

Islington **Somali** Community



Annual Report 2024-2025

**Supporting Somalis living, working or studying in
the London Borough of Islington for over 30 years**

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Mission Statement

Provide a high quality service that is accessible for all and can meet the ever-changing needs of our community; to work towards harmony and inclusiveness.

Our Vision

Work towards a community where people are in control of their lives and confident in relating to other members of the community.

Objectives

The main objective of Islington Somali Community (ISC) is to improve the wellbeing of Somalis living, working or studying in the London Borough of Islington. Most of ISC's work focuses on providing advice and information to residents in the areas of welfare benefits, education, employment, healthcare, accessing utilities, consumer rights and other services. ISC Connect provides support to Somali elders in Islington.

We also support young people and organise youth activities to engage them positively and enable them to focus on their educational and social development. We provide emotional and psychological support to refugees who have had challenging experiences in Somalia and the UK.

ISC Links is a youth work project helping young people access sports, training and employment. We also organise cultural events, Somali mother tongue and supplementary classes, outings for children and adults, as well as interpreting and translation services.

All of these activities help those with whom we work to achieve positive opportunities for Somalis of all ages in Islington and London.

Chair's Report: Essa Ali

This year, the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and the rising cost of living have continued to place significant strain on our community. Increasing financial hardship, housing insecurity, and mental health challenges mean that more people than ever are seeking our support. Demand for our services remains high, and while we prioritise urgent cases, waiting lists remain a reality.

Despite these pressures, our charity has remained strong and focused. The Board of Trustees has continued to ensure good governance, financial sustainability, and adapting our priorities to meet changing needs. The lived experience within our Board continues to guide our work with empathy and insight.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers, whose professionalism and compassion make a profound difference every day. We are also deeply grateful to our funders and partners for their vital support in helping vulnerable individuals and families through crisis.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to accessible, inclusive, and life-changing services. With the continued dedication of our team, trustees, and supporters we face the future with resilience and determination.



Co-ordinator's Report: Yussuf Ahmed

Over the past year many residents have faced increased financial hardship, housing insecurity and mental health concerns. Demand for our advice and other services remains exceptionally high. Emergency cases continue to be prioritised to ensure that those in urgent need receive immediate assistance.

We are incredibly grateful to our dedicated staff and volunteers, who consistently go above and beyond to provide high-quality support under immense pressure. Their commitment and compassion are vital to the success of our services and deeply appreciated by the community.

We would also like to express our sincere thanks to all our funders for their continued support and generosity. In addition, the Resident Support Scheme through the Council, Cloudesley Crisis Fund and local food banks have played a crucial role in helping families manage financial crises and access essential day-to-day support.

Our user lead approach means that ISC has a deep understanding of the challenges faced by local people and this allows us to adapt our services effectively and focus on increasing our reach to support even more individuals in need.

2024-2025 proved to be a very positive year for our charity in many ways. Looking forward, ISC remains committed to delivering accessible, inclusive, and life-changing support to those who rely on us.



ISC Advice

In response to growing community needs, ISC Advice expanded its service to address the significant challenges faced by Somalis in Islington. Over the past year, we increased capacity with additional sessions and our one-to-one appointments at our Finsbury Park centre provided essential, tailored support to residents in crisis.

As an active member of the **Islington BAMER Advice Alliance (IBAA)** and a contributor to the **Islington Strategic Advice Partnership**, ISC continues to play a key role in improving access to advice across the borough. Our service has made a significant impact, particularly for residents facing complex financial issues such as welfare benefits, housing benefit overpayments, council tax arrears, utility debts, and employment or education challenges.

Taking a holistic approach, ISC reviews each client's full financial and personal circumstances, including health and wellbeing to provide effective, sustainable solutions. Where specialist support is needed (e.g., housing or legal issues), clients are referred to partner organisations to ensure their needs are fully met.

During the past 12 months, ISC supported **2,887 client cases**, including **897 individuals** struggling with substantial debts including housing benefit, council tax, and utility bills. Our casework has helped prevent further financial deterioration, stress and evictions.

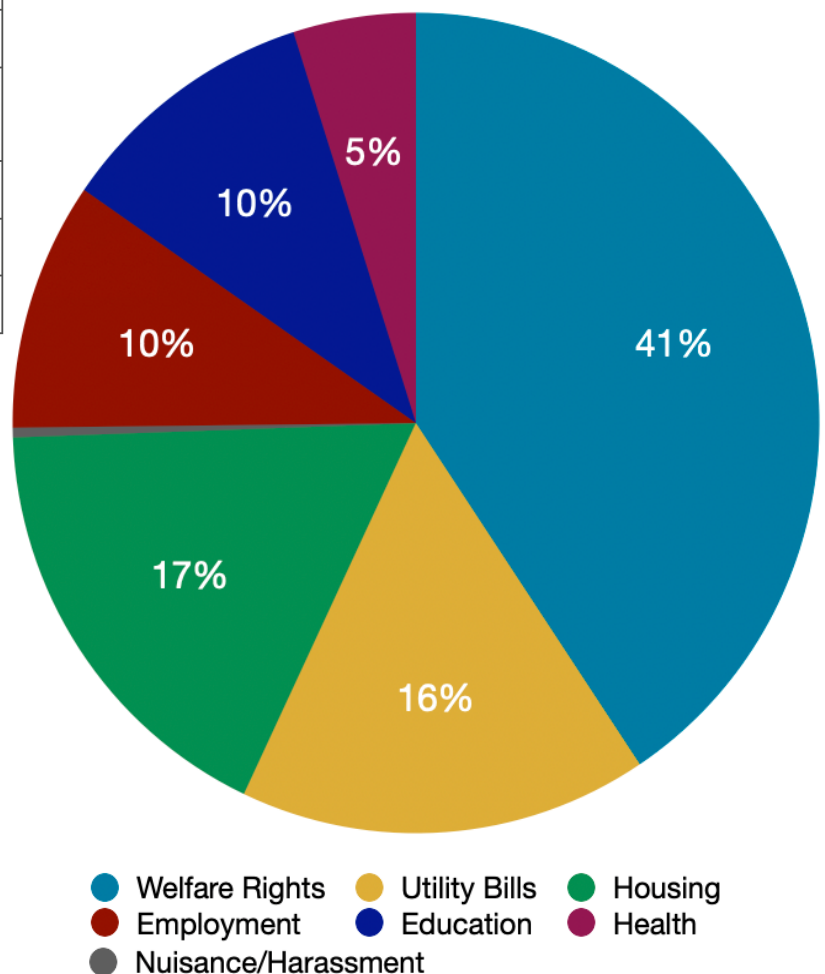
Client feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing their appreciation for the support received through ISC Advice.





Breakdown of Cases

Case Area	Number
Welfare Rights	1,173
Utility Bills	473
Housing	503
Nuisance/ Harassment	11
Employment	283
Education	302
Health	142



Skills, Employment, and Financial Empowerment

A significant portion of local adults continue to face unemployment and low income, often due to skill gaps and educational barriers. Many also experience challenges related to language, digital literacy, and confidence.

To address these issues, ISC organised **14 capacity building sessions** throughout the year, engaging **293 participants**. These sessions covered budgeting, welfare entitlements, housing rights and employability skills. Participants also received practical assistance with CV writing, job search and interview preparation.

This initiative aims to empower residents by improving their financial literacy, enhancing their employment prospects and strengthening their ability to budget effectively.

Funded by City Bridge Foundation and Islington Council.

Health Watch Partnership

This year, Healthwatch Islington supported and facilitated many workshops. We worked closely with **Islington GP Federation, the NHS, Centre 404, and SENDIS** to deliver community health and wellbeing events. These offered free health checks, expert advice and practical support to improve access to care for Somali low-income families. Topics included **winter wellness, mental health, prostate cancer, diabetes, managing blood pressure, menopause, SEN** and **immunisation awareness**. Each event offered a safe and culturally inclusive space where residents could speak directly with professionals, increasing confidence in using local health services.



Many residents took up GP appointments and health screening opportunities as a result. The programme strengthened collaboration between health partners and reinforced ISC's role as a trusted bridge between the community and healthcare providers.

ISC Links

Youth Support and Empowerment



SFL information session – Ayan Guled

This year, ISC Links, with support of **Mayor of London's Community Outreach Programme**, supported over 300 young people by tackling barriers to education, training and employment. Many faced challenges including mental health, and housing issues.

ISC helped young people access Universal Credit, disability benefits and homelessness prevention through mediation and referrals to specialist services. Engagement with Somali parents strengthened family relationships and reduced anti-social behaviour.

Key Outcomes

- 197 progressed into college or vocational training
 - 119 gained employment
 - 80%+ made measurable progress through volunteering, work, or further education
- A dedicated youth worker provided mentoring, CV and interview support, building confidence, wellbeing and independence.

Education, Outreach & Partnerships

ISC reconnected young people to learning through ESOL sessions and others focused on green energy, budgeting, AI and social care. Weekly sessions and estate outreach promoted opportunities in partnership with Capital City College, Islington Council, the WEA, New City College and City Lit.

The project shared its impact at the Community Outreach Programme (Feb 2025) and is exploring new collaborations with UK Shared Prosperity Fund providers and the EFL (English Football League) Trust "Training Ground" project.

Somali Youth Football & Engagement



Weekly football sessions combined sport with workshops on knife crime, gangs, and substance misuse. ISC also held:

- A mental health workshop for youth and parents
- A safety session with police and Islington Council for 62 parents/carers
- Referrals to local support services

Results

Greater safety awareness, reduced peer-pressure risks, and stronger trust between youth, parents, and professionals.

“Football kept me focused.”

- Service User, 15

“It’s rewarding to guide young people away from negative influences.”

- Peer Mentor

Mother Tongue and Supplementary School



Some students took part in International Mother Tongue Day - an annual event where the Mayor of Islington gives certificates and award

Our supplementary school helps children develop a sense of identity and their understanding and appreciation for Somali language, culture and heritage. The school complements the national curriculum at all stages with an emphasis on maths, science and English language. It also covers citizenship including youth rights and responsibilities. Through the project pupils receive help with their homework and tutoring in basic skills to increase their confidence and performance.

The MTSS plays a crucial role given that many Somalis have under-achieved academically in the past. The project works closely with local schools and one key indicator of the success of the project is that students almost universally report increased confidence in themselves, their abilities and their futures.

The MTSS supported 24 children during 2024-2025.

ISC Connect

Supporting Isolated Older Somalis in Islington



Thanks to a grant from local funder **Cloudesley**, ISC Connect supported isolated older Somali residents in Islington, many of whom experience loneliness, depression, mobility problems, dementia along with language and cultural barriers. The project:

- Reduces social isolation through weekly social sessions
- Provides a volunteer-led befriending service for housebound and disabled older people
- Delivers health talks, advocacy and access to services
- Promotes wellbeing, mental health, and community engagement
- Increases awareness and access to rights and welfare entitlements

Achievements and Beneficiaries

- Total beneficiaries: 119 older adults (all 60+, 65% women, 35% men)
- Delivered 45 social sessions including yoga, coffee mornings, workshops and lunches
- Eight volunteers trained to provide befriending and one-to-one support, accompanying participants to health appointments, community activities and the mosque
- Facilitated access to health, housing, and welfare services including referrals to stroke support, mental health services and food banks.
- Digital skills training provided to enhance social connections via platforms such as WhatsApp.

Impact

- Weekly social sessions and volunteer support reduced isolation and improved wellbeing
- Over 300 residents participated in health education initiatives, including workshops on cancer awareness, diabetes, hypertension and vaccinations
- Beneficiaries reported increased confidence, social connectedness and ability to access services
- Culturally sensitive support ensured services were accessible and relevant

Case Studies

Aden, 61: Post-stroke, faced communication and mobility challenges. ISC Connect coordinated culturally appropriate care, peer support, and community engagement, helping him regain confidence and social connection.

"Living with kidney failure is tough, but the weekly group gives me something to look forward to." – Rahama, 66

"The yoga sessions have helped me recover from major surgery and feel more confident." – Sarah, 63

"I received the support I needed to feel safe and supported in my home." – Hadan, 71

Learning and Future Plans

- Ongoing health and wellbeing workshops to increase engagement and improve outcomes.
- Future plans include expanding wellness and exercise classes and continuing partnerships with local providers to enhance service access for vulnerable older adults.

Challenges and Opportunities

- High levels of chronic health conditions, mobility limitations, and financial hardship among Somali older people
- Language barriers and accessibility issues remain a challenge
- Increasing demand for housing adaptations and welfare support due to an ageing population
- Cost-of-living pressures and changes to disability benefits often impacting the most vulnerable residents

Accounts

Accounts Summary 24-25			to 31/3/25	to 31/4/24
	Unrestricted	Restricted		
Income	£27,000	£119,677	£146,677	£141,689
Expenditure	£22,900	£121,599	£144,500	£120,004
Net Income/Expenditure	£4,100	£1,922	£2,177	£21,685
Funds Brought Forward	£58,740	£45,081	£103,821	£82,136
Total Funds Carried Forward	£62,840	£43,159	£105,998	£103,821

For the full audited accounts please contact:

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Our Funders

Islington Somali Community thanks all organisations who have provided funds for our work:

London Borough of Islington
City Bridge Foundation
Islington BAMER Advice Alliance
Mayor of London
Trust for London
Cloudesley Foundation
Awards for All

Our Team

Management Committee

Essa Hussein Ali (Chair)
Ismail Egal (Secretary)
Ahmed Ibrahim Tani (Treasurer)
Mustafa Aideed
Bashir Nur
Fadhiya Elmi
Muna Mohamed
Guled Ahmed

Staff

Yussuf Ahmed - Coordinator
Abdul Ali - Advice Worker
Nimo Ali - Advice Worker
Ayan Guled - ISC Link Project Worker

Volunteers

Muna Abdullahi
Salah Adem
Foos Mohamed
Hanad Hassan
Huda Otmani
Maymuna Ali
Mohamed Hassan
Abdiqaliq Ahmed



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