



DA'ARO YOUTH PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT

April 2022

to March 2023

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CHAIR'S REPORT

The UK has been welcoming generations of asylum seekers from East Africa for a very long time. What makes the Da'aro Youth Project (DYP) services unique is our dedication to young, unaccompanied asylum seekers who have endured harrowing journeys to reach the UK; unimaginable emotional and physical trauma. They have lost everything; their dignity, their identity, and everything else they hold dear. Having survived the untold trauma, a lot of them faced after arriving here unparalleled misery and rejection on multiple levels. These pushed some of them to tragically end their life, the great majority of whom were Eritreans. Galvanised by these tragic stories, about thirty mothers from the Eritrean community in south London sprang into action and laid the founding cornerstone of DYP in 2018.

Dehab Woldu and Benny Hunter built on this foundation and created DYP as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in the same year. We owe a debt of gratitude to the many mothers who took that first step and to both Dehab and Benny who have jointly made possible the success DYP continues to enjoy to this day. Behind every success are the devotion and zeal of our volunteers -without their help our success would not have been possible. Thank you for all your selfless sacrifice. Thank you to all our staff who have endured the tough and rough side of the work that brought the success we are all proud of.

Da'aro (Sycamore) is a giant tree that holds a distinct and an important status in the Eritrean landscape and way of life. Its majestic branches adorned by its broad evergreen leaves outstretch to shield and protect the community from the burning sunlight. It serves as a focal point where people gather to give or receive justice, a place where the young and the not so young come to tell and equally listen to folk stories, to laugh and play. Local people as well as birds enjoy its sweet fruit. DYP through its casework, advocacy and advisory work and through

CHAIR'S REPORT (continued)

the Injera Club truly reflects that human spirit of loving and caring; giving as well as receiving help in equal measure. It forms a platform where young refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan gather for advice, help and support; where they meet friends and create a network of contacts. There are so many untold stories of family reunions and representations assisted by our team – too many to be listed here.

In the year 2022/23 we served 1673 traditional freshly-cooked hot meals to 249 youths at our weekly Injera Club. The club also provides several types of recreational games and it is a great joy to watch them enjoying these activities. Thank you to Fulham Football Club for their support in providing a weekly indoor football training session during the club evenings as well as giving a tour of their football stadium to a group of our male and female youths. It's equally a great pleasure to see our youth play music and dance making the club a relaxing place where they can bury their sorrow and hardships however briefly it might be.

In the short history of DYP 2022/23 has been marked with great challenge and turbulence in terms of staff turnover and severely depleted finances but through collective effort we have used this adversity to create new opportunities, thanks to the strategic planning, forward thinking and teamwork of our staff and the Trustees. The financial and management advisory support of our funders has also played a key role in our successes. Appointing our current Youth Project Lead, Sarah Robson, strengthening the expertise of our board of trustees and eventually strengthening our financial standing are marks of our key achievements. This does not ignore the internal challenges we have encountered, the many emergency Trustees' meetings I have had to call. Words cannot express enough my gratitude to my fellow Trustees. You have given me unstintingly and without hesitation your time and expertise whenever I needed it. Last but not least I would like to express my gratitude on behalf of DYP to all our supporters and our donors who trusted us with their donated money.

Our Chair sharing a meal with two of our youngsters



OUR 2022-2023 RESULTS

Our achievements at a glance, during the financial year 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023:



260 Young People Reached



1600+ Hot Meals Served



247 New Cases Opened



**18 Contributions in
News and Media**



DA'ARO YOUTH PROJECT

Da'aro Youth Project was established in 2018 by members of the Eritrean community in London in response to the deaths of a number of teenage Eritreans by suicide.

According to UNHCR, Eritreans and Ethiopians together were the largest nationality group of unaccompanied minors to arrive in the UK in 2017, 2018 and 2019. Sudanese minors were the largest nationality group to arrive in the UK in 2020. Eritreans were the third-largest nationality seeking asylum in the UK in 2021. Asylum-seeking children and young adults arrive here after traumatic journeys through the Sahara Desert, Libya, the Mediterranean Sea and after crossing borders in Europe, such as in Calais. Once here, young people often struggle to adapt to new lives separated from their families and find that navigating the complex asylum system can be stressful and traumatic. They face social isolation, discrimination and sometimes even hostility.

We aim to promote the wellbeing of these migrant young people living in the UK, through direct support and through advocating for changes to unfair and discriminatory systems which undermine their wellbeing.

Towards this aim, we currently run two projects for young asylum-seekers and refugees: a weekly youth club and casework support, both involving the Eritrean community in London. We also advocate on behalf of our community by campaigning on issues that affect them. We are particularly focused on issues that impact the mental health and wellbeing of unaccompanied young people.

INJERA CLUB

We run a weekly youth club in south London for 16-to-25-year-old unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people from the Horn of Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia (and friends from other countries). At Injera Club, young people can socialise with others, play games, pool, table tennis, football and enjoy a home-cooked traditional Eritrean meal. We mark special occasions, birthdays and holidays (such as Eritrean Christmas) at Injera Club by holding extra special parties.

Injera Club is a social space and a safe space – an environment where young people can be themselves for a change away from the stress they have to deal with in their daily lives, where they can interact with their culture and food, and where they can speak to others in their own language. Through the work we do at Injera Club we are looking to build community, improve wellbeing and strengthen the resilience of the young people who attend. Many of our youngsters have suffered trauma during their journeys; they have found hostility after arriving in the UK; our club provides them with a happy, welcoming atmosphere where they begin their recovery. We don't seek to replace or replicate the help provided by social services and other agencies; what we do is to help individuals holistically, under a single roof, to address their multiple areas of need and suffering.

Number of young people who attended Injera Club

294 young people.

Number of attendances / hot meals served

1673 attendances and hot meals served

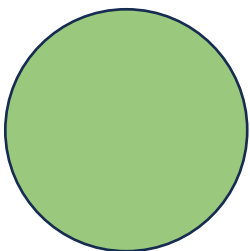
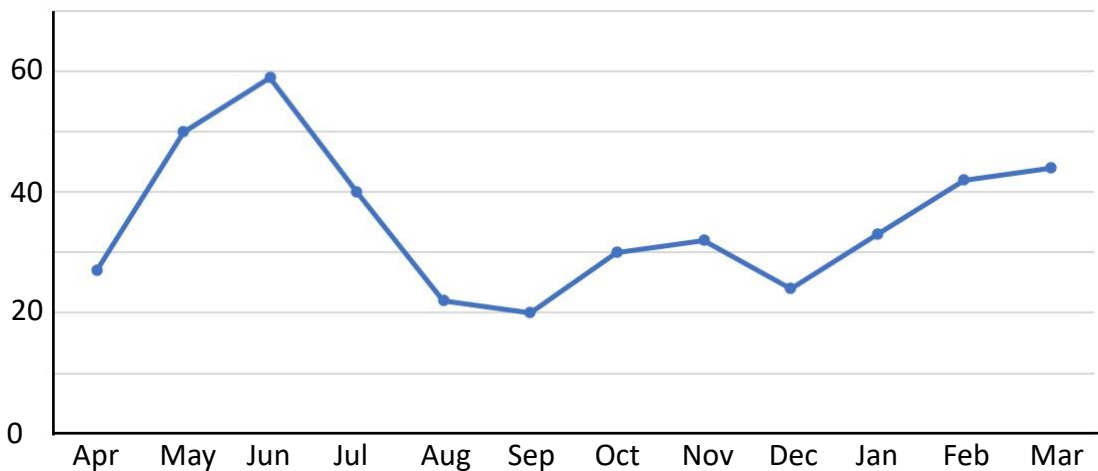
Average attendance per week across the last 6 months of the financial year

42 young people

INJERA CLUB ATTENDANCE

Weekly Average Attendance 2022-2023

The graph shows the weekly number of young people who attended Injera Club, averaged for each month.



Young people have told us consistently how vital Injera Club is to their life. When they are at the club their loneliness is banished and they feel relaxed, safe, and welcomed. One comment: "When I come to the Injera Club I look forward to eating traditional food and speaking in Tigrinya with the friends I have made."

Youngsters enjoying Injera Club activities



YOUTH CASEWORK SERVICE

Our Youth Casework Service was established in July 2021. The Youth Casework Service is trauma-informed, holistic and responsive to the needs that our community present with. Very often our service users first come forward to us whilst attending our weekly Injera Club; the supportive and relaxed club atmosphere provides them with the confidence to come forward and open up to us. The issues they struggle with could be to do with housing, education, immigration, health and mental health, and family reunion (separation from close family members who are in danger elsewhere in the world). Our caseworkers attend the club and after an initial appraisal of each person's situation they arrange a fuller one-to-one meeting with one of the casework team.

Our history of supporting young people goes back to our first days, however, before we formalized our support into the Youth Casework Service. From the birth of DYP in 2018 until the end of the 2021 to 2022 financial year we supported in total 78 young people (between 16 and 25 years old) who needed 1-to-1 support, including with advocacy, advice, emotional support and referrals to specialist legal and other third-sector organisations. For those young people we worked on 138 issues (or we call them 'cases') – including immigration and asylum issues, social services disputes, housing and homelessness, health and mental health matters, family reunion cases and more. In the 2022 to 2023 financial year we have engaged with a further 59 young people, helping them with a further 88 issues. Only 14 of those issues had not been resolved by the end of the financial year.

We have built up excellent relationships with a wide range of organisations and professionals and this means we can skillfully and efficiently help young people to access specialist services – this includes law firms specialising in “outside of the rules” family reunion and complex immigration matters, community care law firms, homelessness organisations, counselling and mental health support organisations, mentoring and educational organisations and many more. We work hand-in-hand with social services, and advocate for young people when their voice isn't being heard.

Since being established in 2018, our organization has supported:

No.	Issue	Support Offered
16 young people (5 in this financial year)	Dealing with a criminal legal issue	By giving help to access specialist legal support and supporting when attending court
52 young people (21 in this financial year)	Dealing with a housing issue or homelessness	By advocating, making referrals and providing advice
28 young people (8 in this financial year)	Struggling to access mental and physical health care	by ensuring their voice is heard and making referrals to support
13 young people (3 in this financial year)	Who had been disbelieved about their age	By referring to children's services, to legal support and providing other advice and support
35 young people (20 in this financial year)	Dealing with an immigration or asylum matter	By making referrals to specialist legal support
24 young people (14 in this financial year)	In dispute with children's services	By advocating, making referrals and providing advice.
5 families	Who were navigating the inquest process after the death of a loved one	By making referrals to specialist legal support and ensuring the voice of the family is heard

FAMILY REUNION

Da'aro Youth Project specialises in supporting complex family reunion work due to the skills of our caseworkers and the relationships we have built with legal organisations. By the end of the 2021 to 2022 financial year our organisation had supported 21 young people to begin the complex legal process for an 'outside of the rules' family reunion application and we had succeeded as part of this in bringing 3 lone children to the UK and reuniting them with their siblings; an older sibling of a man who was blinded; and a mother with her child. Each family reunion case has had a profound and lasting impact on a marginalised young person living alone in the UK. In the financial year 2022 to 2023 we took on a further two family reunion cases: a young mother with her child; and a 15-year-old boy left to die outside a church in Sudan at the hands of people-traffickers – we arranged for him to be reunited in the UK with his older brother, with the help of Islington Law Centre. Once again, our existing relationship with this legal firm was crucial in the success of this case. The scale of our success in these complex situations is particularly remarkable given what a small team we are.

POLICY & CAMPAIGNS

We continue to campaign to encourage policy-makers to make better decisions and to make the public aware of the plight of our service users. With better government policies in place, such as faster processing of claims, young people would suffer less. We campaign alongside other organisations with similar missions.

01

Letter

In March 2023 we signed a petition in protest against the “Illegal immigration bill”.

02

Voice in the media

In July 2021 ...

03

Cross-sector work

In July 2021 ...

04

Parliamentary work

We've worked ...

TEAM DA'ARO YOUTH

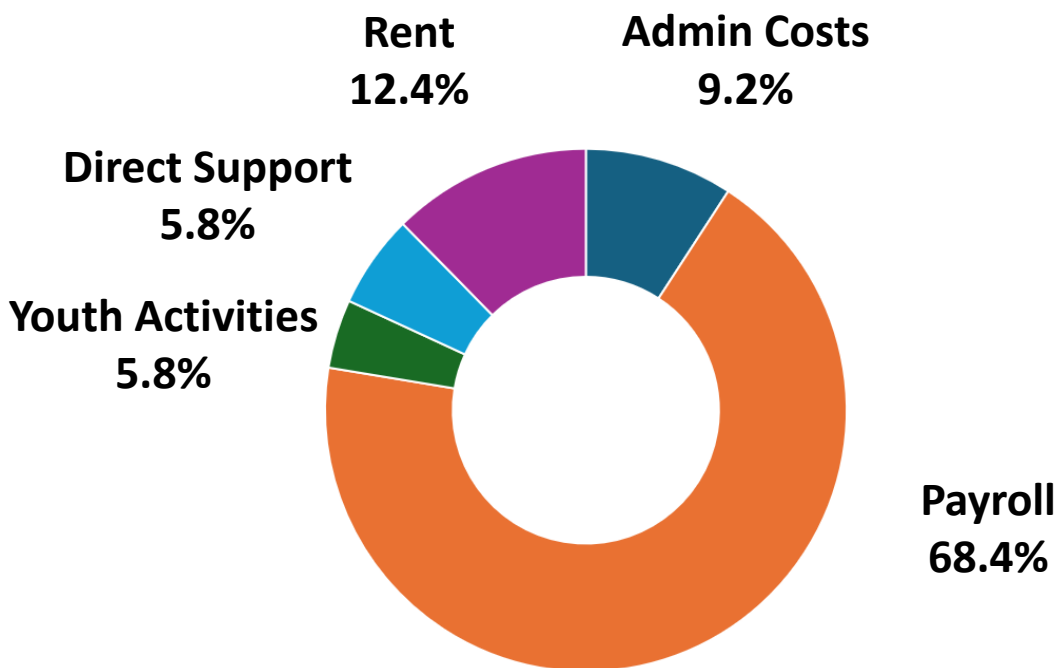
In the 2022 to 2023 financial year our team grew from four staff to five staff. We welcomed two new staff members: Natalia Paszkiewicz joined us as Project Lead; Tigan Hill joined as a Youth Activity Leader; but sadly, we lost Benny Hunter who moved on to new challenges after five years during which he built up this charity into the professional organization it has become.

We continue to be thankful to our incredible volunteers for their support and hard work.

We're also hugely thankful to the community members who have brought food or otherwise helped in whatever way to make Injera Club a success.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

What we spent money on in 2022-2023



In the year ended 31st March 2023 our total income from donations and grants was £192,422.

Expenditure during that period was £159,429.

Reserves at the end of the financial year are £82,102. This amounts to £48,006 in unrestricted reserves and £34,096 in restricted reserves, consisting of 2 restricted funds.

Reserves Policy

DYP is currently dependent on mainly grant funding to sustain its activities. This means that if there were to be a shortfall in grant funding level it is likely that DYP would have to close services.

To avoid closure if funding difficulties were to happen the Trustee Board has agreed to keep a certain level of financial reserves to ensure that main operations can continue for a period of 3 months minimum.

The main concerns of the Trustee Board are to ensure:

- that staff can continue working, primarily to secure new funding
- that clients are supported to move on to other services

Reserves will be built up from unrestricted income.

THANKS

Thank you to everyone who donated and fundraised for us in 2022 – 2023. Every one-off contribution, donation to a fundraiser, and monthly contributor, has allowed us to grow month on month and continue to support the young people that we support.

We are very grateful to our major funders, without which we couldn't do the work that we do: Choose Love, Manpin Foundation, Do It Now Now, The Lloyds Foundation, Thread Ahead, Money 4 You, and The National Lottery Community Fund.

The Blue Thread

A Family Foundation

**CHOOSE
LOVE**



**LLOYDS BANK
FOUNDATION**

England & Wales



TRUSTEES

During the period 2022-2023 the following persons were trustees:

John Abraha		Appointed as trustee on 8 th April 2021
Yohannes Bahru	Chair	Appointed as trustee on 20 th September 2021
Elaine Chase	Secretary	Appointed as trustee on 28 th March 2020
Futsum Kahsa		Appointed as trustee on 28 th March 2020
Hadgu Kiflai		Appointed as trustee on 8 th April 2021
Berhane Semere		Appointed as trustee on 8 th April 2021
Petros Tesfai	Treasurer	Appointed as trustee on 8 th April 2021
Yacob Woldehiwot		Appointed as trustee on 8 th April 2021
Nardos Yemane		Appointed as trustee on 8 th April 2021

Governance and Management

Da'aro Youth Project is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Our governing document is a 'constitution of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with voting members other than its charity trustees'.

There must be at least three charity trustees. If the number falls below this minimum, the remaining trustee or trustees may act only to call a meeting of the charity trustees, or appoint a new charity trustee. The maximum number of charity trustees is 12. The charity trustees may not appoint any charity trustee if as a result the number of charity trustees would exceed the maximum. The majority of trustees must be people who claim Eritrean heritage.

At every annual general meeting of the members of the CIO, one-third of the charity trustees shall retire from office. If the number of charity trustees is not three or a multiple of three, then the number nearest to one-third shall retire from office, but if there is only one charity trustee, he or she shall retire. The charity trustees to retire by rotation shall be those who have been longest in office since their last appointment or reappointment. If any trustees were last appointed or reappointed on the same day those to retire shall (unless they otherwise agree among themselves) be determined by lot; The vacancies so arising may be filled by the decision of the members at the annual general meeting.

The members or the charity trustees may at any time decide to appoint a new charity trustee, whether in place of a charity trustee who has retired or been removed, or as an additional charity trustee, provided that the limit on the number of charity trustees would not as a result be exceeded; a person so appointed by the charity trustees shall retire at the conclusion of the next annual general meeting after the date of his or her appointment, and shall not be counted for the purpose of determining which of the charity trustees is to retire by rotation at that meeting.

All of our activities are undertaken to further our charitable purposes for the benefit of the public. The Trustees have had regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit in section 4 of the Charities Act 2006.

Declarations

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees.



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Charity No. 1189245