



# Annual Review

April 2024- March 2025

Challenging Asylum  
Destitution, Building  
Community Power

## A Message from the Director



**Anna Rudd**  
Director  
ASSIST Sheffield

This year, ASSIST Sheffield has stood firm in the face of profound political and social turbulence. From the fallout of the Rwanda Bill and stepped-up immigration enforcement to the deportation threats affecting our Kurdish and Iraqi clients, we have navigated waves of fear, uncertainty, and injustice. Each policy shift, each crisis, has tested our resilience—and reaffirmed the urgent need for the solidarity-based support ASSIST provides.

And yet, amid the pressure, we have grown. Our housing offer has expanded, our volunteer base strengthened, and our systems refined. We've retrofitted homes to be warmer and greener, supported

over 100 clients with direct financial assistance, and hosted events that turned fear into collective care. Through gardening, arts, casework, and conversation, we've created spaces of safety and connection.

In January 2025, we began developing a bold new five-year strategy shaped by client voices, staff insight, and partner collaboration. At its heart is a vision: A future where everyone has the freedom to thrive.

Together, we are not just responding to need we are imagining a future beyond borders: one rooted in care, justice, and community and until that world exists, we will keep building it – one home, one relationship, one act of solidarity at a time.

## The View from our Co-Chairs

The period of 2024–2025 proved to be a year of significant resilience, solidarity, and strategic growth for ASSIST Sheffield. We are proud to have expanded and deepened our services, strengthened our internal foundations, and responded to profound challenges with dignity, agility, and care.

A key focus this year was investing in the long-term sustainability of ASSIST. This included strengthening our governance through the appointment of eight new trustees, enriching our board with increased diversity, expertise, and lived experience. Furthermore, we prioritised staff and volunteer wellbeing by conducting a comprehensive review of HR policies, ensuring the integration of equity, safeguarding, and leadership development principles.

ASSIST remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering essential support, advocating for systemic change, and empowering the leadership, experiences, and rights of the

people we serve. We approach the next phase of our work with renewed hope and **unwavering determination**.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our dedicated staff team, invaluable volunteers, generous donors, collaborative partners, and all supporters for their hard work, commitment, and unwavering dedication. Your collective efforts profoundly and positively impact the community we serve. **THANK YOU.**



**Pious Nyandoro**  
Board of Trustees Co-chair  
ASSIST Sheffield



**Paul Harvey**  
Board of Trustees Co-chair  
ASSIST Sheffield

## The Political Landscape Post-2024 - What It Means for People Refused Asylum: ASSIST Trustee Dr Lucy Mayblin



The major change since April 2024 has been the change of government. Before the 2024 election we were contemplating the death of asylum as we know it in the UK, with most applications not assessed, and the threat of deportation to Rwanda hanging over many people. The new Labour government cancelled the Rwanda plan and many of the most problematic aspects of the Illegal Migration Act. They also began getting a handle on the huge backlog in cases. Aspects of this are positive, most notably the restoration of the normal asylum system, and abandonment of the Rwanda plan. But the initial burst of decision-making meant that many people were suddenly moved on from the asylum system. This resulted

in a significant increase in homelessness amongst both new refugees, and those refused asylum. The Labour government also pledged to deport more people who have no legal status in the UK, which includes ASSIST clients. To do this they plan to create a specialised enforcement unit with 1000 staff, increase the capacity of the immigration detention estate, set up support programmes in 11 countries to support the reintegration of returnees, and negotiate new return deals with countries of origin. Together, these plans mean both that ASSIST has seen, and is likely to continue to see, a larger number of clients, but also (if the deportation plans are realised) that clients will be at greater immediate threat of deportation.





## Jake - Communications, Events and Fundraising Co-ordinator

Communications and events are central to how ASSIST builds solidarity, challenges misinformation, and strengthens community ties. This year, we've seen key developments in both areas as we expand our reach and deepen our impact.

Our events work has evolved from attending to actively hosting. A milestone was our Community Social in March, marking both a farewell to long-serving Accommodation Manager Jochen, and the start of a new series of ASSIST-led gatherings – creating spaces of welcome, unity, and resistance in the face of increasing national hostility.

Partnerships are vital in amplifying our work. We are thankful to our

friends at Talking Gigs (who hosted four benefit concerts) and to long-standing collaborators at Sheffield City of Sanctuary, KINCA, VVIDY, and UoS Bummit Society – to name but a few – who helped raise awareness and funds. ASSIST took part in over 28 events, talks, and external fundraisers in 2024-25.

Awareness raising also remained fundamental. This year, our outreach team – including clients and people with lived experience – spoke at schools, universities, and public events across Sheffield, tackling the root causes of the Hostile Environment. They promoted compassion over indifference and welcome over hostility.

Our communications continue to grow: authentically highlighting client voices, delivering truth-telling impactful content, and crafting anti-oppressive messaging that reflects the change we seek.



## Client Consultation Group: Sarah – Client Support Manager



Our Client Consultation Group is made up of clients who meet regularly to share their experiences, offer feedback, and shape the development of ASSIST's services. It acts as a key mechanism for ensuring that those directly affected by our work have a say in how it is delivered and improved.

The group is a melting pot of various languages, ethnicities and cultures. We've had 11 meetings in the past year, with attendance ranging from 3 to 12 people. One woman and eleven men participated, reflecting true client representation within our organisation. This allowed for more nuanced conversations and ensured all voices were accounted for.

Through these meetings, the group have discussed issues that affect

them and worked to bring about real change. For example, they provided invaluable input into the length of time for support plan reviews before it was phased into casework practice.

The group yearned for community and the ability to forge friendships. From woodwork workshops at Percy St Collective to concerts at the Crucible Theatre, we create spaces for joy whilst centring on their hobbies. These gatherings breathe true camaraderie into the group.

Members also contribute as interpreters, in the Client Maintenance Group and as Trustees—keeping client voice and community at the heart of everything we do.

## Dignity Through Housing, Solidarity in Action: Kyle – Housing Manager

This year marked significant growth and deeper impact across ASSIST Sheffield's accommodation services, reflecting our commitment to Homes and Dignity for All. Around 40 people who have been refused asylum and were experiencing destitution were supported across ten dedicated properties, alongside six families (11 adults and 23 children) with Refugee Status housed through our pilot refugee housing project.

All of the 16 homes ASSIST uses to provide safe and welcoming homes, are donated, loaned, or gifted to ASSIST in solidarity—not charity. This model is a powerful testament to people's willingness to share resources and create safety and equality for all. It is through these acts of solidarity that we are able to offer stable, welcoming homes rather than temporary shelter.

Four properties were retrofitted this year through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, in partnership with SY Ecofit. These improvements have made homes significantly warmer and more energy-efficient contributing to climate

action and improving day-to-day comfort for residents. Feedback from clients has been overwhelmingly positive.

Clients consistently highlight the transformative impact of stable housing:

*"I felt back to normal... I felt able to live a normal life... when you live on the streets, you can't wash your clothes, you can't make your food. So it's like a normal life because when you are on the streets it's no life." Another shared: "My house is a special house. I love my house... we're like brothers, friends. I have everything. I'm happy."*

This work is part of our ongoing commitment: to provide safe, welcoming homes—not hostels—for all our residents.

## Tending Hope - Gardening in ASSIST Houses: Victor - Accommodation Co-ordinator

The idea of the gardening project came about last year in November 2024 when the former Accommodation Manager, Jochen and I talked about the scheme. The discussions that ensued centred around involving the residents of ASSIST's houses in gardening activities. Being a keen gardener, I was tasked to introduce the plan and engage and encourage them. There was enthusiasm when this idea was mooted as some of our residents are brilliant gardeners themselves!

Gardening has therapeutic benefits for the mental health of quite a few of our clients, many of whom have experienced high levels of trauma from their countries of origin

before they came to this country to seek sanctuary.

It is against this that a request to Sheffield Tools For Africa was made to ask if they could help by donating some gardening tools that could be used in the houses. Sheffield Tools For Africa obliged by supplying us with equipment and our gardening activities started initially at our two Welcome Houses and have since spread to include the long term accommodation houses.



## Listening to the Experts: Client Voices from the 2024 Survey

Last summer, ASSIST carried out an in-depth Client Voice Consultation to better understand the experiences and priorities of the people we support. In August 2024, we held nine focus groups with 34 clients, grouped by language and housing situation to allow for focused discussion and appropriate interpretation. All clients were invited to take part, and while a few couldn't join due to practical reasons such as having moved away, interest and engagement were high.

The focus groups explored a wide range of topics—housing, financial support, casework, and the wider political context of the UK asylum system. The conversations were honest, thoughtful, and full of insight.

Clients expressed overwhelming gratitude for the accommodation, casework, and cash support provided by ASSIST. They spoke warmly about the empathy and commitment of staff and volunteers, and praised how easy it was to communicate—especially via WhatsApp and group chats. The accompanying service was also seen as an invaluable source of reassurance.

At the same time, participants raised important concerns: challenges around house-sharing, confusion about casework versus legal advice, anxiety over time-limited support, and emotional strain tied to financial

hardship. Many also wanted more accessible information about their rights and how to get involved in campaigning or volunteering.

This consultation is now playing a key role in shaping ASSIST's new five-year strategy. By listening closely to client voices, we are ensuring our future direction is grounded in real needs and lived experience.

**We're grateful to everyone who took part—and we're listening.**



“All of the time here, they are this type of people that when you lose your confidence, they all of them boost your confidence, they are always encouraging you, anytime you talk they help you and make you feel human again. All of them are very helpful. They say don't give up. Whenever you need help talk to us. They are very good.”

“I will never forget the kindness of you and your friends”

“I felt so good in the house, it felt like a home. Good area, the house was nice, everything was clean. My last year in the UK was really nice.”

“I have been with ASSIST for up to 5 years and I want to give back. I don't want to just sit in the house. I can fix bikes, cars and work in the house. I have been so happy volunteering on Rock Street. When they call, I come. I go to the house sometimes two, sometimes three days a week. I am learning and have a good relationship with the team.”

“I want to thank everyone within ASSIST for your overwhelming support in time of trouble . Your kindness and love for destitute people is a good example in our society. You have done to me what no one has ever done here in the UK . May almighty God reward you abundantly.”

## Showing Up, Standing With: Our Volunteers in Action: Leah - Volunteer and Community Outreach Co-ordinator

Volunteering is at the heart of the ASSIST community. It's not something done for ASSIST, but something we build together—a shared endeavour grounded in solidarity, care, and collective action.

This year, our volunteer community has been a driving force behind growth and change. Together with City of Sanctuary, we co-developed a Volunteer Interpreting Training programme that deepens support for interpreters and strengthens the quality of care we offer to people seeking sanctuary. We've also begun exploring progression pathways, including support toward formal qualifications, recognising

the skills and experience held within our community.

New volunteers have joined across finance, welfare, accompanying, and housing—bringing renewed energy and helping to create greater stability in our teams. Our events crew has also begun to grow again, helping ASSIST reconnect with the wider community and make our collective voice stronger.

We've worked side by side to improve our systems too. Collaborating with the Office and Admin Support Officer and Client Support Team, we created new CiviCRM training that gives volunteers more autonomy,

while supporting best practice around confidentiality and data use.

And just as importantly, we've made space to connect, relax, and have fun. Through a programme of creative volunteer socials we've deepened relationships and strengthened the sense of community that sustains this work.

To everyone who shares their time, energy, and care as part of the ASSIST community: thank you. You're not just supporting the work—we are the work, and we do it together.



# What we have provided from April 2024 to March 2025

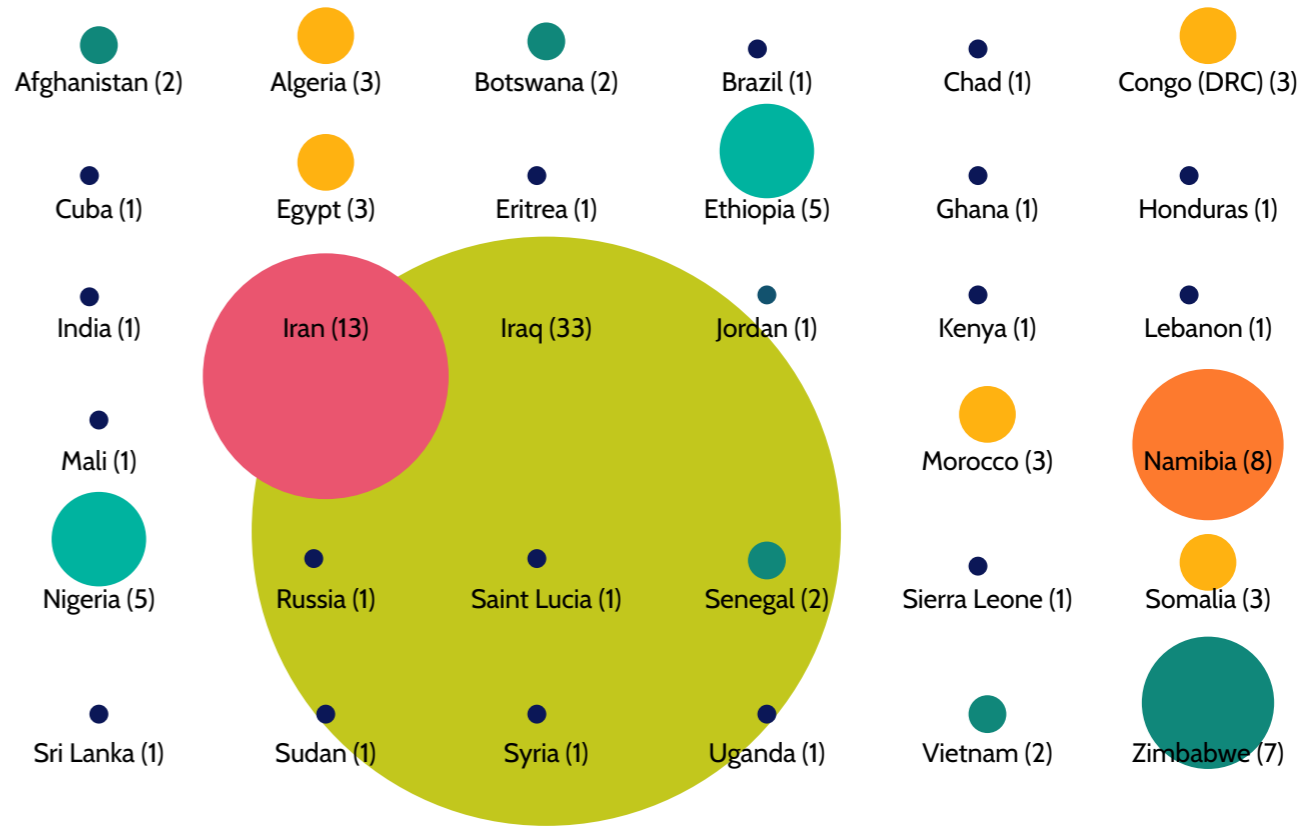
## Housing:



## Clients:



# Country Of Origin Information



# Money with a Mission

Our finances are in the process of being independently examined. The figures below represent our draft end of year accounts. Our full financial statements will be presented at ASSIST's AGM and will be available on the Charity Commission website.

Grants - £444,176
Donations - £269,786
Other (incl. rent) - £45,445
<b>Total Income - £758,602</b>
Client Support - £134,159
Accommodation - £114,521
Resources - £353,831
<b>Total Expenditure - £602,511</b>
Variance - £156,896
Designated Surplus - £136,114
<b>Remaining Surplus - £20,782</b>

In 2024/25, ASSIST had a successful year of fundraising, increasing our income by £81,752 on the year before. This included an

astonishingly generous donation of £101,000 towards the purchase of a new house, as well as £168,786 in other donations.

ASSIST's expenditure rose by £69,116 on the previous year, with the largest increases being in staffing costs and maintenance on our properties.

The house donation and £42,253 in grant income will be carried over to the 2025/26 year, effectively meaning that ASSIST operated a deficit for 2024/25.

ASSIST could not provide cash payments or housing to our clients without the extraordinary generosity of our supporters. Thank you for standing in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary in our city.

# Organisational Structure



# There are so many ways you can get involved

Whatever your situation there is something you can do to help ASSIST continue to provide its crucial services.

- **VOLUNTEER** - Accompanying our clients to appointments, visiting the residents of our houses, helping with administration, running stalls at our events; these are just a few of the roles you can take on as an ASSIST volunteer. Please visit the 'how you can help' pages on our website for any current vacancies or, if you think that you have skills and experience that can benefit our work, then please get in touch.
- **FUNDRAISING** - Set yourself a challenge, be it sporting or otherwise, or organise an event. We want to hear your ideas!
- **DONATE** - we appreciate all donations, big or small, one-off or by standing order. Or leave a gift for ASSIST in your will.

Find out more at:

[www.assistsheffield.org.uk](http://www.assistsheffield.org.uk) • [admin@assistsheffield.org.uk](mailto:admin@assistsheffield.org.uk) • 0300 201 0072

An illustration on the right side of the page shows two hands, one dark-skinned and one light-skinned, pointing upwards towards two speech bubbles. The top speech bubble contains the word 'GET' and the bottom speech bubble contains the word 'INVOLVED'. The background is split into teal and pink sections with yellow wavy lines.

GET

INVOLVED