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London Community Human Rights Programme

Impact report for year 1 of the programme



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"We would like to share that the trainings and resources offered by BIHR and Just Fair have been incredibly helpful so far. It is especially useful to be able to discuss concrete human rights concerns with experts, and to receive case studies of how other groups have designed and delivered similar programmes in the past."

– Southall Community Alliance

Executive Summary

This report covers Year 1 of the four year partnership of the London Community Human Rights Programme (LCHRP), funded by City Bridge Foundation and The Baring Foundation (following on from the initial development year 2023–2024). This report focuses on the work of the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), one of the programme's development partners. The four-year partnership programme runs from 2024 to 2028.

This report draws heavily on direct qualitative feedback from community groups and their members who BIHR has provided human rights development support to this year, including through events, workshops, and resource co-production. We have also included a summary of key quantitative data gathered before and after various delivery supports to capture the measurable changes in human rights knowledge, capacity, confidence and action. Both demonstrate the programme's impact.

Year 1 has been a strong foundation for embedding human rights-based approaches in the work of London community groups. Our goal was to build initial knowledge, awareness, and confidence in using the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). This aim was not only met but exceeded. Community groups moved beyond learning into practical application, using the HRA to influence systems, advocate for change, and empower their communities.

The results are clear: the HRA is becoming an active tool for community-led change, informing casework, shaping strategy, and strengthening engagement with public services. This report evidences both the outcomes and the growing confidence.

Key highlights include:

- Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO) used the HRA to successfully challenge discriminatory school admissions policies and has embedded human rights into onboarding and service delivery.
- Southall Community Alliance (SCA) appointed a dedicated Human Rights Officer, started to use human rights to bring together the community to review and challenge local plans to cut children's centres, launched a local human rights network, and integrated human rights into community forums and Parliamentary engagement.
- Community Plan for Holloway (CP4H) and Unfold, supported through Residency Days, strengthened internal frameworks and empowered young people and advisory groups through rights-based approaches.

Programme Background

In 2024, City Bridge Foundation and The Baring Foundation jointly funded the five-year London Community Human Rights Programme (LCHRP), designed to support community and voluntary groups across London to adopt and embed human rights-based approaches in their work. The Baring Foundation administers the grants, while the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) and Just Fair were appointed as development partners to deliver human rights support.

Each programme year runs from 1 July to 30 June. The initial year — ‘Year 0’ — offered general support across London to understand community need, to build awareness of the potential for change using human rights approaches and reach out to potential partners. Activities included free workshops, events, and resources, with an emphasis on accessibility and relevance, and recognising the extreme fatigue and growing demands placed on London’s vibrant community sector. This laid the groundwork for the four core delivery years (Years 1–4), which focus on deeper, long-term support for four selected community groups. Following an open and accessible application process, four organisations were selected:

- Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO)
- Community Plan for Holloway (CP4H)
- Southall Community Alliance (SCA)
- Unfold

Human Rights Development Model

BIHR primarily works with IRMO and SCA, while Just Fair supports CP4H and Unfold. Each development partner provides sustained, tailored support to help these groups embed human rights approaches into their work. This is complimented by a residency model so each development partner also provides support to those they are not primarily working with, in addition to specific work bringing all partners together for support, reflecting and planning.

The programme follows a four-year model. Year 1 focused on learning, building knowledge and confidence in using the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). Year 2 will build on this knowledge and confidence by supporting community groups to develop their own internal human rights-based approaches. In Year 3, community groups will have embedded human rights-based approaches across their work. By Year 4, the goal is for each group to use these embedded human rights processes to support their wider communities in using human rights to create positive social change. **This report reflects on the impact of Year 1 and the progress made during this initial learning phase.**

The impact of BIHR's Involvement

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The aims of the first year of LCHRP focused on learning was to:

- upskill each of the community groups with a good understanding and confidence of the HRA;
- enable community partners to identify how the HRA protections are relevant to their work, mapping the rights to the issues faced by their communities and where the duties on public bodies can be leveraged
- support them to identify how they can embed the HRA protections it into their organisation going forward, exploring both their internal workings (the how) and their activities such as casework, community support, etc. (the what).

Achieving this aim required strong and continuous co-production and collaboration with the community groups to understand their needs, and their style of working. This section of the report will breakdown BIHR's involvement in the programme and how we've achieved these aims.

Summary of key outcomes:

IRMO



- Embedded human rights training into onboarding for all new staff and volunteers.
- Used HRA language to successfully challenge discriminatory school admissions policies.
- Delivered its first human rights workshops in Spanish, improving access for their community.

SCA



- Staff and trustees have gained a strong understanding of the HRA and how to apply it in their work.
- Launched a local human rights network to foster collective learning and advocacy.
- Community forums now include a human rights element to increase awareness and confidence.
- Action to unite local residents to use the HRA to challenge proposed children's centre closures.

Residency Days



- CP4H saw increased youth engagement after learning about the HRA, with young people using rights-based approaches in local research.
- Unfold has started embedding human rights into internal policies, with staff and volunteers applying these principles to their casework.

Summary of key quantative data:

While each group's journey has been unique, the overarching goal of Year 1 was to introduce and upskill all four organisations in the Human Rights Act (HRA), building their confidence to use it in their work and start embedding human rights-based approaches into existing services. We're pleased to report that the quantitative data collected with our primary partners – IRMO and SCA – throughout the year already shows a clear and encouraging increase in both knowledge and confidence in using the HRA.

IRMO

Data from staff and volunteers:

- **Knowledge of the HRA increased from 3.1/5 to 3.6/5.**
- **Appetite to continue building upon this knowledge was very high, with 87% of participants sharing they were supportive of the HRA.**

"They [BIHR] shared a lot of knowledge and firsthand experience, so it was easier to understand how Human Rights work in practice. They also communicated everything clearly and the training was very dynamic and relevant. It was excellent."

SCA

Data from staff and trustees:

- **Knowledge of the HRA increased from 2.7/5 to 4/5.**
- **Baseline data showed 67% felt conflicted or confused, or undecided or unsure about the HRA; this rose to 100% feeling supportive of the HRA.**

"The combination of general and tailored training that SCA has received from BIHR and Just Fair has empowered SCA staff to embed a human-rights-based approach in our everyday work."

NOTE: work on the programme support was postponed due to the London Summer 2024 riots. Our programme partners and their communities were directly impacted by these; we agreed to shift our timelines and reschedule work, offering support including resources and signposting for responding to large trauma events.

Change achieved with IRMO



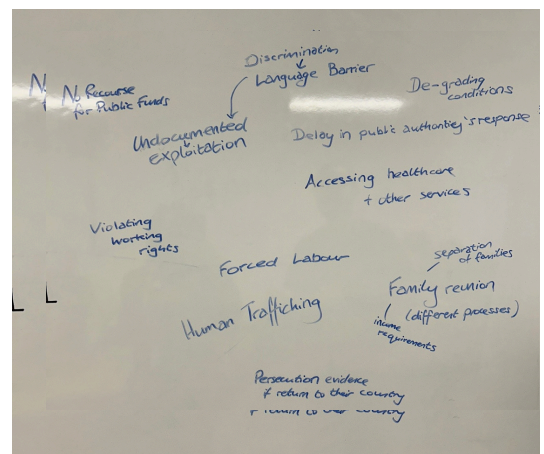
Developing knowing and sharing strategies for using the HRA

Following development work with the IRMO Leads, programme support launched with tailored human rights training for 20+ staff and volunteers across key operations including immigration, education, housing, welfare, and young people. This included an introduction to the Human Rights Act, particularly the duties on public bodies IRMO interacts with locally and exploring specific case studies and tools to start identifying how to build use of HRA into IMRO's work. Participants shared that **the workshops helped them to see the relevance of human rights in their work, and they were excited to build on this knowledge.** This was an important first step as it motivated them to explore what a human rights approach might look like. One participant shared that:

"Offering targeted support and showcasing effective strategies for tackling common challenges will significantly benefit us all. While this is merely the starting point, it's crucial that we quickly implement this knowledge to foster greater awareness in the public sector and society as a whole. Together, we can drive meaningful change and progress."

Making the HRA Relevant to IRMO's work

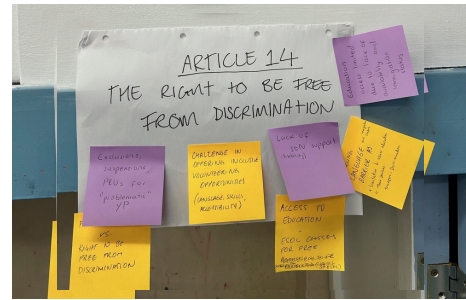
Next, team-specific support was provided to IRMO's immigration, housing, welfare, health, and education teams. We mapped key human rights in the HRA to challenges IRMO's community are facing, drawing on the most prevalent issues and systems failures IMRO and their communities face. Through mapping we started to identify key areas where our support can enable them to use human rights to overcome these. **Participants shared how they felt that the HRA legal framework could support them:**



"reporting [human trafficking and modern slavery cases] to the police or local authorities using a Human Rights perspective would be very useful."

"human rights-based approaches could "lead to a more effective approach in the public sector."

This set vital groundwork for year 1 in that **IRMO was already identifying how they could use HRA as a practical tool in their work and fostering a real drive to implement human rights-based approaches.** We will build on this in year 2 with training and tools to use human rights in the context of these specific issues.



IMMEDIATE REAL WORLD CHANGE: Challenging Discrimination in Schools

The realisation in the mapping sessions of the relevance and practical use of the Human Rights Act in IRMO's work was then translated into a real-world impact, when **IRMO used human rights law, specifically the right to education under Article 2, Protocol 1 of the HRA, to challenge the inclusion of questions about immigration status on school enrolment forms.** State schools must admit children regardless of their nationality or immigration status, yet local schools were including questions about this in admissions. The confidence to identify the human rights issues here and confidently use the HRA to challenge local policies, resulted in two local authorities changing their practice. Not only is this a clear sign of real-world positive impact from using human rights-based approaches, but it also acts as **a testament to the importance of the HRA as a practical tool.**

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: Building Confidence Through Human Rights Resources

Across IRMO an overwhelming, need for practical tools was identified to further embed human rights. Key to this is useable resources that include fact sheets, case studies, practical tools and templates: **"Utilising written materials and templates can significantly enhance our approach, making it both more effective and efficient."** As IRMO shared: **"Already, we have seen progress in increasing IRMO staff and volunteers' confidence and knowledge of human rights principles.** The introduction of a structured training framework and resource development will further embed these approaches into our services and advocacy efforts."

We have developed a joint internal human rights resource that provides practical tools and guidance to staff and volunteers, enhancing their knowledge of and confidence to use. The guide covers key rights relevant to IRMO's work, explains legal duties, and includes letter templates to support casework. This runs alongside other co-developed tools to onboard staff and volunteers, to ensure human rights capacity building start the moment people join and ongoing support is provided.

"All staff received training on the Human Rights Act, building confidence to use it in casework and advocacy for our education, housing, welfare, health and safeguarding cases."

This is a significant development within the first year as it means that human rights is now a key part of all IRMO's services going forward.

IRMO has already reported that they “have begun referencing human rights frameworks in [their] casework” and have said that using human rights in their work has already started “strengthening [their] advocacy approach”. Whilst they are clear this is early days of implementation, **referencing human rights language in their work is empowering**, with community members feeling hopeful and having a “clear interest” about having the legal backing of the HRA when trying to navigate public services. We will build on this in year 2 with further sustainable knowledge and skills development.

IRMO has also started to integrate human rights across their governance and operational systems, sharing that **“we have developed internal workflows” to align human rights approaches “across IRMO’s five areas, with each team developing its own work plan, logic framework, and monitoring and evaluation approach.”** This is setting up the path for “embedding human rights-based thinking across the organisation in a sustainable way” and to **“ensure that human rights are integrated in a way that reflects each team’s specific focus and needs.”** The result will be that, at every level of IRMO, members of the community will be receiving support that is informed by human rights-based approaches in a meaningful way.

IRMO has also **“begun referencing the Human Rights Act in our workshops and sessions”** and they have created their own human rights training materials in Spanish. For World Refugee Day 2025, **IRMO delivered their first human rights training workshop to staff and community members in Spanish.** We supported this, including reviewing training materials and joining on the day, supporting with answer questions and checking for accuracy. **This was a big first step as IRMO now has the confidence to continue delivering human rights workshops to their communities.** Participants shared:

“Loved it! The case studies are key. I think the balance is very good, and the lines of action are key so that attendees leave with something they can do, rather than something abstract.”

“The workshop was very useful and informative, with lots of information that can be used on a daily basis.”

IRMO’s confidence to support people with human rights has increased and have now “embedded human rights into [their] workshops with the community and into [their] community organising programme”. **Human rights has now become a key part of every area of IRMO’s work, internally and externally.**

To further ensure accessibility, we supported IRMO in translating materials for our cross-community summer human rights event, addressing language barriers for the predominantly Spanish-speaking community. This ensured our event empowered community members, ensuring they receive practical human rights information and are supported to participant. **In year two, we aim to increase the use of Spanish translations for resources and workshops.**

LOOKING AHEAD: Building on Year 1's Impact

We will be working with IRMO to build on these outcomes in year 2. Our key aim will be **"co-producing more tools with community members, embedding human rights more consistently across all service areas, and supporting more people to use rights-based arguments in their own advocacy."**

Change achieved with SCA



Informing a Culture of Respect for Human Rights

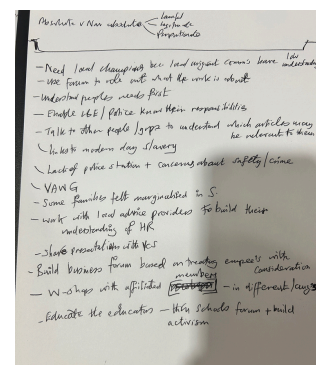
We started programme support with **tailored introductory human rights training with SCA staff members and trustees**, laying the groundwork for understanding the relevance and potential use of human rights in their community. Next, we facilitated mapping to identify key issues in Southall and connect them to human rights, exploring initial ideas for how to address these challenges using the HRA framework. Working with the Board and staff in an alliance-structured organisation with trustees embedded in the local community, was important. As a result SCA, from leadership through to staff, now has a strong foundational knowledge of the HRA to **help to inform an overall culture of human rights across SCA's work.**

This has positioned human rights at the forefront of tackling issues in their community: **"helps prioritise, facing multiple issues on many fronts in the community, understanding where HRA rights and duties can and can't be used helping map to the issues that need tackling."**



A proactive powerful language for change

Our initial work helped staff to see the value of using the HRA in their work, where there were originally trepidations: **the HRA is "Very relevant to the lives of our diverse communities"**. This is in sharp contrast to baseline data which showed human rights law was "usually negative" or "not broad enough" to capture the diverse range of issues in Southall.



SCA have also pointed to the impact the programme has had on the language they use in their work. They said it's a journey to build knowledge and confidence on using HRA, but **the progress they have made so far has been “transformative”, as HRA legal language takes what are often emotive or moral complaints and transforms them into legally backed up issues** about how local authorities use their power and make decisions in Southall.

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: Dedicated Staff Resource

We supported SCA to hire a dedicated Human Rights Officer responsible for delivering their human rights project. **We onboarded their HRO with a programme of intensive human rights training workshops and one-to-one support.** We have provided ongoing human rights mentoring support to help drive SCA's work. **Appointing a dedicated Human Rights Officer has enabled SCA to maintain a clear focus on implementing human rights, with a focal point in the organisation who is consistently finding ways to approach their objectives using a human rights framework.** In Year 2, we will be working to increase the confidence of the Human Rights Officer by providing 1-to-1 peer support on delivering human rights training.

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: HRA Community Capacity Building

Community capacity-building is a key way SCA works. To start the integration of the HRA into this work our CEO Sanchita was invited to deliver a human rights session to new staff, trustees, and residents at their monthly Community Forum, attended by 30 community members. This set foundations for sharing issues faced by the community and how to link these to the HRA and discuss strategies for action in real time **to challenge decisions made in the local area that may not be rights respecting. Now that the appetite has grown, SCA has started to include sections on Human Rights in all their community forums directly connecting community concerns to human rights and actions to use the law to address these.** More broadly, **SCA is now integrating the language of human rights law at their outreach and events:**

- International Women's Day event on 8 March included a human rights information table for residents and a human rights in a panel discussion on "Pushback Against Women's Rights Globally and Locally".
- Street events including a Human Rights Corner alongside BIHR where 30 community members came to discuss local human rights concerns.
- A Southall community members survey to capture local human rights issues

SCA is already building human rights awareness across the community and exploring using the HRA to empower action to address concerns.

IMMEDIATE REAL WORLD CHANGE: Challenge Closure of Children's Centre

We supported SCA to use the HRA in action to oppose the proposed closure of local children's centres. SCA shared that **using the HRA empowered to community to come together and speak up**. Members of SCA and their community have attended meetings, forums and events to raise human rights issues in relation to the proposed closures. **For example, SCA met with their local MP to raise the human rights concerns relevant to the planned closures.** Using human rights when interacting with public services and MPs is a key area that will be built on throughout Year 2 but primarily in Year 3.

Whilst plans to close children's centres are going ahead, SCA have said that there is still scope to use HRA as the legal framework to challenge the implementation of the cuts to services, **and that the community feels more energised to do so with the backing of the HRA legal framework.**

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: Using the HRA to Bring Diverse Communities Together

We have worked alongside SCA to establish the Southall Human Rights Network, which brings together Young Ealing Foundation, Asian Community Concern and Indian Workers' Association GB with more hoping to join in the future. **The HRA provides a universal legal framework that will bring communities together.** Working together we will develop a simultaneously broad and specific approach to the multifaceted human rights concerns that Southall residents face. BIHR will focus on providing support and resources to the SCA Network, **enabling strategic use of the HRA for change across a range of community concerns.**

IMMEDIATE REAL WORLD CHANGE: Engaging with the local MP and ensuring young people are politically engaged

SCA is leveraging the human rights programme to engage with local MPs, in addition to the local decision-makers. They supported **15 students to go to Parliament, attending a workshop on human rights, and using newfound knowledge to raise questions about local human rights issues to Deirdre Costigan (MP for Southall Broadway).** The MP went to mention SCA's human rights advocacy work in a Parliamentary question regarding the Deprivation of Citizenship Orders Bill. Not only does this show the impact of the programme on increasing human rights knowledge and use within the community, but it also shows SCA's increased confidence to use this in advocacy with parliamentarians. SCA is planning more visits to Parliament for students in Southall, during which students will be empowered to advocate for their interests using human rights concepts.

Looking Ahead: Building on Year 1's Impact

We plan to develop and evolve the knowledge, confidence and skills in using the HRA in Year 2. A key element of this will be through supporting with SCA's Human Rights Network, providing human rights tools, workshops and practical frameworks for action.

Residency Support



Community Plan for Holloway (CP4H) CP4H advocates to ensure that a new building development on the site of the now closed HMP Holloway includes community spaces and affordable housing. Through the Human Rights Programme they are enabling young people to be heard and advocate.

IMMEDIATE REAL WORLD CHANGE: Empowering Young People

In addition to the support Just Fair provides, BIHR developed and deliver human rights training to CP4H youth-led research project, focused on how the Human Rights Act (HRA) gives young people a legal right to have a say in decisions that affect them, particularly large scale developments in their community. We introduced the basics of the HRA, who has rights, and which public bodies have legal duties to uphold them, drawing on the right to be free from discrimination (**Article 14**) including on the basis of age and the right to participate in decisions about your life and community (**Article 8**). Exploring these rights in context, young people gained a deeper understanding of how human rights apply to their everyday experiences, and how they can use them to advocate for their communities. Next we explored what the youth group most want to see in the Holloway Prison development, and **we mapped these to human rights so they could see how they can use the language of human rights law when interacting with public services to have their voices heard**. CP4H shared how **this support had a “transformative impact on the way we approach the work with, and empowerment of young people”**. Previously, young people had not felt involved with what happens locally and shaping their community. However, **learning about human rights has seen a real shift in the young people. They are speaking up and have since devised and carried out local research with the community from a position of power and positivity, that this is about rights we all share and putting them in action.**

IMMEDIATE REAL WORLD CHANGE: Disrupting Power Dynamics

For CP4H this human rights support has changed the way they approach decision-makers and public authorities, who they often feel are only doing the bare minimum. **They said that learning about human rights changes that, as they have since started using HRA legal language in their interactions which makes it harder for the local authority to ignore them and gives much more power to people.**



We are working with **Unfold** to create human rights training materials that they can then use internally to **provide human rights training to all new staff and volunteers, to integrate into the mentoring support they provide.** We're investing time across our residency support in year 1 and into year 2 to build a comprehensive package with a right-based process to achieve this.

IMMEDIATE REAL WORLD CHANGE: Transformative Shift to Human Rights Language

The initial phase of support includes bespoke human rights trainings to Unfold's Women's Advisory Council (WAC) and Youth Advisory Council (YAC), shaped by the input of WAC and YAC on relevant issues and concerns they want to address. Unfold has seen an impact already based on the human rights sessions they have received across year 1. They have observed an explicit shift towards using human rights language and how that informs actions, and they have felt empowered by a universal and common language which is important when supporting people across diverse backgrounds, and those who have been marginalised by public bodies. Unfold also shared how this shift has extended to reframing how they think about the things that are important to the people support, for example the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions is not just a minor issue. This shifts the conversation to frame what someone's needs are based on what they have a legal right to and how can this be upheld.

FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: Implementing HRA capacity

The work is also informing Unfold's internal policies, looking at how they work, and the impact of using human rights on their own strategy, moving to enable their staff and volunteers to use human rights to participate, be heard and inform what the organisation is doing. Across this year and into year 2 BIHR is complimenting Just Fair's support by co-developing an internal sustainable human rights training package with Unfold so that future staff and volunteers can start their work on the foundation of a human rights-based approach. This will support Unfold in embedding human rights across their internal systems and using them to empower the people they work with.

BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER: HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT

To mark the end of Year 1, we hosted a free community, attended by over 50 people from across London, including representatives from all four LCHRP community groups. The day featured a two-and-a-half-hour human rights workshop introducing the Human Rights Act (HRA), key rights it protects, and how these apply in real-life situations. This was followed by a panel discussion featuring IRMO, SCA, CP4H, and Unfold, who shared how they are using human rights in their work, the challenges they've faced, and how they've overcome them. Panel members offered valuable insights, as detailed across this report, from the empowering role of the HRA in giving communities a legal voice, to practical successes in rights-based advocacy. Two key themes emerged from all the partners:

- The transformative potential of human rights approaches, and focused on BIHR's support the Human Rights Act, is huge. The shift in language is empowering, but it's also about redressing power imbalances when faced with local decision-makers who too often ignore or marginalise people, being able to confidently draw on the law really changes the conversation, the action and the result.
- This takes time and resource; the real benefit of this multi-year programme is providing the time and space to sustainably develop the knowledge and skills community groups, and communities themselves, need to really be able to take that transformative potential and turn it into change.

A creative session enabled attendees to practice HHRA letter-writing to raise their concerns with public authorities and to design posters about their rights. This gave people tangible tools for applying human rights in their daily lives and encouraged them to share this knowledge within their own communities.



- All 4 community partners shared that interest in the event had been high, and their members left with a deeper understanding of human rights and a renewed sense of empowerment to challenge rights-infringing decisions.
- **100% of those who completed the survey said the event made them feel more positive about the HRA**
- **100% said they now felt the HRA is “very important or relevant” to their life and or work.**

This event was an important step in moving into year 2, showing there is **a wide interest amongst communities in learning more about human rights and how they can use them**. This lays the groundwork for us expanding human rights work beyond the internal systems of the community groups, and out into their wider communities which will be the aim for the following years of the programme.

Looking Ahead

Year 1 focused on learning but that learning will continue throughout the programme. As confidence grows, community groups will not only use human rights in their own work but also support others to do the same.

In Year 2, the focus shifts to deeper embedding. We'll work to ensure all staff and volunteers across the groups have a strong, practical understanding of the HRA and are using it consistently in their services. The aim is for human rights to become second nature in how organisations think, act, and advocate. We'll support this by delivering more tailored workshops and resources, and by helping groups develop and deliver their own human rights materials.

Conclusion and Next Steps

In the first year of the LCHRP, we made significant progress toward our goal of laying the groundwork for human rights-based working. Community groups have begun embedding human rights language and approaches into their services, using the Human Rights Act (HRA) to bring people together, strengthen advocacy, and empower diverse groups.

A key strength of this programme is its long-term design. Unlike shorter projects, the four-year timeframe gives space for deep relationship-building, shared learning, and sustainable change. Already, groups are showing greater confidence in using the HRA and developing a clear, long-term vision for embedding human rights. One of the most exciting developments is seeing groups begin to independently create and deliver their own human rights training and materials, including in multiple languages. This shift signals that rights-based practice is taking root and growing from within.

We are deeply grateful to the City Bridge Foundation and The Baring Foundation for investing in this rare but vital model of consistent, in-depth support. The energy, creativity, and commitment of the four community groups have already led to powerful impact, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the years ahead.

