

Release

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

CHARITY NUMBER

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

LEGAL EMERGENCY &
DRUGS SERVICE LIMITED

1966619 (Registered No.)

801118

YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2017

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	124-128 City Road London EC1V 2NJ
TRUSTEES AT DATE OF APPROVAL OF REPORT	Natasha Dhumma Roger Golland Stephen Goschalk (Treasurer) James Hardy 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 2017.

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 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:

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

FUNDS AND RESERVES

The Board of Directors believes that the charitable company should hold financial reserves because it has no endowment funding and is entirely dependent upon income from grants, sponsorship, donor funding and other income, which is inevitably subject to fluctuation from year to year. The Board of Directors believes that the minimum level of 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

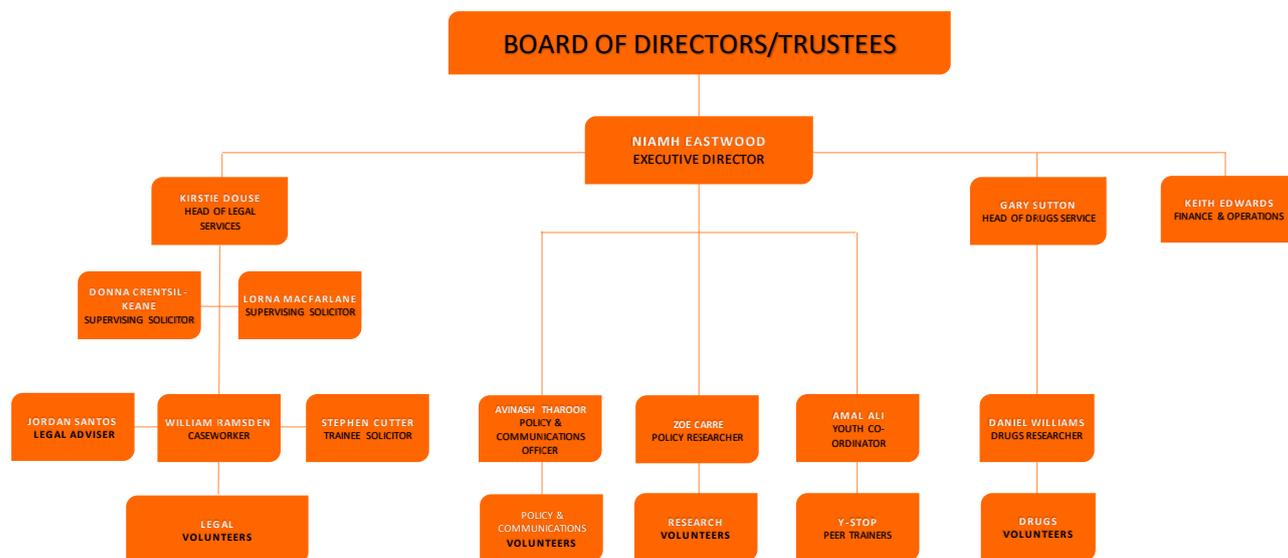
Acquisitions and disposals of fixed assets during the year are recorded in the notes to the financial statements.

INTERNSHIPS & VOLUNTEERING

Release is 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 2016/17 we continued to have a high level of engagement with both volunteers and interns. Approximately 30 volunteers (both in the office and working remotely) supported the legal team, the drugs team and Release's international project TalkingDrugs. Many of those involved assisted in the delivery of our services, manning the helpline under supervision, or drafting letters on behalf of our clients. The organisation was fortunate to have a number of sponsored interns work at the charity; their role was to undertake specific research activities and many of them have contributed to the policy work. As previously stated, the financial benefit to the organisation of the volunteer programme is immeasurable.

MAIN RISKS

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

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Release takes decisions through regular meetings as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES

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

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

Trustees are also expected to attend organisational strategy meetings as required, as well as the

scheduled quarterly board meetings - one to include the AGM.

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

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Over the previous 5 years, Release has ensured that it had diversified its income streams, so as to mitigate any funding shortfalls that could affect the activities of the organisation. This diversification continues in light of the continued current economic climate. This diversification strategy has assisted in stabilising the organisations, although much the funding is for time limited project and/or activity work. Release has been successful in securing multi-year 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 core 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

Net incoming resources of the company for the year were £44,246 (2016 – net incoming resources £103,509) details of which are given in the financial statements below.

Free reserves at 31st March 2017 amounted to £87,117 (2016 - £103,240).

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 2017.

Release's financial position in 2016/17 continued to stabilise with the organisation demonstrating a surplus year on year. Through informed fiscal 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 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 WELFARE OUTREACH

During 2016/17 legal welfare outreach service (free at the point of delivery including county court and tribunal representation) continued to be delivered through a variety of contracts and pilot programmes funded by charitable trusts and foundations. In July 2016 three new pilots were launched under this programme, in the London boroughs of Enfield, Greenwich and Kingston. However, due to the continued reduction in drug/alcohol treatment funding these services were unable to secure continuation funding beyond their pilot stages. We also delivered 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. The previous year's lottery-funded pilots in Newham and Wandsworth continued to be commissioned directly by the host drug treatment centres, which given the economic climate is a great success considering the funding cuts faced by treatment providers, and also places a recognition on the value of the service both by service users and commissioners alike.

During the year, client numbers decreased to just over 1,200 as a result of the 3 pilot services being discontinued. Whilst the client numbers has reduced we have experienced an increase in the number of legal welfare matters presented by the clients – up from 1.5 (2015/16) to 1.8 (2016/17) per client (one client presented with 13 separate legal matters). So, for the period the legal team dealt with just over 2,100 legal matters for the clients and are represented by the following broad categories. Welfare allowances and benefits affected 61%; housing advice and assistance affected 33%; 14% were homeless; 24% for commercial debt matters; 4% for family law; 4% for criminal legal advice; 5% seeking immigration assistance (which were referred); and, 9% for other legal issues, including complaints against the police, criminal injuries claims, and civil litigation. In addition to advice and assistance provided, the legal team also represented 44 people in appeals (Employment and Support Allowance, and Personal Independence Payment) at social security tribunals and again were successful in 100 per cent of cases. This is despite the fact that for the first time we are seeing the Department of Work and Pensions sending case officers to the appeal hearings to defend the DWP's case.

2. DRUGS SERVICES

The counselling service 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 2016/17 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 2016/17 at approximately 5,000 calls, emails and online enquiry forms dealt with by the team for the year. Once again, 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.

The Release website continues to act as reliable source for the public providing unfettered access for drugs and drug law information. The number of people visiting the site during the reporting period was marginally over 500,000 with the overwhelming majority seeking legal advice. The top 5 viewed pages are:

- Sentencing (General)
- UK laws for medical cannabis
- List of controlled substances
- Sentencing for cannabis offences
- What happens in court

The website has been optimised to recognise different devices to ensure the user has the easiest access to the information sort, and this is demonstrated by the following whereby 59% use mobiles, 33% use desktops, and the remaining 8% use tablets. The average length of time spent by users per page is just over 4.5 minutes.

The website is regularly updated to ensure the public benefit from recent policy and legal changes to the law.

4. RESEARCH & POLICY

Release continued to promote an evidenced based approach to drug policy in the UK. During 2016/17 the organisation submitted consultation responses to:

- the [Police and Crime Plan for London 2017-2021](#);
- the review of ['Drug misuse and dependence: UK guidelines on clinical management'](#);
- the [Lammy Review of BAME representation in the Criminal Justice System](#);

As well as providing robust data analysis, we provided the experiences of clients as it related to each area.

Staff also submitted evidence to the Home Office in relation to the Drug Strategy 2017. This was despite the fact there was no open consultation of the new strategy, as the Government decided it was a 'refresh' of the 2010 Strategy. In particular, the organisation highlighted some of the significant problems of the 2010 strategy including a focus on 'recovery', defined as abstinence, at the expense of harm reduction practices within the treatment sector.

In relation to the above we continued to meet parliamentarians of all parties to provide information on the current state of drug treatment and the issue of drugs policing.

At an international level Release submitted evidence to the UN Human Rights Council as part of their [Universal Periodic Review of the UK](#). Release's Executive Director and Head of Legal Services assisted in drafting legislation for the Irish Dail at the request of a number of Irish senators, this draft legislation was laid before the House in 2017.

Throughout 2016/17 staff continued to engage on the issue of drugs policing, in particular, stop and search. The team were active in the following groups: Home Office External Reference Group on the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme; the College of Policing Stop and Search Strategic Scrutiny Group; and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Police External Reference Group on Stop and Search.

Release has also been working with other organisations across the country to look at the feasibility of drug consumption rooms, we have been tasked with developing a legal opinion.

With the appointment of a new researcher at the organisation we were able to start a number of research projects which will be published in 2017/18. This research looks at the scale of naloxone provision in England and Wales, with Freedom of Information requests sent to all local public health areas. Additionally, Release, in collaboration with StopWatch, will be updating the 2013 paper: 'The Numbers in Black and White: Ethnic Disparities in the Policing and Prosecution of Drug Offences in England and Wales'.

There has also been some reflection at the organisation of how we communicated policy developments to the public, in recognition that in-depth policy papers are not always the best form of communication. To aid this we worked with designers to produce infographics highlighting the [consequences of UK drug policy](#).

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 2015/16, with audience numbers remaining steady at almost 600,000 visitors across all languages. This is a testament to the quality of the site, as the field becomes ever more crowded and there is an emergence of new news feeds providing coverage on harm reduction and drugs.

As in previous years, 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.

In 2017 we redesigned the website to give it a more contemporary feel and increase accessibility and usability.

2. GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

Release served as technical advisor to the Global Commission on Drug Policy for a second year in a row. In 2015 we assisted the Commission with their report *The negative impact of drug control on public health: The global crisis of avoidable pain.*

In 2016 we were delighted to be able to provide technical advice on their new report into drug decriminalisation - ending criminal sanctions for possession offences and diverting low level supply offenders away from the criminal justice system. The report was ground-breaking in that it called for no punishment of use or possession of drugs where it is for personal consumption. *Advancing Drug Policy Reform: a new approach to decriminalization* was launched in Washington D.C. late 2016.

Release continues to work with the Commission and is providing expert advice in the development of Model Drug Laws for West Africa.

3. FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

In 2016/17 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 2016/17, with targeted participants from West Africa and 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.

4. COLLABORATION ON INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Release staff attended to the UN General Assembly Special Session ('UNGASS') on Drugs in New York in April 2016, after working with colleagues globally on the communications strategy around the meeting. Staff presented at a number of events in New York related to the UN meeting. The final outcome from the UNGASS saw some steps in the right direction at the international level with a clear reference for the need for human rights compliance in relation to national drug policies.

The Executive Director continued to provide technical assistance to colleagues in Ghana in relation to new draft legislation being considered by the Ghanaian Parliament, this work will continue in 2017/18.

As highlighted above, Release staff also worked with colleagues in Ireland on the development of new draft legislation that would see people caught in possession of drugs diverted away from the criminal justice system. This work also continues throughout 2017.

The organisation has been approached by colleagues in other countries to provide technical assistance.

EXPERT WITNESS SERVICE

The number of instructions received by the service steadily increased during 2016/17, and during the period provided reports in 66 cases. Approximately, half the cases involved charges of possession with intent to supply, with the remaining 20 cases involving charges ranging from importation through to conspiracy to supply. The remaining 14 cases concerned the Proceeds of Crime Act (PoCA), and namely the value of the drugs in question. Towards the latter part of the period, the effects of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 became apparent, primarily resulting in the drugs team receiving instructions to provide expert reports in several Nitrous Oxide cases of alleged supply. The service is predominantly funded through solicitors requesting reports and these reports are funded by the Legal Aid Agency. The team also provided expert testimony in court in 12 cases, and this activity is funded directly by the court holding the hearing.

YOUTH STREAM (Y-STOP)

During 2016/17, Y-Stop trained over 800 young people aged 11-34 directly through the Y-Stop training programme. This does not include training delivered through partner's peer training schemes such as 4FRONT, a legal education provided in schools across London. For example, the peer trainers trained as a part of 4FRONT's work reached over 2,000 pupils across the Brent borough who received Y-Stop training and the relevant materials. The number of peer trainers that have joined in the project since the start of the year is up by 51%. In addition, we currently have 26 young people awaiting to receive the peer trainer training and we aim to run these sessions quarterly.

The project has continued to distribute materials that educate young people in how to handle police stop and searches confidently and in a manner that reduces the potential harm of such interactions (since May 2016 65,000 search cards have been distributed nationally). The website had over 8,000 entrances with over 13,000 pages of content being viewed during the reporting period, and so remains a valuable open and accessible public resource providing free material to individuals, in addition to training material for trainers. The website also acts as portal for individuals to process complaints against the police, although it is still a challenge to engage people around the complaints

process.

An example of this is take-up of the app - at present we have over 8,000 downloads, but again people are still concerned about submitting official complaints. This is evidenced by the fact that whilst we are receiving more reports most are being submitted only to Y-Stop and not the police. The reality is the public are still hesitant to complain about police behaviour. We have taken some steps to ensure the technology is being utilised and that it is effective.

The audiences for the Y-Stop films has also grown exponentially. Since the launch of the two-part film back in March 2015, there have been over a 360,000 views on YouTube. Feedback in the comments illustrates that viewers find the film useful and are sharing it with friends and family.

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 and Thump. Local press also sought comment on issues related to drugs, drug policy and harm reduction. TV appearances were made by the Executive Director, Head of Legal Services and our Advocacy Manager on various news programmes including on the BBC and Sky.

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 King's College London, the London School of Economics, Durham University, Manchester University, Warwick University, Liverpool John Moore's University, Royal Holloway and the University of Ulster. The Executive Director was asked to teach on drug policy and human rights courses at the Central European University, Budapest, and Essex University's Human Rights Centre.

Conferences we presented at included the Drug Policy Alliance's *New Strategies for New Psychoactive Substances Summit*; the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies Seminar on Drug Decriminalisation; Citywide Ireland's annual conference; the National Substance Misuse Conference Birmingham. Staff also presented to the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Drugs and Alcohol on the implementation of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

The team also met with government delegations from Colombia and the Netherlands to brief on a range of issues related to our expertise of 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:

Natasha Dhumma (Joined 5 December 2016)
Dr Christine Ford (Resigned 5 December 2016)
Roger Golland
James Hardy (Treasurer)
Edward Henry
David Hibbert (Joined 5 December 2016)
Ronald Hooberman (Chairman)
Anna Ling
Andrew MacDonald (Resigned 5 December 2016)
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 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 audit 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 11 December 2017 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 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
Date:

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

				2017	2016
INCOMING RESOURCES	NOTE	£	£	£	£
VOLUNTARY INCOME	2	111,956	277,325	389,281	480,571
ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS	3	116,021	73,484	189,505	230,915
INVESTMENT INCOME	4	129	-	129	112
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		228,106	350,809	578,915	711,598
RESOURCES EXPENDED					
COSTS OF GENERATING FUNDS					
Costs of generating voluntary Income	5	5,093	4,840	9,933	12,733
Fundraising Costs	6	5,976	-	5,976	5,666
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES	7/8	160,193	411,604	571,798	578,104
GOVERNANCE COSTS	9	12,598	100	12,698	11,586
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED		183,860	416,545	600,405	608,090
NET INCOMING/(OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR		44,246 -	65,736 -	21,490	103,509
Transfers between funds	-	60,000	60,000	-	-
Net Movement in the year	-	15,754 -	5,736 -	21,490	103,509
Fund Balances Brought forward at 1st April		103,240	107,201	210,442	106,933
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31ST MARCH		87,486	101,465	188,951	210,442

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 2017

	£	2017 £	£	2016 £
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Fixed Assets (note 9)		1,740		3,480
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors (See Note 10)	44,957		33,547	
Cash at Bank and in hand (See note 11)	<u>167,088</u>		<u>194,481</u>	
	212,045		228,029	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Creditors - falling due within one year (See Note 12)	-	24,834	-	21,066
		<u>187,211</u>		<u>206,963</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>188,951</u>		<u>210,442</u>
REPRESENTED BY:				
Restricted Funds (See Note)		101,465		107,201
Unrestricted Funds:		<u>87,486</u>		<u>103,240</u>
		<u>188,951</u>		<u>210,442</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 11 December 2017 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.

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 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Donations				
Neil Kreitman	40,000		40,000	-
Other small donations	5,238		5,238	7,001
	45,238	-	45,238	7,001
Grants Recievable				
Esmee Fairbairn	50,000		50,000	40,000
European Commission			-	-
Big Lottery Fund		47,719	47,719	46,969
Paul Hilder - Legacy			-	4,142
Access To Justice Foundation		10,000	10,000	5,000
Legal Education Foundation		44,177	44,177	42,000
The Pilgrim Trust		13,448	13,448	32,509
London Legal Support Trust	1,719	12,000	13,719	-
The Northmoor Trust	15,000		15,000	-
Paul Hamlyn Foundation		25,000	25,000	-
Foundation Open Society Institute		124,980	124,980	265,450
Trust for London			-	37,500
	66,719	277,325	344,043	473,570
TOTAL	111,956	277,325	389,281	480,571

3 INCOMING RESOURCES FROM ACTIVITIES FOR GENERATING FUNDS

	Unrestricted Fund £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Publication Income			-	2,000
Legal Surgey Income		66,306	66,306	120,667
Consultancy	8,500		8,500	8,500
Training & Conferences	8,437	6,783	15,220	7,885
Expert Witness Income	59,431		59,431	48,514
Online Merchandise	1,530		1,530	-
Other Income		395	395	1,231
			-	-
			-	-
	77,898	73,484	151,382	188,797
Hosting & Support Income	38,123	-	38,123	42,118
Miscellaneous Income	-	-	-	-
	116,021	73,484	189,505	230,915

4 INVESTMENT INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds 2017	Total Funds 2016
Bank Interest	129	129	112

5 COSTS OF GENERATING VOLUNTARY INCOME

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Campaigns	2,167	94	2,261	2,999
Consultancy Fees	150	4,400	4,550	-
Equipment Hire	1,368		1,368	1,532
Hospitality	1,126	346	1,472	1,955
Marketing	282		282	6,248
	<u>5,093</u>	<u>4,840</u>	<u>9,933</u>	<u>12,734</u>

6 FUNDRAISING COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Fundraising	5,976	-	5,976	5,666
	<u>5,976</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>5,976</u>	<u>5,666</u>

7 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY FUND TYPE

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Information, advice and advocacy	105,631	347,228	452,859	489,213
Support costs	54,563	64,376	118,939	88,891
	<u>160,193</u>	<u>411,604</u>	<u>571,798</u>	<u>578,104</u>

8 COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES BY ACTIVITY TYPE

	ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DIRECTLY £	SUPPORT COSTS £	Total Funds 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Information, advice and advocacy	452,859	118,939	571,798	578,104
	<u>452,859</u>	<u>118,939</u>	<u>571,798</u>	<u>578,104</u>

9 GOVERNANCE COSTS

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2017 £	Total Funds 2016 £
Gifts & Donations			-	
Staff salaries	9,305		9,305	9,305
Professional fees	1,414	100	1,514	681
Exchange (gain)/loss	279		279	
Legal fees			-	
Indep. Examiners fees	1,600		1,600	1,600
	<u>12,598</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>12,698</u>	<u>11,586</u>

10 NET INCOMING RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR

	2017	2016
	£	£
Net incoming resources are stated after charging		
Depreciation	1,740	1,739
Independent Examination Fees	1,600	1,600
	<u>3,340</u>	<u>3,339</u>

11 INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS REMUNERATION

	2017	2016
	£	£
Independent Examination	<u>1,600</u>	<u>1,600</u>

12 STAFF COSTS AND EMOLUMENTS

	2017	2016
Direct charitable work & administration	16	16
Average Number of Employees	11.6	10.6

	2017	2016
	£	£
Wages & Salaries	347,114	330,886
Social Security costs	32,469	31,848
	<u>379,583</u>	<u>362,735</u>

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

13 TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS – HELD FOR OWN

Cost	£
At 1 April 2016	47,288
Additions	
Disposals	
At 31 March 2017	47,288
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2016	43,808
Additions	1,740
Disposals	
At 31 March 2017	45,548
NET BOOK VALUE	
At 31 March 2016	3,480
At 31 March 2017	1,740

14 DEBTORS

	2017	2016
	£	£
Trade Debtors	40,759	24,605
Other Debtors	-	4,744
Prepayments	4,198	4,198
	<u>44,957</u>	<u>33,547</u>

15 CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year

	2017	2016
Trade Creditors	2,764	4,397
Other taxes and social security	12,070	12,354
Other creditors	-	-
Accruals	10,000	4,400
	24,834	21,150

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 2017 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	-	-	-	-
	46,680	1,005	46,680	1,005

18 RESTRICTED INCOME FUNDS

	At 1/4/16 £	Incoming Resources £	Outgoing Resources £	Transfers £	At 31/3/17 £
Open Society Foundation	169,909				169,909
Global Web Outreach (Talking Drugs)	-	4,800	5,775	96,884	95,909
African Fellowship					
2016	-	-	34,620	-	34,620
2017			2,485	-	2,485
Asian Fellowship					
2016			34,620	-	34,620
2017			2,275	-	2,275
Lawyering on the Margins		124,980	2,968		122,012
Legal Outreach Surgeries	-	67,318		60,000	7,318
Big Lottery Fund	6,113	47,719	47,719		6,113
Justice First Fellowship		9,177	7,063		2,114
Legal Education App		35,000	22,851		12,149
Sexworkers Outreach Project		13,448	17,718	-	4,270
Legal Outreach Services (other)		88,701	118,036	-	29,335
StopWatch	3,298		3,298		-
Street Law	-	26,008	26,008		-
	107,202	350,809	416,545	60,000	101,466

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:

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.

Global Web Outreach: 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 Spring (Asian) and one in Autumn (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. 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.

Just First Fellowship: Funding is provided by the Legal Education Foundation to support a training contract for trainee solicitor with specific emphasis on developing and advancing access to justice.

Lawyering on the margins: This 2 year project to develop materials and a workshop for 25 participants to be held in Indonesia in autumn 2018. The purpose of the project is to develop a network of lawyers to peer support each other through best practice.

Legal Education App: Funding is provided by the Legal Education Foundation to develop an app for those representing themselves in court criminal proceedings specifically for drug related offences.

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

Sex Workers Project: The purpose of this project is aimed at sex workers to reduce poverty, (re)offending and social exclusion. Debt, low income, homelessness and substance misuse are some of the main drivers for women engaging in sex work, particularly on-street work, which places them at serious risk of offending.

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 1/4/16	Incoming Resources	Outgoing Resources	Transfers	At 31/3/17
£	£	£	£	£
103,240	227,458	183,581 -	60,000	87,117

20 LEGAL OUTREACH SURGERY INCOME

The following organisations contributed to the Legal Outreach Surgeries:

Access to Justice	Pilgrim Trust
Big Lottery Fund (Ended 30 June 2017)	South London & Maudsley NHS
CGL Newham	Foundation (Lambeth & Wandsworth)
London Legal Support Trust	Tower Hamlets DIP

21 ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets	Net Current Assets	Total Funds 2017
	£	£	£
Restricted Funds	-	101,465	101,465
Unrestricted Funds	<u>1,740</u>	<u>85,747</u>	<u>87,486</u>
	<u>1,740</u>	<u>187,212</u>	<u>188,951</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.