

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

highfields  
centre

**Senior Joint Head of Centre:**

**C. Priya Thamotheram**

**B.Sc (Hons) Soc., PGCE,**

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## **Annual General Meeting: Highfields Community Association, 5.30pm on Friday 11 Oct 2024**

Hope you and your family are keeping safe and well in these challenging times, and you are warmly invited to HCA's 2024 Annual General Meeting which will be held at Highfields Centre.

### **Agenda**

1. Guidance for the conduct of the meeting
2. Apologies
3. Approval of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of HCA held on 11/10/2023 (copy to be available at the AGM) and any matters arising.
4. Consideration and adoption of an Annual Report for the period ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (copy to be available at the AGM).
5. Consideration and adoption of the accounts of HCA for the year ending 31 March 2024 (copy to be available at the AGM).
6. Appointment of auditors and fixing of their remuneration
7. Appointment of Individual Members' representatives (see below)
8. Appointment of Directors (see below)

This will conclude the formal business of the AGM. We will then proceed with our guest speaker, Shockat Adam, MP (Leicester South) who will be speaking about 'Overcoming and Advocating for Our Community as an MP'.

This will be followed by a Q&A session and the evening will be concluded with a hot dinner.

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## **Highfields Community Association – Notes of Annual General Meeting – Wed 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**Present:** As per Attendance Sheet.

**Zoom Attendees:** As per Attendance list.

**Apologies:** As per Attendance sheet.

### **1 Registration and Guidance for the Conduct of the Meeting**

Monica (HCA Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance and a special thanks was extended to Professor Ivan Browne, who was the guest speaker for the evening. She said it was an honour for her to be here for a second year and to chair the meeting. She said she was currently undertaking research at De Montfort University and had worked at Uplands as a teacher. She has a keen interest in the process of learning and particularly how this is extended to family members.

It was positive she said that the Centre was extending its work in the creative areas to include music, arts, sports and what matters to children, parents, and grandparents.

Monica referred to the Centre's 3 Es motto and explained how we enhance lives of young people by giving them a voice. How we empower our community through support provide by the FAB-L project. The Karibuni café supported by the Centre provides a hub to have conversations in a safe space and a good place for people to make connections and find out about the services we offer.

Monica handed over to Priya to briefly explain the technical guidance for the 'blended' AGM.

Minutes of the AGM of HCA held on 12<sup>h</sup> October 2022 - agreed as an accurate record..

### **Consideration and Adoption of Annual Staff Report**

Priya provided a summary of the annual report and referred to page 4, saying the last year had been challenging for the Centre. We have incurred large costs partly because of capital expenditures necessitated after the building works were completed in 2004 at a cost of £5 million. This was due to systems failure to do

with lift maintenance, emergency lighting system replacement that cost £25k, energy cost increases and district heating systems failure resulting in us taking emergency measures which have included installation of 4 hot water heaters and providing portable heaters. The repair works to our heating system provided by District Heating is likely to cost £100,000 and the Council's informal response has been that it is our responsibility to meet the repair costs.

Priya referred to page 5 and provided comparative figures for 2012 with HC usage figures of 106,458. Following withdrawal of services and funding by the Council, our numbers dropped but have increased again to 53214 in 2022 as shown on the last page.

Priya spoke about Pat's retirement from the Centre after 40 years of dedicated service. Given she had built up a vast knowledge and experience, it is something that cannot be easily replicated. Linda has taken on the role of Office Manager supported by Fatimah and Aiyub. The Premises Team were thanked for their efforts in keeping the building clean and safe.

Priya provided a short update on the Adult Programme and as on page 11, we have renewed our partnership with Leicester College and are consulting with the new Vice Principal and senior team to expand our provision. We are looking to develop a programme around health and wellbeing and are exploring various funding opportunities.

On pages 13 and 14, is the Youth Report which Priya reported as being positive, with young people now participating on our Governing Body and providing valuable insights. As of June, '23, the Centre staff comprised 7 FTE. Rashida and Iva were appointed for the FAB-L project in June increasing our staffing to 8.5FTE. We currently have only one Premises Officer working for 17 hours a week.

Our 3-year funding to develop the Arts provision has been approved which will allow us to recruit an Arts Worker and cover the Deputy Head of Centre costs. Details of activities are covered on page 18.

The work of the FAB-L team is documented on page 19. Priya provided a short background on how the project was developed following the lockdown, with unions and brands to provide information, advice and guidance, and support to textiles workers in a non-unionised sector. We are waiting to hear from funders about the 3<sup>rd</sup> year funding for the project.

Priya stated that the management team have been working on a financial sustainability and income generation plans to put us back on a sound foundation.

Priya thanked everyone for the confidence they have shown to the staff team in delivering the services.

Affiliations and accounts are presented on pages 21-23.

Priya opened the meeting for any questions.

Vandna a coopted member of the Governing Body said it was heart-warming to read the report which showed so much passion and commitment. The photos reflect breadth and depth of the work that is being conducted at the Centre. She congratulated the staff and leadership team for all their efforts.

Fatimah Li spoke about the elders' project which she is involved with and said it was aimed at addressing health inequalities and address social isolation issues in our community. She spoke about our work, and how it makes a difference to people's lives. Referring to a young person who came here to access our service in our youth project some years ago, following up with volunteering at the Centre is now leading the FAB-L project which is empowering garment workers – none other than Tarek.

Monica thanked everyone for the valuable work undertaken over the year.

## **Consideration and Adoption of Accounts**

Rafique provided the Treasurer's report as on page 8. Following removal of services by the Council, the Centre had lost around £0.5 million. Faced with this situation, most organisations would have folded but the Centre has remained positive and resilient with a current usage figure of 53,000 people using the Centre's services. It has been a challenging year with major systems repairs having been undertaken. He referred to grant applications the Centre is making to provide continuity of services as shown on page 9.

Rafique summarised the financial report saying the Centre is a going concern with net current assets that are healthy.

Monica asked for the AGM report and accounts to be formally approved by those present and these were approved.

## **Appointment of Auditors**

It was noted that the Governing Body has approved Watergates last year to be our auditors for 3 years.

## **Appointment of Individual Members**

There have been 19 individual affiliations this year.

Co-options – Abid Matak who has been a volunteer for Shubaan, and a user of the Centre was co-opted on to the Governing Body.

## **Appointment of Directors**

The existing Directors were continued in post. Following the formal business, Professor Ivan Browne was invited to speak on the topic of health in the city and inequalities. Prof. Browne worked for the Council as the Director of Health and had recently taken a role at De Monfort University.

Professor Brown's presentation is available upon request.

Meeting closed at 7:00pm

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## **HCA/HC Annual Report (2024) – Introduction & Welcome!**

Hello and a special welcome to you all on our return to an in-person AGM!

2024 has been a very different and challenging year, not only for us here at Highfields Centre but across the nation and indeed, globally. The 2 decades of public sector cuts and an unmitigated and disastrous austerity programme, compounded by the ravages wrought on us by the pandemic and the brutal 'televised' and genocidal killings in Gaza have highlighted the gross inequalities within our global societies, and exposed the sheer inadequacies and hypocrisy of governmental responses, both here and abroad, with a return to the failed and discredited trickledown economics!

As per the following pages, we have returned to providing an almost full programme of our community educational and developmental activities within the limitations of our funding, with the much acclaimed FAB-L service being a victim of these uncertain financial times.

With no regular core funding being provided by either national or local government, we have continued to seek alternative funding through grants and contracts, as well as through our own venue hire and service delivery arrangements, and as our Treasurer will be reporting shortly, our financial resilience has been strengthened. However, it's a sorry state of affairs

when the wanton removal of over £5m funding over the last ten years for vital adult learning, advice, arts, sports, under 5's, children and young people's services from this neighbourhood has not merited serious exposure and scrutiny!

The extent of our success can be gauged from the number of sessions we've delivered and the number of people who've attended here over the last 13 years as follows:

### HC – Usage from 2011 – 2023

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Sub Total
<b>Sessions</b>	5900	4924	5183	5206	4218	2368	8925	2994	3666	2058	3041	<b>48483</b>
<b>Participants</b>	105512	106458	97372	81223	66934	56956	62492	57114	66647	24740	50083	<b>775531</b>
	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Total</b>									
<b>Sessions</b>	3497	3711	<b>55691</b>									
<b>Participants</b>	53214	84987	<b>913732</b>									

***Nb. This averages over those 13 years as 4,284 sessions per year, and 70,287 participants per annum!***

As we go into the winter months, we will continue providing our much-needed services over the next few months. It will also enable us to make headway with our youth, adult learning and arts programmes.

As in previous years, the Centre's staff, users and the local communities have been particularly grateful for the dedicated support and commitment of its Governing Body, including its longer term members, as well as the newer members. It's also a huge moment to say a 'Big Thanks and Hugs' to Monica Hingorani, our outgoing Chair for all her support and input over these last few years

Following Pat Gardner's retirement and the huge gap to be filled, it's been wonderful to see that challenge taken on in such a positive manner by our staff team and especially our Management Team (Aiyub Zamakda, Fatimah Li and Tarek Islam), with both Aiyub and Fatimah being appointed as Joint Deputy Heads of Centre last December.

We're also delighted that Vandna Gohil has joined us in September as our new Joint Head of Centre, and given her previous role as a coopted member on the Governing Body and as a volunteer with the Centre's Management Team over the last 2 months, she's been able to hit the ground running and she'll be an immense asset to our team!

We'd also like to thank the Premises Team for keeping the expanded building safe and clean and take this opportunity to thank all our other staff, users, colleagues and friends (from near and far) for their invaluable support and encouragement over the last year and we look forward to working with you all in the coming year to not only benefit our Centre users but also, the Greater Highfields community and indeed, the city and county wide residents. There's much to look forward to over the coming year, so that we can continue our journey not just as an independent Centre but also, as a growing and confident local community.

With all good wishes.

**Priya Thamotheram,  
Senior Joint Head of Centre.**



## Highlights 2024 (Part 1)



**University Student Placements**



**Community Job Fair, partnered with DWP**



**FAB-L - National Stakeholders Meeting**



**FAB-L meeting with Fast Forward**



**Christmas 2023 staff and Service User Party**



**Leicester Textiles Festival 2023**



**Highlights 2024 (Part 2)**



**Garment Workers' celebrations**



**Bulgarian Culture Night**



**Investors in People**



**Youth Residential Experience PGL**



**VRN Funded youth sessions**



**Youth Summer Sept 2023**



**Youth Winter Dec 2023**

## **HCA Chair's Report**

This has been a year of significant achievements in ensuring the financial viability of Highfields Centre (HC). This is testament to the hard work of the staff, volunteers and Governing Body and a reflection of how highly HC is valued by the community. We have increased revenue through venue hire and rental income, as well as receiving funds through successful bids towards core costs through BBC Children in Need and Henry Smith Charity.

There has been success too in the Successional and Extendable (S&E) part of our EESE Measures. We have welcomed the appointments of Aiyub Zamakda and Fatimah Zaahra Li as our Joint Deputy Heads of Centre, building on their tremendous skills and experience of HC. We are also joined by Vandna Gohil as our Joint Head of Centre, who brings a terrific wealth of knowledge, skills and experience gained through national and local roles. We know this skilled and knowledgeable leadership team will carry forward the work of the Centre to further success. We are pleased that whilst Priya Thamotheram moves closer towards his well-earned retirement, he continues to support the induction of the new leadership team with the benefits of his wisdom and experience.

As my term of office comes to an end this year, I would like to take a final opportunity to thank all the staff, volunteers and members of the Governing Body and wish you well in continuing to enhance lives, empower communities, and provide enterprise for all in and around the Highfields community.

I will continue to support HC as a member of the local community. To that end, I would like to share some personal stories of community development work in and around HC over the years:

- 40 years ago as a University of Leicester student I was a peer educator with a South Asian woman in Highfields in a model similar to HC's creative community development work.
- 20 years ago I helped set up Leicester Civil Rights Movement with refugees and asylum seekers based at HC – still vital!
- 12 years ago I taught at the neighbouring school for two years empowering local children and families.
- 3 years ago I helped the Friends of the Earth HC community garden project nurture green shoots of recovery post-Lockdown.
- 2 years ago I performed my first song 'Community Garden' on International Women's Day to an audience of 200+

"They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds" is a poem from the Greek gay poet Dinos Christianopoulos which I shared in my first HCA Chair's report in 2021. I share it again ICYMI. Dinos' words continue to inspire us in our struggles around the world and remind us that we sow the seeds to our own liberation through solidarity.

**Monica Hingorani (BA, MA, QTS, AFHEA)**  
**HCA Chair**

## **Treasurer's Report**

HCA's mission is to help provide, develop and manage a family oriented community, sports and arts learning centre and to serve Leicester's (and now extended to Leicestershire's) population, with a particular emphasis as a community anchor organisation for the Highfields area wide communities. The charity continues to pursue these objectives by overseeing the working of Highfields Centre.

Consistent with these objectives, the charity has continued to provide a wide range of programmes related to lifelong learning and community development throughout the year. The programmes include the provision of services in arts, sports, youth clubs, adult classes and advice work. During the last year and given the excellent platform provided by the EESE (Economic, Effective, Successional and Extendable) Measures we had previously implemented, we have continued to



focus on developing the potential for boosting our self-generated income through venue hire and rentals. Stalwart elements of our services such as the youth work, adult education and sports have continued to be provided and enjoyed by our service users during the last year. However, the slow recovery from the pandemic and its related lockdown and collapse in confidence, and the more recent cost of living crisis and energy price increases resulted in us having to take various measures to minimise a projected significant deficit over the last year.

### **Public benefit**

The trustees have referred to the information contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities, with all of the charity's expenditures being incurred in pursuit of its public benefit duties.

Evidence of this benefit is continued to be demonstrated by the uptake of the charity's services by nearly 85,000 users (in 2023), with a substantial majority of those users from the local area. The range of services provided at Highfields Centre reflects the priority service needs for children, young people, elderly, adult learners, advice, arts, sports and community development, with these services provided over a seven day week (by arrangement) and over an extended year.

## **ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Charitable activities**

The achievements and performance of the charity in the year in overseeing the working of Highfields Centre has been coterminous with discussions with other public and voluntary sector agencies about effecting new service delivery partnerships. The completion of the Power to Change funded remodelling building work in 2018 provided a much-needed stimulus to achieving our objective of seeking economic independence through increasing our self-generated income.

Our new FAB-L (Fashion workers Advice Bureau - Leicester), funded by both trade unions and clothing brands has already made considerable positive differences to the lives of local garment workers!

Through our EESE Measures and in recognising that we weren't able to directly provide all of the services at this Centre, two more spaces have been sublet to other partner agencies (Teskay Homecare and Karibuni Café).

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

### **Principal funding sources**

The charity's main income had been through its three different contracts with Leicester City Council. The cumulative loss of over £500,000 in contracted income during 2014/2015 had adversely impacted the level of reserves as well as the Association's financial standing and the trustees have continued to carefully consider the necessary actions in relation to ensuring not only its continued viability but also its renewal and development.

The 2023/24 outturn, given the ongoing financial challenges has been remarkably good, especially as the trustees had envisaged a significant loss being incurred during that year, and had taken the necessary actions. This situation was also considerably aided by our successful funding applications to BBC Children in Need Core Grants and Henry Smith Charity, with both contributing to offsetting our core costs. The trustees' actions has ensured we are well placed to negotiate our way forward and especially post the severe financial, organisational and programming challenges arising from the ongoing financial challenges.

## **Reserves policy**

In accordance with Association's reserves policy and taking account of the outturn experienced during the 2023/24 year, the trustees have effected appropriate changes to the Association's designated funds, including the Asset Replacement Fund, Programme Support Fund and Transforming Services Fund.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

The charity's plans for the future will be closely related to the fuller development of all the new services at the centre and to complete the replacement of the discontinued Leicester City Council services at this Centre, whilst at the same time providing the necessary infrastructure and systems to enable its smooth and effective operation and to manage the transition occasioned by the local authority's funding decisions.

The charity's updated Strategic Plan has been successfully updated and it was the a key element for consideration at the last Strategic Review Day when the Trustees met with the Centre's staff to consider key priorities and developments for the forthcoming year.

With the charity established in 1972 and having celebrated its 50th Anniversary in October 2022, it has become well established, respected and trusted by not only its staff and service users but also a range of local, regional, national and international partners. The pace of this recognition has increased over the last decade and is reflected in the charity's increasingly recognised status as the partner of first choice for many community development related service provision.

This is underpinned by the trustees and staff now actively pursuing major developments at this Centre, including the Highfields Heritage - People and Place Institute (Happi) and the installation of solar panels and the setting up of a roof garden.

The trustees are satisfied that the charity is very well placed to further enhance its provision of much needed services in the coming years through its already well-established role in accessing non-local authority external funding contracts as a member of several different service consortiums.

For these reasons, the trustees believe the charity is very definitely a 'going concern.'

**Rafique Patel**  
**HCA Treasurer.**

## **Community Services**

Welcome to this year's Annual Report for 2024 on behalf of the Community Service Team.

I joined the Centre's staff team in March 2024, and have been on a huge learning curve. My role is front facing, being the first person visitors see on their arrival.

Some of the highlights during the year have included the following

- Highfields Festival: This is an annual event and it was held on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2024 - a free event for the local community to come along with family and friends and have a great day. We held the festival at the front of the building and in the sports hall. We welcomed newly elected Shockat Adam MP to open the event alongside our Head of Centre Priya Thamotheram to what turned out to be a day where we saw all seasons in one day!! Despite the weather, EAVA FM who hosted the event kept everyone entertained with great tunes and introduced a range of talented local music artists and dance group performers. We had a taste of a traditional Zimbabwean folk dance and choir.

The Sports hall hosted free sporting activities, a bouncy castle, face painting, and lots of arts and craft activities for the children.

A delicious Vegetarian and Chicken Biryani was also enjoyed. On the day, we also had several information stalls, including from Voluntary Action LeicesterShire, Leicester College, Shama Women's Centre, Mighty Creatives and Groundwork Five Counties. Overall, a wonderful day was had by all.



- Charity Bazaars: We have collaborated with various charities, who have held bazaars this year, bringing the local community together and giving local businesses an opportunity to showcase their business alongside food stalls, and lots of children's entertainment and activities held throughout the events.
- Weddings/Functions: We are proud to be a venue of choice for a range of celebrations including weddings, parties, functions, dinners and events nearly every weekend of this year. The Marquee in the Sports Hall truly transforms the space and creates an amazing and perfect ambiance for all events.
- Film Screenings/Productions: We are very proud to have tiered seating, of 4 schools coming together. A prize giving event run by a local charity group was also held and proudly showcased film screenings, including 'Tomorrows Freedom' and 'Where Olive Trees Weep'.
- Schools: Our sports hall is a great asset and aid for the local schools in the community who do not have sports hall facilities within their school premiss. We are extremely proud to be able to help and assist and give the children and young people the opportunity to access our facilities. The sports hall was used to host a badminton and volleyball tournament, and 2 small private schools hired us for their sports day. We also came to the rescue for Daisies Nursery and Uplands on their sports day, as the weather took an awful turn.
- Room Hire: We've hosted many group events, including those arranged through our affiliated groups and by non-affiliated groups and individuals.

**Building/Refurbishment:** The core staff team is now fully engaged in decision making about the maintenance and upgrading of the building. The Centre continues with a planned programme of repairs and maintenance.

**Group Affiliation:** HCA membership continues to maintain a wide range of community organisation that represents the local community and area, currently standing at 23 groups and 15 individuals.

**Venue Hire:** The Centre has introduced new packages for venue hire for weddings and celebration events on weekends from October 2024, reflecting the services we offer at a competitive price.

As reported last year, the Centre had planned to introduce a new electronic system that will enable a more streamlined registration for our services and venue hire. We have completed training on this system and are in the process of trialling out this new system.

**Website:** The Centre's website is due to be updated to keep it current and relevant to the community for easy access and accurate information. The website currently is undergoing changes to reflect all the services available at the Centre.

The Centre's opening times to the public Monday to Friday from 9am – 9pm and Saturday 10.30 -2.30pm with closing times depending on our programmes of activities. We also continue to support all reasonable requests for venue hire outside of these times (staffing permitted). Currently, we are open to the public for at least 322 days per year.

It's been a great year with lots of events and we can proudly say the Centre is fully booked with Sport clubs run by local community groups i.e. Badminton for men and women, Basketball for children, Football for men and women, Volleyball for men and Netball for women during the week.

We are proud that so many local people use the facilities we have and we will continue to provide more opportunities to service users.

## **Rubay Essat Community Services Team**

### **Adult Learning and Joint Deputy Head of Centre Report**

This report summarizes the Centre's initiatives over the past year, focusing on empowering adults and young people through digital skills training, employment support, youth work education, and community engagement. As digital poverty continues to pose challenges for many in our community, we remain dedicated to bridging this gap and fostering an inclusive learning environment.

#### **Digital Skills Training**

In response to the growing need for digital literacy, we offered up to 10 digital skills courses weekly, engaging approximately 85 participants. These courses cater to various skill levels, ensuring accessibility for all.

- Laptops and Wi-Fi Access: To tackle digital poverty, we provided laptops and free Wi-Fi, enabling participants to access essential online resources and complete assignments. This initiative was particularly beneficial for young learners who may lack adequate technology at home.
- Homework Assistance: Our staff provided tailored support to young people, helping them navigate online platforms and tools necessary for their schoolwork. This support not only improves academic performance but also fosters a sense of achievement and confidence.
- Online Safety Education: Recognizing the importance of digital citizenship, we incorporated online safety education into our training. Participants learned to identify potential risks and protect themselves online, equipping them with skills necessary for safe internet use.

#### **ESOL Integration**

Our specialised digital courses for adults learning English (ESOL) have been particularly impactful. These courses are designed to improve both language proficiency and digital skills simultaneously, which enhances overall employability. Participants have reported increased confidence in using technology to communicate and access information, vital skills in today's job market.

#### **Empower Biz**

As part of a 4 agency consortium, we've been successful in drawing down funds to initiate an innovative business advice and support service for African heritage businesses, with our ex-colleague Alfred Bawak as the experienced and knowledgeable sub-contracted advisor.





### **Job Club and Employment Support**

The Job Club has been a crucial resource for local residents seeking employment, providing comprehensive services tailored to meet individual needs:

We have offered personalised support to help participants identify job opportunities that align with their skills and interests, significantly improving their chances of success.

- CV Writing Workshops: Through hands-on workshops, participants learn how to create effective CVs that highlight their strengths and experiences. This training empowers them to present themselves confidently to potential employers.

- Employment Preparation: Our sessions cover key topics, such as interview techniques and workplace expectations, ensuring participants are well-prepared to enter the workforce. This holistic approach equips them with practical skills they can use immediately.

- Universal Credit Support: We provide guidance on navigating the complexities of universal credit, helping individuals understand their rights and access the support they need.

### **Support for Young People**

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by young people, we offer targeted guidance on training and apprenticeship opportunities. Our mentoring programs connect youth with experienced professionals, providing valuable insights into career pathways and helping them build networks.

### **Level 3 Youth Work Course**

A significant achievement this year was the successful completion of the Level 3 Youth Work Course. This initiative certified 10 local students, equipping them with the qualifications needed to pursue careers in youth work—a field where there is a pressing need for skilled professionals. This course not only opens up job opportunities but also encourages further learning and specialisation.

### **Collaboration with Local Universities**

Our partnerships with students from De Montfort University and the University of Leicester have yielded fruitful outcomes:

- Community Needs Assessment: One student undertook a project to update the Highfields Area Plan using local data. This assessment provided critical insights into community needs, informing our strategic planning and helping us tailor our programs more effectively.
- Archiving Historical Material: Another student from the Museum Studies Department assisted us in digitising historical documents and photographs that chronicle the Centre's development. This preservation effort is invaluable for future generations, ensuring that our legacy is maintained.

### **Partnership with Leicester College**

Collaboration with Leicester College has significantly expanded our educational offerings. We identified a range of courses that can be provided from our Centre, including ESOL, functional skills, sports, and arts. This partnership enhances access to diverse educational pathways, fostering community engagement and personal development.

### **Support for T-Level Students**

We actively mentored three T-Level students during their placements at our Centre, providing them with comprehensive induction and ongoing supervision. This experience is designed to equip them with practical skills in a real-world setting, preparing them for their future careers.

### **Safeguarding and Governance**

Safeguarding remains a top priority. Throughout the year, we provided training and guidance to our staff and Governing Body on health and safety protocols, ensuring a safe environment for all participants. We also maintained transparent communication by documenting meetings and sharing updates with the Governing Body, fostering a collaborative governance structure.

### **Management Support and Sustainability**

As part of the management team, I have contributed to various operational aspects, including:

- Funding Management: I have actively supported the team with funding opportunities to support and expand our services, ensuring financial sustainability.
- Building Maintenance: Keeping our facilities well-maintained is crucial for creating a conducive learning environment. We regularly assess our resources to ensure they meet the needs of our participants.
- Staffing Support: I have supported recruitment initiatives and have addressed staffing challenges to cultivate a positive workplace culture, emphasising professional development and team collaboration.

### **Income Sustainability Plan**

Together with the management team, we have developed a comprehensive income sustainability plan aimed at diversifying our income streams and exploring various funding sources. This proactive approach is essential for the long-term viability of our Centre.

Despite facing challenges over the past year, our Centre remains committed to empowering the community through education and support services. We are actively seeking funding to enhance our programmes and ensure their vibrancy in the coming year. Our dedication to meeting the needs of our community will continue to guide our efforts as we move forward.

**Aiyub Zamakda**  
**Joint Deputy Head of Centre**

## Children and Young People's Services and Joint Deputy Head of Centre Report



2024 has been a busy and exciting year for young people from the local area, we have continued to deliver two youth developmental sessions to support local children and young people from the local area in a variety of ways. We were successful in receiving a grant from the VRN (Violence Reduction Network) to deliver a 46-week programme to reduce knife crime and anti-social behaviour in the Greater Highfields area. This has been helpful and timely to address some of the wider causes from cost of living and fuel crisis adversely affecting many disadvantaged young people and their families.

Young people attending our Young Futures sessions have had the opportunity to participate in social, recreational and creative sessions to build self-esteem, stay more active and develop their artistic and creative skills. This essential service has been critical whilst young people from the area are characterised with poor mental health, high levels of anxiety and low underachievement at school and increased levels of youth unemployment.

Our sessions are aimed to holistically develop social skills, so young people have access to a safe space, stay safe and meet new people with similar interests to gain confidence, learn and develop new skills. Our youth sessions typically offer the following:

**Arts & crafts** – themed arts, cards and gifts, graffiti art, puppets, origami, carnival costume arts, fashion & textiles

**Digital Media** – web-design, video production, podcasting, animation

**Games**– team games, non-competitive games, puzzles, quizzes, computer and internet games, team-building activities

**Sports** – weekly Multi sports

**Cooking** – pizza making, pancakes, cake decorating, non-alcoholic cocktails, health foods

**Issue based activities** – drugs and alcohol, sex and sexuality, relationships, anti-bullying, anti-racism, environmentalism, citizenship

**Building Confidence & Identity**- Offering volunteering, learning and casual paid work opportunities







20 Young people successfully completed a level 2 Aims qualification in Principles in Youth Work and during the latter part of the year progressed in completing the Level 3 qualification. This has since enabled some of those young adults to secure employment in different job sectors and a further six young people securing casual employment within the voluntary sector and seek paid work over our summer playscheme in August of last year.

15 Young people were also offered the opportunity to experience a 3-day residential experience to PGL Liddington In Swindon. This gave young people the opportunity to explore nature, greener spaces and immerse into outdoor activities such as abseiling, canoeing, zip lines and spend the evening by the campfire. We had the opportunity to deliver some focused workshops on identity, understanding their rights, developing a voice and staying safe. The weekend residential allowed the youth workers to consult young people and get feedback on issues that were important to them and set some goals with young people to explore and identify the support needed in achieving these goals.

The funding allowed us to celebrate young people's achievements and show case their talents by hosting two major events in the year - one being the Summer Jam and the other, Winter Jam (open mic nights). These major events attracted over 70 young people and we had a super fantastic turnout of local youth attending our open mic night and it further allowed us to engage with new youth from the community and invite them to our youth development sessions.

It was positive to see local artists perform their music, which then inspired many young people to also pluck the courage to perform on the night. This has now also sparked a further interest from young people who attend weekly music & digital art sessions as part of our current youth offer.

We were able to offer extended youth sessions by partnering up with a voluntary youth group (Shubaan Boys) who are able to deliver a late Friday evening youth session that coaches young boys through weekly football session and Shubaan young women's sessions which are delivered on Saturday mornings which focuses on empowering "today's youth on a positive tomorrow". These additional sessions which have been operating over the last eight months have been extremely successful in engaging young people who don't usually use the centre's facilities before the feedback from those sessions have been refreshing and positive as more young women and girls have taken an interest in weekly sports sessions and enjoyed the arts and weekly baking sessions.

The real success with engaging these young people has been from Shubaan's volunteers, with the latter who are wholly local parents who are mentoring and supporting these youth to be better version of themselves by improving their physical, mental and spiritual health.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank VRN for funding our 2023 youth programme which has allowed young people to feel safe, connected and inspired to channel more positivity in their lives and reduce antisocial behaviour in the local area.

**Fatimah Li**  
**Joint Deputy Head of Centre**



## Arts and Wellbeing activities



This year, we had a clear focus on extending our Arts Provision and keep a promising local offer to young people and adults within the area to address social isolation and improve wellbeing for existing and new users of the Centre.

Since September 2023, we have regularly held community events to bring local people together. A popular event which the Centre held was a community movie night to support the textiles festival week. We invited members of the community and key agencies to enjoy a Bollywood movie to get a better understanding of south Asian garment workers and their inherited skills, along with the challenges they faced being at the end of the supply chain.

This highlighted the struggles of working-class people located in India and how one entrepreneur's vision to create his own fashion brand and design clothes which led him into organising his entire village to get involved in creating a designer fashion range of clothing.

The evening ended with a round table discussion around the importance of the textile and garment industry and the historic contributions of Leicester possessing and housing many skilled garment workers.

We also hosted a fantastic evening for the Eastern European community (mostly Bulgarians) to give them a better understanding on the services the Centre offers and bring their culture and share their experiences with residents. The evening allowed service users to understand Bulgarian tradition and their community better, it was great to see some of the history, traditional dance and clothing they wear, as well as experience traditional Bulgarian dishes.

We have now seen some newer attendees to the Centre because of this event and its extremely positive to hear that their community members can access help, support and arts programmes that are being delivered at the Centre.

We were further delighted to present adult learners who are accessing our regular ESOL classes with their accredited certificates in recognition of their regular attendance.

The Centre was able to deliver a four-week summer holiday activity provision through the Holiday Activities Fund with the support of Leicester City Council awarding us funding to encourage 60 minutes of physical

activity and offer a variety of arts sessions, including the use of our music studio and photography room. Young people have used the facilities to create short films and videos, as well as being taught how to record music, beats or use of different instruments.

Alongside of the above, young people were involved in junk modelling, textiles, sketching, journalling & cooking sessions. This has helped many disadvantaged families who are struggling with food and energy price increases.

Young people that attend our weekly youth sessions have also benefitted from participating in arts & crafts where they recorded and designed a professionally printed recipe book to share with their peers at school and college. We have hosted open mic nights to engage hard to reach young people and worked with local artists in supporting young people developing their own voice and exploring their creative skills. This has come at a time where young people are not economically active and are struggling to cope with their mental health.

In October of last year, we were successful in receiving a three-year grant from Henry Smith Charity and we have appointed an arts development worker who is now delivering a weekly programme of activities to engage with hard-to-reach families, as well as children currently being home schooled in the local community.

We are currently delivering geometric arts, textiles and a variety of pop up art sessions throughout the school term breaks, as well as a weekly alternative activity to senior and retired women to promote and increase social prescribing with the aim to improve their mental, physical health & overall wellbeing by delivering weekly dance, chair exercise and art therapy to meet their needs. The weekly group has 25 regular attendees who enjoy meeting and talking to new people and participating in arts and craft sessions.

**Fatimah Li**  
**Joint Deputy Head of Centre**



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## FAB-L AGM Report October 2024

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### Introduction:

Since its start in 2021, **FAB-L (Fashion-workers Advice Bureau Leicester)** has been a voice for garment workers. Over the last three years, we've stood by workers facing **wage theft, exploitation, and unfair dismissals**. Despite all the hurdles, we remain resilient, committed, and determined to make sure these workers are heard and that their rights are protected.

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### Funding and Financial Support:

For **year three**, we're grateful for the financial backing of **ASOS, Next, River Island, The Very Group, Labour Behind The Label, and Leicester Garment and Textile Workers Trust**. This allowed us, albeit at a reduced level to keep moving forward and provide critical services—from helping recover unpaid wages to offering direct casework support.

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### Aims and Objectives for Year Three:

As we moved into **year three**, our mission at **FAB-L** was still crystal clear. We're committed to:

- **Supporting Garment Workers:** Continuing to provide essential support for garment workers in Leicester, especially those dealing

with workplace exploitation and modern-day slavery.

- **Language & Integration:** Expanding our **ESOL and English classes** to help workers and their families integrate into the workforce and society.
- **Safe Reporting:** Maintaining the **Fashion Workers Club** as a confidential and safe space for workers to report exploitation and slavery concerns without fear.
- **Welfare & Benefits:** Offering advice and guidance on benefits and welfare rights, particularly for those facing unfair dismissal or factory closures.
- **Employment Support:** Assisting workers in finding jobs—whether it's in the garment industry or another sector—to help alleviate poverty.
- **Advocacy:** Pushing hard for **better working conditions** for garment workers and encouraging brands to bring production back to the UK.

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### Project Timeline:

- **Year 1:** 8th November 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022
- **Year 2:** 1st November 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023
- **Year 3:** 1st November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024

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### Key Achievements in Year Three:

- **Financial Recovery:** We reclaimed **£20,000** in missing wages for workers who were victims of wage theft.
- **Casework Support:** We provided over **1000+ hours** of casework, valued at **£100,000**, covering wage theft, dismissals, and unsafe working conditions.

**Benefits Access:** We helped workers access **£100,000+** worth of benefits and welfare support,

- easing the financial burden caused by exploitation and job losses.
- **Advocacy:** Participated in **50+ stakeholder meetings**, advocating for better conditions and rights for garment workers. We also organised **5 high-profile events** to raise awareness.
- **Community Engagement:** Through community events, school visits, factory visits, and social media campaigns, we reached **5,000+ individuals**. We made direct contact with **1,000 workers**, offering guidance and support.
- **ESOL & Integration:** Provided **40 drop-in ESOL classes**, helping workers and their families improve language skills and integrate better into the community.
- **Fashion Workers Club:** Ran **40 sessions**, giving workers a safe place to report exploitation and modern-day slavery concerns.

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#### Case Study – Mrs. AP:

Mrs. AP first came to us for **ESOL classes** with her children, but soon confided about the exploitation she was facing at work—being paid only **£5 an hour** and having her wages withheld. **FAB-L** helped her recover those missing wages, reported the employer, and supported her in writing a CV. She's now found employment with **Royal Mail**.

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#### Highlight of the Year – Rally for Garment Workers:

One standout moment was on **October 1st** when **FAB-L** joined forces with **Labour Behind the Label (LBL)** and other organisations to bring together **500+ garment workers** for a rally. It was the first of its kind since the 1970s, demanding that brands bring production back to the UK and improve working conditions. We were featured on **BBC News, BBC Panorama, Sky News**, and more.

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#### Jobs and Careers Fair – Securing Employment for Workers:

Following the rally, **FAB-L** partnered with the **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)** to host a **jobs and careers fair**. Over **400 workers** attended, and **20 workers** were able to secure jobs at an ethical and sustainable factory in Leicester.

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#### Media Exposure:

We've had some **major media exposure** this year, with our work being covered by media outlets like **The Guardian, BBC One Panorama, Sky News**, and **Channel 4**. This has really helped shed light on the challenges garment workers face and has amplified our mission.

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#### Plan for Year Four:

Due to some **funding constraints**, year four will be on a **reduced scale**, but we're still committed to providing:

- **ESOL classes** and **drop-in sessions** for language support and worker assistance.
- Help with **wage recovery** and **exploitation cases** through the **Fashion Workers Club**.
- **Community engagement** through factory visits, outreach initiatives, and events.

Even with fewer resources, **FAB-L** will continue being a lifeline for garment workers in Leicester.

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#### Conclusion:

As we step into year four, the support from our partners and stakeholders will be **critical**. We're confident that, with continued backing, we can keep making meaningful change and standing up for the rights of garment workers.



**Tarek Islam**  
Senior Community Engagement Worker



HIGHFIELDS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/3/24 Total funds £	31/3/23 Total funds £
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM</b>					
<b>Charitable activities</b>	3				
Incoming resources from charitable activities		206,468	300,737	507,205	440,152
Other trading activities	2	73	-	73	200
Other income	4	5,723	-	5,723	-
<b>Total</b>		<u>212,264</u>	<u>300,737</u>	<u>513,001</u>	<u>440,352</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON</b>					
Raising funds	5	-	-	-	160
<b>Charitable activities</b>	6				
Costs of charitable activities		169,513	339,652	509,165	597,732
<b>Total</b>		<u>169,513</u>	<u>339,652</u>	<u>509,165</u>	<u>597,892</u>
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>		42,751	(38,915)	3,836	(157,540)
Transfers between funds	16	(7,006)	7,006	-	(1)
<b>Net movement in funds</b>		35,745	(31,909)	3,836	(157,541)
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>					
Total funds brought forward		530,660	114,095	644,755	802,296
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<u>566,405</u>	<u>82,186</u>	<u>648,591</u>	<u>644,755</u>

**HIGHFIELDS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
31ST MARCH 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/3/24 Total funds £	31/3/23 Total funds £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible assets	13	314,244	13,806	328,050	359,211
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors	14	42,085	33,403	75,488	80,656
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>270,223</u>	<u>68,943</u>	<u>339,166</u>	<u>240,519</u>
		312,308	102,346	414,654	321,175
<b>CREDITORS</b>					
Amounts falling due within one year	15	<u>(60,147)</u>	<u>(33,966)</u>	<u>(94,113)</u>	<u>(35,631)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<u>252,161</u>	<u>68,380</u>	<u>320,541</u>	<u>285,544</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>566,405</u>	<u>82,186</u>	<u>648,591</u>	<u>644,755</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>566,405</u>	<u>82,186</u>	<u>648,591</u>	<u>644,755</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>	16				
Unrestricted funds				<u>566,405</u>	530,660
Restricted funds				<u>82,186</u>	<u>114,095</u>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>				<u>648,591</u>	<u>644,755</u>

The charitable company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31st March 2024.

The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for

- (a) ensuring that the charitable company keeps accounting records that comply with Sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and
- (b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company as at the end of each financial year and of its surplus or deficit for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of Sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the charitable company.

**HCA Membership Affiliation List (2023-2024)**

<b>No:</b>	<b>HCA Group Affiliation (2023-2024)</b>	<b>Rep on HCA</b>
1	Active Women for Leicester	Mrs Farhiyo Abdi
2	Al Islamia Institute for Education	Mr Haroon Makda
3	Antoin Akpom Achievements Foundation	Cheryl Armatrading
4	British Eritrean Community	Habtom
5	Caribbean Court	Fred Clarke
6	CCBC House of Grace Leicester	Pastor Dr Anu Adewuyi
7	Contrast Steel Band	Pat Munroe
8	Ejaz Badminton	Ejaz
9	EQDS	Tirathpal. Naute
10	Gaffar F.C	Altaf Gaffar
11	Highfield Rangers	Maurice Christian
12	Idris Tuition	Idris Omar
13	Inspirate	Sean Caroll
14	Land of Learning	Imtiaz Dassu
15	Leicester & District Trades Council	Mark Mizzen
16	New Europeans Association	Ruvi Zeigler
17	Pet XI	Jake Comaslhy
18	Sensitive Care Solutions ltd	Suhail Mullan
19	Shubaan Youth Group	Intakhab Popat
20	South Asian Health Action	Hwa Sharma
21	St James the Greater Church	Emma Trounson
22	UK Futures	George Revell
23	Viking international youth club	Syl Jeffers
24	Volleyball Club	Zaffer
25	Wasim Badminton Group	Wasim Hanif

<b>No:</b>	<b>Individual HCA Affiliation (2023-2024)</b>
1	Alfred Bawak
2	Alisha Flaherty
3	Alistair Burns
4	Bernard Ryan
5	Elisha Joseph -Simpey
6	Hajra Debar
7	Helen Lentell
8	Maryum Barber
9	Megha Pandit
10	Monica Hingorani
11	Nabillah Ismail
12	Sajida Ali
13	Umaymah Dakri
14	Yaseen Osman
15	Zillul Halim
16	Vandna Gohil
17	Abid Matak

## Highfields Centre – 2023 User & Staff Profile

The Centre's ethos of serving all sections of the local community is brilliantly supported by our 2022 user and staff statistics, with the key findings and 2021 comparator figures in brackets as follows:

- Unique Beneficiaries = 19,846 (2022 = 5,885) – **237% increase over 2022 figure!**
- Users: Male = 57% Female = 43% (2022: Male=56% & Female=44%)
- Users: Asian = 64%; African/Caribbean = 20%; White = 10%; Other = 6% (2022: Asian = 65%; African/Caribbean = 17%; White = 7%; Other = 11%)
- 84,987 users have attended various activities and events at HC in 2023 (2022:: 53,214) – **60% increase over 2022 figure!**
- HC Staff = 27 males & 15 females, with 52% Asian, 24% African/Caribbean, 5% White & 19% Other (2022: 12 males & 9 females, with 52% Asian, 24% African/Caribbean, 5% White & 19% Other)

\* **Unique Beneficiaries (UB) is the number of actual individuals who have attended the sessions, eg. If 10 people attend a class for 8 weeks, the UB will be 10 but the participant number will be 80.**

\*\* **This includes casual workers and sessional staff.**

		HCA Managed Services	External Managed Services	Total	%
<b>Number of Sessions</b>		2428	1283	3711	<b>23 people per session</b>
<b>Unique Beneficiaries*</b>		18529	1317	19846	<b>100%</b>
<b>Participant Number</b>		72710 (100%)	12277	84987	<b>100%</b>
<b>Participant Gender</b>	Male	41376 (57%)	6758	48134	<b>57%</b>
	Female	31334 (43%)	5519	36853	<b>43%</b>
<b>Participant Ethnicity</b>	Asian	46061 (63%)	8659	54720	<b>64%</b>
	Afr/AC	14994 (21%)	2149	17143	<b>20%</b>
	White	7870 (11%)	593	8463	<b>10%</b>
	Other	3785 (5%)	876	4661	<b>6%</b>
<b>Volunteer Number</b>		101 (100%)	17	118	<b>100%</b>
<b>Volunteer Gender</b>	Male	68 (67%)	7	75	<b>64%</b>
	Female	33 (33%)	10	43	<b>36%</b>
<b>Volunteer Ethnicity</b>	Asian	52 (52%)	5	57	<b>48%</b>
	Afr/AC	22 (22%)	10	32	<b>27%</b>
	White	11 (11%)	0	11	<b>9%</b>
	Other	16 (15%)	2	18	<b>16%</b>
<b>Staff Number</b>	FT	2 (5%)	11	13	<b>20%</b>
	PT	40 (95%)**	11	51	<b>80%</b>
<b>Staff Gender</b>	Male	27 (64%)	6	33	<b>52%</b>
	Female	15 (36%)	16	31	<b>48%</b>
<b>Staff Ethnicity</b>	Asian	19 (45%)	11	30	<b>47%</b>
	Afr/AC	14 (34%)	5	19	<b>29%</b>
	White	3 (7%)	5	8	<b>13%</b>
	Other	6 (14%)	1	7	<b>11%</b>