

IMPACT REPORT 2020/21



“

You are rooted in the belief that every person matters, is to be valued, and treated with dignity. Often what you do for them is life changing. It is enriching activities like those of Action Foundation that make our community healthier, safer and ultimately happier.

Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, Susan Winfield

”

WHAT WE DO

Action Foundation provides a range of support for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants so that they can integrate successfully into the community and lead more independent and resilient lives through the following projects:



interaction

Providing free, twice weekly multi-agency drop-ins and outreach, building meaningful connections in the community.

read more on page 5



action
LANGUAGE

Providing volunteer led community English classes.

read more on page 7



action
HOUSING

Providing supported accommodation for destitute asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds.

read more on page 9



action
LETTING

Providing supported accommodation for newly granted refugees at risk of homelessness.

read more on page 11



digital
INCLUSION

Supporting clients to safely access the digital world.

read more on page 13



action
ACCESS

Two-year pilot providing an 'alternative to detention' for female asylum seekers.

read more on page 10

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



1,700

people supported in 2020/21
(approximately).

top 5

nationalities were
Iranian, Eritrean,
Sudanese, Iraqi,
Salvadoran



£33,723

raised by community
fundraisers



76

We supported people
from 76 different
countries



34

staff members
employed



144

volunteers helped
our work



987

face masks donated
by supporters



850

hours of Zoom language
classes delivered

30%

of our volunteers were
refugees and asylum
seekers wanting to
give back to the
community

INTRODUCTION

by Duncan McAuley, CEO

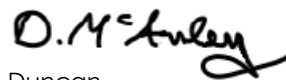
It's been a year of change, both as we continue to support our clients through the Coronavirus pandemic, but also with the internal transitions here at Action Foundation. I began working here just four weeks before the first national lockdown and now as CEO I'm thrilled to be leading an organisation that has repeatedly demonstrated an unwavering commitment to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, even in the most challenging of circumstances. It is this commitment which will ensure we continue to make an impact on the lives of many individuals over the years to come.

There have been a number of sad goodbyes in the last 12 months, particularly the stepping down of our founder and CEO Julian and the passing away of Adrian our founding chair of trustees. It's been quite a year of transition for me personally too, not only stepping up to lead Action Foundation, but moving house and welcoming our second child all within three months.

Looking ahead, I'm pleased to say we have been successful in making some key appointments which will set us in a strong position to continue to adapt to our environment. I have no doubt that the year ahead will bring many new challenges, not least the Nationality and Borders Bill currently working through parliament which poses a significant threat to those seeking asylum in this country as it lays out an overhaul of the current system. We are in a great position to meet these challenges, building on the success of the last 12 months to deliver quality services and provide assistance where it is most needed.

Thank you so much for your support for and contribution to Action Foundation, in whatever capacity that may have been, I trust you will be encouraged and inspired in the following pages as we look at our impact over this last year.

Best wishes



Duncan



HOW WE RESPONDED TO COVID-19

In March 2020 we launched our COVID-19 Crisis Support response, supporting refugees and asylum seekers through the first few months of the pandemic. We raised over £11,000 in a few weeks and were able to redeploy staff from other projects into this emergency response. Between March and the end of July 2020 we supported 401 beneficiaries with practical support including food, toiletries and mobile data to keep them connected, as well as making 344 welfare calls. We also delivered key health messages to over 1,000 people every week via messaging services.

In addition to this we have been providing outreach support to asylum seekers who have been temporarily housed in hotel accommodation, ensuring they can access the essential support to which they are entitled.

From August onwards funds raised to support our clients, as well as our organisation, adapt to the pandemic were channelled through our existing services/projects.

We provided practical support to a total of 401 people, from 210 households*:

213

received regular support

235

received food, clothing, toiletries or cleaning products

28

tech items were distributed

66

were helped through casework

344

welfare calls were made to 274 people, with 129 going on to receive further support

18

volunteer interpreters and 37 practical support volunteers

193

were helped remotely with food vouchers and mobile top ups

200

people living in hotels received help – 35 of these were casework files, indicating more intensive support

“

Hello, I have received a post from you which contains a mask, a notebook and pens. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Action Language learner

”



*Figures from the start of lockdown to the end of July 2020

interaction

InterAction runs multi-agency twice weekly drop-ins in Newcastle, providing a friendly and supportive environment to help migrants experiencing loneliness, isolation and feelings of disorientation.

Attendees can access a variety of help – from free haircuts and a bite to eat to housing and immigration advice. Due to the pandemic, the drop-ins had to close between March and July 2020, but since then have been running with reduced numbers, socially distanced, under government guidelines.

The InterAction team adapted their support which included remote one-to-one telephone/Zoom calls; communicating key Covid health messages by WhatsApp and delivering outreach into hotels where many asylum seekers have been temporarily housed during the Covid outbreak as part of the government's 'Everyone In' scheme. This outreach is continuing. As lockdown restrictions began to ease, and following opening the drop-in again in July 2020, we have continued to offer a safe space for people to connect with their peers and partner organisations as well as remote provision for those who can't come 'in person'.

In 2020/21:

355

people attended

183

people registered as regular attendees

48

volunteers gave their time to this project of whom 88 per cent were asylum seekers or refugees

We asked people why they come to InterAction drop-in:

85%

come for advice and information

55%

come for someone to talk to

55%

come for English conversations

“

I feel happy when I come to the drop-in. It's like a family to me.

Drop-in attendee

”

“

With the drop-in I made new friends, I improve my English, it keeps me busy and useful. Thanks to the drop-in I'm not feeling lonely all the time.

Drop-in attendee

”



OZAN'S STORY

Ozan* is from Turkey and moved to Newcastle for political reasons.

He is a regular at InterAction drop-in and has a degree in law and business with firm plans to study medicine once he gets his refugee status. He says it's tough trying to survive on £37 asylum support per week, unable to work and having to stay indoors because of the pandemic.

"Coming to InterAction really helps. There's tea and coffee, I can have breakfast. I can talk to people, and it's a great opportunity for me to practise my Spanish with the asylum seekers here from El Salvador. I'm really grateful to Action Foundation, everyone's so helpful and lovely here, especially when we are having issues which they always do their best to try and sort out."



MEET NADA

Nada, is an 18-year-old asylum seeker from The Yemen who volunteers at the InterAction drop-in.

She welcomes people, offers them food and drink and uses her language skills to interpret for Arabic speakers who need assistance

"The people who come to this country, they're new and don't have the right information and really need help. Action Foundation gives that help and tries to solve the things that they're worried about and provide solutions. I appreciate that work and also to be a volunteer in this wonderful charity."

*We have changed Ozan's name and used an alternative picture to protect his identity.

Providing free English lessons to refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants. From June 2020-March 2021:

697

Students from September 2020-April 2021, with 580 attending regular Zoom classes

76

Nationalities

340

telephone sessions

94

learners supported with data top-ups to attend online classes.

90

Volunteer teachers and classroom assistants whose time was worth £36,666

850

one hour Zoom classes

730

postal packs

**Covid-19: Action Language classes were paused in March 2020, restarting in June with a combination of delivering lessons via Zoom, over the phone and through the post.*

“

The class has been a positive chance for me. The class atmosphere is very energetic and vibrant. The class is full of different people with different cultures, beliefs, backgrounds. I learnt more from the class.

Learner

”



CASE STUDY: GULSHAN'S STORY

Gulshan* and her husband are from Iran and moved to Newcastle in the middle of the first national lockdown to seek asylum in the UK.

"It was awful moving here in the middle of the pandemic, we felt really scared and alone. We couldn't find anyone for support for things like food, but Action Foundation really helped us.

They explained to us about their services including online English language classes and getting food parcels. We've been given mobile phone top-ups so we can talk to family and access remote learning.

My husband suffers with depression, but he takes English classes with Action Foundation on the internet which really helps him to feel much better because it gives him something useful to do.

The language classes are very useful – not only for learning English, but also learning about the customs in the UK, the dos and don'ts which are so important when you want to live here; and we got to meet other Iranian people too!

Action Foundation care about us like their family. They don't care about how we got here, they just give us kindness and support."



“

We wanted to thank you and your team for your guidance and support, in helping us learn English. We really like that you teach us simply at our own level. You always take the time to repeat things many times. We feel very comfortable in our international class, almost like children in first grade. You and your team always show really nice qualities like patience, kindness and understanding. Your lessons help us to adapt to our new life in England.

Couple learning English

”

“

I feel so proud of myself when I help others to learn English whilst practising my skills that I used to do (teaching). Truthfully, studying and volunteering with Action Foundation increases my self-confidence and brings fun and fulfilment to my life. It provides me with a sense of purpose.

Volunteer with lived experience of the asylum system

”

*We have changed names to protect identities.
Photo by Soroush Karimi, Unsplash

Providing supported accommodation for people who have been refused asylum and have No Recourse to Public Funds.

Over the last year we provided supported accommodation to 37 destitute asylum seekers, and helped 29 to engage with legal representation in order to regularise their status.

In 2020/21 we expanded our capacity in Action Housing and started a new pilot project working in partnership with Newcastle City Council housing

European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who are destitute. We increased our capacity to nine properties with 29 bedspaces. This included signing up 4 new properties for Housing (with 11 bedspaces) and the purchase of a 4-bed property in November through a generous donation from the Lesley Aldridge Trust. In response to Covid-19, we provided laptops to each household and increased our use of remote support using technology. We delivered food parcels and cleaning products and issued pre-paid debit cards for subsistence so that clients could easily access funds.

MOHAMMED'S STORY

Mohammed * is a young Iraqi man who arrived in Newcastle destitute and homeless after his asylum case was refused.

He was referred to Action Foundation by another charity as a matter of urgency as he had significant health problems. Mohammed was feeling isolated and did not have legal representation. However, with the help of our charity, he was granted refugee status.

How did Action Foundation help Mohammed?

- A warm and clean room in one of our supported houses
- Help accessing healthcare and other local support, including getting GP prescriptions, attending hospital and optician appointments
- Arranging volunteering with the Comfrey Project, enabling him to meet others and gain gardening and cooking skills
- Communicating with his solicitors to help him resolve his immigration status
- Enrolment into English classes with Action Language
- Help setting up a bank account and applying for benefit entitlements



“

In 2020 Mohammed was granted refugee status with five years leave to remain. This happened very quickly...an event and timescale rarely known!

Action Foundation Support Worker

”

action HOSTING

Unfortunately, we had to temporarily close our Hosting project due to the Covid pandemic, but we were able to provide alternative housing to everyone that was hosted.

We are planning to relaunch Action Hosting, but this is unlikely to be in 2021 as we are taking the time to evaluate how this best fits with and complements our existing services.



action ACCESS

The two-year Action Access (Alternative to Detention) pilot project run with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Home Office offered support to women who were seeking asylum and would otherwise be held in a detention centre. The project ran as planned to the end of March 2021 with some very positive outcomes for the women supported. The Home Office will consider their future investment in Alternatives to Detention after reviewing the independent evaluation, commissioned and overseen by UNHCR, that will be published in autumn 2021.

To date, this innovative project has supported a total of 20 women.

Providing short-term supported accommodation for newly granted refugees at risk of homelessness.

54

Refugees were provided with supported accommodation in the last year

37

People moved on positively to social housing or moved in with friends/family to live more independently

16

Letting properties in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland are currently managed by Action Foundation

19

People and organisations are Action Language landlords

Leasing property through Action Foundation

We are grateful to the 19 people and organisations who are our Action Foundation landlords. Here, one of them tells us why she chose our charity:

"I came across Action Foundation through a church magazine and it was perfect timing for me because I was becoming very disillusioned with property ownership as rogue tenants continually misused and abused my properties.

Finding Action Foundation changed everything. I met a wonderful team of caring people and from the very first meeting I was confident I could trust them with my properties.

As the years have gone on, I have developed good working relationships with the support workers, maintenance department and tenant liaison

managers. If there is a problem with any property they contact me immediately and I either sort it out with my own contractors or use those suggested by Action Foundation. I find the organisation efficient and very fair and of course friendly.

Being part of Action Foundation has given me huge relief as I no longer have to worry about damage or neglect to my properties and it gives me immense pleasure to know that at the same time I am helping to restore safety and dignity to people who have been forced to leave their own countries."

- Sharyn Collins, landlord

“

"We are very happy to be working with you for the last six years as we know that Action Foundation serves those in greatest need in our community. We enjoy being part of that and having our house in very safe and professional hands"

Mark and Lucia Bagott, landlords

”



JAVED'S STORY

Finding somewhere suitable to live was just one of the benefits Javed received when he approached Action Foundation. The 40-year-old Iranian man became homeless after his private landlord ended his lease but Action Letting helped him move into a long term tenancy in social housing. On top of this, his support worker also:

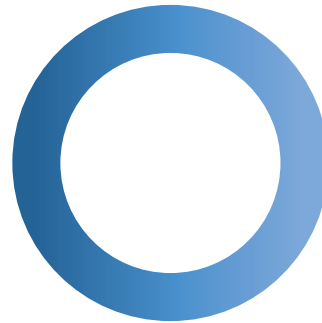
- Helped Javed with his family reunion application
- Assisted his Housing Benefit claim
- Registered him with a dentist
- Signed him up to English classes with Action Language

Earlier this year Javed received the good news that he could move into a 'council house', that he'd passed his driving test and he also got a steady job.

Javed told his support worker: "Today I passed driving test and get full driving licence and also I will start new job in Amazon from this Friday. Thank you very much."

Due to the Government's 'Everyone In' programme which housed all rough sleepers during the pandemic, as well as halting evictions for people in dispersed accommodation, the demand for our Action Letting project temporarily reduced. However, as restrictions ease we are expecting the number of people needing accommodation when they get a positive or negative decision on their asylum claim to significantly increase again.

We have expanded the team with two new full time Support Workers and one full time Housing Administrator.



digital

INCLUSION

In October 2020 we launched our brand new Digital Inclusion project and have already begun to see the positive impact of this service on our beneficiaries. This project equips refugees and asylum seekers with the technology, skills and confidence to get online and engage with the digital world.

With the help of our team of volunteers, we have provided 176 tablets and delivered over 350 hours of digital training. Prior to enrolment in this project, 140 of these beneficiaries had no access to a laptop or tablet.

176

people received a tablet and training

100+

learners were referred through our InterAction Drop-in and Action Language ESOL classes

99%

learnt useful skills and knowledge, and were more confident using the internet

77

people received unlimited data for 3 months

140

beneficiaries had no laptop or tablet prior to enrolment

over 350

hours of training sessions (face to face and telephone)

This has ensured that people can access services (ie: English language classes on Zoom) and keep in touch with friends and family here in the UK and in their home country.

We provided training to our volunteers so they can deliver the programme to service users in their own language.

In the feedback from our service users who have received their tablets and training, they consistently said it helped them access day to day activities like Zoom lessons, workshops and entertainment.

“

Thank you, thank you, thanks for this. Me ten years here. Nothing, Nothing, Never anything. But now I have this, I can use internet and speak to my friends. Thank you, Thank you.

Digital Inclusion learner

”

CASE STUDY: ELIZABETH, TEACHER FROM EL SALVADOR

"Before I get my tablet, I couldn't receive my live lessons, because I had different problems about internet, my mobile; honestly it was very difficult because I hadn't other device.

My live lessons with my tablet are much better, I can hear clearly, watch my classes, my teachers and I can participate in the chat option.

I use my tablet for many things, for example the Google search, watch English language teaching programs, use the translator, use YouTube to search for information personal interest, listened to music, take photos, check my emails and more.

I want to thank infinitely for all the help they have given me."



TRUSTEE UPDATE

By Action Foundation's Chair of Trustees, David Lyall

This has been a time of great difficulty and suffering in our nation, yet also a season of amazing kindness, generosity and love, and the same is certainly true for Action Foundation. To be honest, I find it very hard to know where to begin.

I think it must be with lament for all that has been lost to us. Missed opportunities to be together; sickness and isolation; economic failure; children unable to attend school or be with friends; a significant increase in mental illness; and most of all the many we have loved and cherished who are no longer with us.

To identify just one story, I must pay tribute to our founding Chair, Adrian Smith, who passed away earlier in 2021 after a battle with cancer. I could easily dwell on the unbreakable partnership he forged with our CEO Julian Prior, his remarkable leadership skills and light touch in steering us through complex decisions. However much more than that, Adrian was a wonderful man, a great friend of people and a friend of God. With his wife Nicky, he showed such warmth and hospitality to those from different backgrounds and cultures, valuing everyone as an individual and with a seemingly infinite patience to listen, understand and serve. Personally he helped me greatly in my own spiritual journey, and I was inspired by his faith in a glorious life beyond death, centred in the resurrection of Jesus. Adrian, you gave me hope in the midst of darkness and for that I am profoundly grateful.

And most of all, I want to say a huge thanks to our wonderful staff and volunteers for their creativity and flexibility in rethinking all of our services in the light of Covid – Accommodation, Language Drop-in, Digital Inclusion – and for their utter determination to keep on looking outward to others, and to keep offering the unconditional support and empowerment that are the bedrock of Action Foundation. I rejoice that we are such a diverse family, drawn together from different backgrounds, cultures, languages, sexual orientations, religions and social circumstances, and it is this diversity which I am so proud of and keen to strengthen and expand further in the months ahead. Different voices, experiences, perspectives working together for common goals is what makes us strong.

This is also a moment to express deep gratitude to our departing CEO Julian Prior as he moves into a national influencing role. He goes out from us with our huge thanks and blessing for all he has done to build Action Foundation into an organisation so widely respected and effective in bringing hope to those on the margins. And I am delighted to welcome our new CEO, Duncan McAuley. He has big shoes to fill, but I am sure he is the right person to lead us forward. I'm greatly looking forward to working closely with him in the years ahead.

Finally, to all of you, our supporters and friends, the biggest possible thank you, and my very best wishes and prayers for these coming months. Any thoughts on our services – what has worked well and where we can improve – are always welcome. Please do get in touch.

David Lyall



FUNDRAISING

Action Foundation has had another successful year of fundraising, despite the challenges of lockdown and social distancing.

We launched two successful fundraising campaigns that our community generously supported. Our Covid-19 campaign, launched in March/April 2020, raised a total of £14,047 over the course of the year. We also launched our 'Winter Welcome' Christmas campaign which raised £10,836 for our InterAction project.

On top of this, many of our community fundraisers got creative to raise money within social distancing guidelines. From sponsored cycles and swims to Zoom pub quizzes, they really got behind the charity

and in September 2020 a team of nine runners took on the Great North Run Solo Challenge – completing 40 runs between June and September!

Trusts and foundations also supported us through the COVID-19 crisis, with many of our existing funders providing short-term emergency grant funding which helped us offer emergency crisis support to our beneficiaries. In total, we received **£886,377** through grant funding from both local and national funders. A huge thank you to all our donors, fundraisers and funders!

£87,363

Total raised from regular donors,
one-off donations and our
community of fundraisers

“

I'm incredibly proud
that I notched up all
40 runs...

Katie Bryson

”

In 2020/21 more than 50 community fundraisers raised £33,723

Action Language volunteer and fundraiser Helen Johnson created the Tynemouth Trail treasure hunt:

“There was a lot of positive feedback and people liked the idea of doing something as a family group in their local community which was entertaining and also going to help others.

“The trail raised £340 and was actually fun to create and run. Katie and Abi facilitated the smooth running of the event which was a relief to me. All in all it was a very feel-good thing to do!”



We welcome new fundraisers.
Click here to download our pack!



Special Thanks

Thank you to the following organisations for their fundraising and donations:

- Rotaract Tyneside
- Benton CC Football Club
- Clifford Chance
- STAR Sunderland
- Just Love Newcastle
- Magic Hat Café
- Refuse Café
- Fareshare
- Greggs
- Marks and Spencer
- My Delhi, Newcastle
- The Bake One, Gosforth
- Lush



Many of the people that Action Foundation support face an uncertain future and we hope this small token from our firm will help Action Foundation to offer peace, joy and respite.

Charlotte Cale,
Acting Head of Newcastle office,
Clifford Chance Newcastle Limited



FINANCES



For every **£1**
received we spent...

=



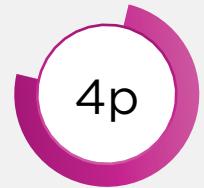
on helping
people

+

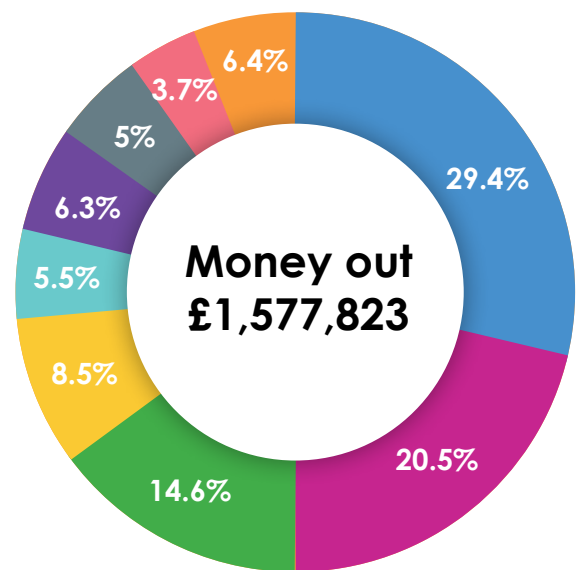
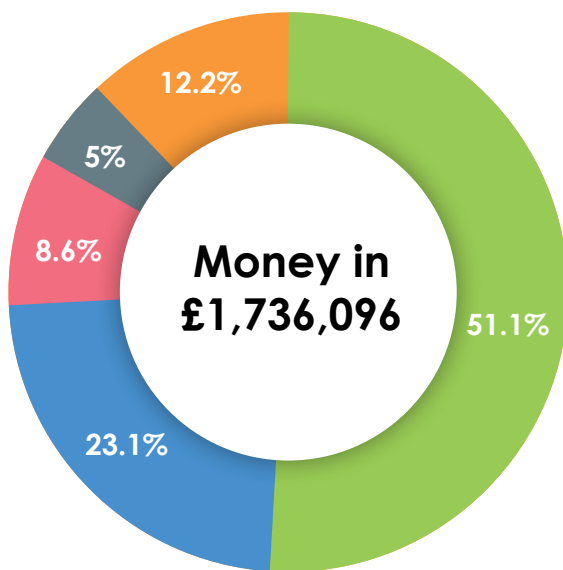


on fundraising to
secure our future

+



on overheads



	2020/21	2019/20
Grants	£886,377	£423,662
Rent/Housing Benefit	£400,675	£536,617
In Kind Support*	£149,227	£297,617
Donations Gift Aid	£87,363	£98,830
Contracts	£212,454	£335,491
Total:	£1,736,096	£1,692,217

	2020/21	2019/20
Letting	£463,222	£422,568
Language	£323,204	£353,045
Housing/Hosting	£230,260	£180,782
Access	£134,533	£193,429
InterAction	£87,360	£71,960
Digital Inclusion	£99,844	-
Covid-19 Crisis Support	£79,494	-
Overheads /Support	£58,476	£63,553
Fundraising	£101,430	£106,819
Total:	£1,577,823	£1,392,156

For a full copy of our financial statements
please see the Charity Commission Website.

*Volunteers' time and houses rented below market rate

LEGACY GIVING

Did you know that you can leave Action Foundation a gift in your will today that will help fund our tomorrow?

Every gift, no matter how large or small, makes a huge difference to the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum in Tyne and Wear. Legacy gifts allow us to plan for our future and grow our vital Language, Accommodation, Casework and Digital support services.

To help promote our Legacy Giving campaign, we enlisted the help of one of our beneficiaries, Amir, a refugee from Iran, who volunteers at our InterAction Drop-in.

Amir is a talented artist and was studying Interior Design before events forced him to leave his home country. He now hopes to forge a career in graphic design and so he was our 'go-to' person when we were looking to have some bookmarks designed to help publicise our Legacy Giving. Amir's design was so thoughtful and moving.

The bookmark features a barren landscape, with an inflatable dinghy, marooned on a sand dune, carrying people seemingly fleeing a bombed-out city.

Amir explained: "The story behind that piece was mainly about the new rules of the UK for asylum seekers. Under the proposed Nationality and Borders Bill, they will be unable to come to the UK by boat, that's why I chose to paint the inflatable boat in a desert (the government took the sea from them). "There is also a broken boat there which is about those who died on their way here. The city in the background is a simple look of my hometown Tehran. The overall meaning of the painting is about the difficulties people have in their own countries that makes them risk their lives to get to a safe place. It's not what they choose but they will find a way to keep their families safe no matter how hard or dangerous it is."

Amir's bookmarks have been very popular so far. For example, an independent bookshop in Whitley Bay, The Bound, has been handing them out to customers. One of the booksellers there said: "Amir's bookmarks flew off the counter so fast! People have loved his thoughtful design and were so interested to hear about Action Foundation's work here in the North East."

Visit our website for more details:

<https://actionfoundation.org.uk/get-involved/legacy-giving/>



THANK YOU

A HUGE thank you to the following businesses and organisations for their generous contributions:

- The Aurum Charitable Trust
- Barclays Bank UK Covid-19 Community Relief Funding
- Building Connections Fund
- Changing Lives (from Newcastle City Council)
- Crisis UK (additional funding from Comic Relief and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport)
- Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland
- ESOL for Integration Fund (Newcastle City Council/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- Henry Smith Charity*
- Jill Franklin Trust
- Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales
- NET DCMS Big Night In Match Fund (National Emergencies Trust and the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport)
- Next Steps Accommodation Programme (Newcastle City Council/Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)
- The North of Tyne Combined Authority
- The Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Pea Green Boat Community First Fund *
- Refugee Action (National Lottery Fund and Respond and Adapt Programme funding)
- The Sir James Knott Trust
- The Vardy Foundation
- Virgin Money Foundation
- City Church Newcastle



**Grants administered through the Community Foundation serving Tyne & Wear and Northumberland*



action FOUNDATION

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Company No. 6946097

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Did you know?

You can leave Action Foundation a gift in your will today that will help fund our tomorrow. Visit:

<https://actionfoundation.org.uk/get-involved/legacy-giving/>

✉ info@actionfoundation.org.uk

🌐 www.actionfoundation.org.uk



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service