

DOCTORS OF THE WORLD

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026



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FOREWORD

BY OUR PRESIDENT



For people seeking asylum, for refugees and those living in vulnerable circumstances in the UK, the challenges are immense.

In a perceived hostile political climate allied with rising costs of living and general health system failures, barriers to accessing healthcare for people already experiencing exclusion can feel insurmountable. Conflict, natural disasters, and climate change mean constant humanitarian emergencies, disproportionately affecting people already living in the most vulnerable circumstances. It is in these times that Doctors of the World UK is most needed, we must step up to support people who need us in both in the UK and abroad.

I am proud to play a small part in an organisation with purpose, drive and ambition to make a difference for people who are living in extremely challenging situations. The beating heart of our organisation is our staff and volunteers who are truly inspirational, consistently going above and beyond the call of duty to serve. We have a very clear purpose, a clear sense of who we are and what we exist to do. The need is undeniable, and our package of holistic and clinical service provision allied with advocacy for change, is unique.

We are evolving, under new executive leadership we are stronger, through embedding service user insights in the core of our organisation we are more impactful. These are, however, challenging times for charities of our size. We need to continue to be innovative, flexible and evolve further, to find new supporters, partnerships, and ways of working to meet needs. We must ensure we are the best we can be as an organisation and to effect tangible change.

The Doctors of the World UK Strategic Plan 2023 to 2026 sets out clearly our four strategic objectives: to provide accessible, holistic services; advocate and lead interventions to influence system-wide change and reduce barriers to healthcare; embed a sustainable and financially independent model; and to ensure we are an equitable and inclusive organisation.

I am hugely grateful to everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy (including every person within our organisation) and for the inclusive manner in which it has been produced. This has been a humbling and inspiring process and the collective product provides the clarity and direction we need now.

Finally, a huge thank you to you for reading and for your support. We are on this journey together. With our supporters, we will realise the aims of this strategy and continue to give our all to make a difference for those who need us. Thank you.

Dr. James Elston
Chair of the Board of Trustees

FOREWORD

BY OUR NATIONAL HEALTH ADVISERS



Over the past three years, we have witnessed the world and our immediate society experience one of the most unexpected and life changing shift resulting from the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Contemplating on the next three years, it is indicative that rapid and constant change which keeps chipping away on vital aspect of human rights and humanitarian needs which has impacted vulnerable people the most, will become the norm.

This concern is utmost on our mind as we have witnessed even more loss of hope among the vulnerable as the changes made to the healthcare system due to the pandemic has birthed more barriers to accessing healthcare. Despite the perplexing rise of cost of living, many still have to grapple with issues of accessing healthcare.

In pursuit of our mission at Doctors of the World, we have remained resilient and relentlessly continued to tackle the issues that damage the individual's right to accessing care. We have taken on a more proactive focus, adopting co-production as a way of working that delivers solutions that address the actual needs of people rather than their presumed needs.

So far, we have been able to establish a functioning Lived Experience Advisory Group known as National Health Advisors who have been integrated into Doctors of the World UK's infrastructure. This work helped us welcome lived expertise in our Board and way of making decisions and across our teams. We showcased how a people-led approach can function and help the organisation realize its potential. We witnessed richer and more robust outcomes. Looking forward with excitement, to build on this work with this new strategy, by actively engaging and utilising the power of lived experience.

The National Health Advisers
The Doctors of the World
Experts by Experience

DOCTORS OF THE WORLD UK

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 TO 2026

Doctors of the World UK is part of the international Médecins du Monde network, which delivers over 300 projects in more than 70 countries through 6,000 volunteers.

Accessible healthcare is a fundamental human right. In the UK, people seeking sanctuary, and other communities such as sex workers, people with no fixed address, and the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities are significantly excluded or ignored from mainstream health services.

The Médecins du Monde / Doctors of the World vision is for a world where barriers to health have been overcome, and where access to health services is acknowledged as a fundamental right. We strive to achieve this vision by delivering innovative medical programmes, providing evidence-based advocacy, and empowering excluded people and communities to claim their right to access of health services, whilst fighting for universal access to healthcare.

We all need healthcare sometimes. Yet, in the UK, people's access to medical services is continuously chipped away by harmful policies that undermine the work, care, and duty of health professionals. Equal access to healthcare doesn't mean that everyone will have the same concerns throughout their lives. But that we all receive care in times of need, no matter our circumstances.

In the UK, Doctors of the World runs healthcare services and advocacy programmes via mobile clinics, outreach and a national advice line. Our 'Safe Surgeries' initiative aims to systematically improve access to primary care by supporting better GP registration policies. At the individual level, we provide practical resources, highlight policies and conflicting NHS messaging, and deliver a professional training programme for NHS staff, including resources for doctors, nurses and administrators so they can better support the diverse communities who seek healthcare at their GP practices.

We partner with leading academics and experts by experience on research activities in support of equal access to mainstream health services. Standing with the people affected by health exclusion, doctors and nurses, and community members, we call on governments and public bodies to protect, preserve, and promote the right to healthcare and campaign for the changes needed to make this happen.


OF THE WORLD

HOW WE WORK

We believe social justice is a vehicle for equal access to healthcare. We are committed to anti-racism principles and will challenge any inequalities present in society, policy making, the third sector, or within our own organisation.

We continue fighting to change the structures and systems which create barriers to accessing healthcare and inflicts harm upon communities across the UK.

We prioritise creating safe spaces for individuals, families and communities to overcome these barriers and receive the care they are entitled to.

We value diversity of thought and lived experience of exclusion from the healthcare system and coproduction is at the centre of how we think, design, and act.

We strive to work in partnerships and adopt a holistic approach to overcoming the multiple challenges our service users experience.

We make space in our own work and in the external environment for our service users to act as agents for change and to share their stories through different channels. When we recognise themes of ongoing and systematic harm, we work with services users and partners to amplify this, so the real-world impacts do not go unseen.



PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

Activism

As a member of the Médecins du Monde global movement of volunteers and salaried staff we provide medical services and bear witness. Strengthened by our diversity we support excluded people to attain social change.

Balance

We seek balance between our national and international actions, emergency, and long-term programmes, between medical and lay knowledge, and between public funding and private donations.

Empowerment

We believe our service users are agents of change in their own health. In partnership with others, we seek to support them to act and exercise their rights.

Social Justice

We believe social justice is a vehicle for equal access to healthcare, respect for fundamental rights and solidarity.

Independence

We have no political or religious affiliation. We are independent in our choice of programmes and operating methods.



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OUR PRIORITIES UNTIL 2026

Doctors of the World UK has real and visible authority on healthcare exclusion of all descriptions experienced by communities across the UK. After the intensity of COVID-19 we have reached a tipping point. We have taken a plethora of opportunities to improve access to healthcare across multiple population groups, and we must continue to make sustainable strategic choices about the services we deliver and ensure we have the infrastructure to deliver on our promise. Our strategic priorities for 2023 to 2026 will prioritise stability, strategic decision making, and sustainability of impact. This complements the ambitions of the MDM International Network, who by 2026 aim to have consolidated and reinforced the structural foundations of the network with the goal of increasing its collective strategic impact and influence.

In the next four years, we will pace our delivery of healthcare interventions with the goal of reinforcing our domestic programmes. We aim to increase our operational agility to drive sustainable and long-term outcomes of healthcare interventions and to respond to national and international emergencies with speed and efficiency.

To achieve this, we plan to establish a process for systematically evaluating opportunities for new healthcare and advocacy service programmes in alignment with our long-term objectives.

In response to the increasingly hostile environment for refugees, people seeking asylum, and vulnerable and disenfranchised communities in the UK, we will broaden our advocacy efforts to encompass the asylum and immigration space. We will continue to push for impactful change to more equitable and accessible delivery of the UK's primary care system by investing in the impact and reach of Safe Surgeries. By strengthening data collection and reinforcing academic partnerships, our efforts in the research space will significantly contribute to the evidence-base calling for changes to NHS policies.

> *"I was given the chance to share my perspective and knowledge to ongoing work on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This gave me agency as a National Health Advisor, and I feel like I am contributing to a change in the organisation."*
>
> Karuna, National Health Advisor

Internally our priorities are to ensure we maintain the good health of the organisation and well-being, morale and agency of staff, volunteers, and National Health Advisors. Embedding the commitments of our previous strategy towards lived experience, we will review our governance model and work towards a Membership base that includes people with lived experience of healthcare exclusion.

> *"It's important to focus on lived experience because health exclusion is something that cannot be understood without putting yourself in the shoes of those in that situation."*
>
> Anne, National Health Advisor

Outcomes of a review into our staffing model will guide us in how to improve accessibility to our core services and the wellbeing of our frontline team; paid and volunteer members of staff feel will value in their working lives, and our organisational structures will prioritise equity and respect. Organisational controls, compliance, and safeguarding approaches will be brought into line with our improved ways of working, including ensuring our services adhere to UK's Care Quality Commission's new assessment framework.

Recognising that our work is not possible without our volunteers we will also make sure that the people who donate their time to us receive high-quality support and personal and professional development opportunities.

The Médecins du Monde network is central to how we work. Our connection to this network has been rebuilt and is now strong. We will continue to raise funds for Médecins du Monde overseas operations and respond to emergencies such as with recent appeals for Ukraine and Türkiye/ Syria as part of our contribution to providing humanitarian relief globally. We continue to support through our expert contributions to decision making platforms such as governance, compliance, and internal operations. The ambition being that Doctors of the World could engage further, in delivery of international operations through partnerships with other network members. Finding ways to ensure the contribution and deployment of experienced field staff, medical and non-medical the networks international operations also remain a priority which we will explore ways to progress.





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OUR OBJECTIVES

1

FRONTLINE SERVICES AND HEALTHCARE RIGHTS ADVICE IS ACCESSIBLE AND MEETS NEED, IN-PERSON OR ONLINE

2

INCREASE PRESSURE FOR SIGNIFICANT SYSTEMS-CHANGE IN THE UK

3

OUR RESOURCING MODEL MEETS THE NEEDS OF FRONTLINE SERVICES

4

WE ARE A MORE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

OBJECTIVE 1

FRONTLINE SERVICES AND HEALTHCARE RIGHTS ADVICE IS ACCESSIBLE AND MEETS NEED, IN-PERSON OR ONLINE

We deliver holistic, person-focused healthcare programmes that aim to remove barriers to accessing healthcare throughout the UK. Currently we manage static and mobile clinics, a national help line and follow up casework to ensure access.. In the next four years, we plan to reach more service users in the UK by reinforcing our core services, leveraging the expertise built during the COVID-19 pandemic and adopting sustainable service delivery models. Fundamental to this is prioritising the wellbeing of our frontline staff and volunteers and structurally embedding lived experience as the guiding principle in how we design and deliver interventions. To achieve this, we will:

- Develop clear processes and incorporate standard needs assessments to decide how and where we deliver our services to reach people in vulnerable circumstances.
- Assess and strengthen external and internal data collection and information-sharing tools to increase awareness of people's rights and entitlements and accessibility of our services.
- Use our learnings from the communities we work with, our data, needs assessments, guidance of people with lived experience of health exclusion, and outcomes of evaluations of previous interventions to identify effective ways of working and what services we should expand.
- Strive to ensure our services are well funded from a range of sources to be able to maintain our independence, and so that we can deliver services strategically and in line with our priorities.
- Proactively explore partnership working opportunities that can increase our reach and/or ensure the change we bring about has lasting impact.
- Review the current staffing models to ensure the best use of volunteers and paid employees, particularly regarding service provision and reliability, and have in place a frontline service delivery team with both lived and learned experience of healthcare exclusion in the UK, advised by a group of National Health Advisors who collaborate to determine and co-produce service delivery interventions.
- Strengthen our Volunteer Recruitment and Retention programme. To ensure volunteers receive high-quality support and personal and professional development opportunities
- Deliver high quality services via our clinics, help line and educational activities, using the learning from our data and guidance of people with lived experience of health exclusion.

OBJECTIVE 1



By 2026, our frontline services will be well-staffed, agile, and able to deliver interventions that bring about strategic, impactful change in policy and access to healthcare for those most excluded from healthcare.

OBJECTIVE 2

INCREASE PRESSURE FOR SIGNIFICANT SYSTEMS-CHANGE IN THE UK

Working with GP Surgeries to improve access to Primary Care

A Safe Surgery can be any GP practice which commits to taking steps to tackle the barriers faced by vulnerable communities in accessing healthcare. At a minimum, this means declaring your practice a 'Safe Surgery' for everyone and ensuring that lack of ID or proof of address, immigration status or language are not barriers to patient registration.

GP surgeries that are 'Safe Surgeries' recognise the barriers to healthcare access that exist, particularly for people in vulnerable circumstances, and believe that small changes in practice can make a difference. Staff working in these surgeries are willing to lead by example and work to ensure that nobody in their community is excluded from healthcare.

The programme remained relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. As of February 2023, 10% of GPs in England are 'Safe Surgeries'. To ensure Safe Surgeries continues to positively impact access to Primary Care in the UK in the coming strategic period, we will:

- Increase the number of Safe Surgeries in regions across England.
- Improve accessibility to healthcare access for people in asylum accommodation by working with partners to overhaul Home Office asylum health policies and establishing a standard of best practice for asylum accommodation providers.
- Maintain engagement with Safe Surgeries community members by continuously providing updated information and opportunities to promote the initiative, distribute materials to GP practices to patients, and actively participate in Doctors of the World advocacy activities.

By 2026, the adoption of Safe Surgeries is promoted by Integrated Care Systems and GP practice groups, and Doctors of the World UK is considered a strategic partner in ensuring communities across the UK receive the best healthcare and health outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 2

Expanding the reach and the impact of our research.

Our reputation as a trusted and expert authority on underserved communities stems primarily from data collated from our programmes. This evidence enables us to identify where change is needed, develop solutions and drive change from a position of authority. In the past strategic period, we focused on formally establishing a research function in the organisation. We must ensure our involvement in research enables us to make evidence-based asks of the system to change or demonstrate solutions and alternatives through evaluating interventions. We also must have in place, a sound evidence base which guides our advocacy programmatic work, we will achieve this by focusing on:

- Closer alignment of research activities and Doctors of the World UK advocacy and programmatic objectives, improving data collection systems and making use of all clinical services to underpin data collection.
- Improve how we use existing data to further our advocacy objectives.
- Conduct research to identify gaps in healthcare provision, community needs and develop solutions, drawing on partnerships with academic institutions and public health training programmes.
- Ensure early collaboration with and seek balance in research partnerships to shape research questions together and ensure collaborations fit with Doctors of the World UK advocacy objectives.
- Increase media coverage of our evidence-based reports and recommendations to build on Doctors of the World UK's thought leadership.

By 2026, a research programme on healthcare access is in place, working in partnership with academia and other stakeholders to publish insights, reports, and recommendations as both grey and academic literature.

OBJECTIVE 2

A stronger healthcare advocacy voice in the asylum and immigration space

Doctors of the World UK generates high quality evidence on the impact of barriers to healthcare access through our frontline delivery of medical and advocacy services. From this we know some of the strongest barriers individuals face when accessing healthcare systematically stem from the anti-refugee stance and broken asylum system brought about by a succession of UK governments.

> *"We can't let people suffer or die in silence. We can't let people die because they're scared of the immigration system, and what it can do to them."*
>
> National Health Advisor

In the past we have focussed our advocacy work on the UK government's attack on the rights of people without formal immigration status; we have been successful in building support within the medical community to protect the right to health for all and have published research on our asylum data and have made multiple submissions to government consultations and legal challenges on the NHS migrant charging system. More recent government attempts to strip away the fundamental rights of people going through the asylum system have forced us to expand our focus to include the asylum system – the evidence we have of the damaging impacts of the UK asylum system on health and wellbeing must be amplified and acted on. To do this we will:

- Bring together Experts by Experience and key partners in the health and refugee sectors to fight for a fair and safe asylum system that prioritises the health and wellbeing of people seeking sanctuary.
- Continue to fight for an overhaul of the inequitable NHS charging policy and an end to sharing patient data with the Home Office.
- Utilise lived experience expertise and evidence from Doctors of the World UK healthcare programmes to maintain our reputation as a trusted voice on migrant health policy and as a basis for advocacy and activist campaigns.
- Partner with medical organisations to ensure the health inequalities agenda recognises immigration status as a driver of poor health.
- Increase the impact and reach of our communications by mobilising existing and potential supporters through clear, bold, and inspiring content in line with Doctors of the World identity and participative approach to production, across channels.

OBJECTIVE 2

By 2026, through working in partnerships with Experts by Experience the UK health and migration sectors, ensure everyone living in the UK, regardless of immigration status, can access the medical care.



OBJECTIVE 3

OUR RESOURCING MODEL MEETS THE NEEDS OF FRONTLINE SERVICES

Historically our funding model has relied upon our individual donors to provide unrestricted funding, with an over-reliance on time-limited institutional and Trust funds to enable our project work to be completed. This approach does not enable us to be agile in our service provision and can mean that support staff are tied to short-term contracts.

We are actively changing our fundraising strategy to extend our fundraising model. We are continuing to build our successful individual giving and Trusts income streams, but adding in events, legacies, corporate giving, and community fundraising, all of which will raise unrestricted income. In addition, we are connecting more strongly to our MdM network, to ensure that UK funding opportunities that are available to our colleagues in the network are maximised.

To achieve this over the years of this strategy we will:

- Ensure transparency and honesty with our existing donors to build long-term relationships and deeper understanding of our work.
- Build up new areas of income, targeting events, community and legacy giving as our first areas of concentration.
- Work with our existing network to access new support, particularly via corporate introductions.
- Continue to collaborate more widely with the MdM network, helping our partners to access UK funds, and in return receiving support to build relationships with funders that our held by our international colleagues.
- Promote our work to expert and public audiences to increase understanding of the barriers and circumstances the people we work with face, grow our community of supporters, and contribute to reframing the narratives, specifically around migration.

By 2026 we will be in a position where we are confident in our unrestricted income that is required each year, which is drawn from a wide and sustainable range of income sources. We will continue to seek new opportunities, new introductions and be working collaboratively across the MdM network.

OBJECTIVE 4

WE ARE A MORE EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION

In the past strategic period, through introduction of the National Health Advisers Group, we began incorporating lived experience expertise into our organisation. At the strategic level, we have two Board Trustees with lived experience and a Lived-Experience Board Advisory group in place.

> *"I'm grateful and I feel empowered because Doctors of the World have given me the platform and the opportunity to hope for a better tomorrow not just for myself but for all those who are excluded from accessing healthcare. I am sitting in the advisory panel for the board, and I am very hopeful that with this strategic plan DOTW will be a good example of how lived expertise can be embedded in strategic decision making and agenda setting."*
>
> Shams, National Health Advisor

We now commit to embedding lived experience into the fabric of Doctors of the World UK. To drive a sustainable inclusion programme, we will review and revise Doctors of the World UK policies and processes, to ensure they are equitable and inclusive those who engage with the organisation.

We will ensure our recruiting models enable these ambitions and provide specific training and engagement with social and racial justice experts to shape our strategies. This was in a direct response to staff survey of 2021 which outlined the priorities of our own teams regarding racial and social justice.

To achieve this, we will:

- Expand our knowledge and understanding of what DEI means in Doctors of the World UK and be ready to adopt a more strategic approach to integration in our office and programmatic activities.
- To have developed a plan to embed all aspects of racial and social justice work in our policies and day to day management of the charity from the top (board of trustees) through to how we respond to our service users.
- Ensure the employee lifecycle is reviewed and strengthened using the DEI lens and bring Doctors of the World UK in line with UK industry standard in relation to DEI.
- Support people with lived experience to continue their journey to become leaders though making personal and professional development opportunities accessible.
- Review the governance of Doctors of the World UK and work towards adopting a membership base that includes individuals with lived experience of healthcare exclusion.

OBJECTIVE 4

- Shift power in the Executive by having representation of people with the diversity characteristic of lived experience of healthcare exclusion at all levels in the organisational hierarchy, including the Senior Management Team.
- Develop and implement a sustainable model of co-production which drives design, development, implementation, and evaluation of all Doctors of the World UK external activities.

> *"I feel like we are the heart of Doctors of the World, giving them a first-hand understanding of the healthcare and cultural challenges of the people we are helping. As a National Health Advisor, we act as befrienders and advocates, helping people to register with GPs, dentists, opticians, and other specialties band teaching them how to navigate the NHS and the asylum system. We also support Safe Surgeries training to improve understanding of the health needs of refugees and asylum seekers. I am happy to be part of this movement and work towards a more compassionate system, putting people's voices at the centre of everything we do."*
>
> Niloha Rangel, National Health Advisor

By 2026 we will have established lived experience as a diversity characteristic in all areas of our work, with representation on our highest-level decision-making platform and a commitment to bring such expertise into the international MDM space. The Employee Lifecycles for volunteer, permanent contract employee, and short-term contract employees of Doctors of the World UK are inclusive towards our increasingly diverse staff base.



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These ambitions connect with the MDM international strategy commitment to lived experience and diversity, equity and inclusion, and our intention is to work within the International MDM network to lead in these areas, because we believe that access to health care is a Universal Right for one and all.



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