

IMPACT REPORT 2019

Special 10th Anniversary Edition

Action Foundation's work is inspiring, exciting and greatly needed. Their approach is fully rooted in the conviction that every person matters, is to be valued and treated with dignity.

Rt Rev Paul Butler, The Bishop of Durham at the Action Foundation
Charity Dinner 14th June 2019



INCLUDING:

- New staff & trustees
- Overview of the year
- Celebrating our journey
- The year in numbers
- Project updates
- Evaluation of services
- Beneficiaries' stories
- Financial review

Overview of The Year

by Julian Prior, CEO

It's been a highly significant year for Action Foundation as we celebrate our 10th Anniversary as a charitable organisation, reflect on our growth and develop our services to meet the increasing needs we are trying to address.

At the beginning of the year we launched a three-year strategy to ensure we provide the maximum support we can for asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants to successfully integrate to life in the North East, and lead more independent and resilient lives. Over the next three years we aim to; extend our reach, develop our

effectiveness, build our sustainability and increase our influence.

I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who makes this important work possible. Action Foundation is very grateful for the support of a dedicated team of hard-working, skilled and compassionate staff, volunteers, hosts, landlords, funders and many other partners and supporters. The following is a flavour of some of our key developments in the last year. If you would like us to keep you updated more often, then please do visit our website and sign up for our monthly email newsletter, or give us a like on facebook.



▲ *Julian, Lesley and Tolosa welcome one of our hosts and Shane Claiborne at an event to celebrate World Refugee Day.*

In January we secured a contract with the Home Office to deliver a two year 'alternative to detention' pilot

called Action Access. The project works with female asylum seekers to provide housing and support to women who are currently detained at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, or who would otherwise be sent there.

We are also working closely with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) on this exciting project that has the potential to significantly influence policy and practice in the future by supporting vulnerable asylum seekers to avoid destitution and resolve their immigration status in the UK (For more info see pages 11 & 12).

In February we launched our 'Gift of Words' appeal which aimed to raise £75,000 a year to ensure that we could keep running our Action Language service into 2019/20 after our National Lottery grant funding came to an end. By the end of March 2019, we'd raised £30,000, and after our fabulous charity dinner dance in June 2019, we reached our target to ensure that Action Language can run for another academic year until July 2020. The challenge is now on to raise it all over again for next year or find a longer-term solution to funding this vital work. (See pages 21 & 22 for more details on our finances).



In April we started our InterAction weekly Drop-ins at two venues in Newcastle: CastleGate in the City centre and at the West End library. The sessions offer beneficiaries - many of whom have recently arrived in Tyneside - the chance to socialise, learn more about local amenities. They can also access a range of local services to become more orientated and connected to support and other people in the area to prevent social isolation. This project is part of Refugee Action's Early Action Partnership that aims to pilot ways of preventing crises through early intervention.



I am proud to be supporting Action Foundation who work tirelessly to provide hope for some of the most vulnerable people in the City.

Lord Mayor of Newcastle,
Councillor David Down,
(2018/19)



In June we were hugely honoured to be chosen as one of two local charities supported by the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Councillor David Down during his year in office 2018/19. We are so grateful for the many ways that he raised our profile and money for our work over the year.



We were thrilled to welcome visits from a number of dignitaries and key supporters of our work this year, including Chi Onwurah (pictured above), MP for Newcastle Central; the Rev. Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham; Maurice Wren, CEO Refugee Council; and senior officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Home Office and UNHCR.

The Year in Numbers



1433 refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants have been helped through our supported housing projects and English language classes



action
LANGUAGE
(all migrants – see below)



action
LETTING
(refugees only)



action
HOUSING
(asylum seekers with NRPF*)



action
HOSTING
(asylum seekers with NRPF*)



Over the last two years of the LET pilot project

*No Recourse to Public Funds.

Note: Action Access and InterAction projects do not have a full year's figures so have not been included.



90 Different Nationalities



22 Staff Employed



212 Volunteers
(estimated value of £174,904)



“

Whilst I feel that my status in the UK is in limbo, my life is continuing to move ahead with new opportunities, friendships and hope.

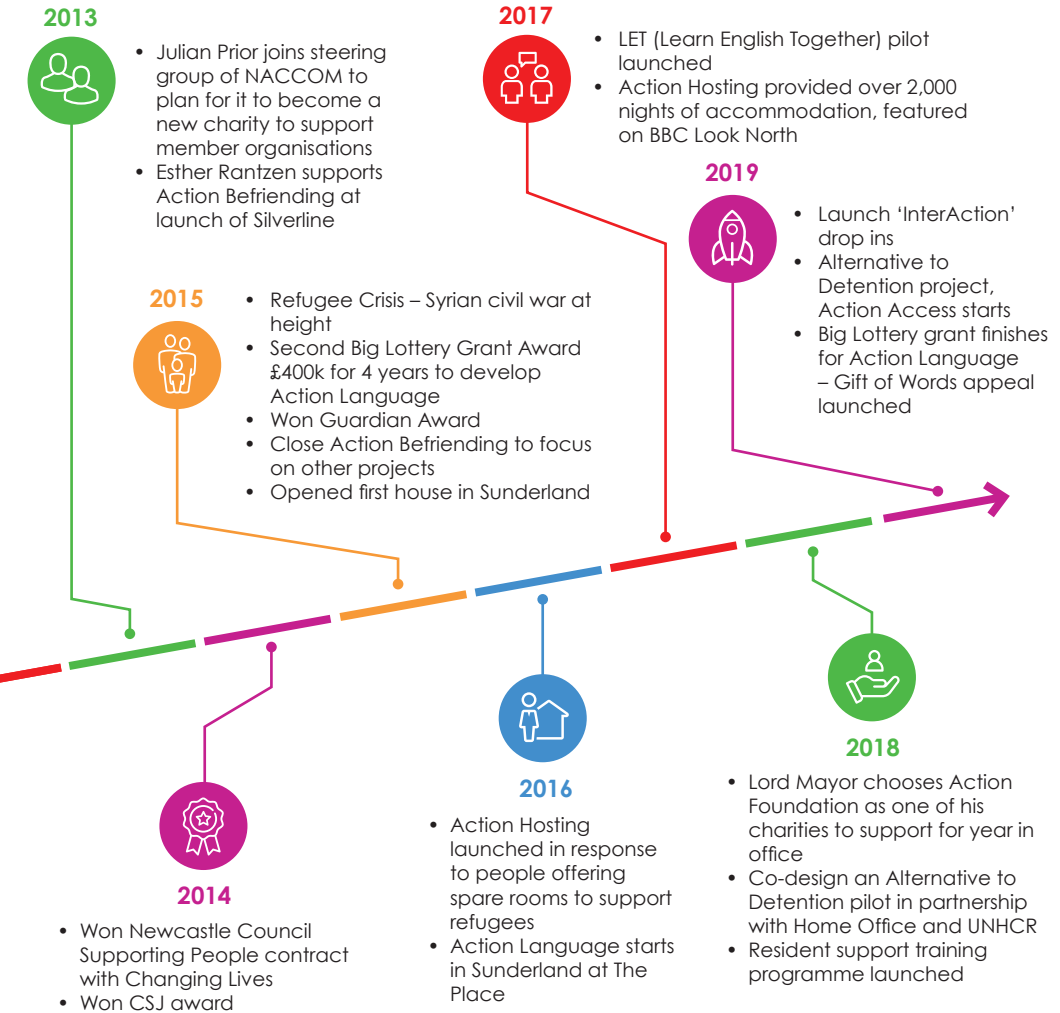
Action Foundation volunteer & beneficiary

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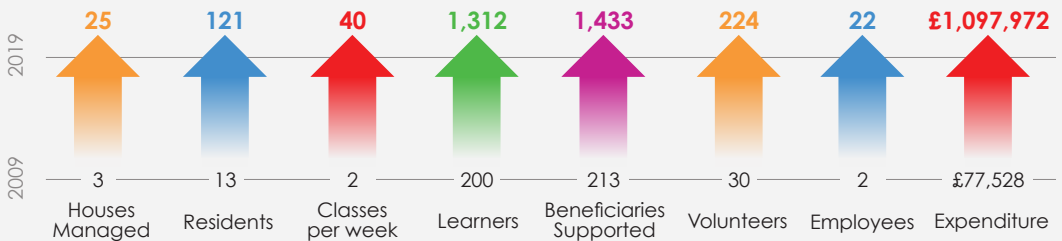
Celebrating Our Journey 2005 – 2019

Below are a few key highlights from each of the last 15 years.





The last 10 years growth:



Action Letting provides supported accommodation to single adult refugees at risk of homelessness during their rapid transition to mainstream housing after being granted the right to stay in the UK. We currently manage 15 properties in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland on behalf of private landlords.

Residents receive weekly support to access local services such as the bank or GP and to enrol on education or training courses. We help residents to integrate, increase their employability, improve their financial stability and increase their independence to enable them to move on positively from our support.

Family Reunion

Kochar became a resident with Action Letting in March 2019. His wife and two children were living in Iran but he hoped they would join him in the coming months. He worked with the Red Cross to secure visas for his family.

The family reunion process can be complex and disjointed, especially when it comes to liaising with the local council, so support workers from Action Foundation worked closely with Kochar to make sure any potential issues were addressed.



His family finally touched down at Newcastle Airport in June 2019 - an extremely emotional moment for everyone. However, there was still a lot of work to be done to make sure things ran smoothly for the family.

From making sure they had somewhere to stay, to transporting them from the airport, ensuring they had enough to eat and able to be in the right places at the right time for essential appointments – Action Foundation was there every step of the way.

Kochar and his family are now housed in temporary accommodation while they wait for something more permanent. Their youngest child has started school and his wife and eldest son have signed up for ESOL lessons with Newcastle College.

Resident Support Training Programme (RTSP)

Every Action Letting resident has a personal support plan which focuses on their immediate needs (e.g. how to open a bank account or register with a doctor), and their longer-term aspirations (e.g. employment, family re-union, and independent living). Each support plan is jointly reviewed by the resident and their Support Worker on a monthly basis.

Our RTSP forms part of the support planning and is introduced to our residents at the outset to provide appropriate pro-active, tailored training/support across a range of practical areas:

1. Introduction to Tenancy
2. Communal Living & Looking After Property
3. Life Skills & Independent Living
4. Pathways to Employment
5. Moving on from Action Foundation

So far 28 group sessions have taken place supported by 8 volunteers, benefitting 60 clients.



“ Before Action Foundation I was totally lost. From the moment they took care of me I didn't have to suffer anymore. ”

Action Letting resident

Action Housing provides supported accommodation to destitute asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds. Due to their immigration status this extremely vulnerable group are unable to work or receive any government support and are therefore entirely reliant on the help of charities or friends to survive.

We provide all residents with a private room in a shared house, travel passes to enable them to attend appointments and personalised practical and emotional support to help them access the services they need to be able to move on and resolve their immigration status.

In 2018/19...

- We provided supported accommodation to **19** destitute asylum seekers
- **14** residents engaged with legal support/made a fresh claim for asylum
- We provided bus tickets to the value of **£11,388.30** enabling Housing residents to attend appointments, English classes and volunteering placements.

We have a good working partnership with Westgate Baptist Church in the West End of Newcastle. They wanted to respond to the needs of failed asylum seekers, including those within their own fellowship, who were homeless and destitute.

This led to the congregation agreeing to pledge and collectively pay for a property close to their church that opened in March 2018, providing a home to three men. Action Foundation is supporting these men in trying to regularise their stay in the UK.

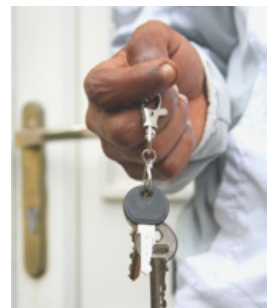
Our arrangement is governed by a management agreement and we meet regularly to discuss the well being and progress of clients, identifying together, additional support available through the church.

“

I feel comfortable because I know I have somewhere to go. For the past few years I have been running around from place to place. Now I feel safe.

Action Housing resident

”



Action Hosting matches volunteers (hosts) offering a spare room in their home with a destitute asylum seeker (guests) to provide short-term accommodation. All hosts are fully trained, and the thorough matching process means that placements are a positive experience for both hosts and guests. All guests are assigned a support worker ensuring access to legal support, while our co-ordinator provides on-going guidance and help to hosts.

In 2018/19...

- **1702 nights** of accommodation were provided to **10** destitute asylum seekers
- **22** different households hosted our guests
- **48** placements were made in homes
- **40%** of guests successfully moved on



We felt like we were offering something to someone who desperately needs it, but it's actually really easy to do. They just come and they're very independent, they don't want mothering or anything like that. They just want somewhere to be, a space of their own where they can work out what their next steps are.

Action Hosting, host



I don't know how to explain it, she took me in like her own. I've never enjoyed Christmas in this country, the atmosphere was so great. Through her I met so many people, the house was very warm as well. She treated me like her own, she made me feel at home.

Action Hosting, guest



On Monday 3rd December 2018 Immigration Minister, Caroline Nokes, announced that Action Foundation would be delivering a two-year pilot to provide an 'Alternative to Detention' for female asylum seekers. This project is in response to the Home Secretary's pledge in July 2018 to pilot a scheme to support vulnerable women in the community who are currently detained at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre, or who would otherwise be sent there. Working with up to 21 women at any one time, the project will provide housing and support and aims to improve voluntary engagement with the immigration system and access to legal support to resolve their immigration status.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has been actively engaged in discussions with Action Foundation and the Home Office about the design of Action Access, and are overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of this pilot and others that the Home Office are commissioning around the UK. Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor, UK Representative for the UNHCR, together with senior managers from the Home Office visited Action Foundation to get an insight into Action Access by meeting staff and clients on the pilot in May.

I want to commend Action Foundation for this fantastic pilot. This is a really ground-breaking project that we hope will make a huge difference in the life of people.

Rossella Pagliuchi-Lor, UNHCR





▲ Women enjoy a trip out to the coast

So far 11 women have been supported by Action Access and are visibly relieved to be out of detention and regaining their independence. Little things we take for granted like a good night's sleep have made a huge difference to these women – some commenting that that they're sleeping the best they have in months.

As part of the pastoral care Action Foundation offers, women have weekly meetings with their support

worker, as well as opportunities to meet up with other women from across the charity's projects to socialise, get advice and support.

“ They gave me a chance. Now I feel happy and cared for. I don't want to be dependent on other people too much, but there's someone there to ask for help if I need it. I love sitting with the other women when we get together – it makes me feel comfortable and relaxed. My support worker is so caring and she always gives me such motherly affection. ”

Action Access resident

In order to start addressing the significant gap in the availability of accredited legal advice for asylum seekers in the region, we've been working collaboratively with the North East Law Centre while our support workers study hard to get the relevant qualifications needed to be able to provide legal advice.



In February our support worker, Jen Willis, was awarded a Level 1 Certificate with distinction in Immigration and Asylum Protection accredited by the Office of the Information Services Commissioner (OISC) and is now working towards her Level 2 exam.

Action Language provides free community 'Skills for Life' English classes and employability courses in Sunderland and Newcastle to refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants unable to access this through mainstream education. Each free class is delivered by a qualified volunteer teacher supported by several volunteer assistants.

Classes focus on creating a social learning environment to equip learners with the knowledge, understanding and confidence to integrate, live independently and reach their potential. Many students tell us that we are one of the first support services they access when arriving in the city.

In 2018/19 we have...

- Enrolled **1,312 learners** (**172** increase from previous year)
- Provided **40 classes** per week across 6 ability levels
- Taught students from **90 different countries** of origin
- Been supported by over **200 volunteer** teachers and teaching assistants
- Increased our ESOL provision in Sunderland from **12 to 15 classes** per week, including **3 tailored support sessions**, and we are aiming to recruit more volunteers to increase this further



85% of learners

feel they are a valued member of the community as a result of attending classes



90% of learners

say they have made new friends at Action Language

“ I was like a person who is blind and lost in a city and he don't know anything, any place, any language. The people here they showed me the new life and how I can know everything about it. ”

Action Language learner



Amanuel's* Story

When Amanuel first came to the UK to seek asylum, he found the local accent hard to understand. He wanted to learn English to integrate and continue with the education he'd had to leave behind.

He came along to Action Language and started in a Level 2 class and progressed well, taking the ESOL for Work course too. Outside of class he was soon helping his housemates to go to appointments and interpreting for them. After four months at Action Language, Amanuel was able to accompany an injured friend to hospital and do all the explaining to the doctors, who asked him a lot of questions to find out what happened.

Amanuel moved on to study at a local further education college and had his application to remain in the UK accepted. He volunteered one day a week as a Teaching Assistant at Action Language, helping out at his local church and assisting other migrants to adapt to life in England.

He is now a confident English speaker, giving him a firm foundation to both study accountancy at a local university and paying for these studies by working in a shop.

**Name changed to protect identity. Image does not relate to story.*



Our Amazing Volunteers

We are so proud of how many dedicated, compassionate, skilled and enthusiastic volunteers we have at Action Language. They make such a difference to so many people's lives, but it works both ways. We asked our volunteers how they feel about spending time at Action Foundation...

“

It is a joy to help others in their journey to be a part of the community. The love and respect we share in the classroom setting is a wonderful experience plus it is **GOOD FUN.**

”

“

I had been going through a low point in my life. Volunteering amongst happy, positive people, who must have experienced extreme difficulties and were so enthused about learning, was a joy.

”



“

I feel inspired by the students, knowing that they have almost certainly suffered great hardship and danger on their journeys to the UK. Their good nature and willingness to learn is a pleasure to encounter.

”

“

Now retired, many of the people I meet on a daily basis are over 60, white and generally reasonably affluent. So I find it refreshing to come to Action Language and mix with a group of younger people from all over the globe. Their enthusiasm for learning and encouraging each other is rejuvenating.

”

Supporting Syrian Refugees

Throughout the year we expanded delivery of English language sessions to Syrian refugees struggling to engage in mainstream provision. Contracts under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) were developed with Newcastle, Gateshead, and Redcar & Cleveland Councils.

LET: Learn English Together

We continued to develop our Learn English Together (LET) pilot, a two-year project funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the North East Strategic Migration Partnership (NEMP) to support community-led English classes delivered by other organisations for migrants across the North East who cannot access classes elsewhere.

In the second year of this project we increased the number of community groups delivering English classes using resources we have developed and trained them to use. We reached migrants in rural settings such as Ashington, Amble and Newton Aycliffe as well as urban areas like Newcastle and Middlesbrough.

The LET pilot has given us a much better understanding of the demand for and provision of ESOL in the region, the interest from small organisations to plug gaps in this provision, and their ability to recruit volunteers, run and evaluate a project like this, all of which will be extremely valuable in planning our work for the future.



Over the course of the whole 2-year pilot we have...

- Registered **9 organisations**
- Trained **91 volunteers** who have run **294** LET sessions
- Had over **800** learner enrolments

Learners are positive about the support LET sessions provide. For many this is their only access to language classes, and they want more.

We are currently looking at how to develop LET to provide both introductory informal English sessions and better co-ordinated access to progression routes with other providers in Tyneside with a regional ESOL Co-ordination, Enrolment and Advice Service (CEAS).

“ Action Foundation has been pivotal in the NE Migration Partnership's plans to support ESOL provision in the region and has been proactive in reaching out to its informal and formal partners to drive up standards, work with volunteers to train others and provide greater accessibility to language support. ”

Janine Hartley, NE Migration Partnership Manager

In October 2018, the UK government announced a strategy to tackle loneliness in England, along with dedicated funding to help communities build stronger connections and alleviate loneliness. Action Foundation's successful bids through the Building Connections Fund and Refugee Action's Early Action Partnership has enabled the charity to open two new Drop-ins for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Newcastle called InterAction. The project is being led by our newly appointed Drop-in Manager, Kate Townsend.

Building meaningful connections between people and organisations, reducing the stigma around loneliness and tailoring approaches to individuals and groups are all part of the Drop-in ethos. In addition, it is hoped that the Drop-ins engender a sense of trust and a feeling of belonging in the local area which is equally important to the wellbeing and happiness of service users.

Our InterAction Drop-ins are open:

- Tuesdays between 12 noon – 2pm at CastleGate at City Church
- Thursdays between 12 noon – 2pm at West End Library



“ Clients can meet lots of different services as well as people from the same culture as them. It is also useful to refer to other agencies there and then. ”

Jenny Hartley, Local Authority Asylum Support Liaison Officer at Newcastle City Council

In the first 3 months...

- We have held **25 sessions** so far
- Supported by **22+ volunteers**
- Steady increase in attendance with **207 individuals** seen to date
- From **33 countries** including:
 - Eritrea: 18.66%
 - Iran: 12.92%
 - Sudan: 11.96%
 - Ethiopia: 8.61%

Story of Hope

Latif has visited 17 of 25 sessions. He had been in Gateshead for just one week when he came to us – he was able to meet with another Georgian speaker, make friends, set up an email address, and set up appointments with solicitors. There has been a visible change in his demeanour, his level of English and his community engagement.

“ I've been able to speak to people which has taken away my loneliness and depression. I've got out of the house and met new friends. Here, there is no judgement of my nationality or religion. It is a safe place where people sympathise with me and understand my problems. ”



Growing Team

We are thrilled to have secured the funds to be able to take on additional staff over the last year to strengthen the team (see below). We have continued to invest in posts to enable us to do more, do it even better and become more sustainable as an organisation.

Some of the posts below are newly created roles and some are to replace people that have moved on, as we have sadly said goodbye to Nikki McCann (Communications and Events), Susan Calder (Executive Assistant), Tolosa Tadesse (Drop in Co-ordinator) and Jo Galloway (Support Worker) who is on maternity leave.



Youssef Hamido

Action Housing
Support Worker



Marian Armour

Action Housing
Support Worker



Joel Sinyard

Partnerships
Development
Executive



Kate Townsend

Drop-in Manager



Andrew Wisbach

Senior Support Worker



Katie Bryson

Communications and
Events Executive



Abi Walker

Fundraising and
Grants Officer



Andrea Ward

PA to Julian Prior

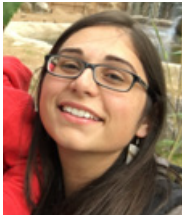
Trustee Changes

We've had the pleasure of gaining three new trustees to the board at Action Foundation and thought it would be nice for them to introduce themselves to you in their own words...



David Lyall

I was born in Gloucestershire and came to the North East to study Mathematics at Durham. I'm married to Jill who is a nurse, and we have three grown up sons. I'm on the board of the Marine Management Organisation and North Star Housing Association, and part of the leadership team of City Church, Newcastle. Through my friendships with asylum seekers and refugees, I've seen the tremendous value they bring to our community and their inherent worth as human beings, made in God's image. I particularly love the work of Action Foundation because it empowers people to move their lives forward and contribute to the good of others.



Maedeh Mesgarnezhad

I am a wife and mother currently studying Medicine at Newcastle University. I was born in the UK to a mother who immigrated from Iran and have experienced some of what life looks like to be a child of a refugee and the challenges that brings. I am married to my wonderful husband Jonah who became a refugee in this country ten years ago following two years living as a destitute asylum seeker. Together we have spent the last eight years serving asylum seekers and refugees in the community.



Mark Hall

I'm the Principal of Grace College, Gateshead, and married with two grown-up daughters. As a family we are proud of our South African roots but have a deep love for the North East considering ourselves to be adopted Geordies! I am committed to seeing people flourish and thrive. To do this people, need to feel "at home" with themselves, their immediate community and within the nation as a whole.

Action Foundation works to ensure some of the most marginalized people establish strong relationships and are able to take an active role in society. The charity's aims are a really good fit with my own desire to see people know who they are and where they can fit in!

Financial Review

Income has increased significantly (32%) on the previous year, up to £1,312,547 in 2019 compared with £988,868 in 2018. This is mainly due to:

- A significant increase in income from Action Letting from Housing Benefit and service charges to residents
- Winning a contract with the Home Office to deliver an Alternative to Detention pilot (Action Access)
- An increase in gifts in kind
- An increase in donations including Gift Aid

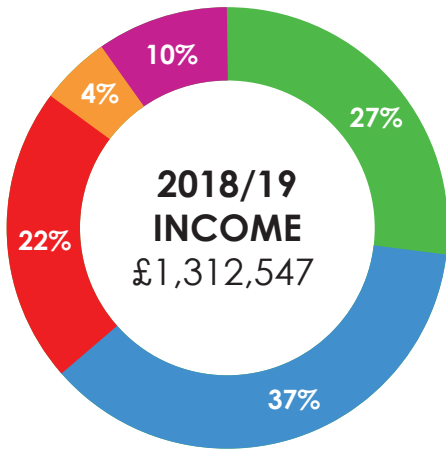
However, there was a decrease in income raised from grants (£354,195 in 2019 from £475,856 in 2018). We recognised the need to diversify our income several years ago, and last year took on a Head of Trust Fundraising to strengthen our capacity in this area and release our CEO to secure alternative sources of funding such as the Home Office contract. In May 2019, we strengthened the fundraising team further by taking on a Fundraising and Grants Officer to further diversify income, particularly through community fundraising and legacies, as well as increasing our capacity to secure grants, which is becoming harder the larger we get.

Raising the funds required for Action Language to plug the gap in funding when National Lottery funds came to an end in August 2019 has been a big focus. Our application for continuation funding was rejected and so in February 2019 we launched our Gift of Words appeal to raise the £75,000 required for Action Language for the following year 2019/20. By July 2019 we had secured £81,468 through a mixture of one-off donations and grants, although longer term (multi-year) funding is yet to be secured.

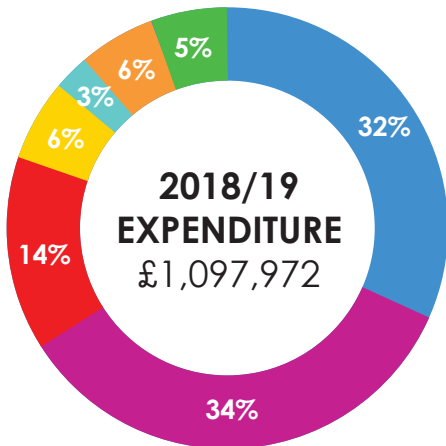
Our free reserves have increased significantly from £89,356 in 2018 to £255,659 in 2019. This is ahead of expectations last year and much more in line with Charity Commission recommendations for a charity of our size.



Income and Expenditure 2018/19



	2017/18	2018/19
Total Income	£988,868	£1,312,547
Grants	£454,011	£354,195
Rent/Housing Benefit	£308,378	£482,619
In Kind Support*	£162,362	£282,104
Donations/Gift Aid	£38,477	£57,764
Contracts/Trading	£25,640	£135,865



	2017/18	2018/19
Total Expenditure	£904,436	£1,097,972
Letting	£348,576	£347,823
Language	£306,373	£378,383
Housing/Hosting	£134,575	£155,696
Access	-	£63,875
InterAction	-	£28,077
Overheads/Support	£59,978	£63,596
Fundraising	£54,934	£60,522

Funds carried forward on 1st April 2019 was £470,032 of which £255,659 was unrestricted reserves. For a full copy of our Annual Report of Accounts please see our website or the Charity Commission website.

*Volunteers' time and houses rented below market rate.

We are very grateful for the support of all our individual donors, churches, volunteers, landlords, supporters and the following trusts, foundations and other organisations that have funded our work in 2018/19.

29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
AB Charitable Trust
Building Connections Fund
Changing Lives (From Newcastle City Council – Supporting People)
Community Foundation Serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland
Frontline Shadow Fund
Garfield Weston Foundation
Henry Smith Foundation
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales

National Lottery Community Fund
NACCOM (Guardian Appeal)
Newby Trust
Newcastle University
Pea Green Boat Community First Fund
Rayne Foundation
Refugee Action (National Lottery Fund)
Sir James Knott Trust
The Vardy Foundation
Virgin Money Foundation

“ The work that is carried out by the organisation is game changing and momentous. People united in solidarity wanting to learn... and teach. ”

Action Language volunteer

“ Thank you Action Foundation for helping people like me, refugees and asylum seekers. It is very noble work and all the people care about the problems and conflicts overseas and the need to seek safety in a safe country. ”

Action Language beneficiary & volunteer

action
FOUNDATION

Charity No. 1132051
Company No. 6946097

Newcastle:

0191 231 3113

CastleGate at CityChurch, Melbourne Street
Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 2JQ

Sunderland:

0191 567 0222

Fusebox, 90 Coronation Street
Sunderland, SR1 2HE