

**The London  
Community  
Foundation**

A photograph of two people, a man and a woman, sitting at a desk in an office. The man is on the left, looking towards the woman on the right. They are both looking down at some papers on the desk. The woman is pointing at a document. In the background, there is a desk with a printer, a box of Russell Hobbs kettles, and a filing cabinet. The overall scene is a professional meeting or review.

# Paddington Central Community Fund

**Round 2 - Impact report**  
20 November 2024

# Round 2

## Introduction

This round of the fund supported 3 organisations with year-long grants to deliver projects and services addressing the unique needs and challenges of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. 440 service users benefited from the funded work with participants reporting that their engagement had improved their mental health, reduced feelings of social isolation and improved their confidence using English to navigate social and professional environments.

This report summarises the impressive work the 3 groups were able to do as a result of your generous funding and demonstrates the critical impact of your support. This is a short report and is expected to take less than 30 minutes to read.

## Priorities and Themes

This round of the Fund focused on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (RAM). Organisations received grants of up to £10,000 to address:

### **Health and wellbeing:**

Via the delivery of projects/services that sought to improve service users mental and/or physical wellbeing or address the health inequalities affecting the RAM community.

### **Economic empowerment & inclusion:**

Via the delivery of projects or services that aimed to improve the economic outcomes of the RAM service users.

## Funded projects

	Organisation	Project summary	Area of benefit	Amount awarded
1	Notre Dame Refugee Centre	The grant supported the running of a drop-in service and ESOL classes.	Westminster	£10,000
2	Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation	The grant was used to run a series of Functional English classes for migrant women in Westminster.	Westminster	£10,000
3	Unfold	The grant was used to deliver specialised mentoring classes for young people seeking asylum.	Westminster	£9,980



# Round 2 in numbers



**3**

groups supported



**£29,980**

total amount of funding awarded



**440**

service users

Organisation name	Service users	Primary demographic of service users
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	318	Young adults, working age adults and seniors (19 - 65+)
Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation	48	Adult women (25-65)
Unfold	74	Young adults (16-25)
<b>Total</b>	<b>440</b>	



# Project summaries

## Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation (MEWSO)

### Funded activities:

The grant enabled the delivery of 26 Functional English classes to 48 migrant women experiencing social isolation due to language barriers. Participants used everyday scenarios to practice the language skills they were learning.

### Benefits & outcomes:

Initially, many of the participants were socially isolated. As the programme progressed, they began to support one another more, forming friendships and offering mutual encouragement.

In addition, many reported feeling more confident in managing everyday interactions. This confidence helped them expand their social circles and navigate various situations more effectively. Services users felt more confidence engaging with new opportunities, and MEWSO worked with Westminster Employment Services to organise CV writing and job application sessions. This empowered participants to pursue volunteering roles and paid positions.



92% of participants reported increased confidence in speaking English and a boost in their self-esteem.



## Funding impact

92% of participants reported increased confidence in speaking English and a boost in their self-esteem. The grant also opened the door for MEWSO to connect with various services, allowing them to arrange more activities and support options for service users. Additionally, the funding helped the group build strong connections with women in Westminster resulting in a noticeable increase in registrations and participation in the classes.

## Challenges & learning

Consistent attendance was one of the main challenges during the delivery period, as well as time keeping, as many women had family commitments or cultural observances. To manage this MEWSO were flexible in their approach to accommodate participants' needs. Another challenge was that some service users often reverted to speaking in their native languages when communicating with their fellow country women, hindering their English practice. To overcome this participants were encouraged to engage in more English conversations through group activities. The importance of practising their English was emphasised during class.

## Case study

Mayada, a 65-year-old woman from Syria struggled with basic English and felt quite isolated in her new surroundings. Her attendance at the classes helped build her confidence speaking English and she soon became more involved in class activities. She approached us (MEWSO) with a request to get funding to start a choir, believing that she could train many of the women in her class who had beautiful voices like her. Two weeks ago, we secured funding for the choir, and we are currently in the process of making arrangements for its delivery. Maya will lead the choir practice using only English.



# Notre Dame Refugee Centre

## Funded activities:

The grant supported costs towards the delivery of their drop-in service and weekly English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes which engaged 318 service users. Six classes ran every week and supported service users who could speak no English, up to those with intermediate skills.

## Benefits & outcomes:

The centre has seen a steady number of service users engaging with up to 16 participants engaging in ESOL classes and 1978 unique visits to the drop-in. The drop-in provided an opportunity for service users to have a hot meal, access donated clothing, toiletries and food parcels. They also introduced a Women's discussion group, art workshops and ran a number of events including a Christmas lunch, Easter Egg Hunt and a picnic during Refugee Week. Service users reported that the centre's activities improved their mental health, their English language skills and reduced social isolation.

Supporting the work of the centre were the volunteers who played a significant role in the running of the centre. 35 volunteers engaged in roles ranging from general advisers to ESOL tutors. The general help and advice desk received 269 unique requests for help on matters including welfare benefits, housing and health. Staff ran a volunteer appreciation event to thank them for their work and give them a chance to meet other volunteers, staff and trustees.

## Funding impact

In addition to supporting the running of the drop in and ESL classes, the grant supported the charity to recruit more volunteers, including volunteer cooks who prepare hot meals for service users, and purchased additional equipment such as a projector for their ESOL classes.

They also developed a Client Involvement Project, introduced a client-led newsletter and developed a Welcome Wednesday offer, increasing the social and skill-based activities offered to attendees. Funding also enabled the production their first impact report.



'When I arrived in the UK I didn't speak a word of English, but thanks to your lessons, today I am starting to be able to get by in English, little by little.'

Service user



## Challenges & learning

The charity did not report any challenges during the grant period.

### Case study

Keny is 31 and arrived in England from Ivory Coast as an asylum seeker in 2023. He is currently staying with friends. Since joining our English classes over a year ago, Keny has made incredible progress. In the last academic year, Keny achieved 100% attendance in our Beginners English class, he has now progressed to our Intermediate class where he continues to improve his English. He also attends our creative writing workshops which he says has helped him to further improve his writing skills. Keny also enjoys coming to the centre because it has helped him build a sense of community. He looks forward to our events and drop-in sessions, where he shares lunch with friends and always makes a special effort to welcome any newcomers.

Keny is a helpful presence at the centre, often staying behind to help staff and volunteers with packing up after our drop-in sessions. He has expressed an interest in volunteering with us once he completes his English course. Looking ahead, if Keny receives a positive decision from the Home Office, he hopes to find work caring for animals as he did back in Ivory Coast. At our end of term celebration, Keny said 'I'm grateful for the support that Notre Dame Refugee Centre has given me. I am very happy when I come here and I have met many good people here'.





# Unfold

## Funded activities:

The grant supported the salary of the Programme Officer, delivery of specialised a mentoring programme tailored to the needs of young asylum seekers. Funding also supported a newly launched Youth Support Group (YSG) and monthly targeted outreach sessions with partners.

## Benefits & outcomes:

36 young asylum seekers between 16 and 25 participated in the specialised mentoring programme. The Programme Officer coordinated the delivery, recruited mentors, assessed service users needs and matched mentees with suitable mentors. Sessions ran for up to two hours for up to six months and total of 188 sessions were delivered during the grant period.

The YSG, a partnership with St. Andrew's Youth Club, delivered 32 sessions that engaged 47 unique service users. Sessions ran for two hours, with an average of 7-12 users engaged at any one time, and a record of 32 participants. These young people were able to build friendship with their peers through activities which included pool, bowling and basketball.

Further, monthly targeted weekend outreach activities with partners including 2-3 Degrees engaged 47 young asylum seekers. These activities were used to encourage the young people to engage with local services.

For the charity, the funded work has deepened their understanding of the unique challenges of young people seeking asylum. This has led them to increase their advocacy work either on their behalf of service users or in support of them advocating for themselves. The work will become a more explicit part of their forthcoming five year strategy and the organisation have been successful in securing a four year grant from the British Institute for Human Rights and JustFair. The charity are confident that their experience delivering this funded work played a substantial role in securing their new grant.

## Funding impact

Prior to obtaining the funding, Unfold identified an unmet need for support for young asylum seekers aged 16 – 25. These young people were particularly vulnerable yet fell through the network as support focused on families and children. These young people are not able to access higher education, have limited access to very few training courses and are not permitted to work. This makes them isolated and especially vulnerable to exploitation by gangs, criminal networks, forced labour and trafficking. Many have previously experienced trauma and have poor mental health. Living in temporary accommodation for more than a year, they are often isolated and disengaged from the wider community, with few sources of support or means to navigate their locality. Unfold's weekly YSG offered a space to socialise, make friends, engage in activities and find out about resources and services available in the local community outside of their hotels. There is growing interest among asylum seekers in the YSG and growing participation.

Moreover, the grant has enabled a strong mentoring programme specifically targeted at young asylum seekers, rather than just being an addition to Unfold's general young people's programme. As a result, the charity are more knowledgeable about the challenges and conditions that asylum seekers and refugees, especially those in temporary accommodation, are facing. They are now equipped with the necessary skills to expand support for these service users.

'Before I was really scared and anxious to meet new people but now, I feel more confident talking. The sessions have helped me to open up more about myself. Mentoring is more fun than I thought!'

Service user



## Challenges & learning

Service user numbers at the monthly outreach activities declined during the summer holidays when the session times changed. To address this, Unfold organised evening activities to places such as the theatre and museum for those unable to attend earlier in the day. Unfold also monitored session times and participation engagement to ensure they were responsive to service users' needs.

Additional factors that affected engagement were that some service users moved onto further education or relocated after receiving their status. To address this, the charity actively reached out to hotels to connect with new arrivals ensuring they were aware of the Unfold's offers. They maintain strong relationships with services such as The Early Help Team and Family Navigators, who regularly refer young people to the YSG. The Local Authority Team Around the Hotels meeting also provided additional referral opportunities.

## Case study

Shada is a young woman who is seeking asylum and used to live in one of the contingency hotels in Westminster when she joined the programme. She was one of the first young people to attend the YSG in January 2024 and has attended 27 sessions this year. From these sessions, Shada was looking to meet new people her age and to discover more activities in the community, allowing her to get out of the hotel more often.

'As an asylum seeker over the age of 16, I did not have access to school or employment which was really isolating, and I had no idea what support I could access. I heard about Unfold when they did outreach at my hotel; they told me about the YSG that was nearby and the mentoring opportunities. Because I didn't have community here, I wanted to join so I could socialise with people my age. I really wanted to connect with the community, try new activities and to build my confidence.'

As the sessions went on, Shada started to realise the diversity of services and opportunities offered to her and expressed an interest in taking part in other strands of our services. She was also paired up with a mentor. 'I have about 4 mentoring sessions left now. The sessions are great and my mentor has also helped me with my stress. From the start we made a connection but around the second session I felt really comfortable. Before I was really scared and anxious to meet new people but now I feel more confident talking. The sessions have helped me to open up more about myself. Mentoring is more fun than I thought!'

## Conclusion

Over the last 12 months, a wide demographic of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with varying needs have benefited from an incredible range of projects and services addressing their health and wellbeing and improving their economic outcomes. For socially isolated migrant women, MEWSO's Functional English classes gave them an opportunity to practice and learn everyday conversation skills and position themselves for paid and voluntary roles. Adults with varying English skills were able to use Notre Dame's Refugee Centre to access their drop-in services which provided general advice and guidance, food and clothing, as well as opportunities to participate in activities such as art workshops and discussion groups. And young asylum seekers facing barriers to employment and education due to their asylum status engaged in Unfold's mentoring programme tailored to their unique needs and challenges.

All of the organisations reported that their funded work improved participants' mental wellbeing, English language skills and reduced their social isolation. Overall, the second round of the fund has greatly benefited those in need in the Paddington Central area.

Grantee	Sessions delivered	Hours of activity per session
Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 hours</li> </ul>
Notre Dame Refugee Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 drop in sessions</li> <li>• 234 ESOL classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 hours (drop in sessions)</li> <li>• 1.5 hours (ESOL classes)</li> </ul>
Unfold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2</li> </ul>



# Thank you

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Your support is so vital to sustain London's incredible network of grassroots charities and local community groups. They are the fabric of our communities and increasingly we are all dependent on their unique reach, impact and purpose.

**Together we truly are making a difference to London, where it matters most.**

Paddington  
Central

Community  
Fund



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