

A vibrant, stylized illustration of the Birmingham skyline. The background is a bright blue sky. In the foreground, there are green and yellow wavy lines representing hills or ground. A large green hand reaches from the left, and a large yellow hand reaches from the right, with their fingers meeting over the skyline. The skyline includes a tall white tower with a circular top, a red building with a white grid pattern, and a tall white cylindrical building with blue horizontal stripes. A large red and white polka-dot circle is also part of the skyline. The text 'BIRMINGHAM' is in large, bold, white capital letters with a black outline. Below it, 'you're not alone.' is written in a white, cursive script with a black outline. A small red heart is positioned between the two words of the cursive text. Below the text, there are three white stick figures: two standing and holding the heart, and one running towards the right. The bottom right corner features a dark red, stepped shape representing a staircase or a hill.

# BIRMINGHAM

*you're not alone.*



# Chief Executive Officer's welcome

As I reflect on a significant year in the development of SIFA Fireside, I am extremely grateful for the ongoing support of our wonderful trustees, Staff and volunteers whose commitment makes our work possible.

The start of the year saw us remodel our Support Centre to better meet the needs of our clients. We remain committed to supporting those who are rough sleeping or in need of emergency support, whilst also supporting individuals recovering from the effects of homelessness through the specialist services provided within our Support Centre.

The remodel was just the start, and initiated a re-evaluation of our vision and mission as well as a new set of strategic priorities for 2024-2026. This saw a significant shift towards homelessness prevention at every opportunity.

However, in order for there to be a future without homelessness we must look further than the delivery of our services. This will require us to work with new partners and be more courageous in order to be a voice for change.



Natalie Allen  
Chief Executive Officer

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# Our Vision, our Mission, our Values

We are SIFA Fireside, the support centre for any adult in Birmingham that faces homelessness.

Our Vision? That every adult in Birmingham can live a future without homelessness.

Our mission? To challenge and address the systemic causes, and the effects of homelessness, in collaboration with our partners.

As staff, volunteers and trustees of SIFA Fireside, we live our values each and every day.

They are:

- ♥ **Inclusive** – We respect diversity and equality and recognise people's individual needs
- ♥ **Dynamic** – We believe in doing the right thing to make a difference for our clients
- ♥ **Courageous** – We are a unique organisation and adapt our services to meet people's needs
- ♥ **Supportive** – We provide holistic support to encourage people to learn and grow from their experiences.





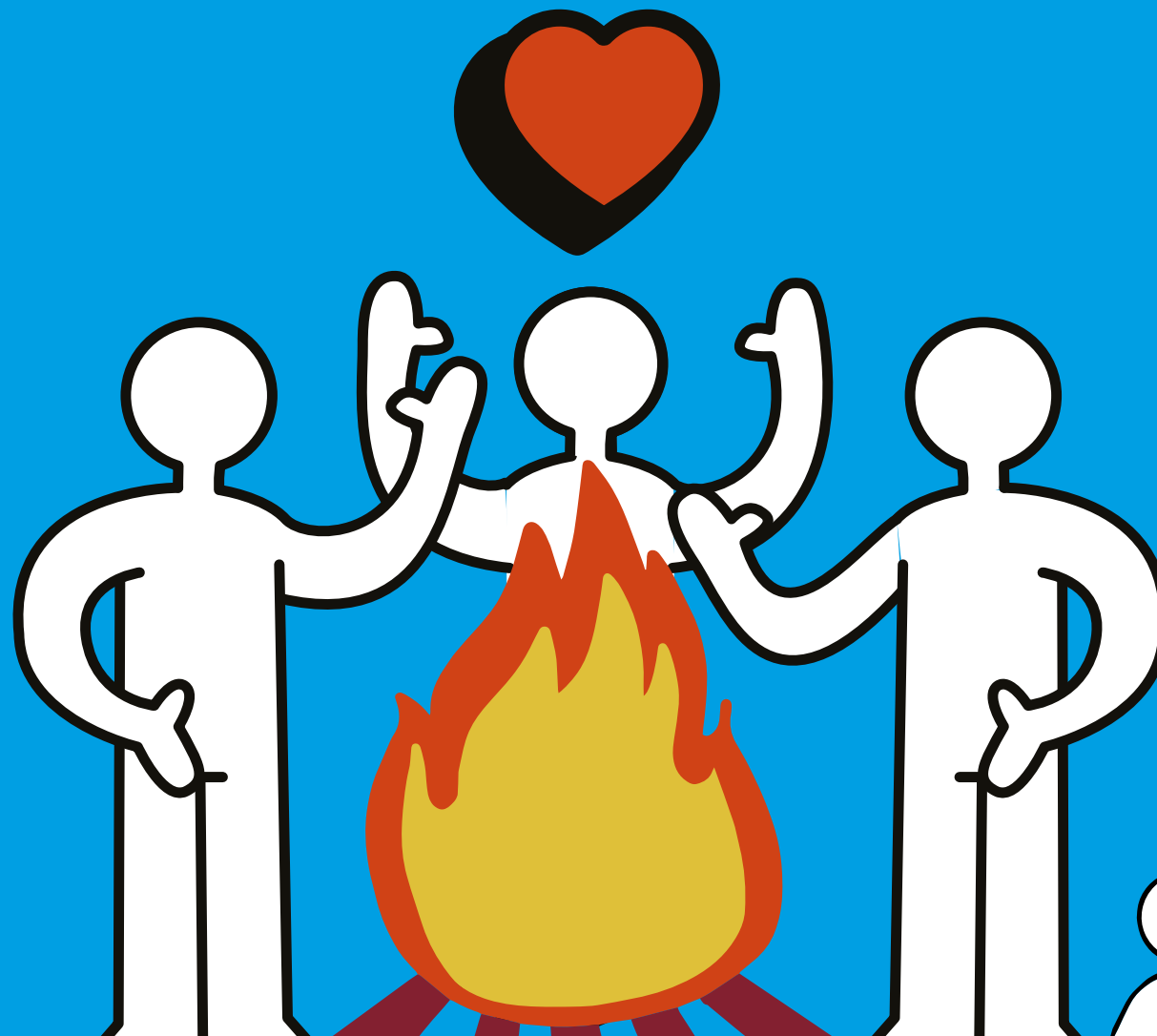
# Together, we prevent homelessness

The Adult Support Hub (ASH) has been instrumental in supporting vulnerable individuals in the fourth year of the contract, highlighting its vital role in improving health and wellbeing, promoting financial stability, fostering community engagement, and enhancing housing circumstances.

From December 2022 to November 2023 (Year 4 of the ASH contract), the ASH provided substantial support in four key areas: Health and Wellbeing, Financial Inclusion, Community Engagement, and Accommodation, which positively affected the lives of 1,564 individuals.

For these individuals, these actions targeted health and wellbeing interventions, financial inclusion support, and community engagement which effectively averted crises and fostered stability among the community's most vulnerable people.

As the service evolves, addressing clients' emerging needs in mental health and overall wellbeing remains imperative. Hence, the ASH new contract delivery in partnership with Birmingham MIND in Year 5 of the ASH contract will provide specialist mental health Information Advice and Guidance work to clients in our community settings and through co-delivered services; further enhancing the successes of Year 4.



During Year 4, the ASH made 1,358 critical referrals to specialist services, ensuring clients received focused support in areas including Mental Health, Counselling, Advocacy, Substance Misuse, Benefits, and Debt Advice. These referrals were pivotal in granting clients access to specialised services. This enabled clients to tackle the multiple disadvantages they faced beyond the prevention service's immediate remit.

The service rendered 858 instances of financial support, aiding clients in managing debts, securing income, and accessing benefits, thereby averting financial crises and fostering stability. The service completed 288 interventions concerning clients' precarious housing situations, thus diminishing the risk of homelessness and ensuring clients have a secure place to reside.

*"Wonderful team of people helping others, helped me a lot, have told others about their work."*

"M"

*"SIFA is the only place I know who helps the homeless people without SIFA I really don't know where the homeless people would go for a hot meal and a hot drink and get the help they need."*

"J"

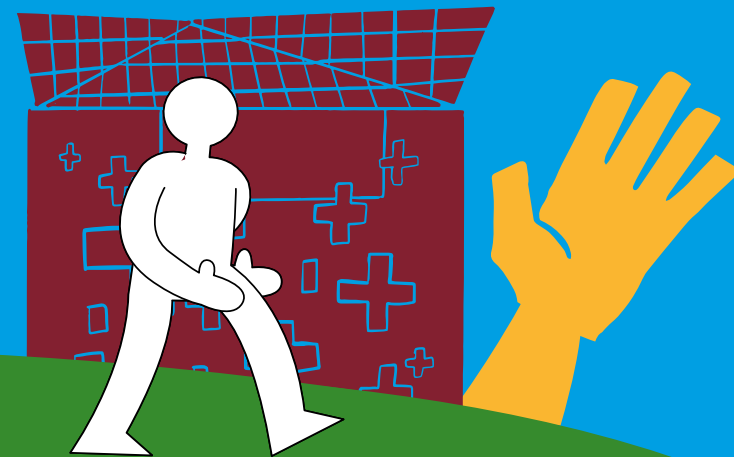


The Homeless Transition Worker Service (HTWS) has been commissioned to provide clients with transition support for 12 months as they move into new supported accommodation. From 1st April to 31st March, we recorded a total of 1,204 supportive interactions with those clients working with the HTWS service.

In addition to these client support interactions, HTWS conducted a comprehensive inspection of properties to ensure the living conditions met acceptable standards.

The key findings from these inspections showed that of the 46 properties inspected, 37 were reported as Good or Acceptable, with 9 properties being Unacceptable or Poor.

These inspections covered 29 different areas within Birmingham City and involved 22 different support providers. This highlights the HTWS's extensive reach and ongoing collaborative efforts to ensure quality accommodation for all of our clients.



## Mohammed's story

"Mohammed" presented at SIFA's Support Centre to access the Adult Support Hub's drop-in sessions. He was in permanent accommodation following 20 years of homelessness but his transition to a stable living situation was marked by significant challenges. He was severely visually impaired and suffered from diabetic neuropathy, which necessitated dialysis three times a week. Additionally, he faced social isolation, compounded by his limited English proficiency - his first language being Urdu - and the absence of family or friends for support.

Living alone, he struggled with basic daily tasks. His visual impairment prevented him from handling important phone communications. As a result, he missed crucial calls from his GP and hospital, affecting his ongoing medical care. Despite being eligible for a disabled person's bus pass, he had difficulty accessing the application process.

The ASH devised a tailored intervention plan to address his immediate and long-term needs. The ASH provided him with a smartphone and supported him to set it up and upskilled him to use it without sight. He was then able to access speech recognition in Urdu, enabling him to communicate independently and manage important calls related to his health.

The ASH then assisted him in liaising with the West Midlands Combined Authority to obtain a free disabled person's bus pass. This crucial step reduced his isolation and ensured he could attend his hospital appointments and dialysis sessions regularly.

Through dedicated, culturally sensitive support, he transitioned from a state of isolation and helplessness to one of empowerment and independence. The success of this case underscores the importance of tailored interventions and the need for ongoing collaboration with specialised services to meet the unique needs of clients such as Mohammed.





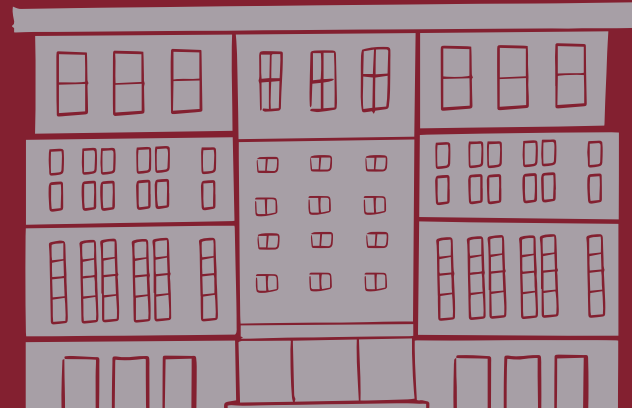
## Together, we provide emergency support

During this period we have consolidated the service delivery offer at SIFA Fireside to maximise efficiency and impact. This has resulted in the provision of more person-centred tailored support for our clients that are experiencing rough sleeping, enabling them to access essential services such as health care, DWP, substance misuse support and the accommodation options available through Birmingham City Council.

This ring-fenced time for individuals that are rough sleeping gave us the opportunity to further develop our support offer to those placed in exempt accommodation to ensure that they are able to sustain their accommodation. In addition, this has also afforded us the opportunity to support with driving up standards across housing providers.

During the 2023-24 period, we continued to deliver a range of services across our funded and commissioned services including the Social Networks project, Move On recovery skills programme, Adult Support Hub Community Advice and Guidance, Housing Transitions and Specialist support for those with restricted eligibility to public funds.

Over the coming year we will continue to push for bolder and more impactful outcomes for those most marginalised in our society. We will be operating our new Housing and Substance Misuse, and Peer Support services to align with our new strategy and ambitions for the future. We will also be continuing to address the systemic causes of homelessness through our service delivery and ensure that people presenting to us in need are supported both to move out of homelessness, and to also prevent it from recurring.



## Mahmood's story

“Mahmood” is a 40-year-old Italian national of Bangladeshi heritage who presented at SIFA Fireside. He had been sleeping under a bridge for some time and it appeared that he had been discharged from hospital onto the streets following a suicide attempt. Mahmood presented as confused, distressed, and with a cognitive impairment which prevented him from providing a coherent account of his life experiences, although from the information he was able to provide, it appeared that he had been the victim of modern-day slavery and was forced to work in exchange for food and accommodation until he was no longer deemed of use.

SIFA Fireside's Homeless Intervention Team (HIT) were able to establish that he had actually been granted pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and that he was lawfully a resident in the UK.

HIT staff worked with Birmingham City Council's Housing Options team to secure Mahmood emergency accommodation pending the development of a long-term support plan to get him off the streets.

The team made a referral on his behalf to Adult Social Care, who identified that he has care needs and that he does not have the capacity to make informed decisions. We also worked with the Italian Consulate to secure him a replacement passport to help him make this application, his original passport having been stolen by the individual exploiting him.

Funding for an assisted living placement has been secured, and Mahmood is now free from the threat of further abuse and exploitation whilst in receipt of the support and care he needs.





# Together, we enable recovery from homelessness

Our Recovery services continued to support people to move away from services and develop the skills and networks to flourish and develop relationships in their communities. We continued to provide art, music and theatre therapy groups throughout the year to improve mental health and wellbeing, as well as increasing communication and confidence building.



The Social Networks programme focused on the barriers that clients faced in accessing and interacting with social community groups, specifically with regards to lack of trust, motivation, activity limitations, unemployment, technology, wellbeing and stigma. A total of 72 clients were supported between June 2023 and March 2024.

SIFA Fireside’s Mental Health Navigator supported nearly 50 clients to access the health care and treatment they needed for their mental wellbeing. This work included liaising with primary and secondary mental health teams across Birmingham to improve access to care and treatment for the homeless community, as well as tailored advice, signposting, and psycho-educational interventions for clients experiencing low-level mental health concerns.

The Peer Mentor role continued to directly support Irish clients and those of Irish descent with practical issues such as benefits applications, registering with a GP and applying for ID.

# Harry’s story

“Harry” presented as a thirty-year-old adult male in stable accommodation struggling with anxiety and depression. He started working with our Mental Health avigator, opening up about his feelings of intense emotional distress. He frequently didn’t leave the house and worried about ‘losing it’.

Harry had received support from mental health care teams previously, but had felt they hadn’t helped him, and at one stage had been told his case was closed as his ‘needs were too high’. In spite of significant trauma during his childhood, in which he was moved across the country in a number of different care placements, as well as multiple bereavements in his close family, Harry had never had any kind of therapy or counselling support.

The Mental Health Navigator supported Harry, who scored very highly on the K-10 assessment (an assessment used to see levels of emotional distress), at first through low-level supportive engagements to understand Harry’s current lifestyle and wellbeing. These engagements built trust and rapport with the worker, and the MHN and Harry together worked on a plan for improving his mental health.

Harry was referred into a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and was prescribed new medication and referred for psychological support. The MHN attended the initial meetings with Harry, who was nervous of returning to medical settings. He was given a diagnosis, and a treatment plan.

He continued to work with SIFA Fireside’s MHN for psycho-educational interventions, where a trauma-informed approach was used to bring compassionate attention to Harry’s triggers and coping strategies developed in childhood to get through a number of highly challenging situations. Harry’s self-awareness improved significantly, and his level of emotional distress reduced greatly. Harry left the MHN service when he felt more secure in his coping strategies, reporting increased resilience, and much improved wellbeing. He continued to engage with his secondary mental health team without further support from the MHN and six months later maintains his improved wellbeing.



## Together, we work dynamically

Over the course of the year we have identified that areas of investment and resource need to be focused on Trusts and Grants opportunities. With that said, a more structured approach to prospect research and processes has been implemented, utilising staff from the wider organisation as well as volunteers.

The team have also employed a tracking system/pipeline to monitor unrestricted income against our targets to ensure a more strategic approach. This system has seen 16 grant applications submitted during this period along with shared learning to increase effective approaches.

Since the beginning of April 2023, the volunteering programme has adapted to the changes that have accompanied the remodel, ensuring that the infrastructure is in place to support service delivery across the organisation as a whole.

We also launched our Homelessness Doesn't Take a Holiday campaign, with pro-bono support given to us by One Black Bear and Ocean Outdoor. The campaign saw digital billboards used throughout Birmingham and national attention on social media from comedian Joe Lycett.

We also opened the SIFA Fireside and Friends shop, through a kind pro-bono offer from the Zellig Building. This shop sold vintage clothes which we collected via a clothing drive, and we also sold products from our partners, Draw My City, Punks n' Chancers and Positively Birmingham Walking Tours, with proceeds going to SIFA Fireside.

January saw the return of the Belly Laughs comedy and food festival with 26 independent venues hosting events all across Birmingham.

In collaboration with Grain Projects, we successfully ran a Crowdfunder to raise money to design and print the Construct photography book featuring self-assisted portraits of our clients.

## What we achieved

We successfully secured the following grants:

- ♥ **Oak Foundation** — **£578,032** of Strategic and operational development funding
- ♥ **National Lottery** — Cost of Living: **£75,000** of Support Centre funding/Homeless Intervention Team funding
- ♥ **Zurich Community Trust** — **£25,000** of Support Centre/Homeless Intervention Team funding
- ♥ **Garfield Weston Foundation** — **£20,000** of Support Centre/Homeless Intervention Team funding

- ♥ **Birmingham City Council** — **£5,000** for food costs from the Winter Food Aid Fund
- ♥ **Goodenough Charitable Trust** — **£1,000** of unrestricted funding
- ♥ **SIFA Fireside** reached over **half a million** people on social media.
- ♥ **The SIFA Fireside website** attracted **75,000 views** which was a **20.4 % increase** on the previous period.
- ♥ We achieved press coverage in **I Choose Birmingham**, **BBC Online**, **Midlands Today** and **Free Radio** amongst others.
- ♥ During this period, **132 volunteers** have donated an average of **660 hours** per month, totalling **7,920 hours**.
- ♥ Similarly, we have welcomed an average of **60 corporates** per month, totalling **3,600 hours** donated during this period.

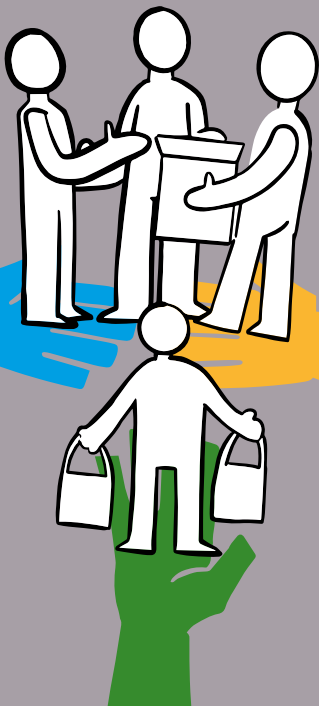




# Together, we look to the future

During 2024/25, our focus will be to deliver to our new three-year strategy and refreshed vision and mission. We will prioritise the delivery of services that prevent homelessness and rough sleeping in Birmingham.

Data collection and analysis will continue to be key to both improving and demonstrating our impact and we will use our learning to challenge and address the systemic causes, and the effects of homelessness in collaboration with our partners. We will regularly review our performance against our strategic aims in collaboration with all SIFA Fireside stakeholders.



# Financial summary

In summary, our total income of **£1,546,664** (2023: £1,569,789) was applied to fund total expenditure of **£1,406,756** (2023: £1,667,277) which resulted in a surplus for the year of **£139,908** (2023: deficit of £97,488).

Of this **£1,300,424** (2023: £1,501,905) was expended in furtherance of our charitable activities meaning that out of every **£1** given to the charity, **90p** is used in furtherance of our charitable objectives.





# SIFA fireside

SIFA Fireside  
48-52 Allcock Street  
Digbeth, Deritend  
Birmingham B9 4DY

✕ [f](#) [@](#) [in](#) [SIFA Fireside](#)

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Illustrations:  
Design & art direction:

Jim Rogers at [BooYeah.com](#)  
[OmarBudeiri.com](#) & [iamsteve.uk](#)