The British Institute of Human Rights

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# London Community Human Rights Programme

## Impact report for Year 2 of the programme




**BIHR Contacts:**

Sanchita Hosali, CEO: ceo@bihr.org.uk
Carlyn Miller, Head of Policy & Programmes: cmiller@bihr.org.uk

# Contents


**Executive Summary** ---- 1

**Programme Background** ---- 2

**Human rights development model** ---- 2

**The Impact of BIHR's Involvement** ---- 3

**Change Achieved with IRMO** ---- 5

Strengthening casework using the HRA: Thematic Workshops 5
MULTIPLYING RIGHTS: Sharing Human Rights Knowledge 6
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: Transforming Policy and Advocacy Work 7
LOOKING AHEAD: Building on Year 2's Impact 8

**Change achieved with SCA** ---- 8

Human Rights Education in State Schools 8
Human Rights as an Empowerment Tool for Young People 9
Human Rights Community Outreach 9
MULTIPLYING EMPOWERMENT: The Southall Human Rights Network 10
MOBILISING COMMUNITIES: Impacting Policy 10
Looking Ahead: Building on Year 2's Impact 11

**Residency Support** ---- 11
Community Plan For Holloway
Unfold

**Bringing Communities Together: Human Rights Event** ---- 12

Human Rights Workshop 12
Human Rights Panel 13
Human Rights Creative Space 13

**Conclusion and Next Steps** ---- 14




# Executive Summary

This report covers Year 2 of the four-year partnership of the London Community Human Rights Programme (LCHRP), funded by City Bridge Foundation and The Baring Foundation (following on from the initial development year 2023-2024). This report focuses on the work of the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR), one of the programme's development partners. The four-year partnership programme runs from 2024 to 2028.

This report draws heavily on direct qualitative feedback from community groups and their members who BIHR has provided human rights development support to this year, including through events, workshops, and resource co-production. We have also included a summary of key quantitative data gathered before and after various delivery supports to capture the measurable changes in human rights knowledge, capacity, confidence and action. Both demonstrate the programme's impact.

Year 2 has built on the strong foundation of human rights knowledge and confidence established in year 1 to successfully embed human rights-based approaches in the work of London community groups. By the end of Year 2, each of the four community groups has started to use human rights-based approaches instinctively as part of their existing work. This has strengthened casework, advocacy and policy work, and overall community support through the legal language of the Human Rights Act 1998.

The evidence shows clear progress, with examples of the HRA creating positive social change: community groups have successfully challenged decisions by public authorities that were not rights-respecting, mobilised young people to engage with local issues, and strengthened community action. Across Year 2, the programme has demonstrated the HRA's value as a practical tool for community empowerment.

**Key highlights include:**

- Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO) have successfully embedded human rights-based approaches across their casework, with many examples of using it to achieve positive social change from public authorities

- Southall Community Alliance (SCA) established the Southall Human Rights Network, a group of community organisations across Southall that are working together to implement a human rights-based approach to their community work.

- Community Plan for Holloway (CP4H), supported through Residency Days, provided human rights information and prompts to inform local voters ahead of a by-election.

- Unfold, supported through Residency Days, have co-developed train-the-trainer workshops informed by their Youth and Women's Advisory Councils.

# Programme Background

In 2024, City Bridge Foundation and The Baring Foundation jointly funded the five-year London Community Human Rights Programme (LCHRP), designed to support community and voluntary groups across London to adopt and embed human rights-based approaches in their work. The Baring Foundation administers the grants, while the British Institute of Human Rights (BIHR) and Just Fair were appointed as development partners to deliver human rights support.

Each programme year runs from 1 July to 30 June. The initial year — 'Year 0' — offered general support across London to understand community need, to build awareness of the potential for change using human rights approaches and reach out to potential partners. Activities included free workshops, events, and resources, with an emphasis on accessibility and relevance, and recognising the extreme fatigue and growing demands placed on London's vibrant community sector. This laid the groundwork for the four core delivery years (Years 1–4), which focus on deeper, long-term support for four selected community groups. Following an open and accessible application process, four organisations were selected:

- Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation (IRMO)
- Community Plan for Holloway (CP4H)
- Southall Community Alliance (SCA)
- Unfold

# Human Rights Development Model

BIHR primarily works with IRMO and SCA, while Just Fair supports CP4H and Unfold. Each development partner provides sustained, tailored support to help these groups embed human rights approaches into their work. This is complimented by a residency model so each development partner also provides support to those they are not primarily working with, in addition to specific work bringing all partners together for support, reflecting and planning.

The programme follows a four-year model. Year 1 focused on learning, building knowledge and confidence in using the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA). Year 2 built on this knowledge and confidence by supporting community groups to develop their own internal human rights-based approaches. In Year 3, community groups will have embedded human rights-based approaches across their work. By Year 4, the goal is for each group to use these embedded human rights processes to support their wider communities in using human rights to create positive social change. **This report reflects on the impact of Year 2 and the progress made during this building phase.**

# The impact of BIHR's Involvement

The aims of the second year of LCHRP focused on embedding was to:

- Support community groups to have the confidence to use human rights in their work without direct oversight from BIHR;
- Strengthen the work and internal processes of the community organisations through the Human Rights Act
- Use the Human Rights Act practically to secure rights-respecting decisions and outcomes from public services, for communities
- Lay the groundwork for multiplying human rights-based approaches into the wider community and public services

Achieving this aim required strong and continuous co-production and collaboration with the community groups to understand their needs, and their style of working. This section of the report will breakdown BIHR's involvement in the programme and how we've achieved these aims.

## Summary of key outcomes:

### IRMO

- Implemented monthly thematic human rights training sessions for caseworkers across their working areas
- Used human rights approaches to secure basic amenities in temporary accommodation
- Delivering human rights workshops and resources for their local community throughout the year

### SCA

- Developed the Southall Human Rights Network – a network of community groups across Southall embedding human rights
- Delivered human rights workshops for young people in schools across Southall
- Established a Parliamentary fellowship allowing young people to visit Parliament to talk to MPs about human rights concerns

### Residency Days

- CP4H co-produced human rights leaflets and prompts to support them to engage with local councillors on the lead up to by-elections using human rights-based questions.
- Unfold delivered human rights workshops to their Youth and Women's advisory councils, co-producing training materials so that Unfold staff can implement human rights training as part of their on-boarding process.

## Summary of key quantative data:

While each group's journey has been unique, the overarching goal of Year 2 was to build on the confidence in the Human Rights Act (HRA) established in Year 2, allowing all four groups to embed human rights-based approaches across their internal governance and services. We're pleased to report that the quantitative data collected with our primary partners – IRMO and SCA - throughout the year shows a significant increase in the use of the HRA in their work, as well as positive outcomes directly connected with the use of HRA legal language.

### IRMO

Data from staff and volunteers:

- 60 instances of using human rights in IRMO's advocacy across Year 2.
- 57% of staff successfully used human rights to support service users.
- 31% of service users increased their understanding of human rights across Year 2.

"I value how excellent and precise all your trainings are. They have helped me to support people better. Thanks for that!" **IRMO Staff Member**

### SCA

Data from staff and trustees:

- 59% of young people on SCA's Human Rights Fellowship reported an increase of confidence in human rights.
- 32% of young people reported an increase in confidence to advocate for themselves using human rights.
- 64% of young people reported that learning about human rights increased their comfort in speaking with elected officials.



## Change achieved with IRMO

## Strengthening casework using human rights – Thematic Workshops

A core element of our work with IRMO throughout year 2 was a programme of co produced monthly thematic capacity building workshops delivered by BIHR. Each workshop focused on a key area of IRMO's work: housing, health, education, immigration, and employment, supporting them to apply HRBAs to cases in these areas. 21 IRMO caseworkers have participated, receiving practical tools to better support service users.

A key strength of these workshops has been their practical, real-world application. Caseworkers brought current challenges from their caseloads, enabling BIHR to provide tailored support on applying human rights frameworks in complex situations. Through this process, staff increased their confidence to challenge public bodies, use legal arguments, and advocate for their community. **Caseworkers shared that the workshops have improved their ability to "spot and raise concerns" with public authorities using human rights, resulting in more timely and positive decisions from public bodies.**

During the workshops, BIHR supported IRMO to work through a wide range of issues using human rights, including:

- Inadequate support for children with special educational needs and disabilities;
- Failures in temporary accommodation provision;
- Barriers to free school meals and education for people with unsettled status;
- A lack of translations and accessible materials in essential public services; and
- Exploitative working conditions.

In each case, staff were supported to identify relevant rights, understand public authorities' legal duties, and apply this knowledge in practice. This practical application includes using human rights arguments when interacting with public authorities to secure better outcomes for the people they support. **This means caseworkers can now apply HRA legal arguments across a range of issues, expanding the support they can offer to service users.**

This learning has also informed IRMO's campaigns, including work with the Temporary Accommodation Alliance to secure better living conditions for people in temporary accommodation. **IRMO used human rights arguments to call on councils to ensure access to cooking facilities, laundry, Wi-Fi, secure storage, and clear information, arguing that not having these would put rights at risk.**

"The workshop was amazing! I discover things I didn't know, especially the education system in the UK and how to protect this and fight for this."

"I absolutely loved this session. I think it is something we should all learn in schools since it is literally universal"

How confident do you feel raising human rights-based arguments to local authorities:

**Prior to thematic workshops:**

**0%**

IRMO caseworkers felt confident.

**After thematic workshops:**

**92%**

IRMO caseworkers felt confident.

How confident do you feel explaining human rights to service users:

**5/6**

IRMO caseworkers did not feel confident.

**5/6**

IRMO caseworkers did feel confident.

**100%**

IRMO caseworkers taking part in the workshops said that applying human rights directly to their work through practical workshops and supported casework made them feel "more empowered" in their advocacy.

## MULTIPLYING RIGHTS: Sharing Human Rights Knowledge

IRMO's increased confidence has also translated into sustainable knowledge sharing within the organisation and beyond. Staff have delivered their own human rights sessions to IRMO's community panel, an advisory board made up of service users—cascading the impact of the programme and enabling service users to inform IRMO's work through lived experience and human rights legal grounding.

Similarly, during Refugee Week, IRMO delivered human rights workshops to members of their community using BIHR produced resources, which they translated into Spanish to increase accessibility. These resources include a tailored guide for migrant families on navigating the special educational needs system using the HRA, emboldening families to engage with schools and local authorities to secure SEND provisions. **This work supported community members to understand the law through which they can speak up for their rights and challenge unfair treatment by public authorities.**

Alongside this, IRMO now hosts monthly caseworker meetings for their 14 frontline workers, providing a structured space for staff to bring cases where they feel human rights are relevant. IRMO shared that these meetings have increased staff confidence significantly. Caseworkers moved from initial hesitation on whether cases counted as human rights issues, to regular use of human rights in casework and decision-making. **Integrating human rights into everyday conversations has strengthened the team's ability to respond effectively to complex cases by grounding support in legal principles and improving the timeliness and effectiveness of advocacy for service users.**

## BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: Transforming policy and advocacy work

As a result of this programme and the support provided by BIHR, IRMO has utilised the HRA across its advocacy and policy work. For example, in its Access to Education campaign, **IRMO successfully challenged the inclusion of immigration related questions in school admissions forms by invoking the right to education.** This directly resulted in schools removing barriers to education for children in the community, creating real world impact and providing opportunities for young people who would otherwise have been excluded.

IRMO continued to pursue rights based policy influence beyond education. Staff used their human rights knowledge to brief MPs representing constituencies with high Latin American populations, highlighting the risks of the proposed 'Earned Settlement' policy, which seeks to introduce additional conditions for migrants to secure settled status. **Using HRA legal language, IRMO set out the potential impact of additional conditions on migrants' ability to secure settled status and the risks this posed to the rights of families and children across the UK, providing a voice for migrant communities, challenging policies that could be detrimental to their rights.**

Similarly, in their joint response to the Child Poverty Strategy consultation, IRMO called for clearer guidance on the implementation of Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, which allows local authorities to provide support to families with no recourse to public funds where a child is assessed as being in need. IRMO also argued for the addition of new ethnic categories in the census in its submission to the Office for National Statistics, using human rights arguments to show that communities facing systemic barriers cannot have their needs addressed if they are not accurately represented in data. **Using HRBAs has given IRMO the assurance and legal articulation to pursue potentially wide-reaching systemic change that will have a real impact on the lives of their community and beyond.**

IRMO then supported community members to present their experiences in temporary accommodation directly to the Deputy Leader of Lambeth Council and the London Assembly Member for Lambeth and Southwark. **This allowed community members to seek accountability from elected officials on rights-related issues impacting their daily lives, putting them on equal footing with decision-makers through a legal framework.**

Throughout Year 2:

**47**

Instances

- Staff advocating for service users using HRBAs
- Service users self-advocating using human rights
- Understanding of human rights increasing through IRMO resources

**IRMO has shared that using HRA legal language in their existing casework has resulted in higher response and success rates from public authorities as they are more likely to engage when their legal duties are invoked.**

## LOOKING AHEAD: Building on Year 2's Impact

The first two years of the LCHRP have provided IRMO with a truly robust and sustainable internal knowledge and confidence to use a human rights-based approach to strengthen their work. Leaving Year 2 with a strong increase in confidence across caseworkers, IRMO are looking to use this to multiply their learning into their local community and public services.

We have already seen evidence of this, with IRMO using HRA language when interacting with public services, yielding positive results, and providing free human rights resources and information to service users. However, we will support IRMO in year 3 to take this further, providing human rights training in Spanish, Human Rights ESOL lessons, and through working collaboratively with local public services to uphold human rights.

**Change achieved with SCA**

SOUTHALL Community Alliance

During Year 2, BIHR supported SCA to expand the use and understanding of human rights beyond the organisation itself and into the wider community. By sharing learning with other community groups, **SCA is strengthening collective capacity to push for meaningful change in everyday life using human rights legal frameworks.**

## Human Rights Education in State Schools

A key focus of our work with SCA in Year 2 has been human rights education. Using training and resources provided by BIHR, SCA partnered with local schools to deliver human rights workshops and resources to students from Year 3 through to Sixth Form. The content introduced students to the rights in the HRA, the public bodies that have legal duties to uphold them, and how those rights apply to everyday life.

As a result, participating schools now identify as "rights respecting schools," characterised by a commitment to ingraining human rights learning in lessons and school culture, allowing young people more opportunities to learn and embody human rights principles. When we asked community groups in Southall about their main education concerns in Southall, they shared "exclusions", "a lack of SEND provision" and "lack of reasonable adjustments". **Implementing HRBAs in schools is a key step to tackling these concerns as they provide clear legal arguments for public services to address these gaps.**

Delivering human rights training in local schools has enabled young people in Southall to participate in decisions that affect them and articulate their concerns using human rights legal arguments. Invigoration through the legal language of human rights has increased young people's political engagement. For example, they visited Parliament to raise human rights issues that matter to them directly with their local MP. **Equipping young people to be informed and articulate on issues that impact them is particularly pertinent given plans to extend the vote to 16-year-olds.**

Learning about rights early helps young people understand fairness, respect, and accountability, supports a more informed, rights respecting society. **Framing this learning within a legal context gives them tools to speak up, make informed decisions, and engage constructively with others.**

## Human Rights as an Empowerment tool for Young People

Building on their work with young people, SCA launched a "Human Rights in Parliament" fellowship, enabling secondary school students in Southall to visit Parliament, putting their learning into practice by raising human rights concerns directly with their MPs. **SCA used BIHR developed materials to train young people, supporting them to engage with parliamentary decision making and present rights based proposals to elected officials.**

This work moves human rights law from the abstract and into democratic processes, **enabling young people to participate meaningfully and reminding decision-makers of their legal duties under the HRA** as they vote on laws that affect millions of people across the UK.

## Human Rights Community Outreach

SCA continued to deliver wide reaching community outreach throughout the year. This included human rights information stalls at local community events, ensuring those who might not attend formal workshops could still access human rights information. SCA also ran letter writing workshops during Challenge Poverty Week using BIHR created templates and established a "Human Rights Zone" at a local summer festival featuring child friendly quizzes, materials, and practical examples.

Across these activities, **SCA distributed over 1,000 leaflets on the HRA, giving community members practical rights information and supporting engagement with public services**. This helps address the "lack of understanding of human rights" that SCA identified locally through providing free, accessible resources for self-advocacy in the community.

A key learning from Year 2 is that rooting human rights within existing structures and projects is more sustainable than running separate strands of work using HRBAs. **As SCA shared, this approach enables "culturally responsive human rights work" that resonates with Southall's "exceptional cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity."**

## MULTIPLYING EMPOWERMENT: The Southall Human Rights Network

BIHR supported SCA to launch the Southall Human Rights Network (SHRN), partnering with more community organisations across Southall to implement HRBAs in their work.

To launch the network, BIHR delivered human rights workshops to 11 community leaders, creating a space for shared learning and collaboration. Participants identified common challenges in communities accessing rights, including "digital exclusion", "lack of co production", "poor multi service communication", and "ignorance". In response, BIHR is supporting the network to co-produce practical human rights tools focused on key issues identified by the groups, including "LGBTQ+ provision", "school exclusions", "SEND", and "gender-based violence and the lack of safe public spaces for women". **SHRN significantly expands the reach and sustainability of HRBAs across Southall, strengthening the capacity of community organisations to escalate issues collectively and seek accountability using the HRA.**

The establishment of SCA's SHRN has been a major achievement, demonstrating that the LCHRP model can be multiplied across organisations, with many other organisations in Southall now working to support their communities with human rights at the foundation. **The network demonstrates that more community groups see human rights as a vital tool for achieving positive social change.**

## MOBILISING COMMUNITIES: Impacting policy

SCA continued advocacy around the closure of children's centres in Southall, with sustained campaigning leading to a human rights legal challenge now proceeding to judicial review in the High Court. Regardless of the outcome, **this programme succeeded in mobilising communities, demonstrating how HRBAs can inform, motivate, and structure grassroots action.**

Likewise, SCA implemented human rights approaches into their existing work challenging decisions by local authorities, leading to tangible results. For example, they used human rights arguments with public authorities to secure employment licences for members of their community, **removing barriers to employment by resolving licensing disputes.**

SCA is also developing a report on Human Rights Issues in Southall. It will consolidate community insights, analyse deprivation locally, and compare lived experience with the Index of Multiple Deprivation. **The findings will strengthen SCA's human rights evidence base, informing future programme development and policy engagement with the Council.** The report will set out local human rights concerns and strengthen accountability by highlighting public authorities' legal duties to address these concerns. **It will also strengthen SCA's advocacy by providing a clear evidence base for engagement with the Council and other decision-makers.**

These activities show a clear shift in Year 2 from knowledge to confidence and impact. IRMO and SCA are applying human rights in day to day practice and using them to challenge harmful policies, influence debates, and secure tangible improvements in people's lives. The programme has strengthened their ability to act as bold, rights based advocates, ensuring human rights are practical tools for accountability, empowerment, and lasting change.

## Looking Ahead: Building on Year 2's Impact

We plan to develop and evolve the knowledge, confidence and skills in using the HRA in Year 2. A key element of this will be through supporting with SCA's Human Rights Network, providing human rights tools, workshops and practical frameworks for action.

## Residency Support

**Community Plan for Holloway (CP4H)** CP4H advocates to ensure that a new building development on the site of the now closed HMP Holloway includes community spaces and affordable housing. Through the Human Rights Programme they are enabling young people to be heard and advocate.

With CP4H, we have produced a human rights leaflet for their Youth Research Project and Report, and we have also worked with them to address concerns about inaccessible community forums around the Holloway housing development. We created human rights resources for their community that address this issue so communities can speak up using human rights legal language. We also created a human rights leaflet containing human rights-based questions for communities to ask prospective councillors on the lead up to the May 2026 local elections.

We are working with **Unfold** to create human rights training materials that they can then use internally to **provide human rights training to all new staff and volunteers, to integrate into the mentoring support they provide**.

With Unfold, we have designed and delivered human rights workshops for their Women's and Youth Advisory Councils (WAC and YAC) and asked the councils to provide feedback on these workshops so we can eventually hand over packaged human rights training materials so Unfold can upskill future staff and volunteers on human rights in the context of their work.

# BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER: HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT

To celebrate the end of Year 2 of the LCHRP, we hosted our second annual Summer Human Rights Event, where we invited and were joined by community organisations from across London to receive free human rights training, as well as a chance to hear from community leaders, and to connect with each other.

> Do not hesitate, this is such a powerful tool that has made a big difference in our casework. Public authorities are very responsive to human rights arguments, so using them strengthens your advocacy.
>
> **Human Rights Event Attendee**

## Human Rights Workshop

With 40 people in attendance, we started the day with a free human rights workshop, where attendees were able to learn:

- How the Human Rights Act 1998 works
- Why it matters to community work
- Practical tips for identifying and using human rights in community work



It is incredibly rare for community groups to receive free workshops and training on the Human Rights Act 1998. This was an exciting opportunity to provide attendees with practical legal tools they can use to strengthen their community work. After the workshop, attendees shared that they feel:

"Well informed. Human rights seem easier to identify and articulate, rather than being theoretical."

"Definitely more knowledgeable in that I know now more about how to use the HRA as an actual means of recourse."

"I feel very positive about human rights, and think it's very empowering to know that us (people who are not lawyers) can also do a lot to guarantee they are upheld."

More optimistic - it's often very easy to be quite pessimistic but this has reminded me that it is effective."

## Human Rights Panel

Following the morning workshop, we facilitated a Human Rights Panel, with panellists representing each of the four organisations taking part in the LCHRP, giving them the opportunity to share the impact the HRA has had on their work with other London-based community groups.



Panellists shared powerful and galvanising insights from the last two years of the programme, for example, **Ada from Unfold** spoke about human rights shifting power to the people organisations serve and giving young people confidence to challenge decision-makers, **Mellissa from CP4H** shared how young people in Islington used a human rights framework to research experiences, co-produce campaigns and secure engagement from local decision-makers on housing, and **Mehak from SCA** highlighted meeting people where they are, supporting them to claim their rights, and empowering young people with programmes that take human rights conversations into Parliament.

The message was clear: **when people understand their rights and advocates are equipped to use the Act, outcomes improve.**

## Human Rights Creative Space



To end the day, we hosted a human rights creative space where we invited participants to take what they have learnt about the HRA over the course of the day and use it to create human rights posters for their community, as well as audio postcards on what the HRA means to them, and a pledge tree where they shared what human rights actions, they would take away and use in their communities after the event.

At the end of the event, we asked those in attendance, "What is one thing you will take away from today's workshop to use in your community groups or everyday lives?" and they said:

"That we need to continuously work together to protect our rights"

"How easy it is to use human rights language when holding public bodies to account"

"A power and essential tool to support our community"

"Framing concerns in regards to human rights can speed up claims"

"A feeling of empowerment to advocate, inform and support others"

# Next Steps

The main goal for the next year of the programme will be to **transmit human rights knowledge from the organisations into their wider communities**. IRMO anticipates challenges around resource accessibility and staff confidence in delivering community-based training. To address these challenges, IRMO has created a needs assessment to share with the community to understand how they can use human rights to support them, and BIHR is supporting IRMO to implement a 'train-the-trainer' approach so staff can confidently deliver human rights workshops to community members, future staff, and volunteers.

SCA has already started to multiply their learning through the SHRN, and IRMO has positioned itself to pass on knowledge from this programme to other Latin organisations as the chair of the Coalition of Latin Americans UK alliance, where they have already referred members of the alliance to BIHR's upcoming human rights policy academy. Both organisations face the challenge of understanding how best to coordinate across different organisations and to disseminate practical human rights knowledge; however, with SCA's SHRN, the groundwork for addressing these challenges is already being laid.

A wider goal to be approached over the next two years, highlighted by SCA and IRMO, is addressing the systemic issues that impact communities. SCA shared that **the LCHRP has revealed the "scale and complexity of unmet needs" in issues such as workplace exploitation, welfare access, housing insecurity, and violence against women**. We are addressing these through the SHRN: a wider, interconnected network of community groups using human rights will be more effective in tackling systemic challenges that may require policy change. SCA has shared that wider use of the HRA is essential for addressing these challenges, as it provides a "powerful legal and advocacy framework for challenging injustice and equipping people to assert and defend their rights." **City Bridge Trust's continued support enables the sustained, long term, relationship-based work required to address systemic injustice.**

# Conclusion

If there is anything more remarkable than the positive impact this programme has had in Year 2, it's that the programme itself is still yet to reach its full potential. Through knowledge sharing, confidence building and embedding human rights approaches within the community groups, all the pieces are in place for this work to be expanded into local communities.

**Year 2 of the London Communities Human Rights Programme has demonstrated the value of sustained, embedded support.** Community organisations are using human rights confidently, sharing learning, and multiplying impact. With continued support, this work can deepen and expand, ensuring human rights remain practical tools for accountability and lasting change.

The British Institute of Human Rights