivery of our services, manning the helpline under supervision, or drafting letters on behalf of our clients. The organisation was fortunate to have a number of sponsored interns work at the charity; their role was to undertake specific research activities and many of them have contributed to the policy work. As previously stated, the financial benefit to the organisation of the volunteer programme is immeasurable.

MAIN RISKS

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

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



** The Head of Drugs Services, Gary Sutton, sadly passed away on 5th September 2020. Gary had been with Release for 20 years and will be deeply missed by all.

Release takes decisions through regular meetings as follows:

- Quarterly board meetings - Executive Director/Head of Legal Services in attendance
- Annual General Meeting – Executive director/Head of Legal Services 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 required 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

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

RESULTS (excluding restricted funds)

Net incoming resources of the company for the year were -£44,338 (2019 – net incoming resources £281,455) details of which are given in the financial statements below.

Free reserves at 31st March 2020 amounted to £357,929 (2019 - £402,267).

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

PUBLIC BENEFIT

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

ACTIVITIES AND REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The company operated satisfactorily during the year to 31 March 2020.

Release's financial position for 2019-20 remained relatively unchanged from the previous year. Through informed financial management and by developing, diversifying and underpinning its service provision the organisation is enhancing its presence and attracting new donors and funders. However, we know we can do more and whilst much of the successful fundraising to date has been for specific projects our short to medium term plan is to focus more on securing programme, core and research funding. This will be a significant factor in enabling the organisation to deliver more in the coming years.

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

liberties, human rights and the criminal law.

OUR WORK (United Kingdom)

ADVICE & REPRESENTATION SERVICES

1. LEGAL WELFARE OUTREACH

In 2019-20, Release continued to deliver free at the point of delivery legal welfare outreach services across London. The service is available and operates in the 9 following London boroughs: Brent, Brixton, Camden, Lambeth, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Westminster. The service is available in one London's largest homeless centre (The Connections), and drug treatment services, and sex work projects. The establishment and continued delivery of the homeless service at The Connections is in recognition that 60 per cent of those dying from heroin related deaths are not engaged in drug treatment services, and so we are steering our services to meet the needs and to connect with populations who are at risk.

During the 12-month period we assisted with 1,145 separate legal issues this year, of which 26 per cent of cases involved housing issues (including homeless applications); 25 per cent debt issues; 17 per cent social security cases; the remaining 32 per cent of legal issues addressed a range of matters including immigration (referral cases); family; criminal law; and complaints against the police.

We have also carefully tracked the monetary outcomes resulting from our interventions, and are delighted to have obtained just over £234,000 for our clients in the form of backdated benefit awards, payments to meet shortfall between rent and housing benefit, and debts written off. We continued our 100% unblemished success at social security tribunals, succeeding in all appeal cases. We have developed a specialist representation service for social security tribunals which is now partly funded.

2. DRUGS SERVICES

The counselling service was delivered at a large GP practice in West London. The service was delivered by the Head of Drugs Services who was a qualified psychotherapist, and who continued to deliver this service throughout 2019-20 working directly with people affected by problems with alcohol. The increased capacity of the drugs team in early 2019 through the recruitment of a qualified physical and mental health nurse has met the increased support needed by numerous individuals; their family and friends especially around accessing and maintaining appropriate treatment provision and prescribed essential medicine. The drugs service has now attracted part funding for 2 years from Ethypharm for 2020-22.

3. EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE

During the year the Drugs expert witness service continued to provide unbiased expert testimony in criminal proceedings involving drugs, and produced 61 case reports, which included a number under the Proceed of Crime Act 2002.

4. NATIONAL LEGAL AND DRUGS HELPLINE

For this first time in many years we received a grant to support the drugs helpline, a grant from Ethypharm supported the expansion of the drugs team. That being said the helpline is not even close to full cost recovery but, as reported previously, it is still a service that is much needed as evidenced by the demand for advice and support. In the last 12 months, we have received in the region of 5,000 contacts through a combination of telephone calls, emails, and online submissions seeking support for a range of issues. As in the previous years, the growth of email and online enquiries continues to be a significant medium for those seeking advice, with over a third of enquiries submitted in this manner (all are responded to within one working day). People accessing the helpline services continue to seek advice on criminal proceedings involving drugs, employment issues involving drug tests and drug use, advice on treatment issues including a reduction in opiate substitute prescribing and onerous conditions attached to treatment. Calls to the helpline have also resulted in Release assisting in bringing judicial review proceedings in a case where a number of patients were going to be taken of their diamorphine medication without proper consultation. External solicitors were instructed and they successfully applied for permission to bring a judicial review claim on behalf of the clients and Release, and secured an injunction to ensure the medication continued pending the outcome. They also arranged mediation and ultimately negotiated a settlement agreement.

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

5. Y-STOP

Y-Stop is youth-led stop and search project that has been developed by young people for young people and aims to equip them with the tools to deal with police interactions in a safe and confident manner. We refer to this as a harm reduction approach. In December 2019, we recruited a new Y-Stop assistant coordinator (Jesse Bernard) to support the work of the coordinator (Amal Ali) who has subsequently left the organisation in April 2020. Jesse now leads on the project. In the last report, we highlighted that Y-Stop would feature in a BBC documentary. It aired on 01 December 2019, and resulted in a significant uptake in the app, with a further 889 downloads, bringing the total downloads to 14,196. Between November 2019 and March 2020, 12 training sessions were undertaken with a total of 120 young people trained, a third took place in the West Midlands, with the remaining sessions held in London. We also sent out over 2,500 search cards over the 12 month period.

6. RESEARCH & POLICY

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

Release's Head of Legal Services provided oral testimony to the Health and Social Care Committee in 2019 highlighting our research into decriminalisation of drug possession offences – her evidence and our written testimony was referred to heavily in the [Committee's final report](#), which recommended

decriminalisation of this offence. Our written evidence was also referred to on a number of occasions by the Scottish Affairs Committee's [Inquiry into Problem drug use in Scotland](#).

Following on from the publication of our [naloxone research](#) in March 2019 - which was our second deep dive into the availability of naloxone in the community and the first time we looked at access on prison release - we brought together a group of experts, a steering group, to develop good practice guidelines in the provision of this life saving medication. This work was undertaken in partnership with the National Addiction Centre. , Chaired by Sir Professor John Strang, the steering group event was held in London in April 2019, with 42 participants in attendance, from drug user activist networks, civil society, service providers, academia, pharmacy, housing, police, prison and governmental departments. Participants were invited to the steering group event to represent a range of backgrounds, expertise and UK regional perspectives. The final document, [Saving Lives: Best practice guidance on the provision of naloxone](#), was a product of this meeting and ongoing consultation with members of the group who fed into every stage of development.

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

7. RELEASE WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The Release website remains an important resource for people seeking information about drugs and the law. During the 12-month period traffic remained relatively stable year on year with over 500,000 visitors to the website. Again, the most viewed pages related to drugs and the law. This is symptomatic of the increasing use of digital resources to seek advice and information. Specific content on the website is frequently updated to ensure the public benefit from latest policy and legal changes to the law.

Release is also active on social media with over 26,500 followers on Twitter, 13,000 on Facebook, and 2,800 followers on Instagram.

8. COVID-19

Finally, the end of 2020 was clearly an extraordinary and worrying period for the world, and it was no different for Release. In mid-March we pivoted all of our policy work to addressing COVID19 and the impact it would have on people who use drugs, especially those who are dependent and those who are homeless.

Release moved to remote working a week before the official lockdown, because we support people who use drugs (PWUD), especially those who are dependent, and who are particularly vulnerable to the worst effects of COVID19, we needed to introduce systems to reduce staff having physical contact with others either at the office or on public transport. All host services then closed within days of our decision, requiring us to move to phone consultations. The system has worked well, but we are acutely aware that there will be an avalanche of legal issues arising as the suspension of housing eviction proceedings is lifted, social security tribunals which have been postponed due to the crisis are rescheduled, and homeless people need legal representation to transition to permanent housing

solutions. We are already in conversation with our host services to ensure we can manage this work in an effective and timely manner.

Our helpline, which provides support to people who are affected by the drug laws or who are having problems with their treatment provider, has been extremely busy. At the beginning of lockdown we received increased calls from people on opiate substitution treatment (OST), such as methadone, who needed advocacy support to ensure their treatment provider transitioned them from daily medication collection to longer prescribing practices – this was crucial to ensure that physical contact with others was reduced to protect the health of this vulnerable population.

Whilst we continue to monitor police use of stop and search, which has increased during lockdown, through Y.Stop and the helpline, encouraging people to use the app and to report incidents to us, we have had to cease training. We are working with our partners, StopWatch, to develop an online strategy to engage with young people.

The work above required significant investment in IT and remote working infrastructure - we bought new laptops for all staff, updated our servers, bought software to allow for remote access, and purchased suitable office equipment for staff to work from home, including desks and office chairs.

COVID19 also required us to repurpose our communications and policy work to address the impact of the virus and lockdown on PWUD. This has included: at short notice submitting evidence to the Treasury Committee about the impact of COVID19 on people who are dependent on drugs; producing cards for people who need to pick up OST or harm reduction equipment, highlighting this is an essential journey; producing advice for people on OST or those wishing to access it; publishing harm reduction advice for PWUD in the context of the coronavirus (translated into eight languages); and setting up national monitoring systems/networks and national survey. This work has dominated Release's policy and communications outputs in 2020/21.

OUR WORK (INTERNATIONAL)

1. TALKINGDRUGS

Release's online platform TalkingDrugs – one of the few multilingual news websites dedicated to covering global developments related to drug policy and harm reduction – continued to grow its reach and influence in 2019-20.

The site has provided clear and detailed coverage of drug policies, drug use trends, and harm reduction initiatives that have taken place around the world. In particular, TalkingDrugs has provided a platform for people to tell their stories of how drugs and/or policies have affected their lives or their communities. TalkingDrugs has published anti-racist, sex worker allied, trans-inclusive content that is grounded in a respect for people who use drugs and for those who are most egregiously impacted by punitive drug laws. Further, TalkingDrugs has continued to provide insight and analysis on community-led alternatives to punitive justice for drug policy and in wider discourse.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, TalkingDrugs has also shared public health resources relating to drug use, harm reduction, and shared important research and information about how the pandemic is affecting those impacted by prohibition and drug law enforcement in specific ways. TalkingDrugs' editor has carried out various interviews and public conversations to broaden our audiences and expanded our online reach, with 1945 new followers on the @talking.drugs Instagram.

Our volunteers continue to be essential to TalkingDrugs' success. Many have developed their research and writing skills, improved their knowledge of international drug policy issues, and contributed numerous important articles to the publication. Those who volunteer their translation skills have been invaluable to developing TalkingDrugs as a global resource. Our English-language articles are regularly translated into Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Thai. Many of our volunteers have used their experience with TalkingDrugs to continue forging their careers as professional translators, journalists and advocates for drug policy reform.

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

2. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

In 2019-20 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 2019-20, with targeted participants from West Africa and South East Asia. The fellowship continued to be successful, with many of the attendees pushing the issue of drug policy reform upon returning to their countries, either through campaigns, media appearances, legal reform or improving access to harm reduction services. Release staff actively support these initiatives through the provision of six months of post-programme mentoring.

MEDIA WORK

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

EVENTS, CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

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

THE TRUSTEES

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

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

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES

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

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

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

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

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant examination information (information needed by the charitable company's independent examiners in connection with preparing their report) of which the charitable company's independent examiners are unaware, and

- the trustees have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant examination information and to establish that the charitable company's independent examiners are aware of that information.

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

Approved by the board on 07 December 2020 and signed on their behalf by:

Viveen Taylor
Chairperson of Trustees

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES AND EXAMINER

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

It is my responsibility to:

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

BASIS OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT

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

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT

In our opinion the financial statements:

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

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

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

Date:

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2020		UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
INCOMING RESOURCES	NOTE	£	£	£	£
VOLUNTARY INCOME	2	78,746	431,416	510,162	681,792
ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS	3	162,158	93,782	255,940	161,250
INVESTMENT INCOME	4	394	-	394	200
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		241,298	525,198	766,496	843,242
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
COSTS OF GENERATING FUNDS					
Costs of generating voluntary Income	5	5,506	4,696	10,202	8,082
Fundraising Costs	6	5,674	-	5,674	6,178
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	7/8	263,448	451,251	714,699	599,825
GOVERNANCE COSTS	9	11,008	-	11,008	12,921
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		285,636	455,947	741,583	627,006
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR					
	10	-	44,338	69,251	24,913
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net Movement in the year		-	44,338	69,251	24,913
Fund Balances Brought forward at 1st April		402,267	-	15,043	387,224
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31ST MARCH		357,929	54,208	412,137	387,224

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

All of the above amounts relate to continuing activities.

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31ST MARCH 2020		2020		2019	
	NOTE	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Fixed Assets	13		73,370		43,931
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	14	66,757		56,856	
Cash at Bank and in hand		295,551		302,513	
		<u>362,308</u>		<u>359,369</u>	
CURRENT LIABILITIES					
Creditors - falling due within one year	15	-	23,540	-	16,076
			<u>338,768</u>		<u>343,293</u>
NET ASSETS			<u>412,137</u>		<u>387,224</u>
REPRESENTED BY:					
Restricted Funds (See Note)			54,208	-	15,043
Unrestricted Funds:			<u>357,929</u>		<u>402,267</u>
			<u>412,137</u>		<u>387,224</u>

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

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

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

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

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

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 07 December 2020 and signed on their behalf by:

Stephen Goschalk
Trustee (Treasurer)

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.

Fixed Assets

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

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

Leasehold Improvements – depreciated over the period of the lease. Items costing less than £500 are not capitalised, but charged in full to the income and expenditure account for the year in which the cost is borne.

Operating lease agreements

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

Irrecoverable VAT

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

Fund accounting

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

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

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

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

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

2 VOLUNTARY INCOME

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
DONATIONS				
HRI	22,407		22,407	34,334
Other small donations	5,839	-	5,839	9,208
	<u>28,246</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>28,246</u>	<u>43,542</u>
GRANTS RECEIVABLE				
City Bridge Trust		45,500	45,500	43,500
Lloyds Bank Foundation		20,187	20,187	19,600
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	50,000		50,000	50,000
Trust for London		16,457	16,457	-
Legal Education Foundation		60,078	60,078	36,940
Barrow Cadbury Trust		15,000	15,000	7,250
London Legal Support Trust		14,388	14,388	11,499
The Northmoor Trust	-		-	250,000
Open Society Foundation		259,806	259,806	213,777
Other small grants	500	-	500	5,684
	<u>50,500</u>	<u>431,416</u>	<u>481,916</u>	<u>638,250</u>
TOTAL	<u>78,746</u>	<u>431,416</u>	<u>510,162</u>	<u>681,792</u>

3 INCOMING RESOURCES FROM ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
Legal Surgey Income		92,472	92,472	66,968
Consultancy	8,160		8,160	7,140
Training & Conferences	4,420	1,310	5,730	1,484
Expert Witness Income	79,956		79,956	59,939
Online Merchandise	1,591		1,591	2,385
Other Income	-	-	-	-
	<u>94,127</u>	<u>93,782</u>	<u>187,909</u>	<u>137,916</u>
Hosting & Support Income	66,531	-	66,531	23,334
Miscellaneous Income	1,500	-	1,500	-
	<u>162,158</u>	<u>93,782</u>	<u>255,940</u>	<u>161,250</u>

4 INVESTMENT INCOME

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£
Bank Interest	<u>394</u>	<u>394</u>	<u>200</u>

5 COSTS OF GENERATING VOLUNTARY INCOME

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
Campaigns	-	250	250	-
Consultancy Fees	-	2,497	2,497	1,178
Equipment Hire	-	-	-	-
Hospitality	4,906	-	4,906	1,551
Marketing	600	1,949	2,549	5,353
	<u>5,506</u>	<u>4,696</u>	<u>10,202</u>	<u>8,082</u>

6 FUNDRAISING COSTS

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
Fundraising	<u>5,674</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,674</u>	<u>6,178</u>
	<u>5,674</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,674</u>	<u>6,178</u>

7 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
Information, advice and advocacy	119,430	421,923	541,353	519,141
Support costs	142,320	29,328	171,648	80,685
	<u>261,750</u>	<u>451,251</u>	<u>713,001</u>	<u>599,826</u>

8 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY TYPE

	ACTIVITIES DIRECTLY UNDERTAKEN	SUPPORT COSTS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
Information, advice and advocacy	541,353	171,648	713,001	599,826
	541,353	171,648	713,001	599,826

9 GOVERNANCE COSTS

	UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	RESTRICTED FUNDS	TOTAL FUNDS 2020	TOTAL FUNDS 2019
	£	£	£	£
Gifts & Donations			-	-
Staff salaries	10,448		10,448	9,305
Professional fees	1,703	-	1,703	1,920
Legal fees			-	-
	12,151	-	12,151	11,225

10 NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR

	2020 £	2019 £
Net incoming resources are stated after charging		
Depreciation	19,127	3,138
Independent Examination Fees	1,650	1,600
	20,777	4,738

11 INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REMUNERATION

	2020 £	2019 £
Independent Examination	1,650	1,600

12 STAFF COSTS AND EMOLUMENTS

	2020	2019
Maximum Number of Employees	16	14
Average Number of Employees	14.2	12.3
	2020 £	2019 £
Wages & Salaries	414,659	359,111
Social Security costs	40,416	32,036
Pension Contributions	10,907	6,176
	465,982	397,323

No employee received emoluments exceeding £60,000 during the financial year (2019 - None).

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

13 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS – HELD FOR OWN USE

	Cost	£
At 1 April 2019		94,357
Additions		48,566
Disposals		
At 31 March 2020		142,923
	Depreciation	
At 1 April 2019		50,426
Additions		19,127
Disposals		
At 31 March 2020		69,553
	NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2019		43,931
At 31 March 2020		73,370

14 DEBTORS

	2020	2019
	£	£
Trade Debtors	48,007	36,146
Other Debtors	-	1,960
Prepayments	18,750	18,750
	<u>66,757</u>	<u>56,856</u>

15 CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2020	2019
	£	£
Trade Creditors	5,683	2,652
Other taxes and social security	12,721	13,424
Other creditors	-	-
Accruals	5,135	-
	<u>23,540</u>	<u>16,076</u>

16 PENSIONS

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

17 COMMITMENTS UNDER OPERATING LEASES

At 31 March 2020 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	75,000		75,000	
In more than 5 years	-	-	-	-
	<u>75,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>75,000</u>	<u>-</u>

18 RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	AT 1/4/19	INCOMING RESOURCES	OUTGOING RESOURCES	TRANSFERS	AT 31/3/20
Barrow Cadbury Trust (Y-stop)	1,375	15,810	14,602	-	2,583
City Bridge Trust (Legal)	7,250	45,500	45,167	-	7,583
Legal Education Foundation (Legal)	-	60,078	39,212	-	20,866
Lloyds Bank Foundation (Legal)	14,700	20,187	21,429	-	13,458
Trust for London (Legal)	-	16,457	15,191	-	1,266
Legal Contracted Services (other)	- 38,307	100,960	92,730	-	- 30,077
Open Society Foundation Projects	- 61	262,616	227,616	-	34,939
TOTAL RESTRICTED FUNDS	- 15,043	521,608	455,947	-	50,618

RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS (continued)

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

Barrow Cadbury Trust (Y-Stop)

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

City Bridge Trust (Legal)

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

Legal Education Foundation (Legal):

- Continued funding is provided by the foundation to support a training contract for a trainee solicitor with specific emphasis on developing and advancing access to justice.

Lloyds Bank Foundation (Legal):

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

Open Society Foundation:

Provided a single 1-year grant for the continuation of TalkingDrugs, and the Fellowship programmes for 2019-20 and the distribution of the funds is allocated by programme.

- **TalkingDrugs:** This is a project to develop a website (www.talkingdrugs.org) for a Global web presence.
- **Fellowship Programmes (African & Asian):** Two programmes were delivered during the year – one in Summer (Asian) and one in Winter (African) The purpose of the programmes is to support those working in sectors related to drug policy in order to improve their advocacy skills and to enhance their capacity in working with the media on drug policy.

Trust for London (Legal): The trust under their Decent Living Standards initiative is funding delivery of a 2 year a new enhanced specialist social security legal advice service commencing from November 2019 for people who have a history of drug/alcohol dependency, providing casework and representation at first tier and upper tribunal.

19 UNRESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

<u>AT 1/4/19</u>	<u>INCOMING RESOURCES</u>	<u>OUTGOING RESOURCES</u>	<u>TRANSFERS</u>	<u>AT 31/3/20</u>
402,267	241,298	285,636	-	357,929

20 LEGAL OUTREACH SERVICE INCOME

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

Camden & Islington NHS Foundation	Single Homeless Project (SHP)
City Bridge Trust	South London & Maudsley NHS
Change, Grow, Live (CGL) in	Foundation (Lambeth & Wandsworth)
Brent, Camden & Newham	Trust for London
Lloyds Bank Foundation	Westminster Drug Project
London Legal Support Trust	

21 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>	<u>NET CURRENT ASSETS</u>	<u>TOTAL FUNDS 2020</u>
	£	£	£
Restricted Funds	-	54,208	54,208
Unrestricted Funds	73,370	284,559	357,929
	<u>73,370</u>	<u>338,767</u>	<u>412,137</u>

22 COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

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

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