



Safety Solidarity Action for Change

Bristol Refugee Rights
Impact Report 2014-2015





Chair's Report

The last year was an incredibly difficult one for Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR), but, due to the commitment and professionalism of our staff team, the excellent leadership of our Director, Beth, and the dedication of our volunteers, we made it through, and are now in an even stronger position to support our members!

We had a major funding difficulty early in the year, where some long term substantial grants had finished, and we had not been successful in securing new ones. As a result, we appealed to our members and Friends and Supporters for help, and had a brilliant response, and now have a regular monthly income which we can use to keep us afloat. We are also really grateful to Bristol City Council who recognised the need for an interim funding solution and helped us get through. Our Director, Beth, and fundraiser, Ruth, supported by the rest of the team, have churned out funding bids and monitoring reports all year, and you will see from the Treasurer's report that we have now secured some further trust and other funding to make our financial situation secure. We are obviously really pleased that funders have recognised the quality of our work and agreed to extend funding or to grant us new monies.

Not a day passes without news of another horrific story of the atrocities that refugees and asylum seekers face, and it is now estimated that 60 million people are displaced from their home countries - some have now been in camps for a whole generation. If we believed the media, we would imagine they are all headed to England, but the vast majority are being supported by neighbouring countries nearby that can barely support their own populations. We have a new Media, Campaigns and Communications (MCC group) who are looking at what we can do locally to challenge some of the myths that are prevalent, and the constant confusion between economic migrants and refugees.

Our Human Rights Day event focussed on the Detention Inquiry and the atrocious way in which detained asylum seekers are treated, and we need to do all we can now to encourage the Government to implement the recommendations in the all-party report and to address some of the worst aspects of an inhumane system.

We have a wonderful staff team at BRR, and they provide a range of high quality services that members often tell us are genuinely life changing. Our new work on 'wellbeing' is much needed, and will hopefully develop further, and we are pleased to be able to expand our advice and information and 'VOICE' work with Lottery funding. Sadly we have lost some key members of staff during the year, Joy, Rachael and Sam Sam, and we are really grateful for all the hard work they put into BRR and hope they will stay in touch in their new roles. During the year, Mohammed started with us as a trainee in the Welcome Centre and Chrys began work in the AID Team, and we are really pleased to have them on board. A particular thank you also goes to Danny, who, during the year was very flexible in helping to cover shifts at the Centre when there were gaps.

Looking to next year, it will be a time of great change as Alice and Beth will both be on maternity leave, and we will lose the much appreciated support of our long term administrator and finance guru, Ruth Nott. However, we welcome Qerim and Matt to the team and I am sure that we will continue to provide the quality services that our members need and to develop new initiatives. So.....thank you so much to my fellow Trustees and to all the staff and volunteers for all their hard work and support during the year.

Ruth Pickersgill MBE
Chair

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Bristol Refugee Rights

Office Address
Assisi Centre, Lawford's Gate,
Easton, Bristol, BS5 0RE

Tel 0117 9080844
Email info@bristolrefugeerights.org
Web www.bristolrefugeerights.org

Registered Company no: 5669208
Registered Charity no: 1126646

Patrons

At our October 2014 AGM we welcomed two new Patrons for Bristol Refugee Rights: Canon Dr John Savage CBE and Caroline Beatty, former Manager of Bristol Refugee Rights



Vision

Everybody coming to Bristol to seek sanctuary is welcomed and treated with dignity and respect.

Mission

Our mission is to welcome asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol. Together we create a place of solidarity and trust. We challenge the injustices that we experience and witness in the UK. Learning from each other, we develop partnerships and links with the wider community to promote equality of opportunity for asylum seekers and refugees.

Goals

Safety

- Provide a place that feels welcoming and safe for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol to meet and socialise.
- Provide services to support the wellbeing of asylum seekers and new refugees in Bristol.

Solidarity

- Develop a programme of activities according to the needs and wishes of members.
- Work towards becoming a refugee-led organisation.
- Contribute to strengthening communities in Bristol through seeking out and facilitating social engagement, educational and volunteering opportunities in the wider community for asylum seekers and refugees.

Action for Change

- Work to strengthen the visibility, voice and representation of asylum seekers and refugees in local affairs in Bristol, and raise awareness of asylum and refugee issues.
- Promote and protect the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

Members

- Our members are people who are in the asylum process, or who have recently been granted their refugee status.
- They are seeking sanctuary in the UK having fled some of the world's bloodiest conflicts and terrible human rights abuses.
- Since 2006 we have welcomed approximately 250 new members each year, bringing our total to more than 2200 members, from more than 70 different countries.

Activities

The Welcome Centre - A unique community hub open 3 days a week for transforming the lives of those seeking asylum; practical support; wellbeing improvement.

Crèche - play based sessions for children up to 5 years, 5-7 times a week.

AID - Advocacy and Information Desk- support with housing, financial support and accessing justice.

BRILL - British Life and Language classes – English, IT, literacy and IELTS.

Destitution Support - hardship payments and mini food bank.

Volunteers - around 120 with at least 40% being members.

Staff - 12 part time staff.

Board of Trustees - 11 trustees (40% from refugee backgrounds).

Partners – referrals for legal advice, healthcare, accommodation, education and more.

VOICE - Volunteering and Community Engagement - member volunteering in the Welcome Centre; at local organisations and businesses; and at community events.

Arts and Public Engagement - through music (LARA) and Refugee Week celebrations.

Campaigning – annual Human Rights Day event and contributions to City of Sanctuary Conference on Destitution.



A Year in the Life of Bristol Refugee Rights

April
2014

Visit from Business West - we were visited by representatives of Business West who had the opportunity to meet refugees and asylum seekers who were struggling due to not being able to work.

May
2014

Volunteering Fair - local organisations were invited to the Welcome Centre in order to be matched with members looking for volunteering opportunities.

June
2014

Refugee Week - Members, staff, volunteers and Trustees took part in Celebrating Sanctuary Day in Queens Square and welcomed members of the public to the Welcome Centre on Refugee Week Open Day.

"Amazing people, music and food and the weather was wonderful. I had so much fun!"

A volunteer



July
2014

Members spoke at Cheltenham Rotary Club Dinner

Sept
2014

Beach Trip - Members, volunteers and staff had a day of fun at the beach.

'It was so nice. I enjoyed it. We had food, played music, danced and talked. It was nice to get out of the city and the place we went was so lovely'

Aimee, BRR member

Oct
2014

BRR AGM - 90 people attended our AGM which featured our wellbeing work.

Dec
2014

Campaign about Patchway signing - we took part in the campaign to end signing at Patchway; although as yet unchanged, we were pleased that the Home Office did make a number of concessions for families and students.

Human Rights Day Event - The Detention Inquiry - Over 150 attended our public meeting where four asylum seekers explained what it was like to be detained and we presented our submission to the Parliamentary Detention Inquiry.

Jan
2015

Winter Party - Members and volunteers were invited to a party hosted by staff; delicious food, music and dancing were enjoyed by all.

Feb
2015

Poetry Writing Workshops - Members of BRR worked with a local writer, Edson Burton, to prepare a poem to be read at the Tree Planting to celebrate Bristol's City of Sanctuary status.

BRR Walking Group formed by volunteers - The group took their first walk to Bristol Harbourside.

"It's nice to go out and learn many things about Bristol and stretch our legs. I named the group Nayorsha Mogu - it means I stretch my legs in Swahili."

Bashir, a BRR member

Training for members on understanding gender and sexual identity -

Members, volunteers, staff, Trustees and partner organisations joined together for two training sessions to build our understanding of the issues facing LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees and be able to provide better support in the future.

100% of members who attended said their knowledge about LGBTI issues had increased.



Mar
2014

City of Sanctuary Conference on Destitution - Five BRR members spoke powerfully to a room of over 150 from across the UK, including councillors and MPs about the realities of being destitute.

Wellbeing Fair - local health organisations were invited to the Welcome Centre to showcase their services; members were invited to complete a health and wellbeing questionnaire to test their knowledge.

Strategy Day - Members, volunteers, Trustees and staff took part in a strategy day to think about BRR's campaigning priorities. The results will be used to inform the new Business Plan.

Plans for 2015/2016

Our primary aim for 2015/2016 is continuing to provide our vital services for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol. To ensure this can happen beyond 2015/2016 we will focus time this year on raising the funds we need to keep services running and to keep working towards our goal of being more financially sustainable. As part of this we aim

to update our Business Plan and our constitution to ensure that we are an organisation that continues to look to the future and strives to improve.

To keep up to date with what is going on at BRR or to become a supporter visit our website: www.bristolrefugeerights.org



Impact Summary

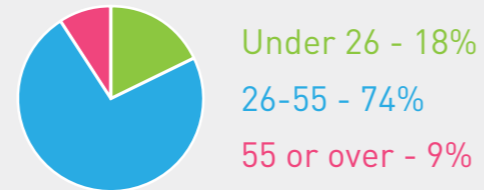
We monitored 142 members during one week in October 2014 and learned the following:

Countries of Origin of our members:

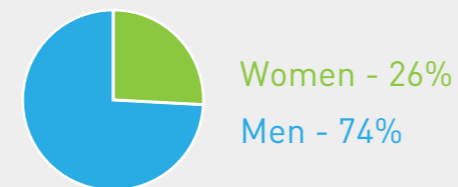
- Sudan - 18%
- Iran - 15%
- Iraq - 10%
- Somalia - 11%
- Eritrea - 8%
- Syria - 5%
- Sri Lanka - 4%
- China - 4%
- Other - 25%



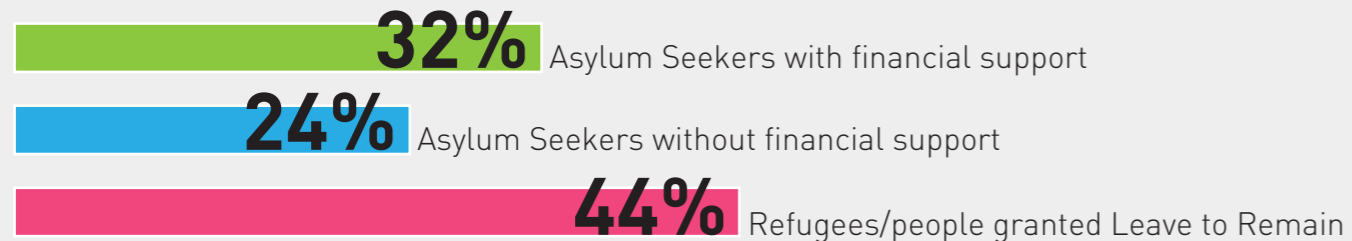
Age of our members:



Gender of our members:



Status in the UK:



Key achievements in numbers for 2014/2015 were:

Safety:

- Welcome Centre:** 286 new members (total of over 2200 since 2006) from 41 different countries; 10,413 visits; average 76 members per session; programme of events to improve wellbeing
- Crèche:** Average five sessions per week; 75 different children benefitted from the crèche
- BRILL:** Up to 60 members attending per session; English classes at seven levels; 60 students moved up at least one level
- AID:** 287 individuals had AID appointments; 151 new case files opened; average 27 members visited triage each week

Solidarity:

- BRILL:** Trained and supported 30 volunteers in BRILL team
- VOICE:** 12 member volunteers trained as community interpreters, 31 members placed in external volunteering placements; and 26 member volunteers involved in organisational decision-making
- Volunteers:** 233 volunteers have collectively volunteered for approximately 30,000 hours

Action for Change:

- Over 150 people attended Human Rights Day Event
- 77 people attended Refugee Week Open Day

Staff

The following staff worked for us in 2014/2015:

Beth Wilson, Ruth Nott, Ruth Soandro-Jones, Alice Cutler, Andrew McCarthy, Karen Davies, Mohammed Osman, Danny Vincent, Tony Jaffray, Chrys Kelson, Laura Hamilton, Kat Abdi, Afrah Hussein, Dje Dje Ngele, Rachael Bee, Joy Kenyah, Sam Sam Abdi, Ezzeldin Mohamed Hussein Mustafa, Jamal Hassan Ali Berkit, Khaled Abdulaziz, Patricia Songu, Sibel Celik, Angela Smith, Annie Fowler, Hana Koryna.

Governance

Serving trustees

from October 2014:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Ruth Pickersgill | Mary Griggs |
| Malcolm Jenner | Andrew May |
| Richard Henderson | Adam Mohamed |
| James Jatta | Chris Bertram |
| Forward Maisokwadzo | Nasim Dumont |
| Abdi Mohamed | |

We would like to thank the following Trustees who stood down at our AGM in 2014: Zahra Kosar, Daahir Mohamed and Claire Stern.

Public Benefit

BRR is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and abides by the requirements set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Trustees reviewed their compliance with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Commission. Our Annual Report indicates how BRR meets the public benefit guidance.

Member Consultation Group

Every month a group of members meet at the Welcome Centre, and consider matters of BRR policy and direction at the request of the staff team and the Board of Trustees. In 2014/2015 we have worked hard to encourage new members to join the group to ensure that the group is well attended by members. The group is an important organ of decision making within our governance structure.



Jane

Jane, from Zimbabwe, became a member of BRR in May 2014 and first attended the Member Consultation Group (MCG) in December 2014. Since then she has taken part in poetry writing workshops for the City of Sanctuary tree planting and has become a regular member of the MCG.

"Being part of the poetry writing for the City of Sanctuary tree planting and joining the MCG has built my confidence. When I first came to BRR I was too scared to speak to anyone. Now I realise they are all nice people and I am no longer lonely. It is good to feel part of things which is why I volunteer and go to the MCG."

Jane, member and volunteer



The Welcome Centre and Wellbeing

The Welcome Centre has continued to thrive as a safe space for members to access much needed support and information. Guided by our ethos of solidarity and trust, the Welcome Centre has promoted friendship, learning, health and wellbeing among members, volunteers and visitors. Due to funding pressures we had to reduce our opening hours for a couple of months this year, but we are very pleased that the Welcome Centre has been fully open three days a week again since November 2014.

Social isolation can be a big problem for asylum seekers and refugees: the sense of feeling separate from your community can lead to anxiety, depression and hopelessness. That's why the Welcome Centre is such an important space for our members to meet people, and to build connections in Bristol.



Our 2014 member consultation showed the Welcome Centre made 98% of members feel better, with 88% saying it makes them feel 'a lot better'. 53% of people said the reason for this was meeting people and socialising: "Because I am alone at home, when I come here my mood changes and I feel better." 'Meeting people' was given as a common reason for coming to the Welcome Centre, and was ranked as the third most important service that BRR provides, (after Advocacy and Information Desk (AID) and English Language classes (BRILL)).

"If I come to the BRR, I feel happy, and if I stay at home I feel unhappy, I feel isolated and there is no one to talk to. Coming to the BRR does me good ... when I am here I forget all my worries."

BRR member

An important part of the Welcome Centre community is the weekly cooked meal, and for 16% of people it is the only cooked meal they eat each week. A further 40% of people reported that they did not have a cooked meal every day of the week and 8% said they feel hungry every day. The Welcome Centre provides support to destitute



members through our Destitution Support Team, including a weekly food parcel distribution with goods provided by FareShare.

We have been working to improve our monitoring and attendance records this year and for the first time can estimate how often our members visit on average. Of 883 visits to the Welcome Centre over 5 weeks, 46% come at least once a week and 19% come twice a week.

Our wellbeing project has delivered 12 sessions including 3 walks, an open session about anxiety and trauma, dealing with sleep problems, and a 'stretch and relax' session for women. The feedback was positive although there have been challenges including language and cultural barriers.

Our Wellbeing Fair in March hosted nine local organisations and was a great opportunity for networking. Through a quiz we identified some gaps in our members health knowledge, e.g. a third did not know that tea and coffee can keep you awake but 90% of members did know how to call an ambulance.

We have worked closely with other wellbeing agencies in Bristol and continue to actively participate in the Asylum and Refugee Wellbeing Forum.

An average of **868** members attended the Welcome Centre per month

286 new members this year

The total number of new members since 2006 reached **2,277**



Parvaneh

Parvaneh came to the UK from Iran fleeing persecution there. Parvaneh has been living in Bristol for 2 ½ years and has been coming to the Welcome Centre for the last 2 years.

"When I initially came to Bristol, I knew no-one here but when I first came to the BRR Welcome Centre, I met other ladies from Iran and it made me very happy. I also meet lots of people from other countries and communities and talking to them is very good. Everybody is very kind to me. I wish the world was as peaceful as it is in BRR. I liked doing Yoga classes and the seaside trips. I like coming to the Welcome Centre because I feel lonely and it helps me to get out of the house where I am alone. I meet people and do nice things, as well as helping others when I can."



BRILL

British Life and Language Project

A cornerstone of our service provision is our language programme - BRILL (British Life and Language). It is well-used and highly valued by our members.

Funded by the Henry Smith Charity, 2014 – 2015 was the second year of our three year grant for this project.

We run a weekly, year round programme of drop in English language classes at the Welcome Centre from complete beginners through to university level, with an onsite preschool crèche for parents.

There are barriers which prevent many of our members from accessing mainstream accredited ESOL (English) classes in the community. Asylum seekers must wait for 6 months before they are eligible to attend College, refused asylum seekers without Home Office support are not eligible either. Government cuts over recent years to statutory ESOL provision and lack of onsite crèche facilities are also factors.



The ethos of BRILL is to ensure that all our members have an opportunity to join an English class without needing to wait on a list or for their circumstances to change. Our classes are not just about improving language skills; they are a place to form friendships, to encourage mutual understanding and to learn about British culture. They are a stepping stone to build confidence and encourage independence.

BRILL has a talented and dedicated volunteer team of teachers, teaching assistants and administrators. Throughout the year the team undertake specialist training with ESOL professionals, and are supported and supervised by Karen Davies, the BRILL manager.

As well as the English classes, we run popular supplementary courses to meet our members' needs. This year we have held reading and writing courses on Wednesday afternoons and basic Word Processing skills at our Thursday morning computer class. Outside the classroom there have been trips to the local library and a tour on Bristol's Ferry Boat.

135 new students each year,
7 levels of classes

30 volunteer teachers and
teaching assistants

Up to **60** students attending one
session, **70** students received
certificates of attendance,
60 students moving up a level

'Moved by Conflict' Exhibition

BRR contributed to a major exhibition in the city at the M-Shed museum, 'Moved by Conflict', an anniversary event to commemorate WW1.

A group of 7 of our members and volunteers created short digital films on the theme of modern conflict, telling their personal stories and connections to WW1. This work was produced through our partnership course with Bristol City Council's Learning Communities Team. The film makers took pride in attending the private view and seeing their work displayed in the exhibition.

There were also special community film screenings.

The films can be viewed here:
<http://www.bristol2014.com/digital-stories.html#VFzxHFY0kIE>



Rajeev

Rajeev, an asylum seeker from Sri Lanka, has been in Bristol for about 8 years but had only found out about the Welcome Centre about 6 months ago. A Sri Lankan friend and user of the Centre encouraged him to drop in. He now comes every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays and Fridays, he attends the IELTS (International Language Testing System) preparation classes. Taking the IELTS test is essential for many of our members who want to progress into higher education or a vocational career in the UK. It is a rigorous test that requires support to study for, which can be expensive or inaccessible for our members.

Being part of BRILL means that Rajeev is now studying and has found a way of using his time usefully. "Learning gives me a goal".

As well as attending IELTS classes, he took part in the 6-week Introduction to Anthropology course run by the University of Bristol in partnership with BRILL, which:

"opened up my mind. I learnt not to make judgements without understanding another person's point of view"

Attending the Welcome Centre has given Rajeev contact with people and helped him out of the isolation that he was in for such a long time.

"I wish I had come to this place earlier."

Rajeev's hopes for the future are to have his case accepted and get the kind of security that comes with that. He would love to go to university and pursue his desire to become an accountant.



AID

Advocacy and Information Desk

The Advocacy and Information Desk (AID) project managed by Tony Jaffray, offers asylum seekers and refugees support, signposting and referrals to enable them to access the national and local services to which they are entitled. As a result they are able to obtain high quality legal advice and medical care; asylum support and accommodation; find ways out of destitution; navigate the complex asylum procedure and the protection of their human rights are ensured.

Despite our funding coming to an end half way through the year, we managed to maintain services through bridge funding and have seen the numbers accessing our service continue to rise.

With the benefit of further funding from the Big Lottery (starting April 2015), the AID Manager's role has expanded to five days a week and we have now recruited a permanent part-time paid assistant, Chrys Kelson, who is a welcome addition to the team.

In addition to the manager and assistant, AID is staffed by an experienced team of hardworking and dedicated volunteers and volunteer interpreters, whose work can, at times, be extremely pressurised

and emotionally stressful given the diverse nature of our members' problems and issues.

This year, AID has also recruited twelve new volunteers, in both advocacy and administrative roles and these have included member volunteers. Sadly we have had to say goodbye to Mary, Tom, Agrippa, Chris, Jessica, Hana and Zainabou, who have had to leave us due to other commitments.

With the benefit of new funding, AID is looking to expand its service to give members access three days a week, with the drop-in continuing one day, an appointments based service on a second day. The third day will be dedicated to our new one-to-one mentoring project, which for the first year will focus on guiding individual members through the asylum and appeals process.

We are also looking to register BRR with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, which will enable us to give limited legal advice to members who are unable to access free services from local solicitors and representatives.

As always, we are indebted to our partner agencies with whom we continue to maintain

close relationships, including British Red Cross, Bristol Hospitality Network, Refugee Action, The Haven and Migrant Legal Project. We are indebted to Mark from Migrant Legal Project and Mahsa and Lucho from British Red Cross, who provide invaluable expert advice and support for our members at our drop-in sessions.



In the year from April 2014 to April 2015:

287 individuals received AID appointments. They came from **45** different countries. **94** were women and **193** were men

16% of those accessing AID were **25** years of age and under

The average number of members coming to AID Triage, weekly was **27**

29% of AID appointments were related to destitution



"This year, AID has seen an increasing number of members forced into destitution and individuals being aggressively pursued for substantial medical costs for which they do not have the means to pay."

Tony Jaffray, AID Manager

Jehan

Jehan came to the UK from Sri Lanka in 2007. He is married with 4 children, all of whom live with him here.

Jehan is presently awaiting an appeal hearing in respect of his and his family's claim for asylum.

Jehan has been coming to the Welcome Centre since October 2014. Jehan says:

"BRR is better than anything I have experienced in other places where I have lived such as Cardiff and Southampton. Everything I need is in one place, language lessons, the Red Cross and the AID service, as well as being a place to meet people. It is gentle and everybody is smiling, everybody is helpful."

Jehan first came to AID for assistance in February 2015. He and his wife were being harassed by telephone and letters from debt collectors for the hospital costs when his youngest child was born in Southampton in July 2014.

"The costs they were asking for were enormous and there was no way we could pay them"

The AID team were able to reassure Jehan that the NHS were wrong to be pursuing him and his wife for these costs and that his wife was entitled to free healthcare all along as their asylum claim was ongoing.

The AID team were able to sort out all the necessary paperwork and after submitting this to the debt collectors, they were able to convince the NHS that they were wrong and the bill was cancelled.

Jehan says;

"I feel more confident in dealing with the system now and I have recommended BRR and AID to a lot of people. It is very helpful in all aspects. I only wish my friends in Plymouth could come. I would like AID to be able to help people anywhere, not just in Bristol."

BRR Community Crèche



The crèche is a welcoming supportive environment which provides sessions for up to 10 children aged 0-5. We are funded by Children in Need until March 2016 but hope to continue after that as the crèche provides an invaluable service for parents. It allows them to access the services of BRR, in particular the English classes. The children benefit greatly from indoor and outdoor play.

We provide routines with a healthy snack time and song time at the end of each session. The crèche helps children to learn English and prepares them for nursery whilst positively affirming cultural differences. The children look forward to coming to the crèche – some have been coming

since they were only a few weeks old. We get to know the parents well and some of them end up volunteering with us. This gives them confidence with their English as well as work experience and the opportunity to make new friends.

This year we have been working to develop links with local nurseries and children's centres so that children can make the transition to nursery school with confidence.

We would like to say a special thank you to our crèche volunteers: Foulanisaran, Yerusalem, Colin, Kate and Tilly.

"Parents often arrive with us initially quite distressed and confused with the new culture, language and legal system they have to navigate. We also don't know what trauma they may have experienced before they get here. After a few weeks, when the children have settled in to the crèche it is very rewarding to see a gradual improvement in people's circumstances. We get to know the children and parents really well and can offer them support through the challenging time that they face. It is hard enough to bring up children without these extra challenges but hopefully we can help them to have a good start in life."

Laura Hamilton, Crèche Manager

*The crèche runs at least **5 weekly sessions** (for BRR and Refugee Women of Bristol)*

***75 children** benefitted from the crèche*



Nasra

Nasra is from Sudan and has been coming to the crèche for around four months now. She registered with the crèche when her baby was due and started coming when her daughter was eight weeks old.

"When I first came I felt I could not talk to anyone – there were lots of people and it was noisy. It is much easier now."

"When I was at home, I felt sick and could not eat, but when I came to the Welcome Centre I was more relaxed and was able to eat something. If I know I am coming here, I get all the housework done the evening before and then I walk here. All the friends I have, I made here. Before, I had to ask my husband for help to make doctor's appointments but now I can do this myself."

"I also needed a translator at the GP but now I can do this myself. Sometimes I find useful things in the free shop. The computer class is very useful – I have set up my own email."

"In the future when my daughter is older, I would like to volunteer – maybe translating for others. Last week I went to a meeting about the future and saving money. I hope that everything can carry on and they have funding as it is such a help for me."

Nasra's baby daughter is really happy and settled in the crèche – she enjoys sitting in her bouncy chair and watching the older children play. Nasra comes to give her a bottle during her break and sometimes she has a nap after that.



Volunteers

That BRR's team of volunteers is exceptional was never in doubt. However over the past year the commitment, energy and skills of our volunteers have been clearer than ever. With significant changes to staff, project funding coming to an end and serious concerns about future funding, 2014/15 was not an easy time for the organisation. Yet volunteers not only stood by the organisation but went many extra miles.

When funding meant that we had to reduce our services, we spent a week consulting volunteers, who listened hard to the different options, gave considered opinions on the best route for the organisation and offered many kinds of help. It has been truer than ever this year that none of BRR's work would be possible without the passion and dedication of the volunteer team.

All this has been on top of the daily work carried out by volunteers at BRR. We have a huge range of volunteer roles in the organisation, each adding something vital to the life of the BRR community. During the past year we have had on average 140 volunteers on the team, around 40% of whom are also members of BRR.

BRR is a strong and vibrant community, remarkably supportive and joyful given the adverse conditions and traumatic experiences faced by many of our members. However, this distressing background is always present, never more so than when well-loved members of the community face removal to the countries they fled from – as happened several times last year. For this reason support for volunteers has been high on our agenda and we will be working with the Trauma Foundation South West in the coming year to provide more opportunities for volunteers to get good emotional support.



233 volunteers have collectively volunteered for approximately 30,000 hours

Zahra

Zahra is one of our team of fantastic chefs. The team has both member and non-member volunteers. This year the team has had chefs from Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, UK and Zimbabwe. Zahra is from Iran. She is always ready to help in the kitchen, cooking great food for well over 100 people on regular Thursday lunchtimes and at special events.

"I volunteer because I am really happy to help the people. I am Christian and want to live like my faith. I see English people volunteering and know that I can help in this way. I don't have money to help people, but I can cook. I can't do anything else. I don't have national insurance number, I can't work so I want to do this and help people."

"I have learnt so much as a volunteer. I have learnt about working with other people. I have learnt English and spent time learning from others. When I get my papers I hope to find work as a chef."

Zahra has now been granted leave to remain after years of waiting and worry.



Mohammed



Originally from Darfur, Sudan, Mohammed has been an incredibly reliable volunteer at BRR for over a year as part of our kitchen team. Even when fasting during Ramadan he comes to organise the big clear up after our community lunch on Thursday. Like many members he takes a takeaway home to eat after sunset during this time.

"I volunteer because there is so much I need to know. You need to learn English; when I am volunteering I speak to others and improve my English. When you are volunteering you know more people and they can help you if you need."

"When I first came to BRR I felt very sad. My case was closed. I had no solicitor, no house, no place. When I came here I got help from AID team, BHN, and got a solicitor. Now I have a house and many things to do. Things are much better now, I can forget about that time before."

"I have met lots of people at BRR, by volunteering, but also by talking and sharing problems... Here there are many people from different countries, they have different stories, they have seen how things can happen. They listen and sometimes they know how to help."

“THANK YOU!”

To each and every one of the amazing volunteers at BRR in 2014/15:

Abdinor Ahmed, Abdul Salam, Abdulfadil Musa, Abdullah Bash, Adil Mohammed, Adut De Garang, Afshar Zarai, Agrippa Ogri, Ahmed Al Nuri, Ahmed Aloklat, Ahmed Mussa, Aimee Feika, Aisha Abdi, Alawia Djaber, Alessia Dalceggio, Ali Parvez, Alice O'Donoghue, Aliyah Ahmad, Aly Vernon, Andrew Burridge, Andrew May, Angela Hill, Ann Brook, Anna Gwokyalaya, Anna Lewis, Anna Schiff, Annie Musango, Asia Hamasaeed, Asia Yousif, Ayan Jama Ali, Ayan Yusef, Baiz Ahmed, Baker Said, Bashir Rag Barre, Bassil Abdu Adam, Becca Lloyd, Bevan Lal, Cara Shaw, Carmen Guajirro, Caroline Black, Cathy Salisbury, Chris Macleod, Christina Shewell, Christine Lambert, Chrys Kelson, Cindy Silongwe, Claire Herford, Claire Shires, Clare Ballard, Claudio Lurati, Colin Thomas, Dammy Le Grand, Danny Vincent, Dara Shivan Hassan, Darren Baker, Dastan, David Mytton, Dawit Kebedew, Deb Corsara, Deeqa Sharif, Derris Whitson, Elaine Logan, Eleanor Fairbrother, Elsie Harp, Emma Gaspar, Emmanuel Nsofwa, Emmy Broughton, Esam Amin, Ezzeldin Mohammed, Faisal Malik, Fariba Bayat, Foulanisaran Djane, Genevieve Davis, Ghidey Eyob, Hafiz Abdulkarim, Haji Osman Salih, Hamid-Reza, Hana Habal, Hanna Ahmed, Hassan al Sharif, Hassan Sharif Ahmed, Helen Vegoda, Henar Pulido, Hijazi Sharif, Hua Ping Yan, Hui Li, Iain Shewan, Ibrahim Abdallah, Ibrahim Yahya, Islam Ahmed, Ismail Quadir, Isy Schultz, Jalaladin Abdalahi, Jamal Hassan Bekhit, Jane Cullen, Jane Katsonga, Janet Karanja, Jehan Jaldin, Jenny Vooght, Jessica Hambly, Jethro Brice, Jo Cutts, John Patrick, Jonathan Lee, Joon Lyn Goh, Julia Gresty, Kamal Alhaj, Karen Bruni, Karwan Kadir, Kate Kimaro, Kate Walker, Katharine Abbot, Katie Goldsmith, Khaled Abdulaziz, Khalid Tonga, Khodeza Begum, Kitty Odell, Laura Chester, Laura Wills, Laurence Daly-Rossin, Lucy Bence-Wilkins,

Lucy Boyle, Lucy Gilbert, Ludovica Bello, Lydia Mbogoro, Magda Mosy, Maha Farooqui, Mahamat Diffa, Mahin Torfisaedi, Manesh Nabiullah Hajibri, Marta Kanarkiewicz, Marty Kelly, Mary Sergeant, Mary Todd, Maureen Prior, Mawada Osman, Mei Lin, Meysam Shojaei, Mia Thomas, Mike Atkins, Missa Osman, Mohammad Yesin Bhuyea, Mohammed Faraz Shinwari, Mohammed Hamed, Mohammed Osman, Mohedeen Zakreya, Moira Byrne, Mona-Lisa Chaka, Monserrat Ayodele, Morteza Talachian, Morzina Akhter, Mostafa Golestani, Mostafa Nasser, Mulugeta Gebreamlak, Muna Mohamed, Mushin Al Najim, Naomi Grant, Naomi Roberts, Nasim Dumont-Namin, Nathan Kerubairasa, Ned Edwards, Nick Shipton, Nighisti Ketema, Nona Anderson, Onabanjo Olubukola, Patricia Ogri, Pauline Marshall, Penny Clarke, Penny Gray, Poppy Hobbs, Qaali Abdi, Qays Hayyars Nayms, Rachel Pearce, Rachel Russel, Rajeev Sotheeswaran, Reza Moussaee, Rhiannon Richards, Richard Henderson, Richard Lawrence, Riffat Bibi, Rob Porteous, Ron Griffiths, Rosemary Andoh, Rosie Merson, Ross Lee Mallon, Sadyeh Bathaie, Said Abdi, Saif Aldeen, Salome Noah, Saman Mohammadi, Sammy Devonald, Sandy Baker, Sara Barna, Selam Nazgi, Shantha Arulanantham, Sharon MacDonald, Shima Pourmokhtar, Sian Sutherland, Silu Pascoe, Silvia Jimenez-Cruz, Simon Abraha, Simon Shakespeare, Sirwan Mahmud, Siva Sugathan, Sue Caporn, Sue Smailes, Sultan, Susan Oldham, Taiwo Gbaye, Tej Bhandal, Teresa Long, Thomas Richardson, Thulani Ndlovu, Tilly Vacher, Tina Ash, Ting Ting Xu, Titi Olaoyo, Tom Daly, Tom Dixon, Towfeeg Abubaker, Ullubiy Isaev, Umul Ali, Valerie Lewis, Vicky Sullivan, Yafiet Abraha, Yanina Matviienko, Yasamine Soodehseyedi, Yousef Alamin, Yufen Ying, Yusuf Abdinor, Zahra Azari, Zahra Naheed, Zainabou Mboob.

Stop Smoking Project

In 2014/2015 we delivered a Stop Smoking project for Bristol City Council which had the aim of delivering language specific stop smoking sessions within the community. At the beginning of the project four Stop Smoking Advisers (all BRR members with Leave to Remain) received training from “Smoke Free Bristol” to enable them to deliver Stop Smoking support in their own languages. These Advisers were able to deliver Stop Smoking support in Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya, Tigre, Kurmanji and English.

In August 2014, information stalls were held at the Islamic Cultural Fayre and St Pauls Community Centre.

Regular weekly sessions were run from the BRR Welcome Centre which was a good platform to educate smokers on the dangers of smoking, the myths as well as opportunities that are available to them to Stop Smoking. Informal group sessions were run from The Leisure Café in Stapleton Road.

There was a lot of interest especially because information was given in native languages.

“The Stop Smoking project has made a great start. It is important to BRR’s ethos to train health champions of refugee background, and to deliver a project which engages our members with their health issues. It has worked well to educate and inform about the support available, for when people are ready to take that step.”

Alice Cutler, Welcome Centre Manager



300 people given initial advice and information

37 people supported to stop on a 1-1 basis

12 complete quits achieved



Community Interpreters

Our members are from all walks of life and most of them come from non-English speaking countries. Many of our members speak little or no English when they first come to the Welcome Centre and being able to communicate with someone in their own language about why they have come and what their needs are is essential to them getting the support they need. Bristol Refugee Rights therefore relies heavily on the work of volunteer interpreters.

In February 2014 the VOICE (Volunteering and Community Engagement) Project worked with Mohammed El-Sharif (Community Interpreting Training Manager) to train 11 new member volunteer interpreters. This meant that going into 2014/2015 we had our strongest team of Community Interpreters ever.

Throughout 2014/2015 we continued to share the knowledge of our interpreting team through our partnerships including providing training to students at the University of Bristol Medical School.

“Interpreting is an essential role for member volunteers; it helps us to communicate with members who don’t have much English so that we can give them the advocacy and information that they need. It is often a difficult role for members as very personal things are discussed.”

Penny, AID Volunteer

In August 2014 our VOICE funding ended but we were lucky that our VOICE interpreters continued to support the work of BRR. In 2015, renewed funding has meant 23 new members have completed the interpreting training and are on our register for interpreting. Seven of them have interpreted regularly while others occasionally. The new project is working with City of Bristol College to enable our member interpreters to get a recognised qualification

from the college. The qualification is available through OCN YHR and only funded for unemployed members who have been granted refugee status.

“Interpreting at BRR is important because it enables people who are suffering to speak to AID to get help. It is a very hard job to do sometimes but the training has helped me to deal with difficult situations.”

Muhsin, Community Interpreter



Languages and Members

Amharic: Jamal

Arabic: Baker, Mahin, Khaled, Ezzeldin, Jamal, Ahmed, Qays, Muhsin

Mandarin: Yufen, Ting, Hua

Farsi: Manesh, Karwan, Mostafa, Reza, Mostafa, Shima, Jalal

French: Daahir, Rob

Pashto: Mohammed, Kamila, Nasrat

Tigrinya: Yafiet, Jamal

Somali: Hassan, Daahir, Said

Kurdish Sorani: Karwan, Esam, Goran, Dara, Saman, Dastan

Urdu: Faisal, Ali, Zahra

VOICE

Volunteering and Community Engagement

The VOICE (Volunteering and Community Engagement) Project was funded by Big Lottery until the end of August 2014. The aims of the project were to support our members to gain valuable skills and experience and integrate into the community. Volunteering opportunities were provided within the Welcome Centre and members were also supported into volunteer placements outside of BRR.

The project was extremely successful, thanks to coordinators Rachael Bee and Joy Kenyah, and by the end of the project we had:

- Worked with 34 organisations which as a result were more aware of asylum seeker and refugee issues
- Trained 37 community interpreters
- Supported 83 members to be active in decision-making by attending our Member Consultation Group
- Successfully supported members to speak at a number of community engagement and campaigning events
- 31 members were supported into active volunteering with external organisations

99% of asylum seekers and refugees who were part of the project reported enhanced self-esteem/wellbeing

100% of VOICE Volunteers from the host community reported enhanced mutual understanding

VOICE Project plans for the future

We were extremely pleased to secure an additional four years funding from the Big Lottery fund starting in April 2015. Through learning from the previous project the project focus has shifted slightly. The aims of the new VOICE project are to:

- Train members to become advocates (in AID)

- Make links with Refugee Community Organizations and the non-Refugee Community
- Encourage and train members to become interpreters
- Encourage and train members to become public speakers
- Empower members to raise awareness about Asylum Seeker and Refugee issues



“The new project will be working with City of Bristol College to enable our member interpreters to get recognised qualifications from the college. The project will also enable member advocates to gain experience in advice work with the aim of helping members to become work ready.”

Qerim Nuredini, VOICE Manager

Campaigns and Communications

As well as being an organisation that delivers a service (the Welcome Centre and associated activities), Bristol Refugee Rights also exists to raise awareness about and campaign for the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers and refugees are marginalised and often amongst the most vulnerable members of our society. Bristol Refugee Rights seeks to support them to have a voice whilst also aiming to bring about change.

Activities such as Refugee Week, Human Rights Day and other campaigning activities allow us to

work in solidarity with members of the Welcome Centre community to raise awareness and bring about change.

Over the past year we have continued to work on campaigns and communications through our VOICE project, through close working relationships with Dignity for Asylum Seekers, Bristol Defend Asylum Seekers and City of Sanctuary and through LARA. Our 2014/2015 key projects included campaigning to end signing at Patchway, Refugee Week and the City of Sanctuary Destitution Conference.

City of Sanctuary Destitution Conference 2015

Under the banner of City of Sanctuary, and in partnership with Bristol City Council and Still Human Still Here, delegates from across the City of Sanctuary and Refugee Support network, councillors, council officials and MPs came together to listen and share ideas.



Five destitute asylum seekers, all members of Bristol Refugee Rights, spoke movingly about their lives and the extremely difficult situation they find themselves in. Nearing the end of the Conference all of those present including George Ferguson, Mayor of Bristol, committed to a Joint Statement of Action to End Destitution. The day ended with the planting of a hawthorn tree on College Green as a celebration of Bristol as a City of Sanctuary.

"I have been destitute for many years with no support from the Home Office or the government whatsoever. The Destitution Conference was a step in the right direction in our quest to continue raising awareness of the many difficult situations that asylum seekers and refugees face every day."

JP, BRR member

Human Rights Day - 10 December 2014

On 10 December 2014, Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR) held a public meeting about The Detention Inquiry in partnership with other local organisations. The event began with the showing of a film about abuse of Detainees in Campsfield. Four BRR members spoke frankly and powerfully of their experiences of detention. Members held placards of quotes that were gathered during BRR's preparation of their submission to The Detention Inquiry. Other speakers included Eiri Ohtani of the Detention Forum and Melanie Griffiths of Asylum Welcome.

Members called for the public to support four recommendations:

Recommendation #1: There should be a maximum time limit on all detentions

Recommendation #2: There should be improved judicial oversight of detention

Recommendation #3: All detainees should be provided with the information and support they need to protect their rights

Recommendation #4: Vulnerable people should never be detained

"We were extremely pleased with our Human Rights Day event this year; I think everyone who attended, even BRR members, learnt something they did not know about detention so it really felt like we raised public awareness. The outcome of the Detention Inquiry was fantastic and we were extremely pleased that most of our recommendations were accepted by the panel. We really hope the new Government will ensure that the recommendations are adopted." Beth Wilson, BRR Director



Refugee Week 2014

On 18 June 2014 we held a special Refugee Week Open Day at the Welcome Centre. Attendees were invited to watch films, listen to talks and take part in question and answer sessions; they were also invited to join our members to eat lunch. 77 people attended. 100% of people who attended said they felt inspired to support Bristol Refugee Rights and over 95% of people said they had learned about the asylum process.



Bristol Refugee Rights also took part in the Refugee Week Football Tournament and members, volunteers and staff attended the Lord Mayor's Tea Party where several members spoke. We had a tea and cake stall with Refugee Women of Bristol at Queen's Square Celebrating Sanctuary Day and also spoke to many people via our information/merchandise stall.



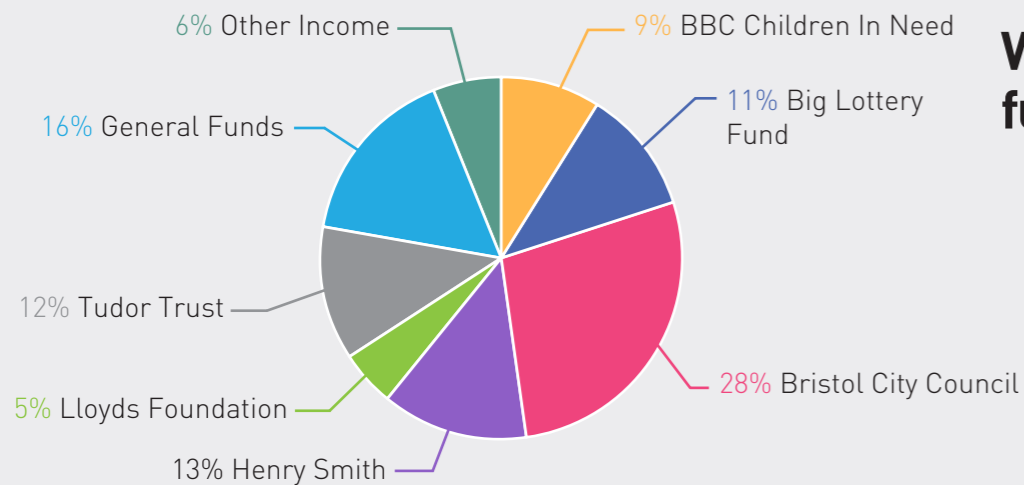


Finance Report

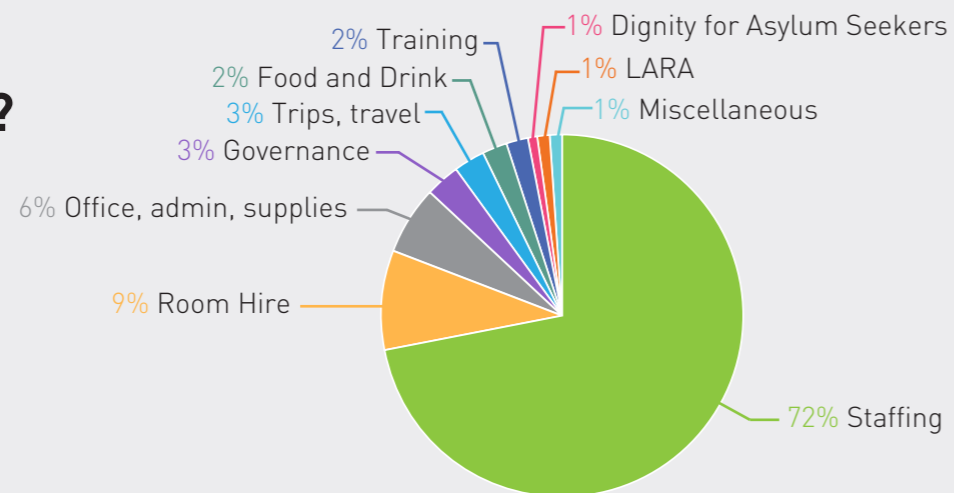
Our total income for the year was £268.6k. Our total expenditure was £251.0k. A breakdown of these figures is shown in the charts. These figures summarise a lot of detail, which is available in the accounts to be submitted to the Charity Commission. The free reserves have increased from £17.8k to £45.2k and now represent around 15% of the budget expenditure for the coming year, which is on target. A lot of effort was made by staff, Trustees, volunteers and members last year to raise funds and this has resulted in reaching this target and increasing our regular donors to 85.

Our main work is covered by grants, and we were successful in the year in obtaining continuation funding from Tudor Trust and Bristol City Council and new funding from John James, Lloyds Foundation and Comic Relief. We were also awarded a four year grant from The Big Lottery to support our Advocacy and Community Engagement work from April 2015.

Malcolm Jenner, Treasurer
Bristol Refugee Rights



Where did they go?



Our Thanks

Our Main Funders

Bristol Refugee Rights has been supported in 2014/2015 by grants from: AB Charitable, Hilden Trust, Merchant Venturer's, Mayor's Fund for Bristol and...



Other organisations and individuals who have supported us include: Fareshare, Bishopston Breadstore, Mothers' Union, local Quaker meetings, Leigh Court Farm, BCMS, Chandos Bakery, Horfield Parish Church, Thinking People, Cotham Parish Church, Ikea Bristol and many individual friends and well wishers some of whom wish to remain anonymous.

Key Partners

The Welcome Centre works closely with many other local organisations. The following successful projects have evolved through the work of people who are members or who have volunteered at BRR: Bristol Bike Project, Bristol Hospitality Network, Borderlands, Bristol Signing Support Group, Dignity for Asylum Seekers.

We are also pleased to work closely with the following established agencies who deliver/have delivered their services from the Welcome Centre: British Red Cross, The Haven at Montpelier Health Centre, Careers Service, Migrant Legal Project.

Our other key partners include Refugee Action and Refugee Women of Bristol.

Special Funds

1. **Sue Njie Hardship Fund** – Sue Njie (1953-2009) was the founder of Bristol Refugee Rights; she was always ready to give away the little that she had to help someone else. The Hardship Fund was launched in her name on Human Rights Day 10th December 2011 as a memorial to her. In 2014/2015 the fund has been used to support members needing emergency help for e.g.: travel to sick relatives and for our destitution cupboard (stocked from donations).

2. **LARA Fund** – The LARA Fund was launched in April 2013 in memory of Lorraine Ayensu to support asylum seeker and refugee artists in Bristol, through putting on special showcasing events. In 2014/2015 the fund has been used for rehearsal space for the gig during Refugee Week at the Station, coordinated by Danny Vincent.

We would also like to say a particular thank you to all staff, Trustees and volunteers who have left us during the year and to **Jo Bloxham** who until September 2014 facilitated our Member Consultation Group.

Current Funders:



Church Urban Fund



Bristol Refugee Rights

Office Address

Assisi Centre, Lawford's Gate,
Easton, Bristol, BS5 0RE

Tel 0117 9080844

Email info@bristolrefugeerights.org

Web www.bristolrefugeerights.org

Registered Company no: 5669208

Registered Charity no: 1126646

