

Annual Review 2025
ATD Fourth World UK

All Together in Dignity to Overcome Poverty

Building Our Future Together

Looking back on this past year, I'm feeling really grateful and full of hope. Since I joined the National Coordination Team, our goal has been simple: to make ATD Fourth World even stronger while keeping up with the world's new challenges. This past year has been one of transition, transformation, and, above all, deep connection.

Developing New Ways of Working: We have started an exciting journey to rethink how we work by merging our two main programme areas: ***Together in Dignity*** and ***Giving Poverty a Voice***. The idea is that in everything we do, we are still supporting families while also listening to the fight people put up for their rights. Whether we are in a support project or an advocacy session, these two elements belong together. By bringing these areas under one roof, we are breaking down barriers. A perfect example of this is our work on **everyday rights**. We've moved beyond just talking about human rights in theory, and started looking at what they mean in real life, like the right to raise your family without fear and to be treated with dignity by the social welfare system. We believe that what families share in the quiet moments at Frimhurst Family House should be heard by the people making the laws, because caring for each other and speaking up for change go hand in hand.

Boosting Our Recruitment and Community: Expanding is vital for our future. We are welcoming new faces into our Volunteer Corps and core teams. These people bring fresh energy to ATD Fourth World. They allow us to grow while staying rooted in the wisdom of our long-term members. And because the struggle against poverty can be profoundly taxing, we also started a **Well-Being Group**, created specifically to support our core team, long-term activists, and allies when things feel "too much". It provides a confidential space for support outside the National Coordination Team, helping everyone find the strength to move from "surviving" to "thriving".

Diversifying Our Funding: To make sure ATD is around for a long time, we've also continued to work hard to find new ways to fund our work. We know we still have a long way to go, and finding resources remains a constant challenge, but we want to celebrate the progress we have made. This year, we are encouraged to have received support from partners including Amnesty International, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission, Southwark Council, the London School of Economics, Cardiff University (CASCADE), and Royal Holloway. This support gives us a bit more stability to plan for the future and shows that others see the value in our unique way of working.

Looking Ahead: As you read through this review, I hope you see a movement that's adapting and listening. We aren't just fighting poverty; we're building a world where everyone's dignity is non-negotiable. Thank you for being on this journey with us. Your presence is what makes this work possible. Together, we continue.

Murielle Double, *National Coordinator*




POVERTY
POVERTY IS FEAR, LIKE A PERMANENT CLOUD.
POVERTY IS FEELING LIKE YOU ARE DIFFERENT AND LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE OF EVERYONE ELSE.
POVERTY IS
POSTCARDS
PRICES

About ATD Fourth World

ATD Fourth World has worked in partnership with people affected by povertyin the UK since 1968 to tackle inequality and promote social justice. The people 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 build understanding of the hidden dimensions 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**.





Community Partnerships

At the heart of our ***Together in Dignity*** programme is our commitment to building strong **community partnerships** rooted in active, mutual presence. By volunteering at partner events, participating in local initiatives, and maintaining a constant dialogue with coordinators, we immerse ourselves in community ecosystems. This reciprocal relationship allows us to encourage our own network of families to engage with local activities, ensuring that the most isolated families feel comfortable in community life.

This year, our continued collaboration with **Parent Action** demonstrated the power of informal connection. By volunteering at their allotment project and participating in their parent and baby groups, our team has been able to gain a deeper understanding of their network of volunteers and organisers, meet new families, and build deeper trust with the families we already know.

Similarly, our ongoing relationship with **Burgess**

Sports has seen us accompany several women to their weekly **Empowering Women Through Boxing** sessions and a **crochet workshop**, which provide the opportunity for participants to connect with new people, as well as strengthen both their physical and their mental health. These activities also provided a safe environment for parents to build trust with our team, with one eventually asking for more specific one-to-one support.

Accompanying individuals and families to these activities is often the bridge needed to break down barriers and allow participants to find their footing in new environments. This process does more than just introduce a new activity; it nurtures the confidence required for participants to eventually claim these spaces as their own. As one parent noted, such invitations are transformative, providing the motivation to leave the house when it otherwise feels impossible:

> *"This has been really great for me. It's exactly what I needed — I very rarely [leave my] home, but I manage to come to things ATD proposes to me."*

These connections also often branch out into further opportunities. Through our regular participation with Burgess Sports, we were introduced to the **Surrey Square Marketplace**, a monthly event that provides free toiletries, fresh and non-perishable produce, and second-hand school and home essentials like clothes, school uniforms, toys and boardgames, and books. Our team focused on accompanying one or two parents at a time, staying with them until they felt settled before introducing more families.

An ultimate success of these partnerships is found in the transition from accompaniment to independence. We are proud to report that many parents who initially required our presence to attend these activities now participate unaccompanied, and even invite other families from their communities to join. This shift represents the core of our philosophy: by fostering inclusive partnerships and providing initial support, we empower families to break the cycle of isolation and navigate their communities with newfound agency and confidence.





Community Outreach and Crisis Support

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. For many, the struggle to secure these basic necessities is a long and often humiliating journey fraught with bureaucratic obstacles. We accompany people through these struggles, helping them to understand complex 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.

Throughout the past year, our team has stood alongside individuals facing critical challenges. This has included intensive outreach and advocacy to prevent home repossessions, ensuring that families remain housed and secure. We have also provided robust

support for people navigating the social care system, helping them understand complex documentation, supporting them through the arduous process of applying for benefits, and standing alongside them at Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) tribunals to overturn negative decisions. These efforts have led to numerous positive outcomes, restoring hope and stability to households in crisis.

Through accompanying individuals to medical appointments and advocating on their behalf with adult social care services, our hands-on involvement has also revealed the systemic disrespect many people living in poverty face. After supporting one adult through a difficult Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim and healthcare battle, one team member reflected:

> *"Some of the experiences show me how various aspects of the system can contribute to stress, and how people with mental health problems often feel disrespected, not listened to, and treated as less capable than they are. They also show how important it is that vulnerable people are treated with empathy and respect — having additional needs does not mean that a person cannot make their own decisions."*

While this formal advocacy has addressed immediate crises, our **'Cuppa Chat'** sessions have also provided a vital space for organic connection and preventive support. This year, the initiative has seen remarkable growth, with more people attending to build friendships and find emotional refuge. What begins as a simple conversation over tea and biscuits often evolves into a powerful network of peer support. These gatherings allow people to share concerns, collaborate on practical tasks, and explore collective solutions to everyday challenges. By fostering an environment where individuals support one another, we move beyond service delivery toward a model that values each person's role and wisdom within their community.

Together, these two pillars — formal advocacy and peer-led support — ensure that while we help people fight for their rights today, we are also building the community strength necessary for tomorrow.

Getting Away From It

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. In the words of an individual who regularly attends our **well-being days** and **residential breaks**:

> *"Well-being is about being kind to yourself. It's easy to help others, but you have to help yourself — that's important."*

And we agree, our well-being days and residential breaks are not luxuries; they are fundamental opportunities that restore the spirit and offer time away from the struggles of daily life. One parent attests to this, noting:

> *"You always go away [after a well-being activity] feeling empowered."*

Throughout the past year, we organised a diverse range of family and adult well-being days and residential breaks designed to offer essential spaces where people with shared experiences can meet, forge new friendships, and provide one another with mutual support.

For adult members of our community, an outing to the beach in Hastings proved transformative: it was immediately apparent how much the group benefited from leaving London for the day to spend a quiet few hours by the seaside in the supportive company of friends. Similar moments of joy were captured during our winter outings, which included ice skating and cinema trips, as well as festive lunches and creative activities held at ATD's national centre in Addington Square. And in the summer, we offered two family trips to the Kent coast, allowing parents and children to build positive memories away from the grind of daily life.

Beyond these day trips, our residential breaks at Frimhurst Family House remain a cornerstone of our well-being programme. These breaks offer an even deeper level of immersion and relaxation. In October, we hosted a family residential break filled with a wide variety of arts and crafts, including Halloween-themed workshops that sparked creativity and connection.

Perhaps most significantly, we also held an adult residential break that included several young people who are the children of long-term ATD activists. For some, this was their first time attending a residential break without their parents. This transition testifies to our long-term commitment to standing beside members of our community across generations. By nurturing these relationships over decades, we ensure that the spirit of dignity and solidarity is passed down, providing a continuous support system that recognises the inherent value of every individual and family.



Understanding Poverty

Our **Understanding Poverty** project aims to create a peer support 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 public discourse. Using participatory methodologies, we help participants explore the issues that affect their daily lives. They 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 strengthening their individual and collective voice.

This year, we organised four residential sessions for a group of a dozen senior activists. Each activist was awarded a certificate to recognise their work and the transferable skills they have developed. Other sessions focused on developing a contribution for the Right to Food UK Commission, on thinking about the role of artificial intelligence in the provision of social services, and on the government's proposal for welfare changes to "Get Britain Working". Participants regretted the lack of understanding about how disabilities actually manifest, saying:

> *"You are made to think you are just your disability."*
> *"You can't get food and drink in public because you have a catheter. They discriminate against you because of the catheter."*
> *"When we're in public, I feel like I have to explain that my son is autistic."*

Our monthly meetings introduce new participants to the programme. This year, we began organising regular **Coffee Afternoons** in Guildford. In London, fifteen people took part regularly in these thematic meetings, which took place ten times during the year. They began with a **Human Rights Summer Festival**, concluding last year's series about everyday rights funded by Amnesty International. Other meetings have focused on unpacking the government budget and imagining an ideal human rights budget.

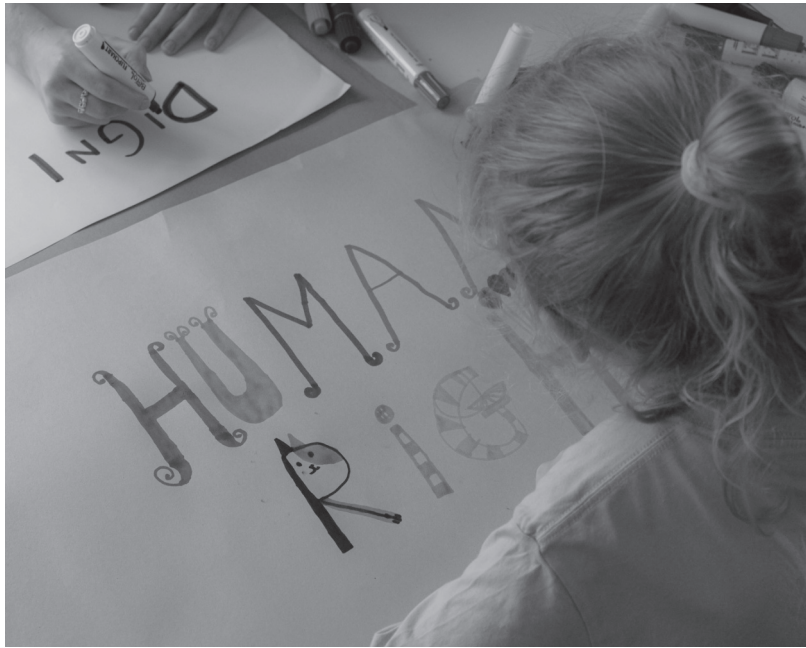
Giving Poverty a Voice

In our newest initiative, **Advocacy 101**, activists learn to build links with local and national policymakers.

Lived-experience activists also continued to take part in other national networks including the **Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience** (APLE) **Collective** (for which we hosted a residential session at Frimhurst Family House) and the **Growing Rights Instead of Poverty Partnership** (GRIPP), a project promoting a rights-based understanding of poverty, run jointly with Amnesty UK and the University of Essex Human Rights Centre. GRIPP includes a charity run by asylum seekers. This has led GRIPP members to think deeply about how to stand against racism and hatred and to get training from the Ella Baker School of Organising about "Defeating Narratives of Division".

With the **Poverty2Solutions** network, ATD activists are focused on the Socio-Economic Duty requirement, which the government has promised to enact as part of the Equality Act 2010. To remind them to keep their promise, Poverty2Solutions plans to host an event at Westminster. To prepare, activists have been silk-screening T-shirts, creating a photo exhibition, and learning film-making techniques to prepare videos.

Two ATD activists travelled to Spain to collaborate with lived-experience activists from ATD's projects in several European countries on the question of how to break the legacy of poverty.



Poverty Experts

This year ATD Fourth World activists:

• Delivered anti-poverty practice training to the **Poverty Stigma Insight Network** based at the **University of Cardiff**;
• Spoke about ATD's Merging of Knowledge methodology to the **On the Margins research collaborative**, an international network based at **Edinburgh Napier University**; and
• Offered the government feedback about its consultation on the Equalities Act and about changes to Universal Credit.

In a long-term project, several ATD activists are helping academics to understand the problems with Universal Credit in research led by **Kings College London** to compare welfare realities across Europe. This includes taking part in interviews and using a phone app to log interactions with job centres. One ATD activist is part of a reference group that will be guiding this research over the coming three years.

With funding from the **London School of Economics**, ATD is coordinating the lived-experience advisory group for research about "anti-poverty and social care prevention services for older people". Two activists from Giving Poverty A Voice participate in this advisory group. For one of them, this is the first time she has ever taken part in virtual meetings, which she does at our Addington Square centre. She says:

"I am excited to be finally learning about Zoom!"

Southwark Council gave ATD funding to contribute to a new training programme about poverty. This involves collaborating with three other charities to run three full-day sessions, which will welcome about fifty council staff or community researchers each time. Six ATD activists are preparing to help co-deliver this anti-poverty practice training, which will include Theatre of the Oppressed workshops to provide a safe space for participants to develop a more relationship-centred practice.

Our **Youth Voices** project has finished contributing a chapter to a UCL Press book titled ***Lived Experience: Critical Perspectives in a Changing World***.

For the second time, a network that ATD is part of has been named one of the Big Issue's 100 Changemakers of the year. This is the **End Child Poverty coalition**, which led the national campaign to scrap the two-child benefit cap.

Six activists worked with a theatre professional to create an original performance about ATD's history. They performed this at the **London School of Economics** in front of 85 people for the launch of the book ***Joyful Revolution: Poverty, Social Justice, and the Story of Mary Rabagliati***, written by ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps member Diana Skelton about one of ATD's co-founders. The next morning, one activist volunteered for the first time to run an ice-breaker activity, saying:

"After last night, my confidence is through the roof!"



The Right to Family Life

Led by young people and parents in poverty who have experience of social service intervention in their families, the Right to Family Life project aims to improve the children's social care system through policy, practice, research, and anti-poverty practice training for social workers.

In 2025, we ran anti-poverty practice workshops for social work students from **Oakland University in Michigan** who were visiting London; at **Royal Holloway, University of London**; for in-practice social workers in the **local authority of Southwark**; and for the **Centre for Justice Innovation**. ATD had a blog post published by the Centre for Justice Innovation, which includes frontline professionals from across the legal field as well as practice officers specialising in youth, family, and women's justice. ATD also made presentations at the **Call to Action to Change Child Welfare virtual conference** and at the **Public Child Law Conference**, hosted by **Liverpool Law Society**.

Based on our 2022-25 series of study groups on poverty, social work, and the right to family life, we presented evidence to the **United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** 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. Based on our evidence, the United Nations criticised the UK for its failure to respect the right of families to protection and assistance.

To follow up, we went to the **Ministry of Justice** to ask how they will respond. Frustratingly, the government claims to lack both budget and capacity to respect its international rights commitments. We are now looking for new ways forward.

We also contributed to two upcoming books:

• ***Empowering Families Through the Justice System***, being edited by the University of Essex; and

• ***Voices from the Edge: First-Person Voices of Mothers Who Have Survived Child Welfare***, being published by Demeter Press.

Two other steps forward in our pursuit to secure the right to family life are still in the planning stages:

The **Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre** (CASCADE) at Cardiff University has included ATD Fourth World in its new research project for developing a complex systems approach to preventing 'child harms'. Our role, which is funded, is to lead the involvement of people with lived experience of children's social care. This project will be starting soon.

Separately, ATD has been invited by a local council to develop a proposal to become its trainer for reflective anti-poverty practice as part of a Department for Education pilot project to improve delivery of social services.









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 the International Movement ATD Fourth World on 17 October 1987.

This year, to commemorate the event we hosted a community-focused seminar and panel discussion titled **"Families on the Margins: Localising the Right to Family Life"**. Held at the Walworth Living Room in Southwark, London, the event aimed to honor the resistance, sacrifices, and contributions of individuals living in poverty, and to create a welcoming and relaxed grassroots space to challenge poverty, uphold human rights at a local level, and explore collective community solutions.

The primary objective of the evening was to amplify local voices and establish practical, collective approaches to supporting the rights of marginalised

families. By bringing together grassroots activists, local community organisers, and residents, the event aimed to bridge the gap between systemic human rights frameworks and the lived realities of people facing severe socio-economic exclusion. A central theme of the event was the **right to family life**: a fundamental human right that is frequently jeopardised or compromised for families navigating the pressures of deep poverty and systemic marginalisation. Through dialogue, the event highlighted the diverse, often unrecognised ways that community members contribute to building a fairer, more inclusive local society.

The core of the event featured an interactive panel conversation structured to maximise audience engagement and peer exchange. The panel brought together diverse local perspectives, featuring community leaders such as **Kaydence Drayak**, an ATD Fourth World activist and youth ambassador for the **End Child Poverty Coalition**; and **Imam Touqeer Tanvir**, a missionary of the **Ahmadiyya Muslim Community** and presenter on the Voice of Islam. The speakers shared insights into how poverty intersects with social isolation, and outlined actionable methods for creating local support networks.

A major highlight of the evening was the premiere of a short video co-produced by ATD Fourth World activists. Created by individuals with direct, lived experience of poverty in collaboration with actor **Paul Higgins**, the film powerfully conveyed the human element behind the statistics.

This annual event represents a vital component of our outreach and advocacy strategy. By moving global human rights discourse into a local setting, ATD aims to foster a deeper sense of solidarity and mutual support within Southwark. It offered an inclusive platform where vulnerable families were not merely the subjects of discussion, but active co-creators of potential solutions. The insights and connections generated during this seminar will continue to inform our community initiatives and reinforce our commitment to ensuring that no family is left on the margins of society.

In Conversation with Marcus Schonbach, an ATD Fourth World volunteer

People in poverty make choices every day to look out for one another and defend the inalienable dignity of all. Their efforts also require the support of people from all walks of life. One of these people is Marcus Schonbach, an ATD Fourth World volunteer. Below, he describes his experience volunteering for ATD Fourth World.

How did you first hear about ATD Fourth World?

I heard about ATD thanks to a charity club at my school, called "Justice Au Coeur" [Take Justice to Heart], which I'm very involved in. They've worked with ATD for many years. I initially came to Addington Square during an open day in 2024. After doing a two-week work placement there in 2025, I have subsequently returned many times as a volunteer.

What initially drew you to volunteer with us?

I love ATD's mission, so when we were told that we'd be welcome for work experience, I took the opportunity wholeheartedly. I enjoyed the work experience so much that I decided to sign up as a volunteer, and have since been helping with Together in Dignity's family well-being programme. I also hoped that through volunteering I would learn more about the discrimination experienced by people living in poverty; as Nelson Mandela famously stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Since meeting ATD, I have been offered many opportunities to learn, such as at the panel discussion event on 17 October 2025.

Can you tell us a bit about your experience volunteering with us?

I've done so much that I've enjoyed at ATD. I thoroughly enjoyed the Together in Dignity outings I've attended. You can really tell that every volunteer cares

about all the people they help within the community. Speaking of community: I was involved in the 2025 Open Mic Summer Fundraiser, and I feel like I truly learned a lot about the community surrounding ATD. It was so great to see so many people coming together and having fun, all whilst raising awareness and money for a good cause. From what I've seen, it is quite easy to get involved with ATD. My sister Alice was a remote volunteer for some time, translating documents between French and English. It really goes to show how there are many ways to help out and make a big difference.

What has stood out the most to you?

So much has stood out to me. I could start with the fact I can really see the joy brought by the Together in Dignity programme to the ATD community, including to the volunteers. I can tell that the volunteers and the whole of ATD really cares for its community. I also really appreciate the fact that one small contribution can really make a difference. For instance, whenever a volunteer comes to a family well-being day, you can really see how excited the children are. And it would be a shame to not mention how listening to the experiences of people living in poverty is truly eye opening and critical to understanding the difficulties behind the poverty crisis.



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 Coordinator: Murielle Double

	2024	2025
Income	(£)	(£)
Grants	407,575	388,748
Donations and legacies	33,535	37,705
Charitable activities	59,899	61,617
Interest	2,194	2,342
Other income	0	0
	503,203	490,412
Expenditure		
Charitable activities (unrestricted)	390,315	340,737
Together in Dignity (restricted)	17,571	27,935
Outreach, Respite, and Peer Support Programme		
Giving Poverty a Voice (restricted)	50,470	41,038
Policy, Participation, and Training Programme		
Other (restricted)	0	0
Support costs (administration and depreciation)	65,175	64,815
Fundraising	4,096	4,704
	527,627	479,229

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

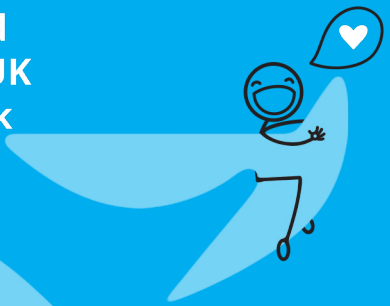
87% of our income is spent on directly tackling poverty.

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

14% of our income is spent on admin costs and raising funds.

www.atd-uk.org
@ATDFourthWorld
ATD Fourth World UK
atdfourthworld_uk

Registered charity no. 209367
Company no. 00654676



48 Addington Square, London SE5 7LB
0207 703 3231
atd@atd-uk.org