

Increasing access to justice in the immigration system



Contents

1. Welcome	3
2. Grant partners	7
3. Working together, strengthening organisations	12
4. Justice Together processes and support	22
5. Finances and our people	24

Glossary

Lived experience – This refers to someone who has lived experience of the immigration system. Justice Together defines “lived experience” as having direct personal experience of the immigration system or having insecure status in the UK or an equivalent system.

Organisations led by people with lived experience of the immigration system – Justice Together defines an organisation as led by people with lived experience of the immigration system if: the majority of their board members, senior leadership team and operational staff are people with lived experience. Through the assessment process we weigh quantitative and qualitative information to make a judgement about meaningful lived experience leadership and accountability. We would look for over 50% of the board as well as some of their senior leadership and/or operational staff, and that they can demonstrate that they are embedded within and accountable to the community they work with, and that they have sufficient mechanisms for this.

Grant partner – This is an organisation receiving funding from Justice Together. We also refer to Partner Organisations, which are organisations that are grant partners and receiving funds but they are not the main applicant, for example Migrants Organise are the main grant partner and there are two Partner Organisations, which are receiving Justice Together funding via Migrants Organise.

OISC – The Office for Immigration Services Commissioner is the regulatory body for immigration advice. Immigration advisors are regulated by them. Advisors register at different levels, which outline what type of immigration advice can be given.

NRPF – No Recourse to Public Funds is applied to people who are subject to immigration control. It means you are not able to access public funds such as mainstream benefits and social housing.

1 Welcome

2023 has seen increased hostility towards migrants and new legislation aimed at eroding the basic rights of people to seek safety and join family members. With the passing of the Nationality and Borders Act, followed by the Illegal Migration Act, the UK has become a more hostile place for all migrants, and for people seeking asylum the right to claim asylum has effectively been ended in the UK.

These changes in legislation have a huge impact on those they directly affect, but also on those supporting people to navigate an already complex system. Our grant partners have reported how difficult it has been to understand the potential impacts of these new laws, as well as the emotional toll such drastic measures have on those working in the sector, where hope is hanging by a thread.

During this last year, it is that hope that has carried our partners through – not only surviving the storm, but developing new ways to come together to build power and make change. A number of our grant partners have been involved in defeating the government's plans to send people to Rwanda to have their asylum claims processed: proof that justice can prevail.

When Justice Together launched three years ago, we could never have predicted how hostile the immigration rhetoric and policies of the government would become; nor did we foresee the cost of living crisis and the devastating impact it would have on our grant partners and the communities they serve.

It's heartening to see how our Justice Together Initiative (JTI) values have enabled us to respond quickly and effectively to these challenges, and continue to support our grantees in our common aim of increasing access to justice in the immigration system.

The trust we have placed in our grant partners has enabled them to try new things, strengthen their infrastructure and get on with their vital work.

This year we successfully completed all our initial grant rounds, and we now fund legal advice partnerships in every region of England, and in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. With the upcoming general election in 2024, we have been able to re-direct funds towards influencing work to capitalise on the opportunity to influence a potential new government.

Our Community of Impact has continued to grow and develop, with more opportunities for grant partners to meet and learn about each other's work, and forge new connections to work and learn together in the future. For the first time since the launch of the initiative, we brought all our partners together for an in-person meeting in York, creating space for the wider JTI community to reflect, connect and share in what has been a very difficult year for all.

As a testament to the amazing work of our grant partners, the strength and impact of the Initiative and the huge need for immigration advice and influencing for change, nearly all our funder partners renewed funding this year for larger amounts, over longer periods. We are also proud to welcome a number of new funder partners who joined the Initiative this year.

We look forward to next year with hope, humility and renewed determination to play our part in building a sector that is stronger, more inclusive and better connected, to work together to increase access to justice in the immigration system.

Jen Ang Chair of the Justice Together Initiative Grants Committee

Our Vision, Mission, Values and Goals

Context:

The Justice Together Initiative (JTI) is a unique collaboration launched in 2020 with a decade-long vision to ensure that people who use the UK immigration system can access justice fairly and equally.

Vision:

People who use the immigration system can access justice fairly and equally, so that they can get on with their lives.

Mission:

Through grant-making, collaboration and valuing lived experience, JTI will increase access to immigration advice and influencing activities and improve coordination and cooperation across the immigration sector, leading to lasting change.

Values:

We are committed to:

- Equality and human rights
- Collaboration and partnership
- Inclusivity
- Anti-racism
- Building trust with our partners
- Sharing learning, listening and responding in an ever more challenging context
- Being courageous and open to new solutions to entrenched problems

Goal 1:

A more just and equitable legal advice system is developed.

Goal 2:

Legal advice organisations are sustainable, better networked and more representative of the communities they serve.

Goal 3:

Individuals have access to just, timely and high-quality legal advice and support.

Justice Collaborations is a subsidiary of The Legal Education Foundation. Both entities are charities registered in England and Wales.

An interview with Dylan Fotoohi – Justice Together Grants Committee member

Can you tell us a bit about your yourself?

I joined the JTI grants committee in September 2020. I have been working in different roles in the UK migration and refugee sector since 2013. I migrated to the UK in 2013 and went through the asylum process, and started my involvement in the migration and refugee sector as soon I arrived in the UK.

Why were you interested in being part of Justice Together?

Justice Together was born in response to one of the most fundamental needs of people who migrate to the UK – access to justice – and to address some of the most important gaps in the migration and refugee support sector in the UK.

I have personally been through the asylum process in the UK and understand how your legal immigration status determines your access to pretty much all basic life necessities, and all your rights and entitlements. Your access to housing, education, employment, healthcare, your ability to rebuild a life in a new country, your sense of belonging, your hopes and your aspirations, your energy and motivation to contribute, your safety and security: these are all directly affected by your legal status. So, it's crucial to have a fair, efficient and humane immigration system in the UK that grants people who migrate to this country the legal status that enables them to access their rights and entitlements and live a human life. And it's incredibly important for people who migrate to the UK to have access to professional legal advice and representation to help them navigate the immigration system.

A fair, efficient and humane immigration system currently does not exist in the UK. At the same time, the capacity of the migration and refugee charity sector and statutory services to provide support, advice and representation is not sufficient at all. Access to justice is limited as a result.

For me, what is really appealing and admirable about the mission of Justice Together is the vision of enabling civil society to reform the system through policy and advocacy work, i.e. addressing the root cause of the problems, while at the same time channelling resources to service providers to give professional legal advice and representation, i.e. easing some of the symptoms of the problem.

Another really important quality of Justice Together is their commitment to delegating power and agency to people with lived experience of the UK immigration system, and their support of partners, grantees, and funders to apply a similar approach. The grants committee is formed by a majority of people with lived experience. We have seen the fruits of this good practice in the depth and quality of the discussion and the decisions made.

What's it like being on the Justice Together Grants Committee?

Being on the grants committee over the past few years has been a great experience for me. I really hope that all other funders, partners, grantees and the civil society sector as a whole continue to move towards a similar approach to practice: to delegate power and to meaningfully involve people with lived experience at all levels of their decision-making and operational structures.

We are a collaboration of our Funder Partners:

A B Charitable Trust

**The Baring
Foundation**



SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON



**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**



the
Tudor trust

UNBOUND

2

Grant partners



Where our grants have been awarded

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT GRANTS

2 grants awarded
2 organisations funded
Total awarded: **£500,000**

NORTHERN IRELAND

3 grants awarded
8 organisations funded
Total awarded: **£620,000**

WALES

2 grants awarded
3 organisations funded
Total awarded: **£500,000**

NATIONAL INFLUENCING GRANTS

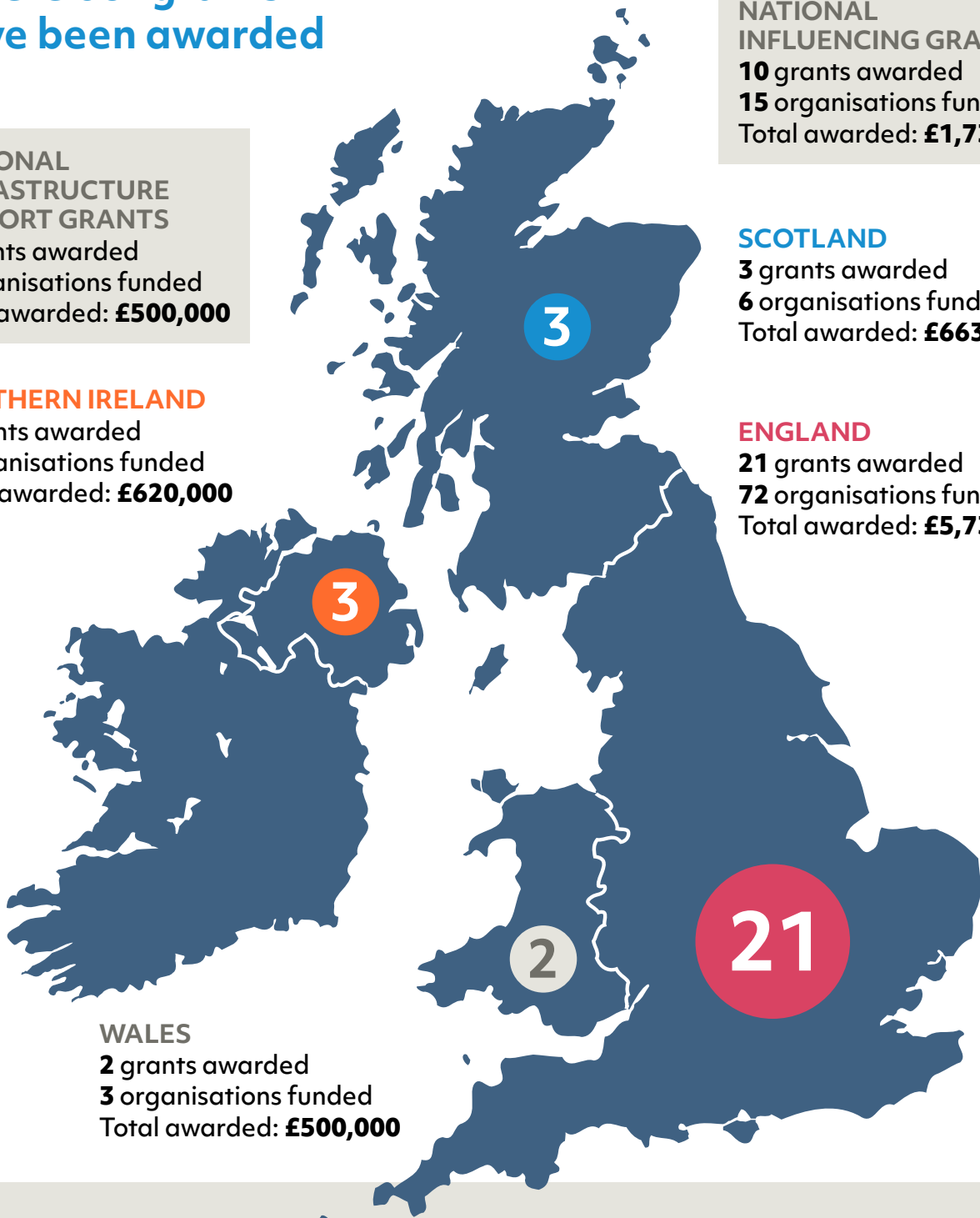
10 grants awarded
15 organisations funded
Total awarded: **£1,734,959**

SCOTLAND

3 grants awarded
6 organisations funded
Total awarded: **£663,558**

ENGLAND

21 grants awarded
72 organisations funded
Total awarded: **£5,731,437**



“

The JTI grant enabled us to hire a solicitor as a mentor. It's been extremely helpful for complex cases. When you're the sole immigration advisor in the organisation, you struggle having no one to bounce ideas off. Now I can pick up the phone where previously I had to rely on forums. It's helped my sanity. When you're one person, you run options through your head and you keep reading guidance and legislation but you have doubts about the path you're choosing for someone. Being able to pick up the phone to a solicitor helps.

Grant Partner, 2023

2023 in numbers



41
grants made to main
organisations



52
advice positions funded,
32 of whom have lived
experience of the
immigration system



81
partner
organisations



21
influencing positions
funded, 20 of whom have
lived experience of the
immigration system



£4,583,883
granted in total (2023)



35
organisations that
are user-led



562
attended Justice
Together events



9,881
people advised by
grant partners¹



13
events organised

1. This number represents the number of people advised by Justice Together funded advice posts, for grant partners that have had at least one full year of funding.

Key activities in 2023

-  Awarded grants to 18 lead organisations and 33 partner organisations across the UK to improve access to justice in the immigration system, totalling £4,583,883.
-  Launched a new infrastructure support grant programme, focussed on grassroots migrant led organisations, providing one-off grants of up to £20,000 for organisations to strengthen their infrastructure.
-  Ran a successful in-person event in York, bringing together 81 people from our grant partners across the UK, with workshops around political strategy, community organising, somatics and providing open spaces for discussion on key topics.
-  Organised 13 events attended by 562 people from the Justice Together Community of Impact across the immigration advice and influencing sector, to share learnings, network and strategise.
-  Commissioned Black Wellbeing Collective to run a successful, bespoke wellbeing support package for racialised people working in the migration sector.
-  Supported the growth of lived experience within the immigration sector through practical guidance and grant-making priorities.
-  Commissioned and published research into the funding of immigration advice by Local Authorities across the UK.
-  Recruited an organisation to work with the legal and migration sector and communities to develop a vision for change for access to justice, ready for a potential new government.
-  Raised additional funds from our funder partners and secured renewed funding for Justice Together.
-  Developed our internal understanding and approach to anti-racism and funded expert support for two grant partners.
-  Recruited learning partners and published our first learning report.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Reunite Families

Strengthening new grassroots organisations

In 2021 Justice Together funded Reunite Families, a small grassroots 'by and for' support and campaign group assisting couples and families affected by the spouse visa rules, which had been started in 2017 (currently includes partners only being able to join another partner in UK if the combined gross annual income is at least £18,600). At the time they had 2,200 members affected by the rules, and were run solely by volunteers who had also been affected. They were small but had a significant reach and filled a niche area of migration law which had a huge impact on people's lives. They wanted to register as a CIO and had ambitious plans to grow their links with media, parliamentarians, UKVI and across the migration and legal sector to change the spousal visa rules, so more families could be together.

With Justice Together funding, they were able to take on paid staff to lead the group, and they have grown significantly. They have been able to attract more funding and have many new links with organisations they have met through Justice Together events as well as funders they have been connected to.

When the war in Ukraine broke out, Reunite Families' workload grew exponentially, as families wanted to be together. With additional funding raised through Justice Together, they were able to increase their management capacity to cover additional influencing work with the media and parliamentarians to raise awareness about the needs of Ukrainians.

In December 2023 the government announced an increase to the minimum income requirement (MIR) for spouse visas from £18,600k to £38,700k. This was a shattering blow to Reunite Families and all their members. They were, however, in an excellent position to lobby and mobilise the supporters they had been amassing over the last few years, and the links and relationships they had built upon with the sector, the media and parliamentarians. When the news

hit, they were able to act fast and quickly started gathering stories from within their membership and connecting these to journalists. The media was overwhelmingly positive in favour of a drop in the raise in the MIR. Reunite Families wrote an open letter with over 2,300 signatures which was presented to the Prime Minister and two of their members started petitions that together have amassed almost 130,000 signatures.

Due to their awareness raising, Reunite Families' membership grew by 50% in the first week after the MIR increase news and continues to grow. They now have over 3,600 members and have been able to galvanise even more people to speak out. They are working with the Refugee and Migrant Project (RAMP) and met with MPs and encouraged their members to do so too, sharing the real stories of the impact of the policy.

As a result of the critical media against the policy to increase the MIR and Reunite Families making public their plans to take the Home Office to court, the government backtracked. They announced that the MIR will now increase to £29,000 in spring 2024 and then to £38,000 in January 2024. As a general election is due before then, it is likely that the £38,000 rise will not come into effect.

Reunite Families demonstrates how power can be harnessed by grassroots organisations that are led by people affected by the issues they are working on, and the importance of trusting, funding and supporting groups to build that power, so that when a crisis hits they can respond quickly.

3

Working together, strengthening organisations



Community of Impact

Our grant partners make up our Community of Impact. We invite the group together throughout the year to learn and share, on topics identified through our regular meetings with grant partners. This year, we held many well-attended events on a variety of different topics.

Community of Impact events and numbers of people attended

110	Launch JTI commissioned research by Jo Wilding – Local Authority funding of Immigration Advice – online (9/5/23)
81	Grant partner event networking, sharing and strategising on access to justice – day long in person event in York (5/7/23)
70	Welcome to new grant partners and learning and impact report launch – online (22/3/23)
67	Experts by Experience – Employment and recruitment information and sharing session – online (25/5/23)
65	Joint JTI and Sebba Foundation meeting – with Affordable Justice: exploring their model of low cost charging for legal advice – online (29/11/23)
40	Joint ILPA training on community lawyering – day long in-person event in Manchester (25/4/23)
24	Sharing learning from Racial Justice work with Jedi Consultancy, Women for Refugee Women, Work Rights Centre and Justice Together – online (11/7/23)
22	Public Law Project session on strategic litigation (with Immigration Legal Practitioners Association (ILPA)) – online and in person (3+6/3/23)
21	Meeting with grant partners to co-design the Community of Impact work – online (5/12/23)
14	Community organising training – Citizens UK – day long in-person event in Newcastle (10/2/23)
12	Grant partner meeting to share updates on influencing activities – online (7/11/23)
11	Community Lawyering Learning Exchange initial session (4 Org selected) – online (23/1/23)
8	JTI Northeast Partnership sharing learning from the Data project – online (14/7/23)

66

In many ways, it's no different from other grants. But the extra bit with JTI is that it's asking about sustainability and it's involving us, as grantees, in that conversation. As individual organisations, we can't see what everyone else is doing, what's working well, or what the issues are. But JTI can.

Grant Partner, 2023

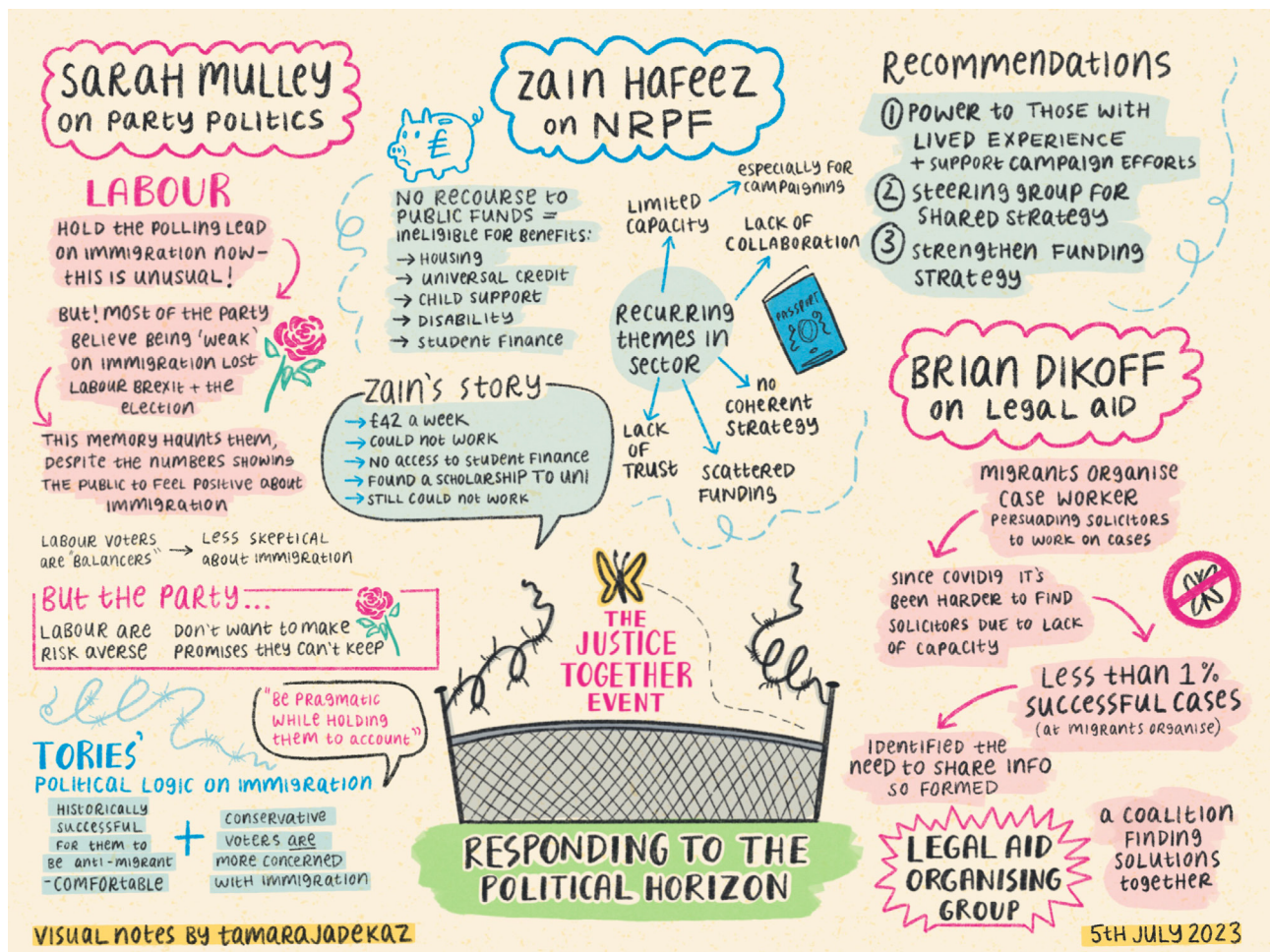
Bringing our grant partners together

In July we held our first in-person event for all our grant partners in York. 81 people attended in total from across the UK. The event featured a series of workshops on political and policy horizon scanning, legal aid, NRPf policy, Labour Party strategy, somatics practice, community organising and an open session covering topics such as power and recruitment and retention. The feedback has been incredibly positive, and participants really appreciated having time and space to connect with each other.



It's so valuable to bring us all together. I came away with a number of concrete follow ups with other organisations, which I hope will lead to useful collaborations.

Participant at Justice Together in person event July 2023



Thank you all so much for a wonderful day yesterday! I came away feeling refreshed and energized, with tons of ideas and inspiration, which feels like an enormous privilege in these bleak times. Everything was so thoughtfully organised.

Participant at Justice Together in person event July 2023

Community Lawyering exchange programme

We launched a virtual learning exchange between UK and US-based lawyers and organisers to learn more about community lawyering. 14 people were part of the learning exchange, which matches people from the UK and US so they can regularly meet to discuss approaches to their work and provide peer-to-peer support. There are also structured meetings with the whole group at regular intervals. Feedback so far has been incredibly positive, with participants learning about community lawyering and also more widely about funding models and methods of delivering and managing legal advice and organising.



The programme was great and insightful and I hope it is just the start of a wider conversation.

Participant in Community Lawyering exchange programme



Learning from [the] US partner about her own practice – in particular on practical matters like funding of cases, taking instructions from communities, other roles within their organisation (such as community organisers) and how these interact with lawyers and also conflict of interests. The US partner was very open to answer questions and also helped us reflect on our own practice and how we can start to slowly move towards a community lawyering model. The programme was also a great opportunity for us to reflect on our practice and discuss it in the wider organisation, both at executive level but also with other colleagues who are not lawyers.

Participant in Community Lawyering exchange programme

Improving data collection in the North East

Between July 2022 to May 2023 Apteligen was appointed by Justice Together Initiative (JTI), Justice Lab and North East Law Centre (NELC) to provide data practitioner support and explore creating shared data sets with NELC and two of their partners in the JTI-funded NE Partnership – North of England Refugee Service (NERS) and Justice First.

Whilst they were not able to develop shared data sets, they found working with the consultants incredibly useful in thinking

about how and why they collect data, referral pathways and developing new ways of presenting the data.

They published a detailed report giving an overview of the project, key lessons learnt and recommendations: *Data in the not for profit immigration legal advice & support sector: Learning from a Justice Together Initiative, Justice Lab and North East Partnership initiative*, March 2023.

SPOTLIGHT ON: The Refugee and Migrant Centre

Stronger together: Strengthening collaboration and peer support for immigration advisors across West Midlands

The Refugee and Migrant Centre, with partners Hope Projects, Brushstrokes and Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent (CASNS), received Justice Together funding in 2022 to increase Level 2 advisors regulated by the Office for Immigration Service Commission (OISC) in the region, develop a network of advisors, improve referral pathways and expand advice into areas of advice deserts.

All the partners have recruited new OISC advisors or supported existing staff to become OISC registered, meaning in total there are an additional 12 OISC advisors.

“ JTI funding has made it possible for me to progress toward OISC level 2, without which it would not have been possible. The partnership has provided me (as a trainee) with excellent resources including study groups, network meetings and of course a plethora of knowledge, support, and supervision from peer caseworkers/supervisors. All in all, this provides for a fantastic learning environment to enable me to achieve level 2 accreditation.

Heidi Latala, Immigration Caseworker; OISC level 2 Trainee, CASNS

In November 2022, they launched the West Midlands Immigration Advisors Network, a network of advisors across the West Midlands that meets every six weeks online and works as a forum for sharing good practice, discussing cases and legal developments, providing mentoring opportunities and enhancing collaboration. It has also facilitated case referrals between members, depending on their capacity and expertise. The network has 23 members so far, from eight different organisations providing free immigration advice across the West Midlands. As a result of the network, advisors feel more supported, resilient and less isolated when doing casework.

“ The West Midlands Immigration Advisors Network has exceeded the expectations we had when we first pitched the idea. RMC has brought together organisations across the region, proudly strengthening relationships and improving the quality of advice in the region. We’ve done this, in no small part, by sharing our expert legal advice experience and well-established, model of training and delivery.

Abbas Baig, Head of Services & Danai Papachristopoulou, Immigration Department Manager, RMC

“ The JTI Network run by RMC is essential to all who work frontline and in small charities. As legal aid diminishes, and legal deserts are created not for profit fill the gap. Having the peer support from this group, to discuss cases, pass on knowledge and experience is invaluable. Not only do we share knowledge, but we strive to raise the standard of asylum and immigration advice in the region.

Aliya Khan FCILEx OISC Level 3 – Head of Legal Department – Hope Project

The network is developing as a forum to discuss policy and influencing. In July 2023, after relevant discussions in the Advisors Network meetings, RMC and Central England Law Centre took the initiative to ask Zarah Sultana MP to raise a question in Parliament regarding plans to grant settlement to Sudanese evacuees who were granted leave to enter the UK for six months. A written response was received to this question, which was shared with our networks, including ILPA, and was included in the legal analysis on the issue on the leading website Free Movement.

The ability to deepen relationships and build knowledge between partners through the West Midlands Network is an excellent example of long-term, sustainable groundwork to strengthen immigration advice.

Racial justice work

One of our core values is Anti-Racism. We are committed to being anti-racist as an initiative and supporting our grant and funder partners to develop their practices to be more anti-racist. Whilst we value this, we are very far from achieving it and recognise it is an area in which learning and development is continuous.



Our activities this year:

1 Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG)

The working group membership is a mix of internal grant committee members, grant partner staff and experts in racial justice. The working group has acted as an advisory group for the development of our racial justice strategy and action plan, as well as advising us on how we can best support the sector and funder partners with racial justice work and supporting JTI staff to remain accountable to our anti-racist goals.

2 Practical support for grant partners

We funded Jedi consultants to work in-depth with two grant partners, Women for Refugee Women and Work Rights Centre, providing training, advice and practical guidance on developing their organisations to be more anti-racist. As a result, Work Rights Centre have started work on an anti-oppression policy for the organisation, as well as reviewing their existing policies and ensuring that anti-oppression values are embedded into the charity structure and practices.

3 Working with our funder partners

We commissioned Ten Years' Time to run a series of bespoke in-person sessions with our funder partners, to look more closely at how funder practices can be more anti-racist. We also held a half day event for our funder partners looking at anti-oppressive funder practices. As a result of this, we will be setting up a funder peer learning group to discuss and learn more about these issues.

4 Our approach to learning

We recruited a new learning partner, Terri Beswick (thepoliticalpractice.org), with a particular focus and expertise on anti-oppression. Terri has already assisted us in our thinking around how our approach to learning can be anti-oppressive.



While the JTI grant hasn't directly funded anti-racism activities, it's been useful as a lever for us. We can say: "funders are demanding it" and that's enabled us to be more confident and more explicit with other funders about our commitment to anti-racism.

Grant Partner, 2023

LEARNING FROM TERRI, JUSTICE TOGETHER'S LEARNING PARTNER: FUNDERS, POSITIONALITY AND MAINSTREAMING

Many grantees spoke about the rhetorical impact of JTI prioritising anti-racism in their grant. For some, naming anti-racism has been a reminder of unexamined issues that need to be explored. For others, naming anti-racism in the grant created incentives to start – or continue – to ask questions about how this impacts on their work. In both cases, grantees understood the positionality and power that funders have to put – or keep – an issue on the agenda. When JTI prioritises a principle as a funder - and backs up that principle with money – it has a wider impact. In other words, funders have the power to 'mainstream' and JTI is choosing to use it.

Focus on wellbeing

We commissioned the Black Wellbeing Collective to host an eight week wellbeing programme for racialised people who work in the migration and refugee sector. The wellbeing programme provided 12 attendees with ways they can look after themselves, providing room to reflect and acknowledge wellbeing needs. Sessions were led by expert therapists, psychologists and professionals in the sector who all share lived experiences.

11/11



Attendees said the programme has improved their wellbeing in various ways.

100%



Attendees would like on-going wellbeing support.

90%



Attendees said that the programme has had ongoing impact for them in the workplace. eg. able to create better boundaries and prioritise self care as well as productivity.

“ This programme has been one of the collective’s most impactful stories yet

BWC Director Cam

“ I can focus on work better since the programme. Before the programme, I felt guilty about taking breaks, but now I can also create boundaries in the workplace.

Attendee

“ Producing our first wellbeing programme of 2023 has been both enjoyable and a big challenge. I have learnt that psychological safety, validation and compassion, can be key ingredients to build a space of trust and long-term self-care awareness for an individual. I have also learnt that the migration and refugee sectors are in need of further wellbeing support for staff, as there is a strong connection to how racialised groups are feeling. Being able to provide space for individuals to take part in looking after themselves has been fulfilling and our results have showcased how needed this programme has been.

BWC Director Cam Lesforis

“ I was pleasantly surprised as all the wellbeing programmes I attended prior were very surface level. I related to the experiences of others and felt so understood. There was a sense of immediate community. I learnt that it is not okay to overwork/ exhaust myself with too much workload. I understand boundaries and continue to use the tools we were taught.

Attendee

“ I feel heard and liberated to take my wellbeing seriously. The most impactful part of this programme has been the community we have built and how we all feel connected due to our work and backgrounds. Before the programme, I was very burnt out and really needed a space that could understand what I was going through.

Attendee

The Back Wellbeing Collective produced a full and detailed report feeding back on the programme, which we are happy to share on request – theblackwellbeingcollective.com

Influencing and evidence

Funding for immigration advice

We commissioned and launched Jo Wilding's report *It's a no-brainer: Local Authority funding for immigration advice in the UK*.

The report explores how immigration advice is funded by local authorities across the UK. Over 110 people attended the launch event, many of whom were local authority staff members who were keen to connect and learn more about how they can fund immigration advice.

Jo found that out of the 153 local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland who responded to her Freedom of Information requests, 59 said they fund or commission immigration legal advice in some form.

As a result, in 2024 we will be starting work with a consultant to work with Local Authorities to share learning about funding immigration advice.

Developing a shared vision for access to justice

We continued to bring grant partners together working on influencing, advocacy and front-line advice, to share policy priorities, strategies and emerging themes. We also worked with this group to refine Justice Together's influencing strategy. As well as our existing influencing funding, we raised additional funding from This Day to fund Migrants Organise to develop their legal aid organising work, in the run-up to the general election, to develop a shared sector manifesto around access to justice, and to organise and influence around this. The Legal Aid Organising group now has over 150 members from law firms, support organisations and migrants.

“

In one of the authorities, '[The NRPF team] had over 20 families on their records and we could see how to sort out status for eight of them just by going through those records, and the reason they hadn't was a lack of knowledge. That was eight families receiving accommodation and subsistence, which is a lot of money.' The NRPF Network uses an average annual cost of £17,151 per family supported, meaning this exercise alone may have saved over £137,000 for that.

Wilding, J., *It's a no Brainer: Local Authority funding for immigration advice in the UK* (2023)

“

JTI funding enabled the launch of a new flagship campaign which has expanded significantly and supported the creation of decentralised campaigns led by people who have experienced the immigration system.

Grant Partner, 2023

SPOTLIGHT ON: Bevan Foundation

Making the case for immigration advice for all migrants in Wales

The Bevan Foundation received funding from Justice Together in 2022 to build their influencing capacity to work with lawyers, migrant organisations and migrants to influence the Welsh government to increase access to quality immigration advice across Wales. In a short space of time, their access to justice project has had a significant impact and has built strong foundations for future work.

Before the Bevan Foundation's work, there was no dedicated influencing work on access to justice for all migrants. In the year since the project began, they have developed excellent links with Welsh Government officials, Ministers and Senedd researchers, through which they raised concerns about migrants' needs for legal assistance and the exclusion of people with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' (NRPF) from support. They persuaded the Welsh Government to broaden its policy approach to include all migrants, including undocumented people. They are contributing to Welsh Government work on broadening access to legal support and improving training for local authorities, as well as prompting the Welsh Government to broaden its Migration Integration Framework from a focus on forced migrants only to include all migrants, including those with precarious immigration status.

On the Illegal Migration Bill, they worked with Save the Children and others to create a joint briefing on the impact of the Bill in Wales. They also gave their own evidence to committees. This work contributed to the Senedd voting not to give consent to the Bill; the Welsh Government do not have the power to block the Bill, but not giving consent is a strong symbolic gesture.

Through their connections to grassroots organisations, lawyers and migrants in Wales, Bevan Foundation has gathered evidence about the need for legal advice and recently published a report examining the sustainability of legal aid in Wales, outlining key recommendations to protect immigration legal aid services. They have also recruited two research assistants, both migrants themselves, who have unique access to communities, to gather evidence of people's experiences to strengthen the influencing work with the Welsh Government.

They plan to develop their work with grassroots organisations Displaced People in Action, Oasis Cardiff and others, and to build a network for change across Wales, as they recognise they cannot do this work alone despite their significant progress so far.

Bevan Foundation is a great example of how a boost in funding into an area with very limited capacity, but huge potential for influence as a devolved nation, can have a significant impact on the way that migrants are treated.

4 Justice Together processes and support

Renewals process

Our first set of grants came up for renewal this year. Based on feedback from our previous grant rounds, we wanted to develop a renewal process that was as light touch for grant partners as possible whilst still gathering the information the grants committee needed. The renewals process starts nine months before the grant is due to end, and if the committee decide not to continue funding they will grant one year exit funding.

This year the grants committee reviewed and renewed 14 grants through this process:

- 1 Grant Manager to review the past reports from grant partners.
- 2 Review as a JTI team what available funds there are for renewals, advise grant partner, and explain that the decision is for the grant committee.
- 3 Arrange a call with grant partner, as well as sub-partners, to explore any additional updates beyond the reports, ask whether they want to make any big changes to the way they work, discuss their progress on anti-racism, wellbeing, and lived experience involvement and discuss funding and the budget. Grant Manager to write this up into a renewal report for the grant partner and sub partners to review, and for an updated budget to be added.
- 4 Renewal application to go to grants committee, whose meetings take place four times per year.

“

I really appreciated the approach to renewals because it is an acknowledgement of the amount of time organisations have to spend preparing an application. There's so much fatigue around writing reports and repeating information to different – or in some cases the same – funder

Grant Partner, 2023

Infrastructure support

Through funding more grassroots, migrant-led organisations, we identified that these small and quite new organisations may benefit from additional infrastructure support. As a result, in October 2023 we launched a new infrastructure support grant programme, with one off grants of up to £20,000 for organisations to strengthen their infrastructure. This could be through HR support, equipment, fundraising, governance, staff training or strategy development. A few grants have already been awarded with a focus on migrant-led and grassroots organisations.

“

It's been a positive experience with JTI from the first conversation. I feel like they listen and they're responsive. It's considered listening, proper listening

Grant Partner, 2023

LEARNING FROM TERRI, JUSTICE TOGETHER'S LEARNING PARTNER: CARE AS A POLITICAL PRACTICE

JTI's approach to reporting, grant renewals, and responses to project adaptations was repeatedly praised by grantees. It was almost always raised alongside their analysis of the unprecedented pressure on the immigration sector and the sustained assault on immigration policy. In other words, organisational challenges and the wider political context were linked in the minds of grantees. JTI's flexibility and approachability isn't just being interpreted as 'niceness' or 'kindness', it's being understood as a considered act, aimed at mitigating the stress and unnecessary burdens that people in the sector are currently experiencing.

THE POWER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

From the choice to proactively disperse extra funds as a cost-of-living increase to the ability to adapt 'ideal' plans to the very real recruitment difficulties, many grantees noted that JTI is acknowledging and trying to react to the realities they are facing. The persistence of bureaucratic or rigid grant-making conditions can feel like gaslighting for a sector that is operating amid perpetual political crises and scarcity. Therefore, acknowledgement – while a seemingly small act – demonstrates a welcome pragmatism and brings some administrative and psychological relief.

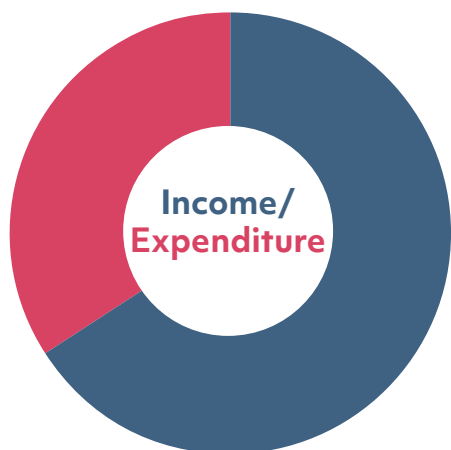
“

With JTI, it feels like we're on the same side. There's a feeling of trust that we can just get on with it and report what the issues are when they come up.

Grant Partner, 2023

5 Finances and our people

Income/Expenditure (From July 2022 to June 2023)



Income
£8,053,000

Expenditure
£4,168,000

Our people

Justice Collaborations Board

Joint Legal Education Foundation (TLEF) trustees:

- Paddy Sloan (Chair)
- Matthew Smerdon – LEF Chief Executive and JC Trustee
- Jen Ang and Jacqui Broadhead – Independent Trustees

Justice Together Initiative Grants Committee

Responsible for decision-making on grant applications and support with strategy development.

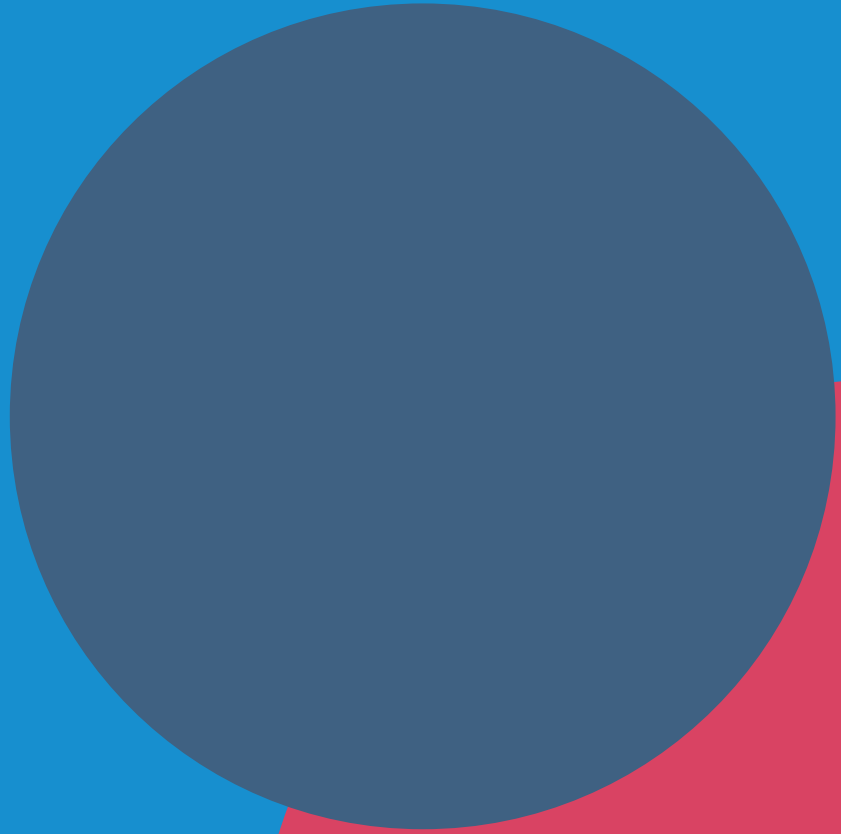
- Ali Torabi (external member)
- Dami Makinde (external member)
- Dylan Fotoohi (external member)
- Jacqui Broadhead
- Jen Ang (Chair)
- Matthew Smerdon

Justice Collaborations Executive (Senior Management Team)

- Rachael Takens-Milne – Director of Grants LEF
- Jake Lee – Director of Strategy LEF
- Hazel Williams – Head of Justice Together Initiative

Staff Team:

- Hazel Williams – Head of Justice Together Initiative
- Alex Mik – Grants Manager LEF (2 days a week)
- Farah Al-Haddad – Grants Manager
- Fidelia Elias – Grants Manager
- Annie Rockson – Grant Partner Community Manager (joined September 2023)



THE JUSTICE TOGETHER INITIATIVE
IMPACT REPORT 2023

Increasing access to justice in the immigration system

justice-together.org.uk

 [@justice_tog](https://twitter.com/justice_tog)

Justice Together is an initiative of Justice Collaborations
Registered Charity No. 1187441

 **JUSTICE
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