



UK REPORT 2015



Foreword

In 2015 the news was filled with stories of refugees and migrants who had embarked on perilous journeys in the hopes of finding safety in Europe. Through Doctor of the World's UK programme, we see the continuing and significant challenges people face even after they have arrived in Britain.



Last year our doctors and nurses helped more than 1,600 people in the UK, the majority of whom were living in unstable and vulnerable circumstances despite having been here for an average of six years. Restrictions within our healthcare system meant that survivors of torture and trafficking, pregnant women and children struggled to see a doctor.

As a volunteer GP in Doctors of the World's Bethnal Green clinic, I treated undocumented migrants working in exploitative situations and suffering from serious health conditions – ranging from acute work-related injuries to chronic illnesses like diabetes – who had never been to see a GP before. Fortunately, with the support of our dedicated and hard-working volunteers, Doctors of the World was able to help these patients register with a doctor and thus access the healthcare services they needed.

We also expanded our clinics – opening centres in Brighton and Hackney, increasing our family clinic and running pop-up clinics for vulnerable groups - so that even more people were able to access our services.

We shared our data and stories with NHS England who acknowledged the continuing barriers to appropriate healthcare access, particularly for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. We worked with them to produce clear guidance about who can register at GP surgeries, a matter that continues to generate a lot of confusion.

As a GP I know that the work we do makes a huge difference to people with unmet healthcare needs. But, I also see that there is still a long way to go to ensure that everyone living in the UK has universal access to healthcare, regardless of their ability to pay.



Fozia Hamid

Volunteer GP and Board Member
Doctors of the World UK

Our projects

London Clinic

In 2015 we held three clinics a week in Bethnal Green where volunteer GPs, nurses and support workers helped people get access to healthcare. We worked in partnership with the University College London Hospital 'Find and Treat' Team to provide a monthly TB screening service, and with Barts Health NHS Trust to provide sexual health screening to people attending the clinics. A monthly debt advice service was also provided by the Mary Ward Legal Centre.

Hackney Clinic

In 2015 we ran a weekly service funded by the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group Innovation Fund, helping excluded people living in Hackney to access primary care.

Family Clinic

To address the health needs of pregnant women and children, our family clinic doubled its opening days from once to twice a month in 2015. Here a team of volunteer GPs and nurses supported pregnant women and children facing healthcare barriers.

Brighton Clinic

In October 2015 we launched our Brighton clinic, funded by the Brighton Clinical Commissioning Group, that provides medical advice and helps people to access healthcare. Our Brighton team also helped Syrian refugees register with local GPs.

Pop-up Clinics

To reach excluded people who were unable to come to our clinics, we launched a pilot programme sending medics to treat patients at other organisations that help vulnerable migrants across London. Doctors at these pop-up clinics saw people at the Latin American Women's Rights Service, the Notre Dame Refugee Centre, and Justice for Domestic Workers. There are plans to expand it into a fully mobile clinic with a customised vehicle.

National Helpline

In 2015 our helpline volunteers took on average 127 calls per week and made 106 calls per week on behalf of service users.

Our patients

1,601

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED SERVICES FROM DOCTORS OF THE WORLD UK IN 2015

TOP 5 COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN:

PHILLIPINES 12.9%

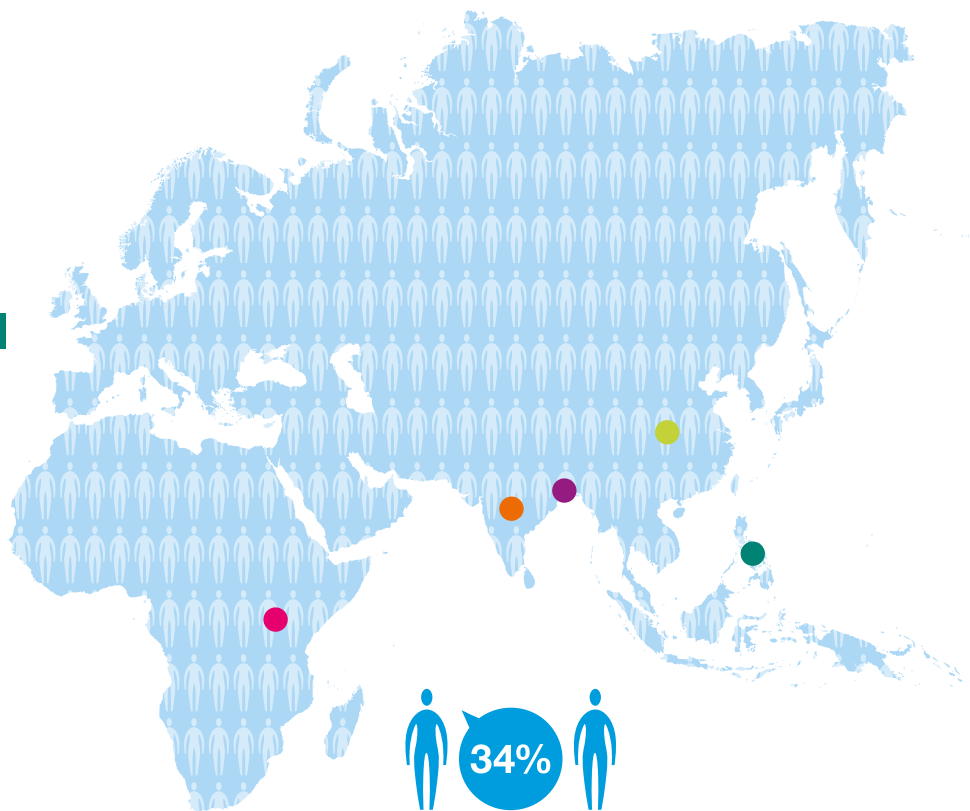
INDIA 9.7%

BANGLADESH 9.7%

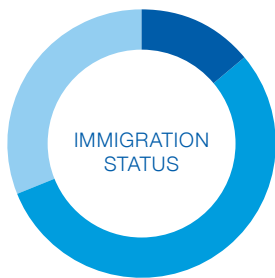
CHINA 8.8%

UGANDA 6.2%

53% CAME FROM 76 OTHER COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD



34%
REQUIRED INTERPRETERS



14% ASYLUM SEEKERS
55% UNDOCUMENTED
31% OTHER/UNDEFINED

SIX YEARS
AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME PATIENTS HAD BEEN LIVING IN UK BEFORE ACCESSING OUR SERVICES

34%
WERE LIVING IN UNSTABLE ACCOMODATION

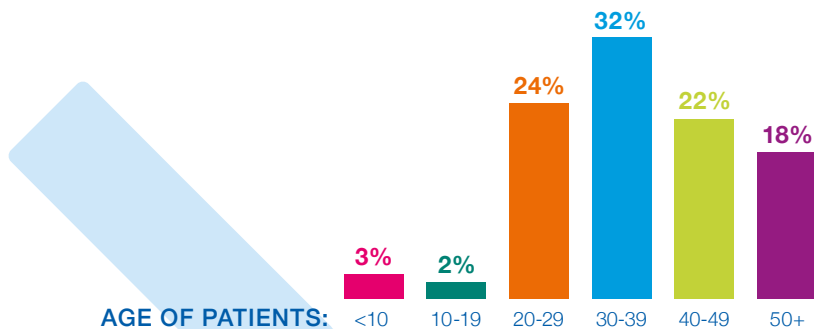
80%
WERE LIVING IN POVERTY



44%
REPORTED HAVING CHILDREN

69%
DID NOT LIVE WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Parents separated from their children are under considerable emotional strain, which can negatively impact their health



HEALTH NEEDS

26% of people attending the clinic reported their health as bad or very bad. **25%** of people reported their psychological health as bad or very bad. Of the patients who saw a clinician, **84%** had at least one health problem that hadn't received any treatment. **39%** had a chronic condition which had never been reviewed by a doctor.



IN 2015 WE SENT **34** PATIENTS IMMEDIATELY TO A&E BECAUSE THEY WERE ACUTELY UNWELL

DIAGNOSES

- LOWER BACK SYMPTOM/COMPLAINT **20%**
- ABDOMINAL, INTESTINAL, ORAL SYMPTOMS **17%**
- PREGNANCY **15%**
- PSYCHOLOGICAL, DEPRESSION, PTSD **14%**
- HYPERTENSION/RAISED BLOOD PRESSURE **14%**
- GYNAECOLOGICAL **9%**
- RESPIRATORY **8%**
- NEUROLOGICAL, HEADACHE **7%**

Barriers to healthcare

Everyone living in the UK is entitled to free primary healthcare, and GPs are our frontline defence against poor public health. Not only do these doctors save countless lives but they also save money by treating health problems early, often preventing the need for expensive hospital treatment further down the line.

In April 2016 we published a report on the difficulties people had registering with a GP. We recorded the outcome of attempts by our clinic volunteers to register patients with practices over a six-month period in 2015.

People who visit our clinics are often confused about their healthcare entitlements or frightened of deportation. They sometimes wait years before attempting to access care.

Our report found that even when they do try to register with a doctor, a significant number are turned away and misinformed about the services they are entitled to and that the biggest barrier to GP registration was the inability to provide paperwork



94%

visiting the clinic had experienced difficulties accessing healthcare



88%

WERE NOT REGISTERED WITH A GP WHEN THEY CAME TO OUR CLINIC



51%

DID NOT TRY TO ACCESS HEALTHCARE AT ALL BECAUSE OF PERCEIVED BARRIERS



39%

ROUTINELY AND WRONGLY TURNED AWAY FROM MEDICAL SURGERIES



23%

OF REGISTRATION ATTEMPTS RECEIVED MULTIPLE REASONS FOR REFUSAL



© Jenny Matthews

Cynthia's story

Cynthia, 48, came to the UK on a study visa in 2005. While in the UK, she discovered that her husband, who had remained in Zambia, had remarried and that her two young daughters were being physically abused by their father and his new wife.

She brought her children to the UK but could not afford childcare and so was unable to continue her studies. They were evicted from their flat and were forced to stay in a succession of B&Bs. They sometimes slept in Victoria Coach Station if they couldn't find a bed.

As a student, Cynthia had been registered with a GP but when she became homeless she was de-registered. When she tried to re-register with her children, she was denied as she no longer had proof of address.

By the time Cynthia came to the Doctors of the World clinic she was very unwell. For months she had put her symptoms down to stress but our volunteer doctor was so concerned she sent Cynthia straight to Accident and Emergency (A&E). "She was cachectic, anxious, emotional, and clearly very unwell," said Dr Emma Preston. "She was breathless on minimal exertion, and had a cough. Her pulse was racing, her blood pressure was high, and it was clear she needed emergency medical care."

Cynthia was kept in hospital for five days and diagnosed with thyrotoxic crisis, a potentially life-threatening condition. Since being discharged she has had follow-up appointments with hospital specialists and our volunteers arranged for her and her daughters to be registered with a local GP. Cynthia's health has improved immensely and she says she is very grateful for the medical care she now receives: "A person's health is the most important thing, no matter what other troubles you have."

Access to healthcare for pregnant women

In 2015 our team carried out a survey about the experiences of pregnant women visiting Doctors of the World's east London clinic. The resulting report found that two-thirds of pregnant patients surveyed had no antenatal care until their second trimester and many who accessed NHS services received huge bills, even if they had lost their baby.

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One of the women included in the report was 19 weeks pregnant when she visited our family clinic, having neither registered with a GP nor accessed antenatal services. Being threatened with eviction before the birth of her child, she texted us after attending her hospital appointment: "I am so sorry to bother you again because I received two letters from the NHS – they want me to immediately pay £5,827. It's really too much for me, I can't afford it."

Out of the 35 pregnancies that our team assessed, two babies died and in both cases the mothers were sent large bills. Report author Dr Clare Shortall said: "In no compassionate society would a health system bill a grieving woman for the loss of their child. Health trusts are increasingly being asked to play the role of the Home Office and focus on checking documents rather than delivering care."

Our findings gained extensive media coverage, and were covered by the BBC and numerous national papers including the *Guardian*, the *Independent* and the *Daily Mail*, raising awareness of the healthcare situation for vulnerable migrants in the UK. It also helped us develop a pregnancy information sheet and a new practice for self-referrals for all pregnant women as well as helping us improve our advice about hospital bills.


Josephine's story

Josephine fled to the UK from Uganda because of her sexuality. When she was 27 weeks pregnant she tried to register with a GP three times without success. "Every time they would chase me away," she recalls. "They told me that as my visa wasn't still valid I wasn't entitled and that if we work on you you're going to have to pay." Josephine was 35 weeks pregnant by the time she had her first antenatal check at the hospital, arranged by DOTW. She had her baby and is now able to access free healthcare but her local GP practice still does not accept she is entitled to primary care and will only register her as a temporary patient. This means she is still forced to re-register every time she needs to see a doctor.



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Charging for healthcare



In 2015, we were contacted by many people who had been wrongly refused essential treatment because they were unable to pay. These patients should have been provided with care because it was immediately necessary or urgent, and some should not have been charged at all because the patients were in protected groups, such as asylum seekers or survivors of trafficking.

These experiences are not only distressing for patients but also have a wider impact as people do not feel safe going to hospital, even for life-saving care, for fear that they will be charged or reported to the Home Office.

In November 2015, we were contacted by the friend of a 32-year-old Sri Lankan asylum seeker, who had been admitted to hospital in London and diagnosed with end-stage colon cancer. His doctor advised he needed palliative chemotherapy but, because the Home Office had given the Overseas Visitor Manager (OVM) incorrect information on his immigration status, the referral could not be made unless he paid in advance. After we made a number of calls to the OVM the asylum seeker's status was clarified and the hospital referred him for the care he needed.

Family clinic



To address the health needs of pregnant women and children, our family clinic doubled its opening days from once to twice a month in 2015. Here, a team of volunteer GPs, nurses and support workers offered a range of specialist services including obstetric checks, child health assessments, and STI screenings. The team also helped with antenatal referrals and GP registration, and provided information on rights and entitlements as well as referrals to support groups.

In 2015 we helped 80 pregnant women, 93% of whom had not accessed antenatal care prior to attending our clinic, as well as 44 parents and 54 children who were facing healthcare barriers. More than two in five service users had experienced violence, and 17 were identified as possibly being trafficked to the UK.

Lilian's story

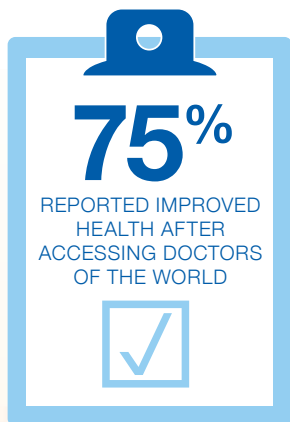
Lilian, 23, arrived in the UK in May 2015 having fled Vietnam to escape political persecution. She came to our clinic when she was ten weeks pregnant. She had been too scared to access healthcare before, but was experiencing abdominal pain and was worried about her baby. We sent her to A&E where she had an emergency scan and received treatment.

We continued to work with Lilian to help her register with a GP and access antenatal care. Our volunteers phoned three different GP practices before one agreed to register her. However, when she went to the practice to register she was turned away because she did not have a passport.

By the time Lilian was accepted by a GP practice and started accessing antenatal care she was fifteen weeks pregnant.

Outcomes

In 2015, we contacted GP surgeries on behalf of 794 people who visited our clinics in need of assistance registering with the NHS. Our volunteers resolved 88% of cases seen in 2015, with many of our service users reporting significant improvements in both their physical and psychological health.



Hackney clinic

In December 2014, Doctors of the World launched a pilot project in Hackney, funded by the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group Innovation Fund.

The service advocated on behalf of people who faced barriers to healthcare because they couldn't provide the documents often required for GP registration, such as utility bills or bank statements. Those turned away included refugees, people refused asylum, those living in unstable accommodation, homeless people, trafficked people and people working in exploitive conditions.



© Luke Johnston

In 2015 we held weekly clinics in Hackney and conducted outreach to the Hackney Migrant Centre. Our clinic supported workers undertook holistic social assessments, negotiated for GP registration and access to antenatal care and made referrals to a wide range of organisations for broader support.

Semira's story

Semira is a 28-year-old Eritrean who came to our Hackney clinic for help with her physical and mental health. She was homeless in London and had been raped while living on the streets, as well as suffering frequent verbal and physical abuse. A GP practice refused to register her because she did not have a permanent address. "The first thing they said is 'What is your address?'" She remembers. "I told them 'I don't have an address', so they took back the registration form."

Our volunteers managed to register Semira with a GP who gave her medication to help her sleep. "I was having uterus problems, discharge, a lot of things, so [the doctor] helped me with different kinds of medication," she said. We also referred her to the Hackney Migrant Centre and the Hackney Winter Night Shelter.

Extensive work was done to advertise the service to vulnerable groups, including translating leaflets and distributing them to relevant organisations. We ran training and information sessions with A&E doctors at Homerton Hospital, Shelter, St Mungo's Homeless Health Nurses, Hackney Community Advice Bureau, Hackney Health Hubs, Hackney Winter Night Shelter and the Hackney Migrant Centre. We also developed excellent relationships with the non-clinical navigators at Homerton Hospital who referred complex patients to us so we could help them register with a GP.

Brighton clinic

In October 2015 we opened a project in Brighton, funded by the local Clinical Commissioning Group. The service works in partnership with Brighton Voices in Exile (BVIE) who provide immigration advice, destitution support and casework. Our volunteer doctors and nurses give medical advice and help people overcome barriers to accessing healthcare in the Brighton area. The Sussex Interpreting Service provides face-to-face interpretation during sessions and we work with their bilingual advocates to help support service users' healthcare needs.

Ahmed's story

Ahmed, a 25-year-old homeless failed asylum seeker from Sudan, was referred to us by BVIE because of concerns about his mental health. He revealed that he had been held captive and tortured in Sudan, and had required significant hospital treatment including abdominal surgery.

We helped Ahmed to write a letter to his solicitor and he is now waiting for a medical-legal report which will be used as evidence for his new asylum claim as a survivor of torture. He originally refused mental health support but returned to our clinic to receive a HC1 form which enabled him get free prescriptions and dental care. Ahmed then agreed to be referred to a mental health service for further assessment. He's now hoping to complete his business studies degree and to work in finance or accountancy in the UK.

The clinic saw over 50 people including many Syrian refugees. We helped survivors of torture, people persecuted due to their sexuality, those fleeing war and conflict, and survivors of domestic violence.



VISITING THE CLINIC
WERE LIVING IN UNSTABLE
ACCOMODATION



WERE LIVING
IN POVERTY

Pop-up clinics

We know that there are people in difficult situations who are either unable or unwilling to come to our clinics. They may be domestic workers who only get Sundays off, refugees who speak little English, or Latin American women struggling to navigate the UK health system and who are unaware of our clinics. For many, getting to our Bethnal Green clinic is difficult because it is too far away from where they live or work.



In response to these problems we completed a six-month pilot of pop-up clinics, working in partnership with allied organisations at different locations around London. We ran a total of 18 sessions at three partners: the Latin American Women's Rights Service, Notre Dame Refugee Centre and Justice for Domestic Workers.

We are now looking to expand our outreach, and are applying for funds to run a mobile clinic which would give us the ability to reach more people at a variety of locations across the UK.

Tavish's story

Tavish, 27, from Sri Lanka was tortured during his country's civil war because of his involvement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In 2015 he was arrested and tortured again. After he was released from prison, his father paid for someone to help Tavish get to London.

As a result of the torture he suffered, Tavish's physical and mental health had deteriorated. He has scars on his lower back where he was beaten. "I have a lot of pain on the body and I am not sleeping well, I have really bad dreams," he told us. "I think a lot, reliving things." The pain in his lower back is made worse by the cold weather in England and he has little appetite. Tavish struggled to access healthcare and was not able to register with a GP because he did not have the required paperwork. Last year, Tavish came to our clinic in London where our volunteers advocated on his behalf and were able to register him with a local GP as well as linking him to support services for survivors of torture. Tavish is now registered with a GP and is able to access NHS care. He is having regular counselling with Freedom from Torture.

60 SERVICE USERS WERE SEEN AT OUR POP-UP CLINICS OVER 18 SESSIONS

Advocacy

We advocate tirelessly for those unable to access the medical care they need. With over 10 years of experience treating excluded people in the UK, Doctors of the World campaigns for policies and practices that give everyone the right to health, regardless of immigration status or income.

We have continued to engage with the Department of Health over universal access to free primary and emergency healthcare in collaboration with a network of charities called the Entitlement Working Group. Our advocacy has included calling for refused asylum seekers, pregnant women and children to be exempt from healthcare charges. Through our experience working with vulnerable groups, we've also highlighted the need for more robust and comprehensive healthcare provision for survivors of torture, FGM, domestic violence and sexual violence.



NHS England guidelines

In 2015, we worked with NHS England to develop guidelines on GP registration to ensure access for all. The guidance stated that everyone should be allowed to register at a GP practice. It said that GPs:

- are not required to request proof of address or identification from patients wishing to register;
- should not withhold registration and appointments because a patient does not have proof of residence or identification;
- can only turn down an application to register if their list is closed to new patients or the patient lives outside the practice boundary or if they have other reasonable grounds. Inability to provide proof of address or identification is not reasonable grounds; and
- cannot refuse an application on the grounds of race, gender, social class, age, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, disability or medical condition.

As NHS England is responsible for commissioning and contracting primary medical services,¹ this guidance has been welcomed as the authority on GP registration in England. These principles are reiterated in the British Medical Association's guidance on patient registration for GP practices.²

1. From April 2015, 63 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) took this responsibility from NHS England under a formal delegation agreement.

2. <http://bma.org.uk/support-at-work/gp-Practices/service-provision/patient-registration-for-gp-Practices>

Right to care

Funded by Trust for London, our Right to Care project focused on improving access to healthcare for excluded people in the UK through alliances and partnerships. Our work has included training medical students and professionals on meeting the needs of vulnerable populations, and creating a body of medical students to champion this cause and train their peers. We have also been providing guidance, resources and training to regional healthcare providers and public health bodies to improve unmet health needs of vulnerable populations across London.

European network

In May, we held a one-off press conference in London to mark the launch of a survey of access to healthcare in Europe. The report was based on over 22,000 consultations at Doctors of the World clinics in nine European countries, including Britain.

Shockingly, it found that only one-third of children seen across Europe had been vaccinated against mumps, measles and rubella (MMR), and only slightly more against tetanus. Over 90% of patients seen were foreign nationals living below the poverty line. Of those surveyed in London, 83% had no access to the NHS.

The Europe-wide report followed Doctors of the World's survey of pregnant women's access to healthcare in the UK. Both publications were key in urging Member States and EU institutions to ensure universal public health systems available to all living in an EU state.

The future

Our clinics will continue providing vital medical care for vulnerable people in the UK. Many still face multiple barriers to accessing medical care, a situation that has far-reaching implications for the NHS and public health. In 2016 we aim to help more people get basic healthcare regardless of their immigration status.

We continue to demand:

- Full access to primary, emergency and other essential care for everyone living in the UK.
- Exemptions from healthcare charges for pregnant women and children living in the UK.
- NHS information should not be shared with the Home Office, accessing treatment should never be used as a means of immigration enforcement.
- Health professionals should be supported to take care of all patients regardless of their immigration status.



Our volunteers

Our volunteers give their time for free, working tirelessly with little reward. Without them we would not be able to provide any kind of service. They are what make Doctors of the World the organisation it is today. Thank you to the **158 volunteers** who delivered our work in 2015.

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Abena Afari	Claire Fitzgerald	Helen Wright	Lucinda Hiam	Priyanka Lakhani
Abi Fry	Clare Campbell	Helen Richardson	Lucy Rogers	Rachel Kerrigan
Abigail Bentley	Clare Halsted	Helen Young	Magda James	Rachel Cottam
Alex Stirling	Colin Robertson	Helene de Bonnaires	Manar Idriss	Rebecca Kassam
Alexandra Murrell	Craig Rosenbloom	Hina Shahid	Manpreet Sahemey	Rhiannon England
Alison Mitchell	David Haigh	Hind Swareldahab	Marcio Taniguti	Richard Kell
Ana Maria Velez	Deepah Shah	Holly Howe Watson	Maria Akinde	Rita D'Alessio
Anna Rom	Denice Kofod	Iain Campbell	Maria Garcia de Frutos	Roisin McNicholas
Anne Nida	Dominik Zenner	Ian Gibson	Maria Souroulidi	Ruth Johnston
Annie Reynolds	Ed Jones	Ibiadukuka Worika	Marian Lanyon	Ruth Taylor
Asiyat Gadjakaeva	Elena Maya Silvan	Jackie Applebee	Marie Costes	Sabreena Ali
Axel Sylvan	Eleanor Fowler	Jasmine Wakeel	Marilyn Cameron	Sahar Abdulrahman
Ayeshat Ibitoye	Elvira Thissen	Jaya Aiyengar	Mati Roberts	Sally Watts
Ban Hussein	Emily Spry	Jen Hall	Maureen Batley	Sarah Banbury
Beatriz Lopez	Emma Preston	Jennifer Kay	Michael Dowe	Sarah Collis
Belinda Chihota	Farah Kidy	Jennifer Gervaise-Brazier	Michelle Moorst	Sarah Dickson
Bernadette De Jager	Fatima Mahmoud	Jenny Booth	Miu Woodrow	Sarah Boutros
Beth Walker	Fiona Hares	Jenny Akhurst	Mohanad Badeen	Sarah Chin
Bettina Wanninkhof	Fionnuala Finnerty	Jessica Louseley	Mohmooda Mian	Sarah Noakes
Brett Prowse	Florence Alemi	John Hansen-Brevetti	Morag Smith	Seena Saberi
Cassandra Baiano	Fozia Hamid	John Raymond Jones	Nadeem Saumtally	Shahida Yasmin
Catherine Harkness	Frank Arnold	John Lowes	Nancy Kordouli	Sherif Salem
Cecile Hallenstein	Georgia Stevenson	JP Nolan	Neelu Begum	Sihad Jasim
Celia Emmot	Grace Rollason	Julia Lungley	Neil Calderwood	Sissela Sylvan
Charnele Nunes	Harman Mohal	Karen Lau	Niamh Ni Dhomhnaill	Sonya Chee
Chris Curry	Harry Whittle	Katherine Taylor	Nicola Purkiss Bejarano	Susie Daniel
Christine Lu	Helal Attayee	Kathryn Basford	Nimco Mohamed	Svetlana Konyukhova
		Khalil Hassanally	Nina Meghji	Tai Oladimeji
		Kiran Cheedella	Olga Casadesus	Tanya Adams
		Kitty Worthing	Olivia Nathan	Tehmina Bharucha
		Laura Rahmsford	Olivia Sheppard	Thelma Thomas
		Lauriane Chakowski	Padma Wignesuaran	Vanessa Liu
		Lee Simmons	Paquita de Zulueta	Vivienne Barton
		Licinio Pereira	Peter Gough	Zoe Alder
		Linieta Eades	Priya Umachandran	

Thank you to our funders

London  Catalyst



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City and Hackney
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Clinical Commissioning Group



Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

Make a donation

Donating just £2 could help us provide treatment to prevent a child dying from pneumonia. You can donate online at doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/donate or text **DOTW10** to **70070** to donate £10.

Volunteer for us

Whether you're a medical professional or just want to help others, there are regular opportunities to volunteer for us in the UK or work for us abroad. See our website for more details: doctorsoftheworld.org.uk



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