About

Who we are
- Pauline Nandoo, Director (full-time)
- Judith Ahikire, Administrator
- Bettina Dreier, Day Centre Leader
- Peter Williams, Day Centre Leader
- Vanessa Sutherland, Play Leader
- Warren Lee, Early Action Development Worker
- Olabisi Taiwo, Early Action Development Worker
- Mateusz Sochacki, ARSP volunteer

Trustees
- Gillian Reeve, Chair
- Caroline McGill, Treasurer
- Sallie Barnes
- Gay Barry
- Mary Boley
- Tod Heyda
- Sally Inman
- Jane Kelly
- Ajoke Sarah Ojie
- John Rhodes
- Andy Roberts
- Simon Taylor

We operate through 3 Day Centres:
- Copleston Centre, Copleston Road, SE15 4AN, open Tuesdays, 12.30-5.00pm
- Peckham Park Baptist Church, 121 Peckham Park Rd, SE15 6SX, open Wednesdays, 11.30am-4.30pm
- St Mary Newington, Kennington Park Road, SE11 4JQ, open Thursdays, 1.00-5.00pm

Cover photo: one of SDCAS’ two allotments
The benefits gained from using our centres continue to be very positive and we wholeheartedly thank everyone including the volunteers who help make this possible. Our holistic services help to improve the all-round wellbeing of our clients at a time most needed.

This year it has been particularly difficult to know how to help destitute clients sleeping rough with no money for food or shelter. The impact on everyone here is enormous and reaches crisis point at times. In response we have joined a 3-year partnership programme with Refugee Action and other refugee groups to explore various early intervention approaches, with two members of our team being assigned to this work. Their account of the project is included in this report. For us, the project means developing our knowledge of this issue and finding practical tools to manage expectations when we are dealing with clients and homelessness. Building connections with hosting agencies and securing more timely winter shelter information has helped more clients find shelter sooner. In the north of the borough, at our Kennington centre, the demand for our advice services is increasing significantly. The centre is supported by local funders United St Saviours and Wakefield and Tetley, who have made possible a wide range of activities that include an English language class, arts and crafts, a women’s group and a singing group. Local people are becoming much more informed about our service through our door-to-door leafleting around the area. We hope to make new connections and reach more people from this site.

We are always keen to develop effective partnerships and this year we welcomed the opportunity to work with Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network who are funded to support clients affected by gender-based violence with welfare and immigration issues. This service is available at two of our centres. Also, I would like to mention the longstanding partnership with Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP) who provide us with some excellent young full time volunteers from Poland. Throughout the year they help maintain/ provide continuity across the three centres and bring great skills (including IT) to help with everyday tasks in the office and centres. We particularly thank Mateusz Sochacki (right) our ARSP volunteer from September 2018 – August 2019.

Whilst SDCAS has a strong track record we could not do this without all our supporters and the team listed in this report who help sustain and advance our work with asylum seekers and refugees.

Pauline Nandoo
How we help: our clients’ stories

Spotlight on family reunion cases...

So many of our clients have had to leave their children behind. This causes agony for the parent waiting on a decision from the Home office, wondering year after year if their children are safe. One client from the Ivory Coast faced several negative decisions from the Home Office. We referred her to the Southwark Law Centre, who helped her make a fresh, successful claim for asylum. With her refugee status granted, Citizens Advice helped apply for her three children, who were still in the Ivory Coast, to live with their mother. After 6 years of waiting, the family was reunited, and it was amazing for all of us at SDCAS to be part of it.

Every refugee’s story is different and their anguish personal. But SDCAS gives all the courage not only to survive but to preserve and rebuild our lives. This is the kind of hope that enables us to live fully in the present moment.

I am 19 years old. This is my story...

I grew up with my grandparents in Eritrea. I don’t know anything about my father who was jailed in Ethiopia. My mother moved to the United Kingdom but it took 10 years to grant her residence permit. My journey to join her started in Sudan but did not go well. My appeal was refused twice by the UK embassy, and everything seemed hopeless. My mother was hugely afraid for my safety and went to SDCAS for help. They contacted the UNHCR in Khartoum who confirmed I would face persecution if I returned to Eritrea. SDCAS helped with my visa application and in 2015 I finally got my visa. I was warmly welcomed by SDCAS with a big welcoming party - I have never felt so loved! As a new arrival in a new country, SDCAS provided me with education and immigration advice. I am studying for access to higher education in a London college. And with SDCAS support, I got travel documents and a residence permit within three months.

Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers
Introduction to SDCAS

The Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers opened its doors in 1997. We operate through 3 day centres in the borough, each of which is open one day a week to provide support to both refugees and asylum seekers. At our centres vulnerable people are advised about their rights, can learn the skills to integrate into the local community, and can access healthcare and other support.

Most asylum seekers live on an allowance of just over £5 a day, are isolated, lonely and traumatised by past events. They face a long and uncertain process to gain asylum in the UK with very few places to go for help. Even then it can be a struggle to acquire the skills and confidence to live here independently. It is these challenges that SDCAS exists to support, working closely with other local and national charities.

We offer:

- practical help such as a hot meal, clothing, food, toiletries, a creche;
- health support both physically and mentally;
- advice and guidance typically on immigration, benefits and housing issues (signposting our clients to specialist partner organisations as needed);
- skills and confidence building including English language and employment skills training;
- a welcoming and friendly environment with the opportunity to socialise with others.

We achieve:

- In 2019 there were over 5700 visits to our day centres by 1145 people, up 12% on last year.
- They came from more than 30 countries of origin and from throughout Southwark (and beyond).
- We provided support at a cost of nearly £183,000. In the following pages you can read about our achievements and the help we offer.

‘It’s important to celebrate the good things... and to have a memorable cake’

Right: produce from our allotment

Annual Report 2018/19
Who are our clients? Why do they come to SDCAS and how do we help them? The number of visits to our day centres increased by 12% in 2018/19 following the pattern of steady growth in demand over recent years. Nearly 1,150 people sought help from SDCAS in 2018/19 and between them they made over 5,700 visits (though this does not mean an average of 5 visits each – in reality many asylum seekers are quickly relocated to other parts of the country, while other clients are regular visitors with a range of problems).

Most of our clients seek help about immigration (25%), housing (22%) and benefits (17%). As ‘limited leave to remain’ status must be reapplied for usually on a 2.5-year basis (usually on payment of a very substantial fee), immigration is a key area of need.

We have received expert assistance from Gary Goddard at Citizens Advice Southwark and the Southwark Law Centre team although that help is coming under increasing pressure.

Substandard housing and homelessness remain a major issue (see p15 for more).

The cost of providing ‘financial support’ has doubled this year, namely emergency funding for those who cannot afford necessities or essential costs such as transport to immigration hearings in other UK cities.

The ‘other’ category includes education and employment advice.

**Country of Origin (%):**

- Nigeria: 28
- Iran: 24
- Ivory Coast: 20
- Iraq: 12
- Afghanistan: 6
- Eritrea: 6
- Syria: 3
- Sudan: 2
- Sierra Leone: 2
- Other: 7
This year we helped clients from over 30 countries.

Our clients and their families – some of them victims of human trafficking – came from a list of countries that also includes Albania, DR Congo, Somalia, Vietnam and Zambia. Nearly half of our clients come from Nigeria and Iran.

We have seen fewer asylum seekers this year (31% of our client population compared with 45% last year). The number of migrants has risen slightly while those with status – the majority – continue to need our services until they are able to find work, can be reunited with their families, or acquire the skills and confidence to live independently in this country.

M’s story ...

M. is a young woman from Cameroon who arrived in this country a few years ago. She was a successful professional and an accomplished athlete in her country until she faced homophobic persecution including rejection by her family who thought she was possessed. She received constant threats and intimidation from the police and at times suffered cruel and inhuman treatment in police custody.

As a result she developed serious health problems physically and mentally. She decided to come to London to seek asylum.

She first came to SDCAS for advice on practical issues and then joined our art group. There she explained how she was suffering extremes of loneliness, despair and uncertainty about her future. The sharing of these fearful memories with us helped her gain strength and she gradually became more confident. M. comes across as an incredibly resilient woman. Always smiling, she has made good friends everywhere she has stayed. Her English is improving rapidly. She is currently in college, studying to become a nurse, working very hard to be able ‘to take care of other people’.
This year has been another challenging year with the refugee crisis worsening globally and the hostile environment making life in the UK extremely difficult for our clients. Our team of staff, volunteers and external colleagues from the Southwark Law Centre, Citizens Advice and other organisations offer advice on immigration, welfare and housing. We try to ensure access to housing, education and healthcare and we have been lucky to have therapists on site two days per week.

Navigating the complicated benefits system is one of our challenges. Universal Credit delays and complications with housing benefit payments have been a daily occurrence.

At times we accompany clients to important appointments and hearings in court but most of all we listen to somebody’s concerns and reflect with them on ways forward. The need for advice is never-ending.

The dehumanising asylum process leaves people in the most humiliating situations. At the Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers we try to stand with those who are struggling with injustice - we try to tackle the causes while looking for a way out.
Our brilliant new IT system

This year we revolutionised the way we record and access information about client problems. We now have a cloud-based system which allows up-to-date client information to be immediately and securely accessed by any of our advisers at all our centres. The genuinely user-friendly software was created for us pro bono by Jon Rickard at Ebase Technology.

The associated laptop and internet upgrade costs have been met by a generous grant from the Clothworkers’ Foundation and the Wakefield and Tetley Trust. We are extremely grateful to all three. The system has been enthusiastically welcomed by our staff and advisers. It has greatly increased our efficiency in progressing cases. The quality, consistency and speed of our advice are all better and advisers aren’t writing up paper records in their own time. Above all it means that clients no longer face the emotional pain and frustration of having to repeat their problems at different centres. The system can be adapted for use by other advice agencies and we are also singing its praises to our partner organisations.

“When I got here I was so happy because immediately I saw someone who said ‘just come in, just come in’. So I filled in the form, advice, lunch. They sat me down and said ‘its ok, someone will attend to you now’. The friendliness of this community!”
What we do: support and welfare

Lunch at the Day Centre

We provide around 150 meals each week. Some of the food is donated by Fareshare. Each week they let us know what they can provide, so our volunteer cooks can plan meals and buy anything that is missing, locally.

It takes around 3 hours to prepare and cook the meal – separate hot dishes for meat-eaters and vegetarians with a salad and pudding - and another few hours to wash-up and clear away.

Some food is offered to clients without cooking facilities for their evening meal.

Our day centres offer a hot meal, a welcome, a sympathetic and supportive hearing, a creche, clothing and toiletries for children and adults, and emergency support for people who can’t afford the basics to keep them going through the week. This practical and moral support is a lifeline for many people.

In addition, many of our clients have health needs both physical and mental as a result of past traumas, and current stresses and living conditions. Guy’s and St Thomas’s Health Inclusion Team visit our Peckham Park Road day centre on Wednesdays to provide holistic advice and support to clients.

Yvonne and Karima from the team – nurse and case worker – typically see 10 – 15 people each session. They offer a health assessment to clients to identify their needs, and may then provide a health check-up, facilitate access to other primary services such as helping get appointments and prescriptions, make referrals, for example to counselling services, offer maternity advice and care, and give general advice on staying healthy. They also help clients whose language barriers can prevent them getting the right care to access language support.

In this way their work helps people cope, and addresses specific medical needs.
We very much enjoy working at the creche, it is a nice introduction to the nursery setting. Children and parents alike benefit from this amazing service SDCAS provides. Children look forward to joining us and have a fun time for few hours.

Maurizio and Honorine – Working at the Creche

You can eat hot food here, I socialise and I have friendships here. I feel like I have security here. When I come here, I am more relaxed. This is the only place I feel safe.

I want the Centre to survive and to help others in the future. You see because if I had come and this Centre didn’t exist I cannot imagine what my life would be. I want it to continue, to help people in the future because when you are alone many things go through your head, if the Centre wasn’t here you wouldn’t know what to do.

For more information about our work on the increasing homelessness crisis please go to the special article on page 15
What we do: skills and confidence

At the day centres volunteers share their skills in ways that help our clients feel a sense of belonging and regain the self-confidence they need to build a full life for themselves and their families in this country. Involvement in creative work is therapeutic. Volunteers provide art, pottery, music and storytelling workshops as well as the opportunity to tend our two allotments.

Work and living skills are equally vital. Our clients can learn English and receive advice on writing their CV, managing their finances and other UK life skills. Our partner organisations (listed on page 13) deliver many of these skill sessions while volunteers give English language (ESOL) tuition.

ESOL class sizes are typically 3-10 people with a wide range of abilities and needs.

Fairbeats

Fairbeats has been running music clubs for children at SDCAS each school holiday since September 2018. At the sessions children learn new musical skills and explore their creativity through making new music together. We also support children and their families to take part in music-making outside SDCAS at Camberwell Choir School, The Albany Theatre and with Multistory Orchestra. Next year we will create and record a song with the children and hope to perform it at Theatre Peckham in summer 2020. The project is funded by Youth Music, National Lottery Community Fund, Newcomen Collett and Arts Council England.

An English class at St Mary’s
We were very sad to lose a much-loved colleague, Anne-Catherine Le Deunff, to a year-long battle with illness. Anne-Catherine worked at SDCAS for several years. A qualified volunteer art therapist, she ran art workshops at our centres as well as at Barry House temporary accommodation centre.

Creative processes like art are important to our clients in allowing them to tell their stories and express their feelings in an indirect, non-confrontational way. The natural empathy and understanding which Anne-Catherine brought to her work with survivors of trauma meant that her work was greatly valued, an important complement to the more direct interventions we make via our advice service.

Since her passing many former colleagues and clients of the day centre have spoken about Anne-Catherine’s gentle and sympathetic nature and her unstinting commitment and devotion to our work helping asylum seekers and refugees. She is greatly missed.
After completing a Masters last year, I was struggling to find a full-time job in London. I’d been leaning increasingly towards the charitable sector, and a few months ago by chance I saw an SDCAS advert for volunteers in a local news bulletin. I recognised an opportunity to become more active in my community and applied.

Volunteering at SDCAS has been a thoroughly humbling experience, one that has challenged me to step outside my comfort zone and learn details of immigration, benefits, healthcare and homelessness services I had no prior exposure to.

I enjoy a running joke with one client whom I’ve helped most weeks since starting that he is my advice coach. I recognised an opportunity to become more active in my community and applied.

Thanks to SDCAS, I’ve met so many intelligent, engaging and positive people – clients and volunteers alike – who continue to help me become a better advice volunteer, and who have inspired me to pursue humanitarian work going forward.

SDCAS is fortunate to work with a stable, caring and committed group of over 40 volunteers. They bring a wide range of skills to a large variety of work, from running activities – English classes, art, music, storytelling, gardening – to advising clients, cooking, counselling staff and volunteers, fundraising and more. Some are retired professionals but many are just starting their working lives and come to SDCAS for new experiences and skills.
Thank you to our partners and patrons

SDCAS could not provide the wide range of services our clients need without the close support of local and national agencies. Our partnerships with organisations such as the Southwark Law Centre, Citizens Advice, Guys and St Thomas’, the churches whose space we use – and the many others listed below and discussed throughout this report – is fundamental to our achievement.

Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to:

- Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP)
- Citizens Advice Southwark
- Compass Project, Birkbeck, University of London
- Distinct Family Services
- Fairbeats
- Fareshare Community Food Network
- Goldsmiths, University of London
- Groundworks Employment and Skills Service

We also thank our patrons for their support this year:

- Riz Ahmed – Actor
- Councillor Anood Al-Samerai – London Borough of Southwark
- Rt Hon Harriet Harman – MP Camberwell and Peckham
- Helen Hayes – MP Dulwich and West Norwood
- Sir Simon Hughes – Former MP Bermondsey and Old Southwark, Community leader
- Dr Woyin Karowe Dorgu – Bishop of Woolwich
- Rt Rev Patrick Lynch – Assistant Bishop in South-East London
- Barbara Pattison – Chair, SE5 Forum

The summer picnic in Lettsom Gardens
In October we were pleased to welcome over a hundred and fifty guests to an evening of music, readings, food and friendship in memory of Anne-Catherine Le Deunff. It is a testament to the affection and respect in which Anne-Catherine is held that more than a hundred friends, including SDCAS colleagues past and more recent and — especially — clients attended the evening. We as an organisation are particularly grateful for the fact that Anne-Catherine asked for donations given at her funeral and at the Copleston gathering to be passed to the day centre, and for many of her own works of art to be auctioned in aid of our work.

SDCAS is entirely dependent on the generosity of our funders — individuals and organisations - who between them enable everything we do. This is an opportunity to say A HUGE THANK YOU to all of them. This year we have benefited from a number of really touching donations: from the outstandingly generous Southwark Councillor Helen Dennis who asked her wedding guests to donate to SDCAS instead of giving presents, to children fundraising in their schools and saving their pocket money, to the family of Anne-Catherine whose contribution is described here. As set out in the Treasurer’s report on page 16, the cost of running SDCAS in 2018/19 was nearly £183,000. This cost was funded from income of over £215,000 and the surplus enables us to restore our reserves this year. Income came from donations and our expanding Friends’ scheme (£44,000), from fundraising activity such as the monthly bookstall organised by Ruth Olney and regular concerts organised by Frances Bennett (over £10,000), and from grants by public and private bodies whose commitment to equality, opportunity and human rights we share (over £161,000). We are enormously grateful for the continuing support of Southwark Council who again contributed over £45,000 towards our running costs. Our thanks are due to the following grant-making bodies and others for their support: ARSP, Awards for All, CWL, Churches, Clothworkers’ Foundation, Community Fund, Enid Maud Emillis Trust, C&M Fleming Food Project, Henry Smith Charity, The London Community Foundation, Peoples Heath Trust, Refugee Action, Room for Refugees, Truemark Trust, United St Saviour’s Charity, Wakefield and Tetley Trust, and 29 May 1961 Trust.
Our work on homelessness

A distressing number of our clients are homeless or face the real risk of being out on the street.

In the winter months of 2018/19 we saw and supported around 50 homeless people who were either sofa-surfing or already sleeping rough. Others, often families, were only keeping a roof over their heads at the cost of enduring abusive relationships.

At SDCAS we do not provide accommodation ourselves, but we work to try and ensure that people do not become homeless and help find shelter for those who do. It is a difficult task for our staff and volunteer advisers.

This year we began a 3-year Early Action Project to help ensure that the day centre is supporting its homeless users in the best way possible. Early Action is a partnership with 8 other charities in the UK, led by Refugee Action and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund to identify and implement services that help asylum seekers before they reach crisis point.

Our Early Action Development Workers (Ola & Warren) have worked specifically on homelessness cases at the Centre.

Their aim is to enable our advisers to be more effective in supporting clients who have become homeless, and also to know best how to support those at risk.

So for example they have built up a network of organisations that provide crisis shelter in London while also understanding the opportunity for clients to find longer-term housing.

They have now set up a programme of volunteer training, casework and other holistic support to help frontline workers. Once tried and tested at our Centre sessions, it will be shared with our Early Action partners and potentially more widely.
## Detailed Statement of Financial Activities – 31 March 2019

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| **Costs**                   | **182,809** | **183,585** |
Above: Art session run by volunteers Ali (middle) and Christa (right) at Barry House accommodation centre.

Above: Clients socialising at our Peckham Park Road Centre

Right: Amazingly this year’s outing to the beach was sunny again...

Ahmadzia’s (third from left in picture above) Kite Exhibition at the Horiman Museum (right)
How to find us

Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers

Co-ordinator: Pauline Nandoo
Administrator: Judith Ahikire
Copleston Centre
Copleston Road
London
SE15 4AN

Tuesday
12.30-5.00 pm
Copleston Centre,
Copleston Road,
London
SE15 4AN

Wednesday
11.30 am-4.30 pm
Peckham Park Road
Baptist Church,
121 Peckham Park Road,
London
SE15 6SX

Thursday
1.00-5.00 pm
St Mary Newington,
Kennington Park Road,
London
SE11 4JQ

How to get involved
Volunteers, supporters and funders – please join us.
Contact us on office@sdcas.org.uk, call us on 020 7732 0505,
or check out our website at sdcas.org.uk if you’d like to know more.