



Annual Review 2024
ATD Fourth World UK
All Together in Dignity to Overcome Poverty

Everyday Rights in Action

Poverty in the UK has been intensifying in the wake of the pandemic and a national cost-of-living crisis. And with spiralling inflation hiking up the prices of energy, food, and other basic necessities in the back end of 2022 and early 2023, families living in poverty have been hit the hardest (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Destitution in the UK 2023*). As such, in 2024 our work has centred on **'everyday rights'** — the essentials that every person should be able to count on: a safe home and decent work, access to healthcare and education, the opportunity to build a family, and the ability to live fully in society with dignity and respect.

These rights are not luxuries — they are lifelines: the building blocks of stability, well-being, and equality. Yet for families living in poverty, they are often denied or only partially realised. At ATD Fourth World, much of our work over the past year has been about creating the spaces where people living in poverty can claim their rights, find support to speak out about injustice,

and have their voices heard in shaping the solutions that affect their lives.

Our **'Together in Dignity'** team supports individuals and families living in poverty who are facing times of acute crisis, such as when sudden ill health strikes. One parent told us:

“Last year, my partner and I nearly lost our daughter. ATD came to the hospital [and stayed through the night] to support us, and that is when I said, yes, I can trust those people.”

And at **Frimhurst Family House**, our residential well-being stays remain a vital support, offering families a peaceful, non-judgemental space to reconnect and rebuild:

“Stays can bring a broken family back together in an open, peaceful place where no one judges. It also gives people who have no [other] support... a place to create friends that become family and a wealth of knowledge that can help in their lives.”

Many of the families we support go on to become activists in our '**Giving Poverty a Voice**' programme, ensuring lived experience guides our public advocacy. In '**Understanding Poverty**' discussions, for example, topics over the past year have ranged from the cost-of-living crisis to registering to vote. But these spaces also serve a wider function. As one participant explains:

"This is an opportunity for new families to come together, share a meal and talk about their problems. They learn to make new friends and get a chance to have their say."

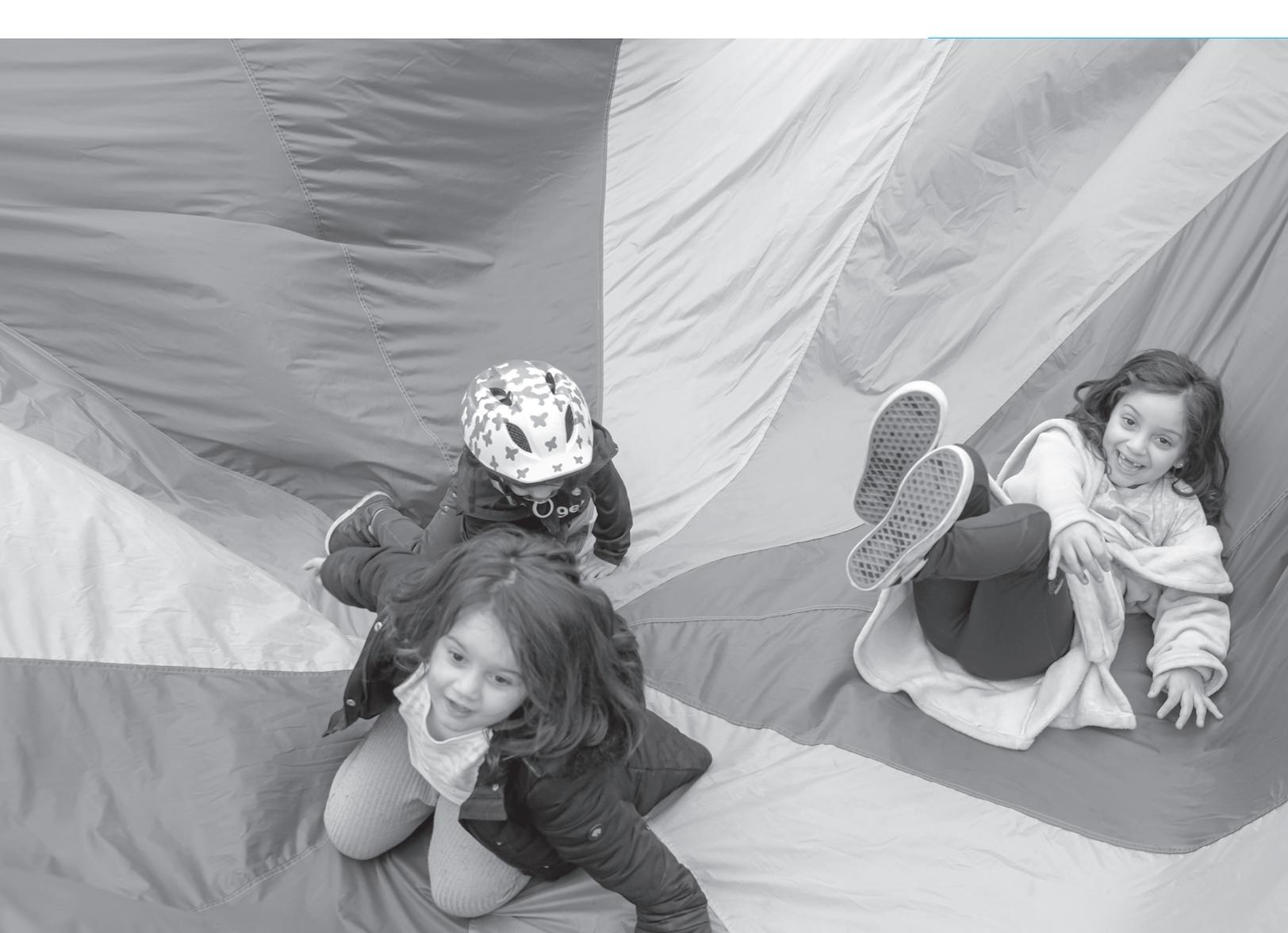
This year, we have seen important progress across all our programmes. The **Parent and Families Action Network**, led by an ATD Fourth World parent activist, continues to advocate for those experiencing injustice in social care. Members of one family, who first came to us several years ago for support, are now leading voices in our community: the father has joined our board of directors, while his daughter contributes to events and community life.

We have also been delighted to welcome new people into our team: one who played a key role in preparing our submission to the UK Government's **Child Poverty Task Force**, and another who has been instrumental in supporting our '**Together in Dignity**' actions.

These contributions have strengthened our collective voice and widened our circle of trust and solidarity. We continue to face challenging times in the UK, as the effects of global conflicts, economic uncertainty, and growing pressures within the anti-poverty sector impact us all. Yet hope and determination endure through the courage of families and individuals living in poverty and the dedication of our team and volunteers. We would like to thank the activists, families, volunteers, staff, friends, and allies who give their time, energy, and commitment to stand alongside those living in poverty.

In solidarity,

Letitia Mason, Murielle Double, and Lareine Mouogua
National Leadership Team



About ATD Fourth World

ATD Fourth World has worked in partnership with people affected by poverty since 1968 to tackle inequality and promote social justice. Those with the most difficult lives hold the key to understanding and overcoming persistent poverty and are thus at the heart of everything we do.

‘Together in Dignity’, our family support programme, offers vulnerable families resources to get through times of crisis, build upon their strengths, develop support networks, and broaden their skills, confidence, and knowledge in order to pursue their goals and aspirations.

Our **‘Giving Poverty a Voice’** programme aims to raise awareness of persistent poverty, counter prejudice and discrimination, and improve policy and practice. To this end, we empower people to speak out and shape their own narrative, while offering policymakers invaluable insights into overcoming poverty from the bottom up.

Our vision is a world without persistent poverty, where all people are valued and can participate fully in society.

Our mission is to build a network of people, groups, and organisations committed to overcoming persistent poverty.

We take people seriously by recognising the strength, determination, and resourcefulness it takes to just get by. We are committed to accompanying people at their own pace, over the long term. We believe every voice matters, particularly the voices of people who are ignored or rarely heard. We work inclusively with our full-time core team members, families in persistent poverty, allies, and volunteers, who are all involved in every aspect of what we do. These are **our values**.

We are part
of an international movement
of solidarity and collaboration.
Find out more about the
International Movement ATD
Fourth World by pointing your
camera at the QR code and
tapping the banner that
appears on your screen.





Community Partnerships

ATD Fourth World works within communities to reach families experiencing persistent poverty. We collaborate with other organisations that provide support to individuals and families in difficult situations. These partnerships enable us to connect with new families and identify areas where additional help may be necessary. This ensures that people receive tailored support, which is at the heart of our **'Together in Dignity'** programme aims.

ATD team members volunteer with other organisations and participate in their events, as well as invite them to our own ATD Fourth World events. The cooperation includes dialogue between coordinators, and referring individuals to partners' projects. An additional benefit of maintaining contact with local initiative organisers is staying informed about activities in the areas where ATD Fourth World works, allowing us to encourage people within our own networks to participate in them.

An important partner in the Frimhurst area is **Home-Start**, a local community network of trained volunteers and experts helping families with young children through crisis situations. ATD Fourth World team members join the team of supporters, allowing us to get to know families and build relationships and trust with them. This ensures that we are able to continue offering support to the families who need it most due to persistent poverty after they finish their programme with Home-Start. In 2024, Home-Start decided to focus on children showing substantial developmental delays due to lasting effects of the pandemic.

Another initiative supported by ATD Fourth World members is the **Asylum Seekers Café**. Bi-monthly coffee mornings took place thanks to collaboration between **Barnardo's** and **St. Barbara's Church**, and these coffee mornings continued at **Frimhurst Family House**. For participants, it was a valuable opportunity to go out and meet new people, share experiences, and connect with others, giving them renewed strength and inspiration.

ATD Fourth World in London continues to cooperate with **Parent Action** (formerly known as PACT), an organisation that runs activities in Southwark. They offer group activities that help connect and strengthen community members. ATD Fourth World team members volunteered at a Monday baby group for parents with infants, at a Friday group for parents and children under four, and in an allotment project. Parent Action provides activities and training for groups of participants, while we support their actions by offering one-to-one support with more focus on individuals. Together, we complement each other.

Through all of these collaborations, ATD Fourth World has been able to reach deeper into communities, connecting with families experiencing persistent poverty and offering tailored support where it is needed most. Volunteering, shared events, and open dialogue has strengthened the bonds between each organisation and the people we work beside, creating a web of solidarity that empowers families, fosters resilience, and nurtures hope.



Community Outreach and Crisis Support

ATD Founder Joseph Wresinski, in his report 'Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security' (February 1987), wrote:

“Extreme poverty results when the lack of basic security simultaneously affects several aspects of people’s lives, when it is prolonged, and when it severely compromises people’s chances of regaining their rights and of reassessing their responsibilities in the foreseeable future.”

ATD Fourth World offers individual support to uphold the rights of the most vulnerable people. People living in poverty often have to fight for basic everyday rights such as the right to housing, to family life, and to healthcare. This can be a long and humiliating journey, full of bureaucratic obstacles. We accompany people through these struggles, helping them to understand complex documents and procedures, supporting them

in filling out forms and applications, and standing with them during difficult moments. We aim to enable access to services and support while recognising and valuing people's roles within their communities.

One of the most devastating experiences faced by people is separation from their children. This year, we have supported parents in maintaining contact with children removed from their care by court orders. In one case, we supported a family in securing contact sessions. We have also helped maintain communication with adoptive families through 'letterbox' contact systems.

Many people face housing-related issues like rent arrears, the bedroom tax, or rising housing costs caused by assessment errors. ATD Fourth World supports conversations with landlords and housing officers, checks the validity and legal basis of decisions, submits appeals, and helps clarify discrepancies. We also support individuals with Personal Independence Payment (PIP) applications, mandatory reconsiderations, and appeals to independent

tribunals, as well as assisting individuals for whom understanding official documents is difficult due to limited English or learning disabilities. Ultimately, our role is to ensure they understand the content and can make informed decisions.

These are just a few examples of the ways that members of our **'Together in Dignity'** team have accompanied families and individuals through struggles in 2024.

In attempting to access their basic rights, people experiencing poverty often face rejection and humiliation. This is why emotional support is just as important as practical help. We aim to respond with empathy and solidarity, listening and adapting to people's needs.

As one woman put it:

"You guys at ATD always seem to know just what kind of support to offer — and just at the right time."

Getting Away From It

“Well-being is about being kind to yourself. It’s easy to help others, but you have to help yourself — that’s important.”

When poverty forces people into a constant struggle, we offer a moment to breathe. When people face discrimination in society, we offer acceptance and respect. When poverty leaves people feeling alone, we offer a space where friendship and solidarity can break that isolation. And when individuals dedicate all their time to caring for their families, we provide time for them to be cared for too.

“I felt at ease; I felt peaceful; I felt relaxed. It is important for us to be looked after too — it’s a great feeling to be cared for.”

We organised a range of family and adult well-being activities, spaces where people with shared experiences can meet, make new friends, and support one another.

In 2024, the number of these events increased in response to an increase in the number of supported families, while also maintaining relationships with people we’ve known for years.

Well-being days offer a hot meal and several hours during which children can enjoy a wide range of games and toys, bikes and scooters. Adults talk, play cards, practice mindful activities, and listen to music. A particularly cherished element was the pampering sessions offered by one team member until the end of 2024:

“After I’ve been pampered, I feel like I can take on the world.”

Residential breaks at Frimhurst Family House give people a chance to have a short break, take part in creative workshops and go on outings. The house also includes fantastic facilities: a games room, art studio, bike shed, playgrounds, basketball and football posts, a living room, and a library with books and games — all surrounded by nature.

"I remember it was so exciting to come to Frimhurst when we were kids. It's kind of the only holiday we had as children... To be back at Frimhurst, it feels like you're coming back to your own family."

Cuppa Chats in ATD Fourth World's London centre provided a relaxed space to meet and catch up with mothers while their children were at school, and we also organised various inspiring outings throughout the year:

We went to the Young Vic Theatre to see *The Homecoming* with a group of adults, where the performance sparked deep and thoughtful conversations.

At the London Museum Docklands, we had a wonderful time with families. Children particularly enjoyed running around and exploring.

We also visited the Young V&A (Museum of Childhood) with children and their parents, and enjoyed going to the cinema with different families throughout the year.



Understanding Poverty

The '**Understanding Poverty**' project aims to create a peer network of community activists with lived experience of poverty and equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to share their individual and collective knowledge in the public debate on poverty.

Using participatory methodologies, we help participants to explore the issues that affect them in their daily lives and to connect their knowledge and experience to current debates in policy, research, and practice. The project provides participants with opportunities to meet, think, and train with their peers, thus creating a peer support network that strengthens their individual and collective voice.

This year saw us hold three residential sessions and one non-residential session for a group of eighteen ATD Fourth World activists with lived experience of poverty. These sessions, for activist development and capacity building, had a particular focus this year on

strengthening the group's conflict resolution skills, examining poverty and racism, and identifying the fingerprints of each individual activist on the '**Giving Poverty a Voice**' (GPAV) programme. Fifteen people took part regularly in '**Understanding Poverty**' **monthly meetings** in London, which serve to introduce new participants to the programme. These thematic meetings took place ten times during the year, and included a series about '**everyday rights**' funded by a grant from **Amnesty International UK**.

Three GPAV participants also took part in regular on-line meetings to develop the **Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience (APLE) Collective**, where ATD Fourth World is a founding member and where two GPAV participants are now board members. The Collective is an initiative to amplify the voice of grassroots anti-poverty charities led by lived experience.

We hosted one in-person session for APLE members at Frimhurst in June. Thanks to our participation in APLE, ATD Fourth World also received funding to bring five GPAV participants to an event run by the **Wales Centre**

Giving Poverty a Voice

for **Public Policy** and **Save the Children**. This event, prepared by young people, is now connected to GPAV's **Youth Voices** project. Six ATD activists have continued on a steering group for a project on promoting a rights-based understanding of poverty run jointly with **Just Fair**, **Amnesty International**, and the **University of Essex Human Rights Centre**. This project grew in 2023 to become the **Growing Rights Instead of Poverty Partnership** (GRIPP), which brings together several organisations to mobilise around the seventh United Nations Review of the UK's performance as a signatory of the **United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (ICESCR). Within GRIPP, one ATD activist has been part of the 'Trunk' group, working on finances, compliance, accountability, evaluation, and responsibilities. This group reflects:

"Good governance of any organisation or collective is fundamental to its success. We have been (and still are) on a journey that fully considers what 'good' looks like. [...] Our governance approach and way of working is evolving, and we are continually learning."

And finally, for the first time this year, we hosted an in-person residential stay for the **Parents, Families and Allies Network** (PFAN), providing an opportunity for building connections, strengthening peer support, taking stock of achievements, and planning future events.



Poverty Experts

The goal of our '**Poverty Experts**' project is to create and promote participatory opportunities and platforms for activists with lived experience of poverty to challenge perceptions of poverty while increasing public understanding of the issues. The project targets the general public, as well as specific audiences involved in the policy, practice, and research fields. 'Poverty Experts' enables participants to demonstrate directly the value and effectiveness of lived experience and co-production in the search for solutions to poverty.

In 2024, notable achievements came from the national **Let's End Poverty campaign** for which a 'Giving Poverty a Voice' activist contributed a personal letter to a '**Dear Prime Minister**' booklet. Part of her letter read:

"If you want to make change, [...] abolish the insane notion of disability benefit vouchers. Am I really screwing the taxpayer over by spending my child's

disability payment on her ventilator and the cost of travelling 200 miles to her hospital appointments? I spent a month in the paediatric intensive care unit with no choice but to buy £4 sandwiches and £2.50 bottles of water. Why is food subsidised in parliament, but they are allowed to charge monstrous prices in hospitals?"

This booklet was launched at an event in the House of Lords and then delivered to 10 Downing Street, where delegates met with the Director of the Prime Minister's Partnerships Unit. Also as part of this Let's End Poverty Campaign, we exhibited our '**The Power of Creativity**' exhibition in Camden and contributed to a '**Neighbourhood Voices**' video series.

Other key 'Poverty Experts' events this year included: speaking to the World Bank and the IMF about the **Hidden Dimensions of Poverty**; with GRIPP, publishing an '**Untold Realities**' booklet showing the effect of policies on real lives; speaking at the launch of **The Empathy Fix: Why Poverty Persists and How to**

Change It, a new book from author and ATD Fourth World board member Keetie Roelen; speaking at a UNICEF webinar about '**Tackling Shame and Stigma in Social Protection for Children and Families**'; co-facilitating a workshop at the **Action on Poverty Conference** hosted by Staffordshire University on behalf of the APLE Collective; speaking to script writers for *EastEnders* to inform a story arc about being unhoused; speaking to a filmmaker about gang life on estates and challenging stereotypes; being interviewed for the upcoming book ***Inactive: Stigma, Unpaid Labour and the Myth of Worklessness***; speaking at an international webinar to launch a special issue of the **Action Research journal** on 'Transforming the field of poverty'; and co-producing a chapter for the upcoming book ***Lived Experience: Critical Perspectives in a Changing World***.



The Right to Family Life

With the voices and thinking of young people and parents with experience of social service intervention at the fore, this project seeks to improve the children's social care system.

Our 2022-24 series of study groups on poverty, social work, and the right to family life concluded with a second submission to the seventh United Nations Review of the UK's performance as a signatory of the **United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**. This work highlights the fact that families in poverty in the UK can be subjected by children's social care to harsh interventions that are discriminatory and driven by a concept of risk aversion that is inconsistent and fails to fully consider the harm done by removing children into state care or contested closed adoptions. An excerpt:

"It is absolutely awful, soul-crushing, to have to hand your child over, crying for you, calling out, 'Mummy!' and you are court-ordered to walk away. [...] You end

up feeling guilty for pretending to be okay. Because, if you show you are not feeling great, it will be used against you. [...] Guilt will swallow you whole if you let it. It ravages your soul and steals away what little sunlight remains as you walk through the hell that is child protection. [...] You have to climb out of the crumbled wreck of your soul."

Collaboration with the **Nuffield Family Justice Observatory** has now convinced the President of the Family Division of the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary that adoptions must no longer be closed.

With the **Parents, Families and Allies Network (PFAN)**, ATD Fourth World contributed to many on-line events and webinars including a 'Making Research Count' event at Kings College. One of ATD Fourth World's experts-by-experience took on a formal role as a parent-to-parent advocate within a local authority, and another was a featured speaker at a University of Essex conference on 'Supporting Families'.

We delivered **anti-poverty-practice workshops** for

social work students at Royal Holloway, University of London and Birmingham University, and for in-practice social workers in the local authority of Dudley. The workshop explores the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and encourages reflective practice as part of a positive dialogue with practitioners and students. We also ran this workshop for other professionals who interact with families in poverty, including: doctoral students in clinical psychology at the University of Hertfordshire; an academic research team at the Open University; the staff of Trussell; and staff from Amnesty, Just Fair, and the University of Essex at a GRIPP event. Feedback from a senior lecturer said:

"I teach interviewing skills and ethics. After today, I will revise my own notes, because I'm not sure everything in them is quite right."

This feedback ultimately underscores how listening to lived experience can challenge assumptions and drive change, highlighting the crucial role of people with direct experience of poverty in leading reform.





United Nations International Day to End Poverty

It was to bear witness to the lives of people in poverty that in 1992 the United Nations gave official recognition to the International Day to End Poverty, which was first marked by ATD Fourth World on 17 October 1987. This 17 October, allies, activists, partner organisations, and members of the local community came together at Addington Square for a day that embodied the spirit of solidarity and recognition for people with lived experience of poverty.

At the heart of the day was a powerful message: people living in poverty must be at the centre of efforts to end it. As Aye Aye Win, **President of the International Committee for 17 October**, shared in a message from the ATD Fourth World house in Dakar, Senegal:

"This day has a very special meaning. For us, the International Day to End Poverty has a founding spirit: that people with lived experiences of poverty are at the

International Day to End Poverty

front and centre of the commemorations, that their faces are seen, their voices heard, and the knowledge that they bring is valued."

Throughout the event, ATD Fourth World members reflected on the year's work. One ATD Fourth World lived experience activist, who is also a Lived Experience Advisor at **Mencap**, spoke about the **'Together in Dignity'** programme:

"At ATD, they listen to me, I get my voice heard. It shows I'm taken seriously, and that is important. At the end of the day, it's your story you need to tell, no one else's."

Other activists shared insights from the **'Giving Poverty a Voice'** programme: one spoke about preparing for elections during 'Understanding Poverty' meetings, focusing on voter rights and access; another described speaking publicly through the 'Poverty Experts' program, offering valuable knowledge from lived experience. A moving letter to the Prime Minister was also read aloud to the room, calling for people in poverty to be part of national decision-making.

Original **poetry** and **'Let me tell you' statements** added heartfelt expression to the day, sharing personal truths that often go unheard. Activists also paid tribute to the late Barbara Murphy, a deeply respected member of the ATD Fourth World community.

Overall, the event was vibrant and welcoming. Partner organisation **4in10: London's Child Poverty Network**, which provided significant funding for the event, presented their work on **Challenge Poverty Week**, and **Burgess Sports** offered family-friendly activities in the sunny courtyard, creating space for joy and connection. The day affirmed the strength, insight, and leadership of people living in poverty — and the power of coming together in dignity.

By sharing testimonies, creative expression, and collective demands, participants affirmed that 17 October is more than a date on a calendar: it is a reminder that ending poverty requires society to listen, learn, and act alongside those who experience it directly.

In Conversation with Tiegan Boyens, an ATD Fourth World Youth Activist

Lived experience is at the heart of ATD Fourth World's actions. The activists who share their knowledge and stories shape our work and ensure that the fight against poverty is guided by those who know its realities best. One of these people is **Tiegan Boyens**, an activist with our **'Youth Voices'** project. Below, Tiegan reflects on her journey advocating for human rights, challenging poverty, speaking out about the care system, and standing alongside other young people to make sure their voices are heard.

How did you first hear about ATD Fourth World?

I first heard about ATD Fourth World in 2021 through an individual I had been working with for a while on various projects, and as part of an advisory group they led. They shared information about a specific ATD Fourth World project around human rights and the

care system, which sought to contribute to a consultation with the **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child** by co-producing a submission with young people who had been separated from their parents. This project ended up being the start of ATD Fourth World's **'Youth Voices'** project.

What was your experience like participating in that project?

I enjoyed taking part in the project and found it refreshing to see an organisation approach the care system and adoption in a thoughtful and inclusive way. It was exciting to hear that this was a topic they were considering exploring further, especially in relation to the often-overlooked connection between the care system and poverty. I was interested in engaging with this work to see where it could lead within the organisation, how it might influence policy and practice, as well as the broader discussions and change it could inspire.

What have been the highlights of your involvement with ATD Fourth World?

One of the biggest highlights is the people I have met whilst being part of ATD Fourth World. I have enjoyed the level of interest and passion in the individuals, whether they are fellow ATD Fourth World activists or those with whom we are consulting. I have learnt so much from them and have had many insightful discussions.

I have also enjoyed the events I have been able to attend through the work we have done, including going to Parliament to present a guide published in collaboration with the **British Institute of Human Rights**. The guide was a resource that endeavoured to make young people aware of their human rights and provide actionable steps they could take to effectively challenge decision-makers and assert their rights in real-world scenarios.

Overall, I have enjoyed just gathering and empowering a range of voices and seeing them slowly be heard.

What are your hopes for the future of this work?

There is still much more to be heard, and a lot of change is needed so that people have the best journeys and outcomes concerning the care system, human rights, and poverty. I want other voices to be heard, as mine has been listened to a lot, and I feel I have the skills and interest to support this.



Our Inclusive Governance and Financial Ethos

ATD is not a traditional service provider, and a collaborative approach is part of our ethos. The ATD Fourth World community includes full-time core workers, families living in persistent poverty, allies, and volunteers. Since our founding, we have worked to build governance structures that allow all our different members to take an active role in the decision-making process, and to contribute their knowledge and experience.

Our organisation depends on collaboration and dialogue among people of different social, cultural, and generational backgrounds. All are encouraged to get involved in every aspect of what we do, from project planning to evaluation, from fundraising to campaigning, from administration to governance. The way we operate is unique, placing the focus on the experiences and voices of people living in poverty, and giving those voices their rightful credibility.

All ATD core workers receive the same Real Living Wage solidarity salary and reject 'poverty industry' professional salaries. This means that **no wage hierarchy** exists at ATD Fourth World, regardless of our seniority or level of responsibility. It is an ethical choice which dates back to the founding of ATD, and it is an integral part of our financial ethos.

Board of Directors: Lyle Barker, Celestine Greenwood, Eric Knibbs, Dr. Keetie Roelen, Gertraud Trivedi, Ian Whitefoot (Chair)

Ambassador: the Right Reverend Saju Muthalaly, Bishop of Loughborough

Company Secretary: Thomas Croft

National Leadership Team (NLT): Letitia Mason, Murielle Double, and Lareine Mouogua

Governance and Finance

	2023	2024
	(£)	(£)
Income		
Grants	453,500	407,575
Donations and legacies	32,138	33,535
Charitable activities	55,984	59,899
Interest	1,827	2,194
Other income	0	0
	<u>543,449</u>	<u>503,203</u>

Expenditure

Charitable activities (unrestricted)	377,647	390,315
<i>Together in Dignity</i> (restricted)	18,293	17,571
Outreach, Respite, and Peer Support Programme		
<i>Giving Poverty a Voice</i> (restricted)	57,720	50,470
Policy, Participation, and Training Programme		
Other (restricted)	2,058	0
Support costs (administration and depreciation)	56,059	65,175
Fundraising	3,744	4,096
	<u>515,521</u>	<u>527,627</u>

We spend 0% of our income on advertising or external fundraisers.

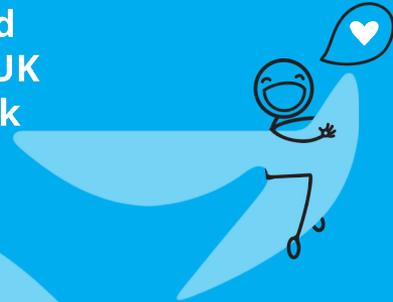
87% of our income is spent on directly tackling poverty.

100% of all donations go towards actions that directly tackle poverty.

12% of our income is spent on admin costs and raising funds.

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