

ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024



together
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CHAIR'S REPORT

HELEN SLEE

The last year has resulted in some significant developments for Together Now and the communities we serve.

We have seen escalations in the conflict in Sudan, the Middle East which have been devastating for those we serve and more personally for some of those we work with. This has also negatively impacted our costs and availability of flight options for families who have, at times, struggled to find any option open to them.

The far right violence in the summer badly affected many newly reunited families in the UK but we were encouraged by the stories of support people had received and how this had helped them.

Within Together Now we have welcomed our first paid members of staff into our Director and caseworker roles, a significant step in our organisations development. We are pleased to be able to bring lived experience to the heart of our organisation as we can see the benefit this offers for our clients.

With dedicated fundraising support, we have achieved the highest income to date, allowing us to take a more strategic outlook on our work and focus on developing our resilience as an organisation.

We have also increased our volunteer numbers allowing us to spend more time working with each family and be more proactive in offering support.

Increasing demand and upcoming challenges in our operating context mean we expect the year ahead to be difficult. We are confident that the dedication of our staff and volunteers will help us through this so we can develop and grow our offer to families who most need it.

154

FAMILIES REUNITED

350

INDIVIDUALS FLOWN

503

BENEFICIARIES SUPPORTED

DIRECTOR'S REPORT



VICTOR IRINGERE

Director, Together Now

As Director, I have been charged with leading the organisation and delivery on our growth and leadership strategy. My appointment was a key achievement of our ambitious Front and Centre strategy – designed to put lived experience at the heart and head of the charity.

Other key achievements of Front and Centre this year include:

- the appointment of six new board members with lived experience
- the institution of our Experts-by-Experience advisory group.
- the organisation of three Experts-by-Experience networking events across the country, engaging effectively with over 100 clients face-to-face.
- the engagement of new volunteers with lived experience across the organisation.

For fourteen years, the co-founders of the charity, Helen Slee (the current and out-going chair) and Amy Lythgoe (the former operational lead of the charity and current family support volunteer) tenaciously led the charity, together with a dedicated and passionate board of trustees and team of volunteers, achieving impressive results year after year, on the smallest of budgets.

Driven by a need to transfer leadership to the clients who they had so passionately served for over a decade, the trustees created the ambitious three-year Front and Centre strategy, the culmination of which was achieved this year.

We have also said goodbye to trustee and former communications volunteer, Caitlin Shentall, and long-time dedicated casework volunteer, Urska Ozimek. We will miss them dearly and wish to express our sincerest gratitude for all the brilliant contributions they have made to the organisation over the years. We absolutely would not be here without them.

When I was appointed, thanks to a generous 3-year grant from the National Lottery Community Fund, the goal was to create a single role to provide overarching leadership and oversight of our work. With priorities to oversee our work in all areas including our Front and Centre strategy, governance, service delivery, stakeholder engagement, partnerships, record keeping, impact measurement, volunteer development, and peer mentors, I was set ambitious and well-defined targets to achieve within a 3-year period.

Our goals for the next year are no less ambitious than this year just gone by and with our increased investment in our capacity, we expect to meet our targets and pave the way for a third year of growth. Thank you to the National Lottery Community Fund for facilitating the achievement of our Front and Centre strategy.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

For this last year, our priorities focused on laying the foundations to support ambitious growth targets. Closely aligned with the priorities of the National Lottery grant award, we achieved the following targets:

- Front and Centre: achieved over 75% lived experience on the board, completed delivery on all objectives of the 3-year strategy, hosted networking events across the country and recruited new Family Reunion Expert Advisors, Peer Mentors and Volunteer Interpreters.
- Formed new partnerships including with Rooted Finance, The Money Charity, the Refugee Microfinance Working Group (founding members), the NRPF partnership, RAMFEL, the Experts by Experience Employment Initiative, the National Digital Inclusion Network, and SEREDA. We increased the level of our involvement with the Global Family Reunification Network run by UNHCR, and with ACEVO, and NCVO.
- Secured external support for our growth efforts from the Lloyds Bank Foundation.
- Maintained productive relationships with existing funders and built relationships with new ones.
- Transitioned from a small to a medium-sized charity by achieving an annual income of >£100,000.
- Increased organisational capacity by recruiting new volunteers in key positions including casework, fundraising and finance.

LOOKING FORWARD

With our successful year end, we are now in the perfect position to formally close our Front and Centre strategy and launch a new strategy: Front and Centre II. Our plans include:

- Extending the opportunities for people with lived experience to participate at every level of our organisation and represent it externally
- Empowering our experts by experience to take charge of the public narrative around family reunification and refugees' rights in general.
- Increasing awareness of our service in order to expand the number of families who access our support.
- Expanding our service delivery offer and increasing staff hours, to meet our clients' needs. Expanding our fundraising efforts and diversifying our streams of income.
- Amplifying the voices of our lived experience advisory group through increased interactions with external organisations.

SERVICE SUMMARY

TOGETHER NOW

Where there is a specific need to, we book flights directly for families.



36

Families supported



81

People flown



£460

Cost per person



£37,232

Total cost

10 families received support with costs associated with obtaining a visa
30 beneficiaries in total
Total cost **£2,871**

8 families who travelled independently supported after arriving in the UK

MILES4MIGRANTS

Through Miles4Migrants we can access flights funded by donated airmiles for just the cost of the taxes and fees.



£65,963

Value of flights



69

Families supported



141

People flown

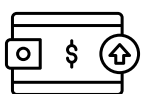


4,834,375

Miles redeemed

REFUAID

Our partnership with RefuAid allows families to access flexible loans with no interest to fund their families' travel. This allows them to be in control of the arrangements and fund non-flight travel costs as required.



£64,900

Total borrowed



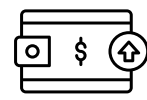
45

Families granted loans



128

People flown



£507

Loan per person

MINA'S* STORY

The first nights when my daughter came, she screamed in her sleep until the morning and was running away. Stress and fear were still with her and she couldn't believe that she had found a place.

This is my daughter's room. I still can't believe that my daughter is with me. Seeing another dream about my daughter at home makes me happy. It shows my daughter after twenty-six years of suffering, torture, beatings, threats, and separation from me, my daughter miraculously managed to be saved with the help and support of God and you dear ones..

My daughter was only seven years old when her father brutally took all of it from me and I was never able to see my daughter again and for many years my daughter and I were separated from each other and we cried day and night and our meeting is a wish.



This was my hard days before my daughter came. I was under a lot of stress. I couldn't sleep at night until morning. At any moment, my daughter's father might find out that my daughter was in contact with me and my daughter's life was in danger.

A video call between me and my daughter and my family in the first days when I was able to see my daughter through a video call after twenty years.

I was not in a good financial situation and could never save my daughter and your help helped my daughter to be saved especially when her first flight was cancelled due to lack of boarding pass.

Due to not having a good financial situation, I was never able to save my daughter from another country. If it wasn't for your help, dear ones, it would not have been known how my daughter's fate would have been, despite her father's definite decision to send my daughter to marry a fifty-year-old man who was in Afghanistan. With death threats, my daughter and I were poor.

The story of our very bitter life, which had become even more bitter and continued, suddenly changed from death to life with your financial help, we returned from death to life again.

If you didn't help, my daughter would have been transferred from Iran to Afghanistan. I was never able to find her or meet her because my daughter was supposed to be married to a Taliban man and she was imprisoned in a room in Afghanistan for the rest of her life. She didn't even have the right to have a mobile phone.

This was the scariest part for me and my daughter because my daughter had been able to secretly find me through Instagram and now at any moment this connection could be cut off again and we would not know each other. I didn't know what to do. My daughter could die at any moment. By her father or by a fifty-year-old man who was going to sell my daughter to Obb, my daughter said that she would commit suicide again and I would die here at any moment.

My daughter had committed (sic) suicide many times before she found me. After finding me, she was hopeful that she would be saved. This time, I was scared that I would be able to save my daughter if you didn't help me to save her at all. I was not enough. I was alone and that was not good at all.

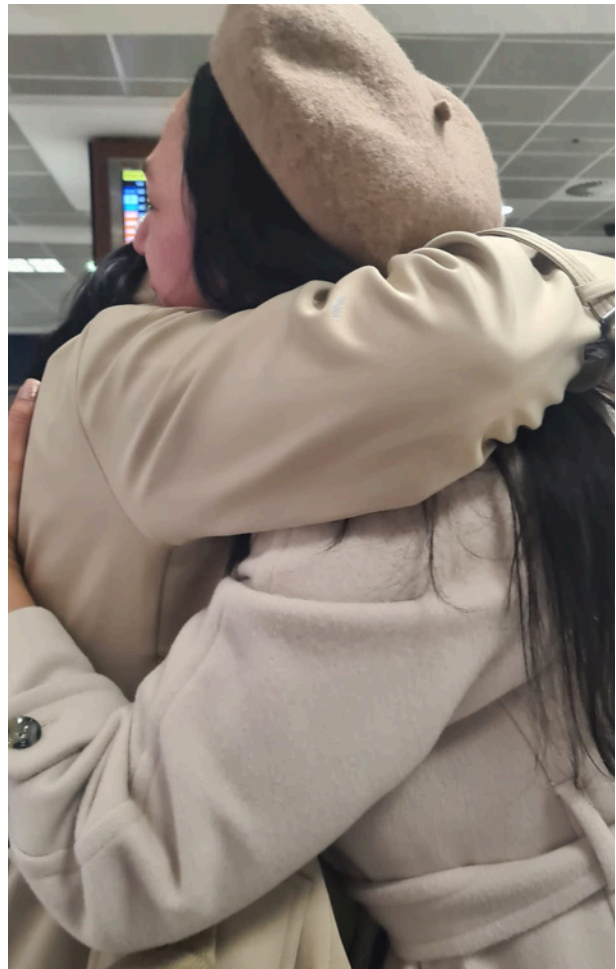
Thank you for everything for life and peace of mind that you and your colleagues have given you. May God be pleased with you.

This photo of my children when their father took them from me cruelly and never let me see them again and I was only able to save my daughter after twenty years with your help dear ones.

The most painful thing for a mother is to be separated from her children and not seeing them. I had this difficult experience and I was in a difficult situation mentally and emotionally. My heart still hurts.

For all the years that passed with longing to see my children, I could not see them grow up or I could not save them from that hell and they grew up in the most difficult conditions and suffered a lot of damage.

And there was no way to see them again. For me, there was no way to see my children in this world. He thought that maybe there would be freedom in the afterlife, maybe there would be a meeting. We are very happy that we are living in a miracle and we have come from despair to hope.



I don't know how to thank you, I really can't thank you for this amount of magnanimity, help and philanthropy.

My daughter and I have decided that when our English improves and we go to work, we can donate some money to help families who miss seeing each other like us. This is how our hearts will improve.

In my opinion, this helping is the most beautiful kind of helping. My family and I are grateful to you 🙏🙏🙏

Please, I have achieved all this happiness with the help of you dear ones. I can't do anything alone. I appreciate you and your colleagues. 🙏

Mina's flight was provided thanks to funding from The Forrester Trust and Choose Love.



ESTHER'S STORY

My name is Esther Mukiibi, I'm a refugee in England. I came to UK 2021 October and left my 8 yr old son with my late mother.

It really hurt me leaving him behind but I had to flee for my own safety and trusted that he was in safe hands with my mother unfortunately God called my mum home in 2023 may and my son was left with no one except friends. I struggled to bring him here the time mum died I was still an asylum seeker so it wasn't possible but soon as I got my leave to remain I immediately looked for support to apply for family reunion, Fortunately, the visa was granted in 3 months and I had to look for help to bring him because I don't work and got a 1 year old girl so couldn't afford his tickets until someone told me about Together Now.

I reached out to Together Now and they accepted to help me , I'm so grateful for them for making my dream come to true. My son arrived in UK 2 weeks back we are so very happy.

It's so painful to be separated with your child. It tortured both of us mentally, infact I suffered from severe depression and anxiety but now I can testify that I'm okay .I've not had any anxiety and depression since he came!!

Big ups to TOGETHER NOW ❤️🙌

Esther's flight was booked using 27,375 Flying Blue miles generously donated by Miles4Migrants.



CYRUS’* STORY

“My family was at a well-founded risk in Iran and due to this reason, I wasn’t feeling good and I felt very bad mentally physically emotionally. I was very weak but when we reunited it help me more than enough that I can recover myself from my previous trauma and hopefully soon we will be able to see each other. Then we are going to look for the future to make plans to get into work and to buy house car and to help our children to have a better safer and a secure future. I would like to say that I really appreciate how you help me to see my family sooner than expected. And if it wasn’t you, I wouldn’t be able to arrange or get the tickets to see my family at this time thank you very much. This loan helped me a lot to get reunited with my family because when I got my positive decision in the UK I literally had nothing in my account so the Lord helped me to get the tickets and to see my family as soon as possible and I am very grateful for that.”

Cyrus’ family were reunited thanks to an interest-free loan provided by our partners, RefuAid

*Some names have been changed to protect clients’ anonymity.

NEED

Over the last year we have seen an increase in demand due to the conflicts in Sudan and the Middle East displacing families and, in addition to the risks to physical and psychological safety, putting further financial strain on families. 68% of families are coming to us directly rather than being referred by another organisation. Most are from Sudan, Iran, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Yemen.

Whilst we have developed additional criteria to try to identify those in the most vulnerable situations we are now in the unfortunate position of turning away more families than we can support, and are only able to offer advice to these families.

300 families turned away in 2023/24; an estimated 1600 people unable to receive travel assistance. An estimated 832 people not travelled

Examples of families we have supported where there are specific risks

Sudanese national in Saudi Arabia following fleeing the conflict in Sudan and at risk of deportation back to Sudan, joined sponsor as carer due to mental health issues.

Afghan teenager at risk of forced marriage by her father's family and no protection from the authorities in a third country.

Young Afghan care leaver, the sole guardian of their two minor siblings needing multiple flight bookings and flexibility to allow a safe route from Pakistan despite exit permit ban.

Displaced adult reliant on essential medication but unable to access healthcare.

Children and grandchild of a victim of modern slavery who themselves were at risk from trafficking.

Family of a care leaver whose eldest brother was at risk of conscription in Syria.

Destitute Gazan family receiving specific permission to leave via Rafah.





CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

“Your support has not only provided me with reuniting with my children, but it has also reminded me of the importance of kindness and compassion in our world. Your willingness to go above and beyond to help me during difficult situation means more to me than words can express.”

“Being separated from my family was an incredibly challenging experience. The uncertainty and the constant worry about their safety weighed heavily on me every day. It felt as if a part of me was missing, and I struggled to find solace knowing they were far away and potentially in danger.

The moment we were reunited was indescribable. There was an overwhelming sense of relief and joy. Tears of happiness flowed freely, and it felt as if a massive weight had been lifted off our shoulders. Finally, being able to hold my loved ones and knowing they were safe was a profoundly emotional experience. There is a sense of hope and excitement for the future. We aspire to contribute positively to our new community, pursue education and career opportunities, and build a stable, happy life here.

Reuniting families is not just about bringing loved ones together; it's about providing safety, stability, and hope for a better future.”

“We were so upset and felt alone and now we are happy and more confidence.”

“It was an indescribable moment meeting my family at the airport. The wait for them to appear through the entrance was almost unbearable and I joked that after waiting for 2 years why was it that I couldn't handle the last 2 hours?! Seeing them reunited with their dad, I felt such a sense of relief that now my children could have what they really needed, and a burden was lifted.”

“The day finally came when I was reunited with my daughter at the airport in the UK. The joy of seeing her again was profound, but it was overshadowed by the tragic loss of her mother, who had died in a crossfire in Yemen.

While the loss was immense, seeing my little girl, knowing she had survived, brought me a deep sense of relief and gratitude. She was now the only family I had left, and she was my beacon of hope through the darkness. I am deeply grateful for all the support that made our reunion possible. Without it, we might still be apart. Reuniting with my daughter has given me new hope and strength, and I am thankful beyond words.”

“The most painful thing for a mother is to be separated from her children and not seeing them. I had this difficult experience and I was in a difficult situation mentally and emotionally. My heart still hurts.

For all the years that passed with longing to see my children, I could not see them grow up or I could not save them from that hell and they grew up in the most difficult conditions and suffered a lot of damage.”





Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/
members of

Charity Name
Together Now

On accounts for the year
ended

30 September 2024

Charity no
(if any)

1183639

Set out on pages

1 - 2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

Responsibilities and
basis of report

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 30/09/2024.

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

Independent
examiner's statement

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Nana Opoku Barfi

Date:

14 November 2024

Name:

Nana Opoku Barfi

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

1. Member - Association of Charity Independent Examiners (MCIE)
2. Fellow - Association of Certified Public Accountants (FCPA)

Address:

16 Butlers Grove
Great Linford
Milton Keynes, MK14 5DT

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Charity Name
Together Now

No (if any)
1183639

CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	Period start date 01/10/2023	To	Period end date 30/09/2024
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Grants	31,200	62,602	-	93,802	85,722
Personal Donations	13,420	-	-	13,420	11,609
Casework Income	-	764	-	764	-
Gift Aid	76	-	-	76	-
Fundraising	-	-	-	-	1,528
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub total (Gross income from AR)</i>	44,696	63,366	-	108,062	98,859
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub total</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Total receipts</i>	44,696	63,366	-	108,062	98,859
A3 Payments					
Case Expenditure	33,288	23,486	-	56,774	60,732
Staffing costs	5,252	38,442	-	43,694	5,200
Core costs	608	2,401	-	3,009	1,757
Project costs (front and center)	-	5,222	-	5,222	1,689
Project costs (other)	- #	-	-	-	2,347
Training	-	420	-	420	268
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub total</i>	39,148	69,971	-	109,118	71,993
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Employee wage advance (loan)	2,025	-	-	2,025	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub total</i>	2,025	-	-	2,025	-
<i>Total payments</i>	41,173	69,971	-	111,143	71,993
<i>Net of receipts/(payments)</i>	3,523	- 6,605	-	- 3,081	26,831
A5 Transfers between funds	1,298	- 1,298	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	3,779	27,314	-	31,093	4,262
<i>Cash funds this year end</i>	8,600	19,411	-	28,012	31,093

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
CCXX R1 accounts (SS)				

B1 Cash funds

Bank account	8,600	19,411	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Total cash funds	8,600	19,411	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
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B2 Other monetary assets

Employee wage advance (loan)	2,025	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
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B3 Investment assets

		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
---------	-----------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
---------	---------------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------

B5 Liabilities



HMRC (PAYE and NICs)	Restricted	1,777	
Pension	Restricted	139	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature

Print Name

Date of approval

	Olivia Long	04/02/2025
	Maria Falzetti	06/02/2025

APPRECIATION

VOLUNTEERS

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to all the volunteers who so diligently supported us this year and without whom none of our work would be possible:

- Mellan Elhachem
- Alex Hilton
- Amy Lythgoe
- Urska Ozimek.

We would also like to thank our board, those who have advised us, and everyone who has supported us and families this year including: Miles4Migrants, Refuaid, Children and Families Across Borders, Rainbow Haven British Red Cross and The Money Charity

As always the community support we have seen for families has been incredible with friends and family interpreting, collecting documents, providing travel to and from airports and caring for unaccompanied children. We have also seen some really positive examples of clients receiving support from others in the development of our peer mentoring offer and would like to thank those who have agreed to help other families.

FUNDERS

We would like to thank all the funders and individual donors who have supported our work this year, including those who prefer to stay anonymous.

The Fulmer Foundation
Eleanor Rathbone Foundation
The Forrester Trust



**CHOOSE
LOVE**



CONTACT US

Email/

enquiries@togethernow.org.uk

Website/

www.togethernow.org.uk

Social Media/

[@TogetherNowUK](https://www.instagram.com/TogetherNowUK)