



# Annual Review

2023 - 2024

Supporting those in our community facing social, mental, financial or other personal difficulties.

[www.centre70.org.uk](http://www.centre70.org.uk)

# Welcome to our Annual Impact Review 2023 - 2024

This year we invite you to find out more about our work and the impact this has had in the community through the eyes of a valued staff member who worked with us for almost two and a half years.



## Reflections from my time at Centre 70

“My name is Victoria Taylor and I worked as a Housing Caseworker at Centre 70. My work was split between both Legal Aid funded work and non Legal Aid funded work, funded by Trust for London. I have an undergraduate degree in Law and a Masters in Human Rights and Criminal Justice. I've managed to also complete the Bar course whilst I've been at Centre 70.

My time at Centre 70 has been great because I've been able to work on a huge variety of cases and also help clients that wouldn't normally be helped, because they wouldn't qualify for Legal Aid funded work.

I will take a lot of very, very fond memories of being here. I think you would struggle to find a workplace that is more supportive and have colleagues who are as genuine and interesting and care so deeply about their clients. I think that Centre 70 is just an absolutely fantastic place to work, and I'm very sad to be leaving.”

## Our vision

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Communities where everyone has access to the support they need to overcome adversity in their lives so they can thrive.

## Our mission

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Centre 70 supports and works alongside those who are facing social, mental, financial or other personal difficulties at our centre and out in their communities, through a holistic programme of free and affordable services including:

- Advice
- Counselling
- Training
- Advocacy

## Our outcomes

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- Increased access to rights and entitlements
- Improved mental health and wellbeing
- Improved access to life opportunities

## Our reach

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Based in West Norwood, we work across Lambeth and nearby London boroughs. 60% of advice queries were from people living in SE27, SW2, SW16, SE19 SW4 and SW9 postcodes.

“Something really unique about Centre 70, and that really demonstrates our commitment to our clients, and our commitment to our clients as people, is that we are trying to support them as a whole person. Instead of just trying to, I suppose, fight fires, we're trying to actually resolve the issues as a whole for them and support them with that.”

# Our Values

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“One of the other great things about Centre 70 is that we are a community organisation, and so not only do we have a great reputation amongst the community, but also we have connections with local grassroots organisations. This is something that allows us to really reach out to parts of the community where other organisations without that kind of community centred focus, would not be able to.”



Passionate



Inclusive



Responsive



Community focussed



# Advice

“Another great thing is our holistic approach to the person and the fact that we have two lines of service. We have our Advice side and it's been great to be able to help a client with their housing issues, but also identify, that actually, this person has benefits issues. So I'm going to refer them to the benefits team. They're in debt. Let me refer them to the debt team”



**24,529**

**Advice queries**



*“The information about debts and which are the most important was most useful. Thank you for all the information and the packs to take away. It will be really useful for me moving forward.”*

*Money Management course participant, prison outreach*



# Counselling

“But then also, inevitably, if you're in housing arrears, have debt and benefits issues, it's very likely that that's going to impact on your mental health and your wellbeing. So having our second line of service, which is counselling and wellbeing, is brilliant, because we can then refer somebody to those teams as well.”



137  
clients



120 supervision  
sessions



24 counselling trainee  
volunteers

*“I feel more positive about my life and it has given me the tools to make small but positive changes.”*

Counselling client feedback

# Wellbeing



“Our commitment to our clients as people, in that we are trying to support them as a whole person, instead of just trying to, I suppose, fight fires. We're trying to actually resolve the issues as a whole for them and support them with that.”

- Wellbeing workshops
- Menopause group
- Stretch
- Bereavement help point
- 1:1 Befriending
- ChatManDo
- Maternal journal



*"You can learn so much from meeting new and different people who are generous enough to share their experiences."*

Peer support group participant



# Outreach & partnerships

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“Under the Trust for London funding I established a relationship with two outreach partners in Brixton: the Bay Tree Centre and the Mosaic Clubhouse. One a centre for Women and Girls, and the other for people who are living with mental health issues.

We were able to reach a lot of clients through these outreach partners and also provide a lot of one off advice.”

“I was also able to attend the Homewards Coalition. This is part of the Royal Foundation and one of the pilot projects is in Lambeth creating a coalition of housing organisations.

It was very clear that we were the only actual housing advice organisation present, and so we were able to push forward our grassroots community approach and the kind of connections that we have within the community, to ensure that it was representative of the local community, rather than it just being a bit more corporate, or I suppose, shoehorned into other kind of agendas.

So I think that's something that's been great with this funding, is that we've been able to have those kind of partnerships and relationships with other organisations.”

“It’s also highlighted to us the impact that we can have because we have such strong community ties. I mean, I often have clients saying my mum came two years ago, my grandmother came two years ago, and I feel really proud to be part of an organisation that has such a connection to the community.”



*“Thanks Centre 70. I’ll keep spreading the word about debt advice services it makes such a difference! When we try and deal on our own the banks and collection agencies bully us. Knowledge is power!”*

Debt advice client





“As mentioned before, funding from Trust for London enabled me to support cases that were out of scope of Legal Aid.”

One such case that I worked on was a client who was a single mother. She had just recently been granted refugee status and had been placed with her two young daughters in temporary accommodation. It was actually a hostel that she was placed in. They were living in one room. They had two single beds for all three of them, and they had to share kitchen facilities with single men. And so not only did the children not have any space to play, didn't have a proper bed, had nowhere to do their homework, but also they were potentially put at risk by being around single men when it was supposed to be a family hostel. I was able to negotiate with the council and get them moved.

“That was a really personally fulfilling, because I got a phone call from her, and a colleague who had referred her from the Bay Tree Centre received a video from her of her and her children going to her new accommodation for the first time, just before Christmas.”



“Another case that I worked on via the Trust for London funding was to do with housing transfers, some thing that is excluded from Legal Aid funding. So it’s really great to still be able to work on these types of cases.”

The client was in her 80s and she had been in unsuitable temporary accommodation through the council. She was unable to walk up the stairs because of mobility issues and so that was causing her a lot of pain, but also was impacting on her social life and just her general wellbeing, because she wasn't really able to leave her accommodation. I assisted her with an application to transfer, advocated for her to be transferred, and assisted her with filling in a medical assessment form. As a result she was placed into a higher priority band, and pretty soon afterwards, she was offered a transfer to new ground floor accommodation.

“So that was another very fulfilling case to work on because I could really see the positive impact on a client.”

# It's all so overwhelming

"I think that housing issues in London and even more specifically, in Lambeth, are very overwhelming, because there are obviously macro and micro issues, I guess is the best way of describing it."

"Of course, housing supply is a huge problem. Of course, housing management is a huge problem nationally. But I think, in terms of the particular issues in Lambeth, that is something that is overwhelming in terms of the scale of it.

The impact this can have on individuals, particularly homeless applicants can be really, really dire. Also the temporary accommodation crisis is completely overwhelming, and we have so many clients who are in unsuitable accommodation. The vast majority of housing advice requests are queries about unsuitable temporary accommodation.

In terms of the scale of the issues, it can be difficult for such a small organisation like ours, particularly with the strain on resources that you inevitably have when you're working in the third sector, to see how our impact can even begin to tackle these sort of huge, massive, often structural problems."

“But I think the more cases that you do, and the more clients that you meet, the more you realise that even if we can't change the systems which are very much broken, for an individual client we can still make a really big difference. And that is really what you have to kind of keep bearing in mind as your motivation.”



“I will take away a lot of fond memories with clients as well. I love the fact that this is a community organisation. It is a community Advice Centre. We are set up in such a way that prioritises our clients and allows us to give holistic advice. The priority is providing a good service to our clients and to the community. And I think that that is really fulfilling and something I really enjoyed.”



“So I've been able to use my academic experience in a more practical way through doing a great range of Legal Aid casework.

A lot of that casework has been things like defending possession proceedings, but also I've had the opportunity to act for some clients in judicial review cases, and having just said that we find it difficult to influence structural changes and make a bigger difference in that way, I have had the opportunity to do that in one case because it was a judicial review against a council and their policy on temporary accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse. In particular, the fact that they don't have any single sex temporary accommodation in the borough. Our client was awarded quite significant damages and the council agreed to undertake Equality Impact Assessments.

So it was great to be able to have that sort of individual impact on the client, but then also to have a more strategic outcome as well for other applicants in the borough in future.”



# Futures

So sadly I'm leaving Centre 70, but only because I am pursuing a career as a barrister.

"In an ideal world, getting more funding to do the non Legal Aid work is really important. I say in an ideal world, because whether or not that funding even exists is a big question, and whether the resources to actually do that is another one.

It's important because Legal Aid has been completely decimated and there are so many clients who we can't help because they're just not eligible, either financially eligible, or the type of case they have has just been excluded from Legal Aid. I would say that probably the majority of cases we get are not eligible for Legal Aid so there's a huge amount of people we're just not able to assist.

I've pushed for Centre 70 to take on and pursue cases that are likely to have a wider impact, rather than just for an individual. This is important for two reasons. First, because of course, we're trying to make an impact on the wider community, which is our purpose. But also, in terms of attracting future employees and talent to Centre 70. If we're going to attract great people, particularly relating to Legal Aid work, being able to say that many years ago Centre 70 were the instructing solicitors in the Hotak case, which is still the most important case on vulnerability in homelessness applications, is something that we should be shouting from the rooftops. Thinking about our strategic outcomes, it's really important that the best people to come and work for us."



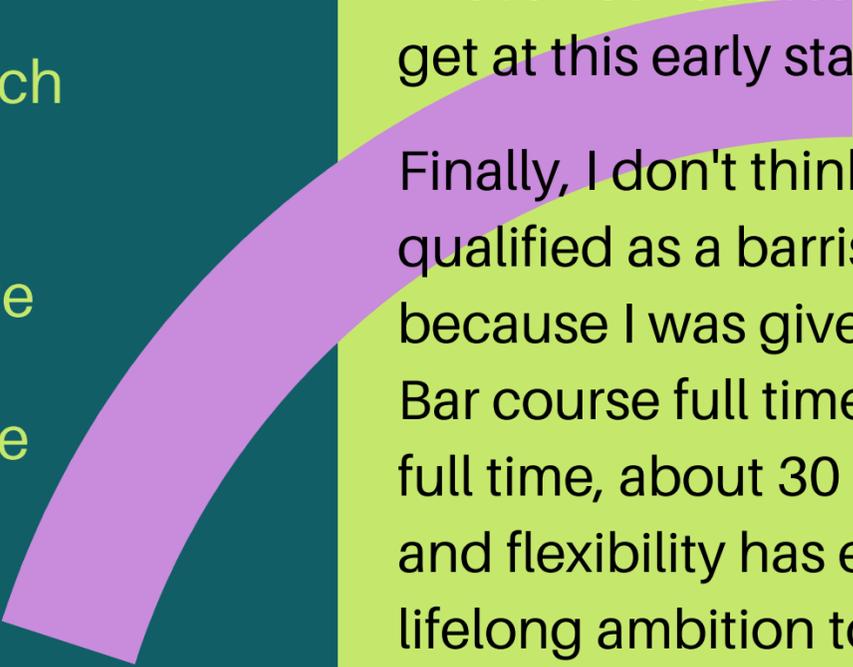
# An amazing place to work

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"I have been given so many opportunities and so much responsibility at Centre 70. Yes, I've been supervised, and there's been the support there for me, but I have been allowed to work on cases that if I was in a private practice firm, I would maybe get to write some of the letters but not actually interact with council, doing the instructions, drafting documents, and filing court proceedings."

"The most important thing personally for me is having the client contact. In private practice firms, you may be drafting a letter to a client, but you're not the person sitting there giving them the advice and actually building that relationship and rapport. And I'm really grateful that I've had the opportunity to do that.

And also the opportunity to debate things with my supervisors, make suggestions, actually be treated as if I am someone who knows things and who maybe has something to bring to the table. That's not necessarily something that you would get at this early stage of your career.



Finally, I don't think I would be able to have qualified as a barrister if it wasn't for Centre 70 because I was given so much flexibility. I did the Bar course full time, whilst I worked pretty much full time, about 30 hours a week. So the support and flexibility has enabled me to progress my lifelong ambition to be a barrister."

# The Centre 70 team

Our committed team of staff, volunteers and trustees drives our impact in the community.



Photos from Centre 70's Open Evening and AGM 2023



# Financial position

Income

£860,983

Expenditure

£857,103

Funders & donors

We thank Lambeth Council, Legal Aid Agency, Walcot Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, The Henry Smith Charity, Trust for London, Norwood & Brixton Foodbank, Richard & Gwendoline Chadwick's Charitable Trust and the Elizabeth and Prince Zaiger Trust.

See full Financial Statements at <https://centre70.org.uk/about-us/annual-report-and-accounts>

# Challenges



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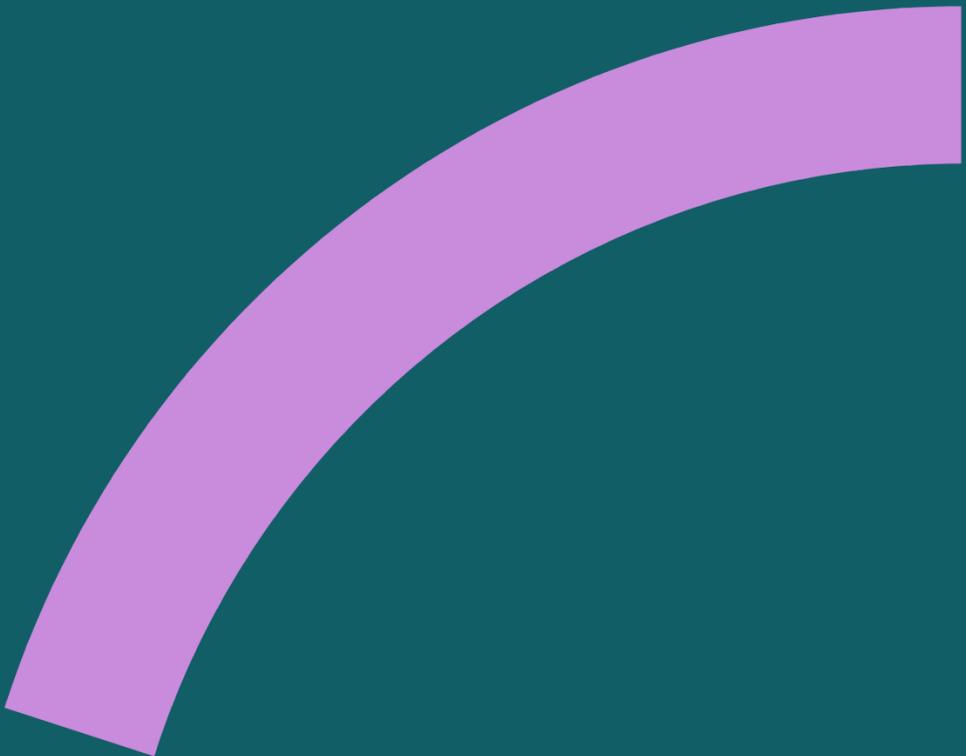
The Board of Trustees considers that the main risk to the Charity remains its dependence on a few large funding sources, although recently we have successfully diversified funding streams.

After a protracted period, we received reduced overall funding from the London Borough of Lambeth for the 2024 / 2025 year and so are mitigating this by remodelling and deploying staff under other income generation or paid per case contracts. Introducing this new way of working brings with it risks and so we plan to phase this in whilst funding tapers and implement systems to track and monitor income in real time so adjustments can be made as we go along.

We currently have only one Solicitor after another recently retired and have not been able to recruit a replacement. This has resulted in reduced chargeable housing work we can take on, but we have increased capacity in the Housing team by increasing staff hours and taking on a paralegal in October 2023.



# Connect with us



<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.centre70.org.uk">www.centre70.org.uk</a>
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