

Frequently Asked Questions

Who are BRR's members?

We call BRR's service users "members" because we want to show our solidarity with them and we want them to feel that BRR belongs to them. BRR's members are people currently in the UK asylum process or who have recently been granted refugee status. Some are family members of people who have been granted refugee status, who have recently arrived in Bristol. In 11 years BRR has welcomed over 3000 members from over 60 different countries. Members visit BRR over 10,000 times throughout the year.

What is the difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee?

The 1951 Geneva Convention spells out that a refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."

In the UK, a refugee is someone who has been through the asylum process and the Home Office has accepted meets the definition of a refugee in the Geneva Convention. An asylum seeker is someone who is in the process, waiting for the Home Office to accept their claim.

How long does the asylum process take?

About 70% of cases are refused by the Home Office. There is a right of appeal to a Tribunal and around a quarter of earlier refusals are overturned on appeal. The process can take a few weeks but for most it takes many months and sometimes takes years.

What support do people get?

While waiting for a decision asylum seekers are not usually allowed to work. They get £36.95 per week onto a payment card that they can use to withdraw cash or use in certain shops. They have a room in a shared house. Some receive no support, or are destitute. This is because their cases have been refused but they have not returned to their country of origin because it is unsafe or the government of their country of origin refuses to issue them with a Travel Document.

What is it like to be an asylum seeker or refugee?

The asylum process has been described as a form of mental torture. The anxiety of what will happen, not being independent, being separated from family, thinking you could be locked up and sent back to a country you have fled, not being able to speak the language, facing discrimination and misconceptions from the public – all these add up to a very difficult set of circumstances. During this long wait they are "liable to detention" at any time; they have to report to the police station every week or month. This is a very stressful time as they fear being returned to the place from which they fled.

If people are granted Refugee Status or Humanitarian Protection, they have Leave to Remain for 5 years. After many months or years of living in limbo, a whole new set of challenges then emerge.

How can I become a volunteer with BRR?

We recruit volunteers two or three times a year. Register your interest on the “Volunteer with us” page of our website to join our mailing list to receive notice of when our next recruitment session is open. Volunteering roles are daytime only on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Are there other ways I can support BRR?

Make a Donation: We are a charity; we rely on one off and regular donations to be able to deliver all of our services. If you want to support us, pick up an “Information for Supporters” leaflet, visit LocalGiving.org/charity/brr or visit our website.

Destitution support: Sanctuary seekers who lose an asylum claim have no financial support and may be destitute. You can help with donations of clothes, toiletries and food.

Fundraise: Whether you enjoy sport, baking, crafts or film watching there is bound to be a way that you can raise needed funds for BRR’s work. We can support you to do this.

Become a Friend: As a Friend of the organisation you become a legal Member and are able to vote at the AGM. You will be invited to special events and kept up to date with BRR activities. The minimum annual subscription is only £12.

What if I want to ask more questions?

If you want to ask more questions, please do so. However, we would ask that you respect that our members are people who may be in very difficult situations. Please do not ask them personal questions about their current situation, their own asylum claim or their reasons for coming to the UK.

What if I want to find out more about BRR?

T: 0117 914 5480

E: info@bristolrefugeerights.org

W: www.bristolrefugeerights.org

F: [facebook.com/bristolrefugeerights](https://www.facebook.com/bristolrefugeerights)

T: twitter.com/bristolrefugeer

Bristol Refugee Rights is Supported by:

Bristol City Council, Quartet Community Foundation,
The Henry Smith Charity, Big Lottery Fund, Lloyds Foundation, John James
Bristol Foundation, Church Urban Fund, New Beginnings, Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

