

Challenging Issues: Changing Lives

Case work report 2017



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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the Peter Tatchell Foundation's case work report for 2017 – Challenging Issues: Changing Lives.

It documents our work giving advice, support and practical aid to individuals who are victims of injustices, such as discrimination and hate crime.

We are particularly proud of our success in helping to win asylum in the UK for refugees fleeing persecution by repressive regimes.

Despite our limited size and funding, the Peter Tatchell Foundation still manages to make a positive difference to the lives of many people every year. Since 2013, we have helped over 1,000 people. Special thanks to Pliny Soocormanee, Executive Assistant, and to our volunteer Kimberley Watson.

If you feel impassioned by what you read in this report, please consider [making a gift](#) to help us continue this work. All of this was only made possible with the incredible support of our amazing donors – our success starts with your generosity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy N. Hooke'.

Jeremy N. Hooke Esq DipFa MILFB
Chairman, Peter Tatchell Foundation

1. About us

The Peter Tatchell Foundation (PTF) works for universal human rights, including very importantly, LGBT+ human rights.

The aims and objectives of the PTF are to raise awareness, understanding, protection and implementation of human rights, in the UK and worldwide. This involves research, education, advice, case work, publicity, lobbying and advocacy for the enforcement and furtherance of human rights law.

Through our case work, we are making a tangible, positive difference to the lives of people who've suffered discrimination and hate crime and those who are seeking refugee status. One of our great strengths is our ability to respond professionally and compassionately to calls for help wherever they are from.

2. Requests

The Peter Tatchell Foundation receives requests for help from all over the UK and around the world.

Very often people contacting us are depressed, harassed and are emotionally drained. The PTF is a small organisation with very limited resources. Despite this, we assist people in a number of ways as depicted in Fig 1.

This case work service is provided free of charge and funded by our donors, who we thank very much.

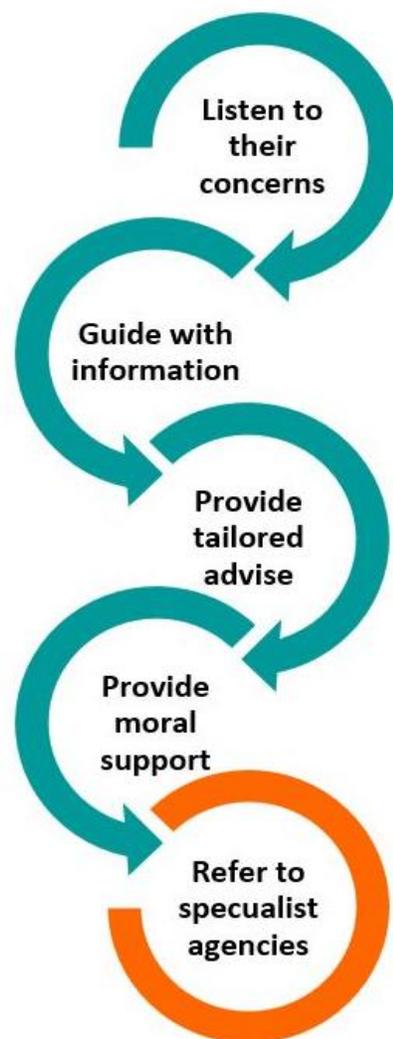


Fig1: How we assist people.

3. Key Facts

Case work report 2017

How do we help people?

We are often the first people who have heard about their suffering and listened to their concerns. We offer moral support and hope during their emotionally distressing time, alongside providing information and advice.



Where are they from?



We helped 198 people



were from the Commonwealth*

*incl UK and Pakistan

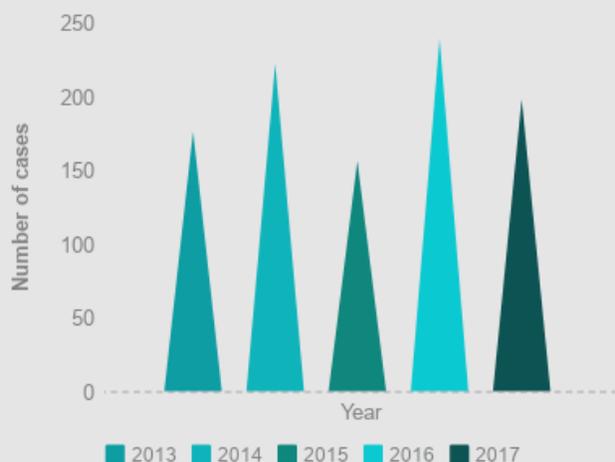


from the UK

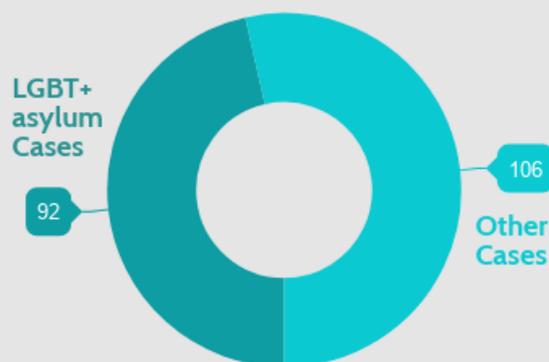


were from Pakistan

Our history of case work



Who did we help?



4. Why do people come to us?

We are known to get things done. Peter Tatchell is a nationally and internationally renowned human rights defender with over 50 years experience. Because of his high profile, many people see the Peter Tatchell Foundation as a first point of contact for help on issues such as discrimination, asylum, harassment and hate crime.

5. In their own words



Robert Bristow & Marinel Bristow – UK & Philippines

Background: In 2012, the UK government introduced a law which stipulated that any UK citizen married to a non-EU-citizen cannot live with their partner in the UK unless they meet an arbitrarily imposed income threshold of £18,600. This law has completely devastated thousands of couples' lives and is splitting families apart.

Robert and Marinel are one such couple and we are helping to ensure they are reunited in the UK.

Rob's own words:

"My life has been ripped apart since I was forcibly separated from the one and only person I love. My wife Marinel is from the Philippines and we married more than eight years ago in 2009 - 3 years before the arbitrary minimum income law came into force.

"We married in the Philippines and several months later my wife visited the UK for a few weeks and we had a wedding blessing at my local church. I went to the Philippines soon after and lived there with my wife for a couple of years, running a business together.

"In November 2012, my wife survived the devastating typhoon Yolanda. Six thousand people were killed and BBC described our home town of Tacloban as a "war zone".

Marinel lost many friends, neighbours and relatives leaving her traumatised and needing support. It was then that we decided to settle in the UK.

“I live in a rural, low-income area of Herefordshire where I think more than 50% of the local population earn less than the government's arbitrary minimum income threshold. During the time that she was here with me, I was working full time and supporting her as she was not allowed to work while our application for residency was being processed.

“As I did not meet the income requirement, my wife was deported after living with me in the UK for three years. Despite our love, she was treated like a common criminal. Despite our commitment, she was detained for three weeks in an immigration removal centre. The woman I love was not even allowed to come home and pack her bags.

“At the airport, she was not even allowed to say goodbye to me. She had very little dignity left at this point, but being denied that final kiss stripped her of what little she had left.

“My wife is a most wonderful, kind and beautiful person and her ongoing treatment is despicable. Every time I think of our forced and unnecessary separation my heart hurts. I can't begin to imagine how she feels so many thousands of miles away.

“I would like people to know what we have gone through and have found a great deal of support and solace from the Peter Tatchell Foundation. No compassion or understanding was shown regarding our love and my wife's fragile mental condition. I would like people to know that this is

how the government is treating its citizens. It is certainly a case of: ‘One law for the rich and another for the poor. How sad!’



Hadija Ally Mwinshee – Tanzania



Background: Tanzania is one of the 36 Commonwealth countries that criminalises both male and female; same-sex acts. In February 2017, Dr. Kigwangalla, the Deputy Minister for Health, stated that “homosexuality is not a human right” and vowed to search for and prosecute LGBT+ people and those who advocate for LGBT issues. The same deputy minister threatened to publish a list of gay people who he claims are selling sex online. Lesbians like Hadija face stigma, discrimination and persecution. The authorities have also launched a crackdown on LGBT activists and advocates, threatening arrest or expulsion from the country.

This is **Hadija’s** story:

“I don’t know where to start. I am from Tanzania and I sought asylum in the UK because I am lesbian. I faced so many troubles in Tanzania.

“My parents knew I was a lesbian and I was often mistreated by them. They forced me into a marriage that I did not want. My husband later on found out that I was attracted to women and he turned out to be always angry and violent at me. He would be beat me up almost every day. I still have the scars. It was a very difficult time for me.

“In my village I earned my living by selling food. However, people started talking about me. Soon the word was out that I was a lesbian. It was very hard for me to survive then. Many of them avoided me and many refused to buy the food I was selling. One day a group of villagers got around and started insulting me and they said that I was not natural, not a proper woman. The mob got very agitated and suddenly they all started attacking me and they beat me up. I barely made it alive.

“I could not report anything to the police. You see, the police would not do anything and I feared I would be beaten by them. I was very much afraid for my life. During this time my family completely ignored me and refused to meet me. They thought I was a disgrace.

“In 2015, I applied for asylum here [in the UK] and it has been a struggle since then. The Home Office refused to believe that I was a lesbian. One day, while I was going to sign-in at the reporting centre, I was sent into detention. I had nothing else with me except my handbag. I was terrified of being sent back to Tanzania, as I knew I would not be in peace there.

“Being in detention is like a prison and I kept wondering what I did wrong. I just wanted to live in peace. Whist in detention, I cried a lot as I thought at any moment I would be forced into a plane and deported back. I even pleaded to be sent to any other country, but not Tanzania, to any other country where I could live freely. I spent nearly 3 months in detention. Every day, I thought it would be last day I would be here. It was a hard to cope with the stress.

“My case is still under consideration by the Home Office and at the moment I feel my life is just on hold and I am immensely grateful that the Peter Tatchell Foundation has been supporting me all the way.

Attiq ur Rehman Janjua – Pakistan



Background: Pakistan is one of the countries in the Commonwealth that criminalises homosexuality. In terms of legal statutes, Pakistan has one of the harshest anti-gay laws in the world: with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. It is one of only a handful of states that stipulates such a penalty for homosexual acts. Homophobic hatred and discrimination is generalised and tolerated by the state authorities.

This is Attiq's story:

“My parents passed away when I was young and my brothers took care of me. I am from a big family with 8 brothers and sisters.

“I had a boyfriend in Pakistan and we were always very careful to hide our relationship. It is not possible to be openly gay in my country. The society is very homophobic. Not only are there laws that make you a criminal, the whole society is hostile to gays.

“It is not uncommon for gay men to simply disappear and never to be heard of again. Several of my friends have just vanished and I can only suspect that they have been killed. No one will ever ask questions, as they were gay.

“In 2012, despite all my precautions my then boyfriend's family found out about our relationship and they contacted my brothers. It was a very difficult time. My brothers were very harsh to me and ordered me to change or face the consequences. It was useless trying to reason them. I felt powerless as they became increasingly hostile. The insults poured in and then came the beatings. I still have the scars, those are a constant reminder of the pain and struggle I have been through.

“Despite all of this, I was still committed to my partner. We tried to be even more discreet and cautious when we met. On one of these occasions, while we were on the road, a group of men, total strangers, approached us and started harassing us. They encircled us and we could not escape. They punched us. They kicked us to the ground. They said they would teach us a lesson. I was so afraid and they left both of us bleeding badly. I could not go to anyone or even complain to the police. The police would have done nothing and probably would have beaten us and mocked us as well.

“Sometime after this incident, my boyfriend disappeared, without any indication that he wanted to stop our relationship. I was very afraid for him and thought of the worst possible scenario.

“My brothers also got more violent. One day, they even pointed a gun at me, telling me I was bringing dishonour to the family and they would kill me if I did not change. But, how could I change my sexuality? I knew if I remain in Pakistan, the worst would happen. My brothers were well connected and even if I managed to relocate in Pakistan, they would be able to find me.

“One of the relatives who supported me, helped me escape. I came to the UK seeking refuge. I was running away for my life. During the asylum process, I was terrified that I could be deported back. That would have meant a death sentence.

“I felt liberated when I was granted refugee status. I could hardly contain my emotions. This meant the start of new life, a new beginning, one where I could be myself. I have always found support from the Peter Tatchell Foundation when I was in a time of great need.

“Today, I do have a partner, Mirza Tayaab Baig, from Pakistan. He escaped our home country as well and was granted refugee status in Germany. However, I am still fighting to be reunited with him. The Home Office has been less than helpful and our struggle to be together is ongoing.

6. Case work in brief

In 2017, we dealt with 198 individuals who requested assistance. Many of these individuals required extensive multiple correspondence and support. This is illustrated in Fig 2. Case work over the years.

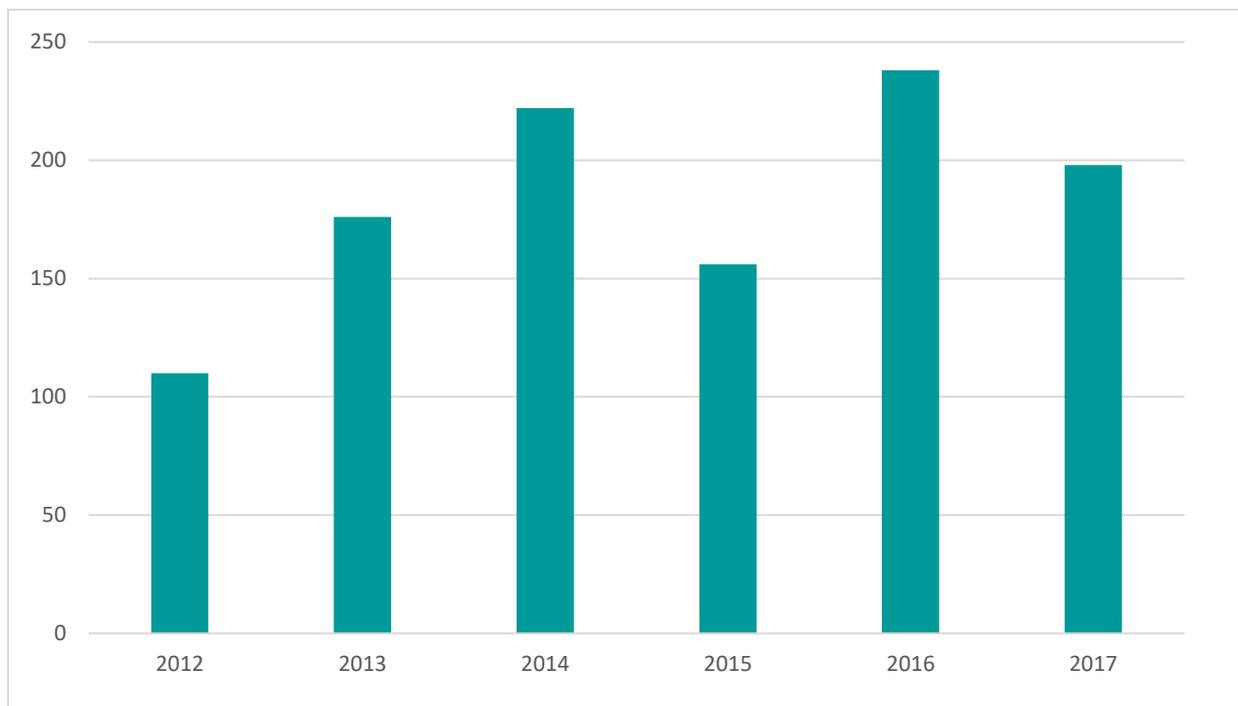


Fig 2. Case work over the years.

The trend in the number of cases dealt with has increased over the years. Since 2012, we have assisted over 1,000 people.

7. Global reach

More than a quarter of requests for help come from the UK but, increasingly, a greater number come from around the globe. This is shown below in Fig 3:

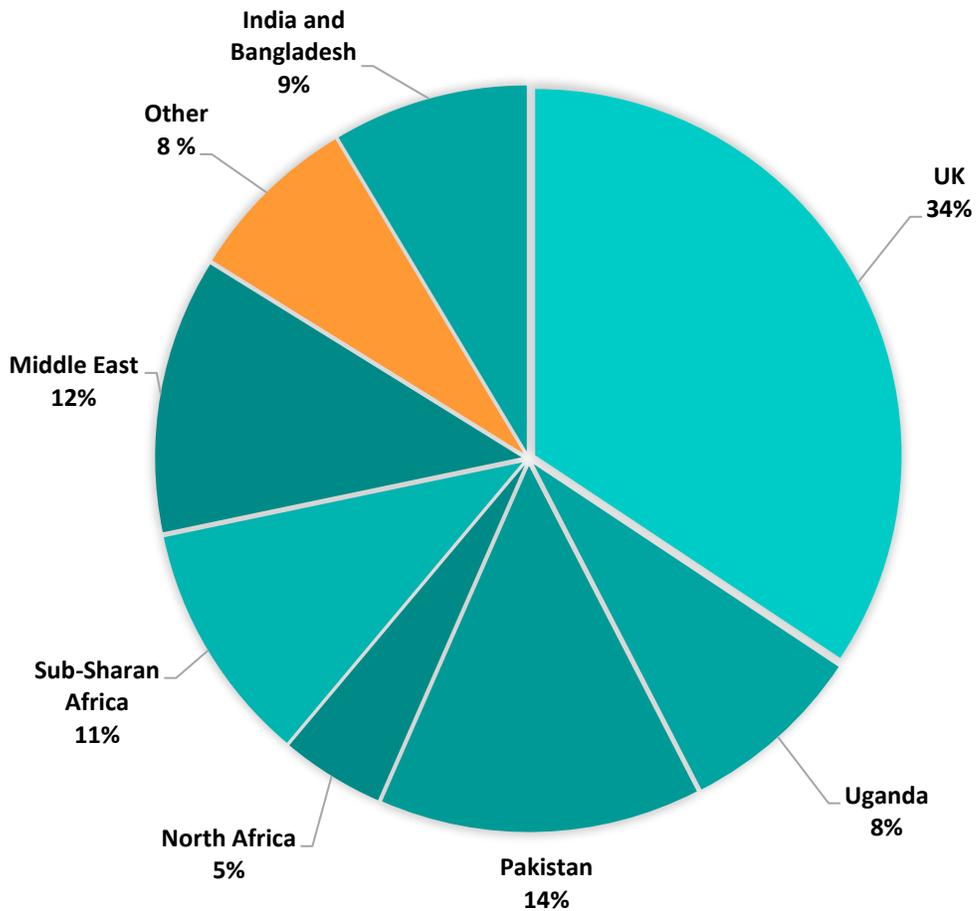


Fig 3. Case work: request for help by country of origin.

70% of the people we helped were from the Commonwealth. It is important to note that 36 out of 53 Commonwealth member nations still criminalise homosexuality. They account for half the world's countries where same-sex relations are illegal. Nine of these Commonwealth countries have life imprisonment for gay sex and in parts of two countries, Nigeria and Pakistan, LGBT+ people can be put to death. In many instances these anti-gay laws are a relic of Britain's colonial past. While it is important to recognise that Britain introduced most of these homophobic laws, the current leaders of these countries bear the full responsibility of maintaining these laws.

The Peter Tatchell Foundation urges all Commonwealth to:

- Decriminalise same-sex relations
- Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Enforce laws against threats and violence, to protect LGBT+ people from hate crimes
- Consult and dialogue with national LGBT+ organisations



Protest at the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2018 led by the Peter Tatchell Foundation and supported by a coalition of 14 other organisations.



Fig 4. Case work: global reach.

We have helped people from 38 different countries, namely:

Albania, Benin, Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Eritrea, UAE, UK, Guatemala, Indonesia, India, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Palestine, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

8. Issues

Other cases include a range of issues from homophobic discrimination to immigration matters.

The category Police and Prison includes gay men who have been convicted after the 1967 Sexual Offences Act (that led to a partial decriminalisation of homosexuality) and who are now seeking to clear their names.

Whilst, the 1967 Act was a step in the right direction, police repression continued and increased after 1967 with arrests and harassment escalating, until full decriminalisation happened from 2003.



Asylum and immigration overall represent over 50% of all the people that we have helped.

We are helping many genuine LGBT+ asylum refugees who tell heart-breaking stories of discrimination and violence in their home countries. These are very vulnerable people who have suffered greatly. They've shown great courage, given their persecution in their countries of origin.

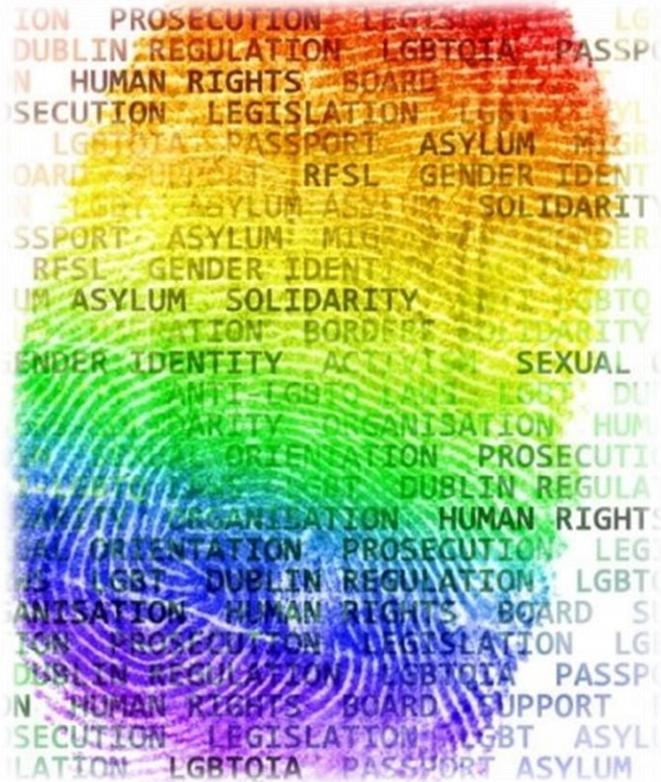
Seeking asylum in the UK is a long and complicated procedure and LGBT people face the additional burden of having to prove their sexuality: plus, there is always a risk of being put into detention. These people have come to the UK expecting a safe haven but are sometimes detained for weeks or months.

The UK is the only EU country that does not set a specific time limit on immigration detention.

The joint report of Stonewall and UKLGIG, **No Safe Refuge**, on the experience of LGBT+ asylum seekers attests to the dreadful condition that exists in detention centres. Several articles in the press have also covered the situation in detention centres. The Independent newspaper reported between January 2016 and August 2017 that there were 647 cases of detainees receiving medical treatment following incidents of self-harm.

Deportation is a major concern because they fear harassment, imprisonment or death if returned to their country of origin.

The category International LGBT+int consists of calls for help which are not related to asylum or immigration from people outside of the UK, including linking victims to local human rights and LGBT+ organisations.



9. Feedback

“Thank you so much for your response. You have given me a lot of **valuable information** and contact points.” **Mohammad**



“I really appreciate your support. It means a lot that **you understand what I am going through**. I can't take the risk to contact any local organisations or go to the police because some of my relatives are working in different security departments and they may know about my sexuality easily.” **Kevin**

“Your email was **encouraging and supportive**. It meant lot to know that there is someone who understands what I am going through at the moment.” **Nifalou**

“Thank you so much for your supportive and informative email. It gave me the **courage to act** and I have started to gather information for my application.”
Andrew



“Your response contained detailed answers to my questions. **I am more confident** to improve my current situation.” **Nonny**

Note: Names have been altered

11. Get involved: Support our work

Please consider donating to the Peter Tatchell Foundation to cover the cost of helping someone who comes to us in need.

These people need us. We listen to their problems (often no one else has); provide moral support and hope; guide them with information and advice; and refer them to specialist agencies.

The Peter Tatchell Foundation depends entirely on individual donations. We do not receive any statutory funding. Whatever you can give is greatly appreciated. No donation is too small for us.

Everything we have done to support these people has been made possible is thanks to our amazing supporters.

You can make a donation by visiting our website:
www.PeterTatchellFoundation.org/donate

© Peter Tatchell Foundation
14 Marshalsea Rd
London
UK
SE1 1HL
London

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Registered Charity number: 1178107

E-mail:
Pliny Soccoormanee
Pliny@PeterTatchellFoundation.org

Tel: 0203 397 2190

