



**The Manna Society
Annual Report
2023 – 2024**

Working with homeless people & those in need

THE MANNA SOCIETY

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Patrons: Most Rev Kevin McDonald, Retired RC Archbishop of Southwark,
The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Anglican Bishop of Southwark.

Committee Members

- Kendra Schneller Chairperson
- Bill Dodwell Treasurer
- Donna Miller..... Secretary
- William Curran, Nannette Ffrench, Silke Junge & Cha Power

The **Manna Society** began in 1982 and formed under a constitution in 1988 (amended in August 1989). The Society's objects and purpose: ***'to relieve poor persons who are homeless and/or unemployed by the provision of food, shelter and other forms of Christian care with the object of promoting the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of such persons and of improving their conditions of life.'*** (Constitution No 2a)

The Ethos of the Manna

Our vision is the creation of a just society that respects the dignity of every individual.

The Manna Day Centre is a place of unconditional acceptance. Our task, as we see it, is not to judge but to love.

We aim to respect the dignity and worth of each person with whom we come in contact. Each and every one has an intrinsic value that deserves to be respected. No one is dispensable. Our task is to feed and care for homeless people and those in need who seek our help but we cannot be content with this. We must also seek to challenge the structures of society that lead to homelessness and poverty.

The Growing Challenges of Addressing Homelessness and Housing Scarcity

By
Bandi Mbubi
Manna Centre Director



Each year brings its own unique challenges, and this year, from September 2023 to August 2024, has been no exception. We have wrestled with two main challenges: the increasing number of people becoming homeless and sleeping rough, and the dwindling supply of accommodation available to those who are homeless. These challenges form the backdrop of my report.

Homelessness in England has significantly increased, with over 309,000 people estimated to be homeless. About 90% of them live in temporary accommodation, and approximately 3,898 people were recorded as sleeping rough in a snapshot survey conducted on a single night in autumn 2023. This figure is up from 3,069 in 2022 ([GOV.UK](#), [Shelter England](#), [Big Issue](#)).

The supply of social housing and affordable privately rented accommodation has not kept pace with demand, forcing many of our service-users onto the streets. Rising rents and the shortage of truly affordable housing have exacerbated the problem, leaving many people unable to secure stable housing due to the high cost of living ([GOV.UK](#)).

Despite the increase in the number of people rough sleeping, the average number of people accessing our day centre has remained relatively stable. Approximately 120 people use our services daily, from 8:30am to 1:30pm. Our snapshot survey on 17th June 2024 recorded 126 visitors ([The Manna Society](#)).

As in previous years, we have offered six services:

Food remains our most popular service. Nearly everyone who uses our services partakes in the meals we provide. Breakfast includes a sandwich at 8:30am, porridge, during cold weather, and cereal, during hot weather, at 10:00am. Lunch, served from 11:30am to 1:30pm, varies from spaghetti Bolognese and pasta to chicken stew and rice, mashed potatoes, and burgers. Throughout the day, water, squash, tea, and coffee are available.

Housing and Welfare Service has been offered differently this year. Previously, people needing accommodation queued early in the morning and hoped to be seen on a first-come-first-served basis. However, we could not cope with the demand, especially when newly recognised refugees sought housing assistance in large numbers. The government's decision to decant newly recognised refugees from hotels within short periods led many to sleep rough while awaiting welfare benefits, which can take up to 12 weeks. In response, we transformed our existing telephone advice line to conduct initial assessments on Mondays only, between 10am and 1:00pm, allowing us to manage the demand by capping housing assistance at 20 people at any given time.

Additionally, we have been short-staffed for several months due to the departure of Eleanor Smith, earlier in the year, who left to practise as a psychotherapist. Since December 2023, Chinasa Nnoka has joined our team full-time.

We are grateful to the London Borough of Southwark for providing two-thirds of the funding needed for the housing & welfare advice service.

Healthcare has continued to be comprehensive. Kendra Schneller and Tsering Wangmo from the Health Inclusion Team (HIT), part of the NHS, have provided excellent care twice a week, addressing physical health problems and establishing links with external health service providers

like opticians and dentists. We held our first health and well-being day earlier this year with their assistance, bringing together physical and mental health practitioners and a masseuse.

The local mental health team, the START Team, has continued to regularly offer sustained mental health assistance weekly.

Liza Curtis, our podiatrist, has been treating our service users' foot problems twice a month.

Shower facilities have remained in constant use throughout the day. Thirty men shower daily, with provided soap, shampoo, and clean towels. Although women make up only about 5% of our service users, we ensure that as many women as possible can use the showers, averaging five women daily.

Clothing has been offered twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays for much of the year. However, when our stock runs low, we limit it to Mondays to cope with the demand.

IT Sessions have been popular, thanks to our dedicated volunteers. On three days, companies send employees to facilitate these sessions, alongside a retiree, Deanne Johnson, and a remarkable young student, Jake Hierons, on the other two days the service runs. Many service-users come for leisure activities, including listening to music, which significantly enhances their experience. As one service-user put it to me, “music makes all the difference!”

We have actively sought and maintained support from external partners. Paddy Boyle, our administrator, and I have held meetings and given talks to secure their assistance. While harvest donations traditionally covered about 70% of our food needs, the past two years have seen only 60% of the usual donations, likely due to the cost of living crisis and the rise of food banks. Thankfully, Fareshare and the Felix Project have enabled us to collect food from local Marks & Spencer's shops. However, Nando's, which generously donated large amounts of chicken for over ten years, has significantly reduced its chicken donations. If this trend continues, we will need to find alternative solutions.

All this wonderful work would not be possible without our formidable team of eleven employees, who ensure that all our service users are treated with respect, compassion, and fairness. Our thirty or so regular volunteers, mostly retirees, are invaluable. They give us their time and effort, which spares us significant expenses. We are also deeply grateful to the RC Archdiocese of Southwark for providing us with long term tenure of our premises. We owe all our donors of all shapes and sizes a debt of gratitude – THANK YOU!



*Nannette Ffrench, the Founder of the Manna Society
on her 98th birthday - July 2024*

Review of Advice & Welfare service

By

Margaret Shapland

Housing and Welfare Advice Worker



“All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded the individual” Albert Einstein

I am writing at a time of the Changing of the Guard as a new government is swept into power with what appears to be a commitment to give opportunity to all. Homeless Link in response to the new Chancellor’s statement of 30th July 2024 is positive about the commitment to conducting Spending Reviews every two years with a minimum planning horizon of three years. In effect, if that is enacted, it means there will be greater certainty in budgets to combat homelessness and will come as a relief to many services in our sector who have in previous years been on the cliff edge of wondering if short term contracts will be renewed.

What is a concern of course is the explicit warning in Ms Reeve’s speech that there will be “difficult decisions” this October and as Homeless Link puts it there will still be a tough road ahead to protect current spending levels in 2025-26 in an effort keep the doors of homelessness services open and that services such as ours need to partner with in order to provide specialist services, housing provision etc.

But now, let us look back at our previous year’s work and how various policies etc. have shaped those who come to us for help and assistance

Overall Numbers



Over the last fiscal year, our service has delivered a mix of face-to-face appointments, dealing with clients who have attended our drop-in, email, telephone and on some occasions by text and WhatsApp.

To effectively manage clients who were seeking accommodation, our Advice & Welfare service runs an accommodation waiting list. Prospective clients are invited to ring a dedicated telephone line on a Monday morning. We cease to take names once we have filled 20 spaces on the waiting list. When we have an available appointment available and we feel that there is a realistic opportunity to place the client in suitable accommodation, we get in touch with candidates on the list and book a firm appointment.

The face to face service works on the principle of booking 2 appointments per day from our roster of existing clients, seeing 1 person booked from the accommodation list and then seeing clients who have dropped by the centre and need assistance. The face to face service is largely covered by two Advice & Welfare workers, Monday to Thursday with Friday being dedicated to external meetings and complex case work.

Overall, we have worked with 609 registered clients this year and alongside that over 300 incoming calls for help and assistance from people who are not registered on our database. This represented an uplift from FY22-23 of 33%.

New clients registered on our Advice database accounted for 46% of all clients seen in the centre, up from 27% in FY22-23. This really represents the demand for services such as ours. Over the year, we delivered 91% of all available Advice & Welfare sessions; 1,360 appointments with clients were logged on the database and 3,561 consultations on various matters were covered at those appointments.

What was the split in gender?



We have reported in the past that the number of female clients visiting us for assistance is at odds with female clients who actually use our centre. In the last snapshot survey in our centre, just 6% of those attending the centre were female. In FY23-24, 21% female clients used the Advice & Welfare service. We know that female homelessness is under-represented – just 16% are recorded in official rough sleeping figures and we know that a large number fall into the group classified as hidden homeless – staying with friends or sofa-surfing, being taken in by members of local churches. Single Homeless Project (SHP) research tells us that 65% of homeless adults (London) in temporary accommodation are women – of course, a number will be lone mothers but there is a relatively high proportion of single homeless women many of whom are suffering from mental health issues. SHP is partnering with other organisations to deliver a more rounded picture of women’s homelessness through the development of a specific census of homeless women.

What age groups use our service?

18 Plus

As per last year, we can report that the largest single age group approaching us for help fell into the 26-35 age group – in this fiscal year, it stands at 37% growing from 29% in the previous year. As a group, it was twice the size of the next largest age group of 36-45 year olds which delivered 18% of all clients seen. We welcome all adults above 18 to the service. This increase has largely been driven by the requirement for accommodation amongst this group. The lack of housing provision for under 35 year olds has been a long-standing problem. Demand has been exacerbated following the previous Government’s policy decision to fast-track decisions for some cohorts among asylum-seekers, which resulted in an unprecedented flood of refugees newly granted humanitarian protection looking for accommodation of some kind. Looking at the age distribution of those calling in to our accommodation line, some 90% plus fall into the under-35 age group.

A fellow organisation providing roughly similar services to our Advice & Welfare service reported that the overall situation for homeless under 35 year olds was bleak and stating that it will require long-term investment to expand the amount of housing dedicated to this group. Their data shows that rough sleeping is likely to be more prevalent in the under 35 age group and indeed our organisation has seen people in this age group actually rough sleeping outside our door so that they could be seen by the Advice & Welfare team. It was an absolutely tragic situation and one of the reasons why we introduced the accommodation list so that there could be some promise of managed assistance rather than having to rely on the drop-in.

What ethnic groups come to see us?



There has been a significant uplift in the numbers of clients of African background accessing our service – last fiscal year it stood at 41% and were the largest single group of clients. In FY23-24, that dominance has increased and now account for 60% of all clients seen. 19% came from the segment identified as “White – other” - largely clients from the European mainland and then just 5% who classified themselves as White British.

I have written in the past about the disproportionate numbers of the BAME population who experience homelessness and poverty and so rely on services such as ours to help them. A new study from Heriot-Watt University entitled “Taking a race and ethnicity lens to conceptualisations of homelessness in England” sheds light on the struggle that many in these group face when trying to access help from homelessness services due to “a system of complex, bureaucratic and culturally insensitive policies and practices in UK housing”. Researchers found that when assessing suitability for re-housing local authorities rarely recognise additional locational requirements that are vitally important to some communities. One of the points raised

highlighted the reluctance of those from minority groups to enforce their housing or homelessness rights, even where they were aware of them, often due to a fear of “rocking the boat”.

This is where organisations such as ours can help support those who find themselves in such a situation. We all appreciate the pressured that local authorities are under when it comes to providing housing but we do have to resist as the mechanisms used by local authorities could be seen as discriminating inadvertently against some minorities ethnic groups who lack the same insight into the rules and requirements governing applications to local authorities.

What was the legal status of those who approached us?



In this fiscal year, the largest single group were those afforded humanitarian protection – effectively, refugees They account for 45% of all clients seen in the service, displacing clients from the EU and EEA who were the largest group in FY22-23 – this group is in second place with 19%, closely followed by clients identifying as British citizens who contributed 17% overall. There is no doubt that this has been driven by previous government policy in an effort to reduce the number of asylum-seekers in hotels for any significant time.

The Refugee Council in its latest publication of facts based on the Government’s official statistics states: *“The moment someone receives a positive decision on their asylum claim should be one of celebration and relief, an end to instability, and the start of a bright future where they are able to establish new lives in the UK. Instead, many newly recognised refugees experience homelessness and/or destitution right at this point.”* Refugee Council – Top facts from the latest statistics on refugees and people seeking asylum.

We mentioned earlier in this article that certain groups of asylum-seekers had their claims fast-tracked – however, early on in the application of the policy, those granted refugee status were only being given 7 days to leave the Home Office accommodation (a policy since reversed to allow 28 days breathing space before they must leave) having 28 days is barely enough time to set up Universal Credit claims, obtain bank accounts and seek accommodation – in fact, as they are consequent on each other, it can extend the period before someone has entitlement agreed for Universal Credit (which generally requires an established bank account) and for many providers we work with, we cannot start referrals unless we can demonstrate that they will be able to pay their rent through benefit housing costs or other means.

Finding housing



379 clients approached us for housing in this fiscal year – that is 62% which remains consistent with the previous financial year. Over the year, we were able to place nearly 60% in some form of accommodation – temporary or permanent. I have mentioned earlier in this article that there is pressure on any available homeless route for single persons – Homeless Link statistics show that there were 911 accommodation projects in 2022. However, that is 33% less than recorded in 2012.

Homeless Link also reports that 71% of accommodation projects have had to turn someone away due to being full. We can report that the housing provision access over the past year has had somewhat of a “stop –start” nature with providers closing waiting lists or staggering assessment appointments for an extended period and there has been drag in accommodation re-settlement where clients are being asked to spend an extended time on waiting lists. The Homeless Link report mirrors our experience – 96% of the day centres participating in the research reported that access to accommodation is the most significant challenge they face.

We are aware that eternal vigilance is required to keep up to date details of active housing projects and projects that were dormant or had criteria which previously would have excluded an approach from our Advice & Welfare service and that effort forms part of the work we undertake each week on Friday so that we can maximise the opportunities available, obtain new referral rights or re-establish relationships.

Looking forward

In the current financial year, we will be looking at a) further streamlining of our database and reporting systems to increase efficiency in recording and manipulating our data b) Re-shaping the staffing of the service – having lost a very valued member of staff in FY23-24, we have welcomed their replacement who is making a welcome contribution to our service. We are a service with long-serving employees and inevitably that means that retirement beckons or at least a reduction in the working week. That means we have to think about re-configuring the service and brings an opportunity to reflect on what the shape of that service might be in the future.

In essence, our ethos remains the same and I am put in mind of two quotations from persons better qualified than I which reflect our purpose; one again courtesy of Albert Einstein who spoke with great wisdom that we should “*Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value*”, it speaks to the collective desire to be of use to the people we serve and I could not resist including a quotation from the late Desmond Tutu who was a founding member of the Council of Elders; a member of that council was amazed at the optimism that he showed – the Archbishop’s response was that he “*was a prisoner of hope*”. I think that anyone associated with the relief of homelessness exists in that space and it is a place of light, not darkness.

Thank you for accompanying us on our continuing journey.



Wealth inequality - the Elephant in the room

By

Karolina Muszynska

Housing & Welfare Advice Worker



It has been a difficult and emotional year for me in the advice service. I believe I expressed this before in my previous articles, and it is really hard for me to be positive here today. I understand that our readers and supporters would like to know what is really happening at Manna and I want to be honest. Unfortunately, the truth is upsetting, and I am starting to feel more and more angry about the systemic injustice faced by our service users.

People often ask me if I like my job and I always say I love it. I enjoy working with people in a helping role and I enjoy meeting them, listening to their stories. This job has enhanced my understanding of vulnerability, social exclusion, boosted my empathy and informed my life. Every day I am learning so much from our service users and I am very grateful for that.

At the same time, I am starting to feel enormous rage against the social injustice, thoughtless policies, unequal distribution of wealth, raising costs of living etc that has a detrimental impact on our service users and those on low income. I am fed up with politicians pledges to resolve homelessness and the housing crisis and I can tell you with confidence that nothing is getting better. Over my 14 years as an advice worker things have gotten worse and I do feel frustrated and hopeless as a frontline worker.

I feel sorry for my Somalian client Fatima, who came here as an asylum seeker and has had to leave her all family behind. She has gone through hell and has been suffering from depression and anxiety, she even tried to commit suicide because of the unbearable pain. Fatima's right to remain has been granted last year and after a short period of being placed in temporary accommodation (via a London council) she was housed in so called supported accommodation. The idea of supported accommodation seems to be a great concept – it is meant to be accommodation for people with additional needs, including care leavers, people with disabilities, mental health issues and addictions. The weekly rent for supported accommodation is usually very high as it includes a support element (Fatima's rent is £500 per week) and is covered by Housing Benefit.

Sadly, what we see in our work is that the supported accommodation sector has become a money-making business for some unscrupulous providers. There seem to be no regulation or control over that sector and vulnerable people are being placed in poor quality housing with unsuitable or non-existent support. If you would like to learn more about it please see Public Account Committee (PAC) report "Supported housing: Vulnerable people left unprotected from unscrupulous providers" on <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/127/public-accounts-committee/news/198324/supported-housing-vulnerable-people-left-unprotected-from-unscrupulous-providers/>

This the case for Fatima whose male neighbour keeps having friends over every night and the noise prevents her from sleeping. She is exhausted and yes, she did report it a few times to the provider, but nothing has changed and now she feels scared of her neighbour's reprisal. She would prefer to move somewhere else but here again there is another systemic challenge. Fatima is under 35 years old and on Universal credit. That means that if she wants to move into independent private accommodation, she needs to find a room with a rent which falls within the local housing allowance (maximum rent that is covered within a certain area) and that is virtually impossible. Please do challenge me if you think I am wrong. I will welcome your ideas with open arms.

We see a lot of homeless people under 35 years old and the only solution we are able to offer to them is supported accommodation. Sounds like vicious circle? Yes – that is what it is. What is even more paradoxical is that now, following various reports like the PAC one, the government has started to be stricter with supported accommodation providers and Housing Benefit teams often refuse to pay the supported accommodation rate if they feel that the customer does not need such support. We have had a lot of cases where the supported rent rate has been refused and we do not have a plan B for this people. On top of that it seems absurd and makes no sense at all that the government is prepared to either cover rent as high as £500 a week or as low (and impossible to find) as £149 per week (LHA rate for shared accommodation for within Southwark).

The situation with people over 35 years old is not much better. Over the last few years, the private market has radically changed, and many property owners have transferred rooms in their properties into so called studios flats. They are tiny spaces and when I describe what is on offer to our service users, I tell them they will be sleeping in the kitchen. These places charge the Local Housing Allowance for a 1 bedroom flat, and they often provide large, shared kitchen in the building. Often the conditions are very poor, and the space is extremely small. They would be fine for a short period of time for those who need help but sadly a lot of people, especially those who are single or unable to work may never be able to afford anything else. And again, billions of taxpayers' money is pumped into private pockets. As a result the poor get poorer and the rich get richer.

In the last years we have seen a lot of cuts in the welfare system. The reasoning is always the same – let's make work pay and save public money. This argument always drives me mad. Politicians somehow always find it easier to cut essential help to poor people than to perhaps increase taxes for higher earners. The UK is a country of high wealth inequality and I think this is the elephant in the room we have to address to implement change. Please see below an extract from The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the full report is available at <https://www.jrf.org.uk/wealth-funding-and-investment-practice/changing-the-narrative-on-wealth-inequality>

“Wealth inequality is high and rising and more marked than income inequality. In the UK, the bottom 50% of the population owned less than 5% of wealth in 2021, and the top 10% a staggering 57% (up from 52.5% in 1995). The top 1% alone held 23% (World Inequality Lab, 2022). The ratio of wealth to income has risen in the UK from 2.3 to 1 in 1948, to 5.7 to 1 in 2020. It has a significant impact on life chances and outcomes, and it generates high levels of poverty amongst those with no wealth assets to fall back on. There are no nations which have high levels of economic inequality and low levels of poverty.”



Human rights are not only violated by terrorism, repression or assassination, but also by unfair economic structures that creates huge inequalities.

Pope Francis

Working with the socially vulnerable

By

Chinasa Nnoka

Housing & Welfare Advice Worker



I came across an American definition of Social Vulnerability which aptly describes the clients I deal with as an Advice Worker and who would often fall through the cracks of other institutions which are supposed to help their needs. *“Socially vulnerable populations include those who have special needs such as, but not limited to, people without vehicles, people with disabilities, older adults and people with limited English proficiency” (Social Vulnerability I National Risk Index).*

Some clients appear confident and clear about what they want like ZA, a young homeless gentleman who wanted to be housed in the area where he had lived for years whilst seeking Asylum and where he was studying ESOL (English as a second language). I cautioned him that things might not work the way he wanted but I drafted the Housing referral. I needed his Universal Credit statement, when he produced it, it said that his award, in two days' time, would be £0. I told him that he wasn't receiving Universal Credit, he countered this, pointing to the calculation, which only proved my point.

Confusingly, he had recently received an advance payment from Universal Credit. I rang the DWP enquiry line and the official confirmed that he wouldn't be receiving any money because the calculation showed that he had been working (whereas he said he had not been). The official informed me that she would raise this with his Case Manager. I told him he had to be in receipt of Universal Credit for the referral to be considered, however I would submit it with an explanation that there was a query and he would be paid any monies outstanding to him. Nearly two hours later as he was leaving, shocked and less confident, he thanked me stating that if it had not been for me, he would not have known there was a problem. “I didn't understand” he said; he realized that this lack of understanding had impacted his chances of being housed more rapidly. It appeared he had missed out on another two months benefit payments without realizing and I wondered what other problems this misunderstanding had caused.

I have felt like a buffer between a vulnerable client such as Mr A and his local authority (LclA). He was in temporary accommodation and an official had visited one day, inspected and told him they would take better care of his damp, leaking accommodation and to sign a document indicating his agreement. He did so believing the council were being helpful. Much later Housing Benefit (HB) notified him of an overpayment created when he had signed a new Licence and moved out of the Lcl A area. He was visibly upset and his voice was raised in shock and anxiety, he felt he had been deceived. When we called HB and an official told him that she didn't appreciate being shouted at. I explained that he wasn't shouting, he was just very upset (I recognised this as he is from the same ethnic background as me). We spoke to three separate departments for different aspects of the problem. Lcl A had a new company managing its temporary accommodation, hence the visit to Mr A and request to sign a document, but this had not been explained I usually don't like to criticize organisations in front of their clients, but I had to tell Lcl A that they had not served this gentleman well. It took over two hours to unravel and resolve this issue, thankfully Manna has the flexibility and agility of a small charity which allowed me to do this, more organisations like Manna are needed.

Mr A (above) was also elderly with a long-term illness and my predecessor had worked hard to submit a homeless application for him. He contacted me, joyful that he had a viewing scheduled. Days later he told me that he had rejected it. He had formed a view, borne of fear that the place was a hospice and he was being treated as though his death was imminent. I tried to explain, even calling the Sheltered Housing Officer to enquire what had happened and she reiterated what I had told him, that this was sheltered accommodation, and the daily welfare checks were not an infringement of his freedoms, but Mr A decided that he wanted to rent privately.

Days later he returned, saying that he wanted to withdraw his refusal of the property, adding he had been scared and confused when he made his earlier decision. He had a Support Worker from the NHS also advocating for him. Ordinarily in the face of scarce housing resources and high demand I am sure Mr A would not have been considered again without a hard fight. I also wrote to the council at his request and his case was reopened. It was fortunate Mr A could receive quality attention from the Support Worker and myself, due to the agility of our respective services, otherwise he may have had attend another advice agency (whose services are often over-subscribed) to start again, a daunting prospect given his health.

Many of our clients don't have English as their first language and even if they have lived in England for years the language barrier can prevent them from accessing important services. I was supporting JA to apply for Pension Credit, he spoke broken functional English. He needed a bank statement and we decided to call the bank as we were part way through the application. The bank official spoke to him in everyday professional language, which I have frequently seen discomforts my clients. She asked him about recent transactions on the account (the conversation was on loudspeaker) and he looked at me blankly. He told her he didn't understand, she tried two different questions, finally asking if there was anyone else on the account. He looked blank again, told her that he didn't understand and she replied that she couldn't proceed as he hadn't answered the security questions. I asked if I could break the question down, she replied "Yes, but I can't allow you to give him the answers". I asked him "The account is just for you? Any other person?" "No ", he replied emphatically. He had now passed security. I suggested to the official that whilst she had spoken as plainly as she could, the questions still needed to be simplified for those whose first language isn't English (especially if there are no interpreters). She accepted my advice.

Manna's agility can be used to empower individuals too. A long-standing client YY called to have a letter read to him. He had an appointment with me and brought letters with him, we accessed his email and learned his status here had been confirmed. He was overjoyed. He told me that he couldn't read. I asked whether he had considered adult literacy classes, adding that he would be with other adults, and this would give him his independence. He told me that he did want independence and we went online searching for adult literacy courses in his area. I registered him with a free one and volunteered to help him read his mail until his literacy improved. He told me that I was the first person to have suggested this to him. He had left school before the leaving age, adding he had difficulty concentrating and was very impatient when he couldn't accomplish what he wanted but now he was going to take his time. I hope he follows through. I think it's important that charities don't inadvertently infantilise and disempower those they help.

I spoke to an ex "Housing First Worker- broadly speaking they accommodate people with complex needs and support them to keep their tenancies. He told me that Housing First can make a big difference to homelessness provided the individual wrap around support meets the of that

individual. Critically a HF Worker shouldn't have a large caseload so that they can meet their clients' needs more comprehensively. Similarly, Manna deals with many people who have complex needs and a proportion of those who come to the Centre are seen by the Advice Team and are offered a service which meets a wide range of needs; the limit to the Adviser's remit, helps this unique charity attend its clients more thoroughly and successfully such that its reputation has spread, particularly for housing its clients. Indeed, when I joined last year Manna started operating an accommodation waiting list both a reflection of the prevailing circumstances - an increase in homeless particularly amongst newly recognised refugees and a testament to the confidence which Manna has inspired through its track record.

Treasurer's Report

**By
Bill Dodwell**



This Annual Report includes the statement of financial activities and the balance sheet for the year ended 31st March 2024. Full copies of the certified accounts will be found on the Charity Commission's website <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/294691>

Our income for the year to 31 March 2024 was £409,725, down from £505,009. In recent years we have benefitted significantly from legacies. However, these totalled £4,596 in 2024, compared to £107,399 in 2023). Legacies continue to be an important source of funding for the Society; we are very grateful to our long-term supporters who continue to leave money to the Society in their wills. We continue to receive grant funding from the London Borough of Southwark, which was at the similar levels to prior years. This grant has been renewed for 2024-25.

Our expenses in 2024 were £584,297, compared to £544,200 in 2023. Our expenses increased compared to last year, with higher food and energy costs. We continue to invest in a range of building improvements for the centre. We sold our van in 2021-22 and now mainly use pedal carriers to move food and other goods between our store and the Centre. We have bought our own cargo bike, aided by a grant. We continue to invest in our staff, through pay rises and pension contributions, which have been higher than in recent years, reflecting the increased cost of living.

The result is that in 2024 we had a deficit of £174,572, compared to a deficit of £39,191 in 2023. Our retained funds have dropped to £375,471, which still means we have more than six months running costs in hand.

Our financial position has thus declined during the year. Our individual donations have continued strongly, for which we very much thank our donors. In recent years we have received more support from businesses in the area, through donations, fund-raising events and volunteering. We are also grateful for the support of grant-making charitable trusts, which have increased their support in 2024.

As always, I and the whole management committee would like to thank our staff for all the helpful, friendly and productive work in the past year. We would also like to thank all the volunteers, who support the staff in helping the Manna Centre clients. The high regard that the centre is held in is directly as a result of the staff and volunteer efforts. We must also thank the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark for their continuing practical support in providing the Centre rent-free.

Finally, of course, I would like to thank all our donors, who continue to support the Society with donations and many fundraising efforts. Without your help the Society would not be able to continue with its work which is so important to many people on the margins of our society.

Statement of financial activities
For the year ended 31 March 2024

	Restricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	<i>Total funds 2023 £</i>
Income from:				
Donations and legacies	66,540	333,926	400,466	<i>501,600</i>
Investments	-	9,259	9,259	<i>3,409</i>
Total income	66,540	343,185	409,725	<i>505,009</i>
Expenditure on:				
Raising funds	-	7,162	7,162	<i>6,582</i>
Charitable activities	69,863	507,272	577,135	<i>537,618</i>
Total expenditure	69,863	514,434	584,297	<i>544,200</i>
Net movement in funds	(3,323)	(171,249)	(174,572)	<i>(39,191)</i>
Reconciliation of funds:				
Total funds brought forward	23,338	526,705	550,043	<i>589,234</i>
Total funds carried forward	20,015	355,456	375,471	<i>550,043</i>

Balance Sheet
as at 31 March 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	14,707	13,067
Investments	-	80,000
	14,707	93,067
Current assets		
Debtors	31,251	75,001
Investments	165,000	84,787
Cash at bank and in hand	213,079	313,411
	409,330	473,199
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(48,566)	(16,223)
	360,764	456,976
Net current assets		
	375,471	550,043
Charity Funds		
Restricted funds	20,015	23,338
Unrestricted funds	355,456	526,705
	375,471	550,043
Total funds	375,471	550,043

The financial statements were approved by the Management committee on 10th September 2024 and signed on their behalf, by: Bill Dodwell, Manna Society Treasurer.



We would like to say a genuine 'thanks' to all who support our work. In addition to the grant making trusts, companies and churches (table below), we are also indebted to the many individuals (too many to name), who have supported us throughout the year.

London Borough of Southwark
Fishmongers' Company
Safe Haven London
Norton Rose Fulbright LLP
The Joseph Rank Trust
The Hiscox Foundation
Streets of London
Tindall Riley Limited
StreetSmart
The Drapers' Charitable Fund
Jaguar Building Services
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
The Albert Hunt Trust
Sainsbury Charitable Fund
The Alexandra Trust
Inner London Magistrates' Courts'
Poor Box Charity
Sisters of St Louis
St James Church (Weybridge)
Trinova Real Estate LLP
The Hobson Charity
Archbishop's Appeal Fund
Second Chance Charity Shop
The Oliver Borthwick Memorial Trust
The Souter Charitable Trust
The Most Holy Trinity Church
(Dockhead)
Better Bankside
Catholic Housing Aid Society
(West London)

Enterprise Holdings Foundation
Fidelity International
Marsh Charitable Trust
Catenian Association, Epsom 109 Branch
Daughters of Jesus - Westgate
FMDM Community
The SMB Charitable Trust
Worshipful Company of Basketmakers'
Charitable Trust
Trivet Restaurant
Meridiem Investment Management Ltd
Anderson Acoustics
Blue Fin Building
London Catalyst
Royal Bank of Canada Global Asset
Management (UK) Ltd
Team London Bridge
The Fulmer Charitable Trust
The Sir James Roll Charitable Trust
The Worshipful Company of Curriers
The Fulmer Charitable Trust
St John The Baptist Church Wimbledon
BPL Global
Knights Saint Columba Council 117
Maurits Mulder Canter Trust Charity
Shad Thames Residents' Association
(STRA)
The Alchemy Foundation
The Lord Faringdon Charitable Trust
The Michael Cornish Charitable Trust