

BRISTOL REFUGEE RIGHTS



Safety – Solidarity – Action for Change

Business Plan 2016-2019

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1. Executive Summary

Bristol Refugee Rights is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. We have created a welcoming hub of activity for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol where they can feel safe and improve their wellbeing. Our Welcome Centre is a place of solidarity and trust where asylum seekers and refugees can work alongside each other, volunteers, and staff to deliver services, to challenge injustices and promote equality of opportunity.

We pride ourselves on being an organisation that is dynamic, innovative and progressive which seeks to be an example of best practice in working with asylum seekers and refugees.

What makes BRR unique:

- BRR is a hub of knowledge and support; it provides a breadth of services for asylum seekers and refugees not available anywhere else in Bristol and models best practice to the sector;
- BRR offers unique services e.g. advocacy; asylum support advice; community engagement project; early years project
- Member volunteers are meaningfully engaged in service delivery and design.

This Business Plan: describes our organisation and sets out our strategic aims for three years: 2016-2019. Our aims include:

- being a member led organisation;
- ensuring the provision of appropriate services to those most in need;
- supporting better integration for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol;
- empowering asylum seekers and refugees, reducing social isolation and improving their wellbeing;
- mitigating the impact of poverty and destitution for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol; and
- the promotion and protection of human rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

2. Organisation details

2.1 **Charity/Company name:** Bristol Refugee Rights (“BRR”)

2.2 **Address:** St Pauls Learning Centre, 94 Grosvenor Road, St Pauls, Bristol, BS2 8XJ and Malcolm X Community Centre, City Road, Bristol, BS2 8YH

2.3 **Telephone Number:** 0117 914 5480

2.4 **Email:** info@bristolrefugeerights.org

2.5 **Website:** www.bristolrefugeerights.org

2.6 **Legal Status:**

Registered Company no: 5669208

Registered Charity no: 1126646

2.7 **Objects:**

- To relieve the needs of asylum seekers and refugees by the provision of information, advice and support.
- To preserve and protect the physical and mental health of asylum seekers and their dependants and those granted refugee status and their dependants.
- To advance the education of the public in general about the issues relating to refugees and those seeking asylum.
- To provide facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life of those persons who have need of such facilities.
- To advance the education and training of refugees, asylum seekers and their dependents.
- To promote human rights (as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent United Nations conventions and declarations) by all or any of the following means:-
 - relieving need among the victims of human rights abuse
 - conducting research into human rights issues
 - educating the public about human rights
 - raising awareness of human rights issues

- promoting public support for human rights
- promoting respect for human rights among individuals and corporations

3. What the organisation does

3.1 Vision: People coming to Bristol to seek sanctuary are welcomed and treated with dignity and respect.¹

3.2 Mission Statement: 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.²

3.3 Our Activities:

The Welcome Centre: This service runs three days a week (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday) asylum seekers and refugees can take part in games, arts and activities, get drinks and snacks and have someone to talk to; they can have a cooked lunch once a week; it supports the physical and mental well-being of asylum seekers and refugees with friendship and a community.

The Advocacy and Information Desk (AID): Asylum seekers and refugees can receive support, signposting and referrals to enable them to access the services to which they are entitled, ensure protection of their human rights, find ways out of destitution, and get support to make fresh claims and eventually leave to remain; increasingly advocacy services provide opportunities for members to learn and thus have a better understanding of their case.

The Asylum Support Project (ASP): Asylum seekers receive advice on making applications for asylum support, get support with making applications and with challenging refusals. Members are supported

¹Developed at Vision Day October 2010 - amended 2013

² Developed at Vision Day October 2010

throughout the application and appeal process to gather evidence to support their claim and to respond to Home Office requests for additional information.

BRILL: English language and computer classes which allow asylum seekers and refugees who cannot always access college or other community classes opportunities to learn English and about life in the UK; support to access other education opportunities; opportunities to practice communication skills in different contexts and learn about British life and culture.

Volunteering: Volunteering for asylum seekers and refugees takes place in the Welcome Centre. Asylum seekers refugees who speak good English are supported and trained to become volunteer interpreters.

Community engagement: Supports asylum seekers and refugees to take a full part in community and awareness raising events, through training in public speaking and preparation for speaking to the media.

The Early Years Project (formerly known as Community Crèche): This service is open three days a week when the Welcome Centre is open (also delivered on a Tuesday on behalf of Refugee Women of Bristol) and enables parents to attend and make the most of opportunities offered by each project; it provides a first step for children in preparation for nursery and school; it provides an important first link to other services for families such as Children’s Centres; it is a place where children can just be children.

Destitution Support: This is for asylum seekers and refugees who are not receiving financial support. They can access a mini-food bank and toiletries; we also have a sharing shop for clothes and household items. We work with other asylum seeker/refugee support services in Bristol to gather and share information about the destitution support we are providing to ensure: fair distribution of resources; members are receiving all to which they are entitled; and we can demonstrate the need for support from the local authority/funders.

Campaigning and Public Engagement: We support and enable campaigning and projects for asylum seekers and refugees to take part in theatre, music and the arts; we regularly hold public meetings to inform the public about human rights abuses faced by asylum seekers and refugees.

Wellbeing: Improved physical and mental wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees is promoted throughout all projects and through specific activities such as wellbeing sessions, a Wellbeing Fair, health sessions and yoga.

Pride Without Borders: A fortnightly drop in for LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, Inter-sex etc) asylum seekers and refugees (run jointly with Borderlands and Bristol City Council) provides a safe space for members to talk about gender and sexuality and offers support to access mainstream LGBT+ support services. Additional activities such as trips are also arranged.

3.4 Equality Statement³: BRR aims to be an anti-discriminatory organisation committed to the promotion of equality and diversity and, in line with the Equality Act 2010, the elimination of all forms of discrimination on grounds of any of the ‘protected characteristics’. BRR also does not discriminate on grounds not covered by the Act such as immigration status, socio-economic disadvantage and trades union activity, and encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998.

4. Background and achievements to date

In 2005, ‘Holding Refugees and Human Rights in Mind’ was formed by a diverse group of professionals and volunteers working across Bristol with asylum seekers and refugees with the aim of filling a gap in the provision of services which left many asylum seekers destitute and without support. The organisation subsequently changed its name to Bristol Refugee Rights.

³ This statement is made in accordance with Bristol Refugee Rights’ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2015

BRR's first project, a drop-in Welcome Centre, opened its doors at the Unitarian Hall in St Pauls to refugees and asylum seekers in April 2006. Since then, BRR has expanded to open 3 days a week and now offers a holistic range of services to asylum seekers and refugees. The Welcome Centre is now based at the Malcolm X Community Centre in the St Pauls area of Bristol at the heart of a community where many asylum seekers and refugees reside.

4.1 Our three goals are:

Safety: We offer a unique community hub for transforming the lives of those seeking asylum; we are a key partner in Bristol being a City of Sanctuary. Since 2006 we have welcomed over 3000 members (asylum seekers and refugees who have accessed our services) from over 70 different countries. In 2016/2017 we had an average of 79 member visits per session and a total of 391 new members.

Solidarity: We celebrate equality and diversity, learn from each other and develop new understanding and through this promote community cohesion and mutual respect.

Action for Change: We build grassroots movements to break down segregation, uphold and defend human rights and actively campaign on issues affecting asylum seekers and refugees. We support asylum seekers and refugees to utilise their skills and take a full and active part in the community of Bristol.

4.2 Our values are:

Solidarity	Quality
Equality	Integrity
Creativity	Inclusivity
Shared humanity	Empowerment
Hope	Compassion
Mutual trust	Warmth
Open-mindedness	Respect and appreciating each others' qualities
Sensitivity	

5. Why we do the work we do

5.1 Situational analysis: Across the world it is now estimated that more than 60 million people are displaced from their home countries⁴. The vast majority of these are being supported by neighbouring countries with only around 3.5 million being hosted in Europe at the end of 2015, many of whom arrived since June 2015: the number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe doubled in 2015 to more than 1.2 million; 2016 has seen a slight reduction (based on the first 3 quarter figures) but there is still projected to be close to double the number of arrivals in Europe that there were in 2014⁵. Red Cross estimates that the UK hosts around 118,000 of these (representing just 0.18% of the world's refugee population). In 2015/2016, there were 36,465 asylum applications in the UK, significantly less than in neighbouring countries such as France and Germany (Germany for example had over 1.1 million asylum applications in 2015) and received more than 3 times the asylum seekers who come to the UK in a whole year in just one quarter of 2016⁶. There are around 300 Home Office provided beds for asylum seekers in Bristol.

Asylum seekers and refugees often face poor treatment in the receiving country. In the UK, the “hostile environment” describes a package of measures designed to make life so difficult for individuals without permission to remain that they will leave the UK voluntarily; these include increasingly complex and anti-immigration legislation such as the recent Immigration Act 2014 and Immigration Act 2016, the harshest legislation yet.

There is a lack of understanding in the wider public about the needs of and problems faced by asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers and refugees often face poor treatment in the media particularly as their circumstances and special legal status are rarely properly explained. However, the refugee crisis in 2015 saw a new wave of media interest coupled with some more positive coverage. In the UK

⁴ UNHCR 2016

⁵ EUROSTAT figures

⁶ EUROSTAT figures

and other European countries, the far right has experienced a rise in popularity.

- 5.2 Local Context:** Locally, changes in police stations have resulted in “signing” (reporting to the Home Office) being moved outside of the city. There are also ongoing cuts being made to local services.

Rising rental costs in Bristol city mean that increasingly asylum seekers are being accommodated outside of Bristol city, far from services which they need access to e.g. in Kingswood, Hanham and Avonmouth.

The Mayor, Marvin Rees, provides an opportunity for better support for asylum seekers and refugees locally. He is committed to developing a strategy for Bristol as a City of Sanctuary and this has been developed in consultation with asylum seekers and refugees and voluntary sector organisations.

Bristol City Council has worked with Citizens UK and other voluntary sector organisations to support the resettlement of Syrians and UASCs in Bristol through the various government resettlement programmes.

- 5.3 The public need:** The needs of asylum seekers and refugees are well-documented in research and further supported by our own consultations with members, volunteers and other stakeholders.

Asylum seekers and refugees, who often experienced pre-flight trauma and ongoing problems in their country of origin, face multiple disadvantage and discrimination in the UK not least due to the hostile environment.

There is a lack of understanding in mainstream support services about the complex and multi-layered needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Their basic needs are often not met; many asylum seekers and refugees find themselves destitute (and often homeless), at various points in the process. They experience poor mental health, poor wellbeing and isolation.

There is a lack of information and understanding of the complex asylum system and rights within that system. Advice is often difficult

to access and in some cases is not free. This is further exacerbated by poor decision making by the Home Office. Many asylum seekers and refugees have limited or no English communication skills and there is a lack of access to English language courses provided elsewhere (as a result of cost/eligibility and childcare).

Asylum seeking and refugee children are also isolated and development needs are not met. Refugees experience difficulties moving on and integrating to the wider community once granted refugee status. Many asylum seekers find that their human rights are not respected even after arrival in the UK facing detention and being denied the right to work.

Government resettlement schemes to bring asylum seekers and refugees to the UK (such as the Syrian resettlement scheme and the Dubs amendment scheme) have created a two tier system which demonstrates a better way, but has caused tension between different communities and also means that there are an increasing number of UASCs (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

- 5.4 Beneficiaries of BRR's activities:** The primary beneficiaries of our organisation's activities are our service users (known as members): people in the asylum process or who have recently been granted refugee status, living in Bristol. Membership grants access to all services indefinitely depending on individual needs.

The following also benefit: Friends, partner agencies and the general public.

5.5 How do they benefit?

Members:

- Their basic needs are met (through the provision of a cooked meal each week; our food bank and the Asylum Support Project) and social connections rebuilt.
- They have improved understanding of rights and knowledge of services (through AID). Their protection needs are recognised.

- They have improved communication skills in English and an increased understanding of British life and culture (through the BRILL project).
- Children’s development improves and they are better able to integrate with mainstream services (through our Early Years Project).
- Increased confidence in speaking about the issues they face publicly (through the VOICE project).
- Their wellbeing is improved (through all projects and specific wellbeing activities).
- Human rights abuses and planned changes to local and national government policy are challenged through responding to Consultations, engaging with MPs and local councillors, holding events to encourage the public to challenge draconian laws and policies.

16% of our members surveyed in 2014 said that the only hot meal they have each week is at the Welcome Centre. In 2017, 83% of members said that coming to the Welcome Centre makes them feel a lot better; and 69% said since coming to the Welcome Centre they were less lonely.

Since 2015 we have seen an increase in the number of new members we are seeing annually; this caused a shift in who is using our services: we are spending more time working with new members and their high number of needs and less time providing long term support to more established members. Despite new member numbers being slightly lower in 2016/2017 they have not returned to their levels of pre-2015 refugee crisis and as such this trend of supporting those in high need continues.

Friends: They receive a quarterly newsletter, are invited to an AGM, invites to events.

Partner agencies: Refer and signpost people to us and vice versa. Refugee Women of Bristol: Early Years Project provided 1 or 2 days per week. Joint funding bids and joint working (e.g. Pride Without Borders).

Wider public: Volunteering opportunities in the Centre and awareness raising events increase public knowledge and awareness.

5.6 Complementary services currently available: BRR works closely with the following Bristol based services to ensure joined up support and to avoid duplication:

Borderlands: offers a drop in to support asylum seekers and refugees and other vulnerable migrants one day a week (Tuesday when BRR is not open). Their services include English classes, a cooked meal, referrals for health and legal advice, My Futures project and a Mentoring service.

Refugee Women of Bristol: offers a drop in for asylum seeking and refugee women one day a week (Tuesday when BRR is not open). Their services include English classes, a cooked meal and community support.

Bristol Hospitality Network (BHN): hosts destitute asylum seekers in local accommodation and provides support payments to them. BHN have a drop in one day a week (Monday when BRR is not open) which includes English classes, cooked meal and links people to BRR's advocacy service.

Red Cross: provides advice and information to people within the first year of being granted refugee status; makes support payments to destitute asylum seekers and refugees; and assists asylum seekers to make applications for free gym membership.

Ashley Community Housing: supports refugees with accommodation and courses.

Other services: There are now numerous complementary services in Bristol, some focused entirely on working with asylum seekers and refugees and others for whom working with our members is just a small part of their work. These include: City of Sanctuary (travel tickets); Refugee Welcome Homes; SARI, The Haven; Unseen; Aid box Community; Brigstowe Project; Calais Refugee Solidarity; Citizens UK; 1625 Independent People; Barnardo's; Bridges for Communities; Creative Youth Network.

5.7 The unfulfilled need: Bristol Refugee Rights has welcomed over 390 new members in each of the last two years. There is an ongoing demand of new members with needs as identified at 5.2 above. Asylum seekers and refugees lives are often erratic and they face changing situations, meaning that there is an ever present need for different types of individual support.

5.8 How the organisation integrates with other activities/providers: Bristol Refugee Rights works closely with all similar organisations in Bristol in order to ensure that services do not overlap but that asylum seekers and refugees also do not find themselves falling through gaps in available services. We deliver an Early Years Project on behalf of Refugee Women of Bristol and share information about destitution with Borderlands, BHN and Red Cross.

Bristol Refugee Rights is part of networks to ensure a strategic approach and closer working and sharing of knowledge: Bristol Refugee Forum, City of Sanctuary, South West Migration Partnership. We also work with national networks such as The Detention Forum to contribute to consultations on and campaigns for/against changes in government policy.

In addition to the similar services outlined at 5.5 above, there are a number of other smaller organisations we work with such as Signing Support, B.Friend, Allotment Project and Walled Garden, Arts Refuge and BDASC. We also work with a number of immigration advisers, health and education services and nurseries in Bristol.

6. Our strategic aims:

Our strategic aims, which are in line with our goals of Safety, Solidarity and Action for Change are:

6.1 Being a member-led organisation: Representation by members throughout all levels of the organisation is key to ensuring that we are providing a programme of activities which continues to evolve according to the changing needs and wishes of members.

- 6.2 Providing a community hub for appropriate services to those most in need:** ensuring the funding and infrastructure is in place to continue to provide a welcoming, safe environment; in partnership with local and national organisations provide accessible services where asylum seekers and refugees can meet and socialise and ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have access to the information and services they need.
- 6.3 Asylum seekers and refugees are better integrated into Bristol:** supporting asylum seekers and refugees to engage with the wider community and speak out; raising awareness and influencing decision-making; improving the sensitivity, accessibility and relevance of other services and celebrating difference.
- 6.4 Asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol feel less socially isolated and experience improved wellbeing⁷:** we aim to improve both the physical and mental wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees through the activities we provide and promote, leading to empowerment and increased autonomy.
- 6.5 Reducing the impact of poverty and destitution for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol:** asylum seekers and refugees will experience less food and financial poverty; meeting asylum seekers and refugees' basic needs is an essential first step to re-building their lives.
- 6.6 The human rights of asylum seekers and refugees are promoted and protected:** it is a fundamental aim of our services that asylum seekers and refugees are empowered and supported to ensure the protection of their human rights; and where human rights are not protected by law, to challenge this injustice through campaigning and advocacy.

7. Performance monitoring

- 7.1 Quality Standards:** As an organisation funded by Bristol City Council, Bristol Refugee Rights is required to meet Bristol City Council's Baseline Standards for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

⁷ Amended October 2017 from "Asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol have improved wellbeing"

Organisations⁸. The aim of these Standards is to ensure that funded organisations are well managed and provide good quality services. As such, Bristol Refugee Rights has a comprehensive list of policies which are an active part of our governance and running of the organisation. Policies and Procedures relate to personnel, health and safety, safeguarding and child protection, Trustees, volunteers, members, and grievance, disciplinary and complaints. In addition we have Early Years Project specific policies as are required by Voluntary Registration with Ofsted.

In 2017, Bristol Refugee Rights became an OISC accredited organisation in order to be able to provide legal advice to our members. The OISC accreditation require competence and training in delivering advice, having certain policies and procedures in place, and proper business management and planning.

All policies are drafted in consultation with staff and where relevant, with volunteers and members. Policies are approved by the Board of Trustees and reviewed and updated by the Board of Trustees as often as is required by changes in law and good practice, and as a minimum 3 yearly. We seek to build equality of access and opportunity into all policies and activities of BRR and as such seek to make all policies accessible to our members through use of plain English or the creation of summarised versions.

A list of policies and procedures and a copy of any of our policies or procedures is available on request.

7.2 Goals: Our performance is monitored against our key goals of Safety, Solidarity and Action for Change and our strategic aims.

7.3 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Measurement of KPIs: We monitor our output through collecting information about the number of people who use each of our services and the numbers who are helped in different ways. We regularly gather feedback from members and non-members through feedback questionnaires,

⁸ The Standards relate to: Governance; Financial Management; Equalities; Employment; Insurance; Service User Involvement and Participation; Complaints; Information Sharing; Health, Safety & Wellbeing; Safeguarding; Monitoring and Evaluation; and Environmental management and sustainability.

surveys and feedback at events. Further information about our outputs and the methods used to monitor and evaluate our services can be found in our Theory of Change which is available on request.

- 7.4 Reporting of KPIs:** The learning derived from monitoring of our KPIs is made available to the Board of Trustees, the Member Consultation Group, and is published in our Annual Impact Report. Specific projects within BRR have monitoring requirements imposed by funders. We produce regular reports on outcomes and outputs as required, and have commissioned external evaluations for certain aspects of our work.
- 7.5 Services Reviews:** Regular reviews of operation are held for each project and engage staff, volunteers and members. Outcomes are used to inform the Business Plan and make improvements to services.

8. Running the organisation

- 8.1 The Board of Trustees:** Up to 12 elected Trustees meet every two months to oversee the development and running of the organisation. We aim to maintain the Board with at least 50% Trustees of refugee background. Trustees have a wide range of experience from across the voluntary, public, private, community and refugee sectors. Individuals with specific knowledge and skills are co-opted as required. Five Sub-Committees (Fundraising and Finance; Early Years Project; Premises; Media, Campaigns and Communications; and Staffing) meet regularly and report to the Board of Trustees.
- 8.2 Management Team:** Bristol Refugee Rights is managed by an employed Director. In addition the Welcome Centre Manager, Advocacy and Information Desk Manager and Early Years Project Manager have line management responsibilities for staff. Volunteers are managed by two Volunteer Coordinators and by individual project holders.
- 8.3 Member Consultation Group:** A group of 8-12 asylum seeker and refugee members meet each month and consult on the operation and

development of BRR. Their decisions and recommendations inform decision making by the staff team and Board of Trustees.

- 8.4 Friends and supporters:** Friends and supporters of BRR are invited to the AGM and regularly updated about the work of the organisation. Friends elect the Board of Trustees.
- 8.5 Staff:** The organisation is run by 21 part-time and 1 full-time paid staff (approximately 11 full-time equivalent): Director; Welcome Centre Manager; Volunteer Coordinators; VOICE (Volunteering and Community Engagement) Manager; BRILL (English classes) Manager; Advocacy and Information Manager and Assistant; Asylum Support Project Coordinator; Finance Manager; Office Manager; Fundraising and Communications Manager; Early Years Project Manager, Early Years Project Deputy Manager, and Early Years Project Workers.
- 8.5 Volunteers:** around 140 volunteers deliver all front line services. Around 30% of these volunteers are also asylum seekers or refugees and are members of the organisation.
- 8.6 Patrons:** Bristol Refugee Rights is further supported in its activities by our two patrons Canon Dr John Savage CBE and Caroline Beatty. An organisational chart is available on request.

9. Promotion and advertising

- 9.1** The aims of promoting our services are firstly to ensure that potential service users are aware of them and are able to access them; secondly to positively challenge negative stereotypes through raising awareness. We do this through involvement in different local networks, participation in community activities and events such as Refugee Week. We also create opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to talk to the public, including schools and higher education institutes, about their experiences. Our services are also promoted through our website, Facebook and Twitter.
- 9.2** A Media, Communications and Campaigns (MCC) sub group was formed in 2015. The MCC comprises Trustees, volunteers and experts

in communications, the Director, Fundraising and Communications Manager, and VOICE manager.

- 9.3 We use media and social media to celebrate and tell people outside of BRR about our unique contribution. We use opportunities such as newsletters, events, AGM to convey this message. The MCC's aim is to ensure we are making best use of BRR's USP in marketing ourselves particularly when marketing sold services such as training/crèche delivery.

10. Managing risks

Risks and Opportunities are managed through BRR's Opportunities and Risks Register. The Register is approved by the Board of Trustees and reviewed and updated at least annually in order to identify new opportunities and risks and monitor the effectiveness of actions being taken.

11. Fundraising Strategy

Bristol Refugee Rights Funding and Income Generation Strategy 2017-2018 sets out the ways in which Bristol Refugee Rights is funded and our strategy for diversifying our income sources in the future.

Currently three quarters of our income is restricted; coming from a combination of small and large grants from trusts and foundations and Bristol City Council funding. Unrestricted funds from regular donations, fundraising activities, friends/ group affiliation fees and designated funds (the Sue Njie Hardship Fund to assist destitute asylum seekers and refugees and the Lorraine Ayensu Refugee Arts Fund to support refugee arts) account for the other quarter.

Our aim is to reduce our reliance on restricted funds by exploring other sources of funding such as contracts, generating funds through awareness raising work, increasing our supporter and regular giver base, legacy giving and developing relationships with businesses.

However, we recognise that for the foreseeable future, trusts and

foundations income will continue to be critical and ensuring time is spent building these relations must be balanced with new developments.

Our Funding and Income Generation Strategy is available on request.

