

Bristol Refugee Rights



Impact Report

2016–2017



Safety • Solidarity • Action for Change

Our vision

People coming to Bristol to seek sanctuary are welcomed and treated with dignity and respect.

Our 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.



What we do



Safety

We provide a Welcome Centre in Bristol for asylum seekers and refugees to meet and socialise in safety. The Centre is open 3 days per week for practical support and wellbeing improvement.

Other services include: English and computer classes; an Early Years Project – a place for children to play, learn and make friends; advice about claiming asylum support; advocacy and information – to ensure people get the help they need; a free shop and food bank to support those who are destitute.



Solidarity

We 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. We aim to be a member led organisation.



Action for Change

We work to strengthen the visibility, voice and representation of asylum seekers and refugees in local affairs in Bristol and raise awareness of asylum seeker and refugee issues. We aim to promote and protect the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

Chair's Report

These are challenging times for refugee charities as we support our members in an environment where government budgets are cut and organisations compete for money and the public's generosity. There have been great funding successes, but we need to keep up our efforts to pay the rent and wages that make BRR possible.

The political environment is difficult. Changes to the rules mean more families face destitution. Members who get status often face poverty when their asylum support ends but they have yet to access new resources. In August 2016, the tragic murder of Kamil Ahmed (a Kurdish asylum seeker from Iraq and longstanding BRR member) brought in to sharp focus the need for services to work together to safeguard the human rights of asylum seekers here in Bristol. The recent decision to review refugee status after five years confronts members with an anxious future. We are having to deal with a continued stream of unaccompanied children, desperate for help. Other challenges are the housing of members in remoter parts of the area, making our services harder to reach.

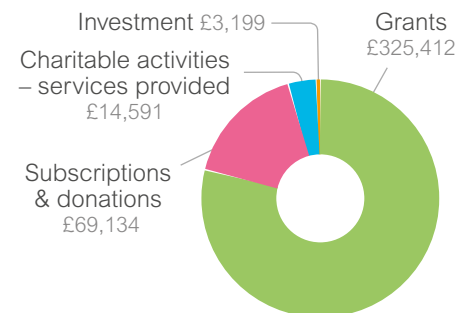
Since the last report, Ruth Pickersgill (a hard act to follow) has stepped down as Chair. Long-term trustees Malcom Jenner and Mary Griggs have left. I thank them for their service. Thanks also to Director Beth Wilson and to her maternity cover Katie Hope, as well as our dedicated staff, volunteers and our members, who are the soul of the organisation. Beth has recently led us through a significant move to new offices in the St Paul's Learning Centre. Though new trustees have joined, we continue to look for more, especially people from a refugee background and with skills in accounting and management.

Chris Bertram, Chair of Board of Trustees

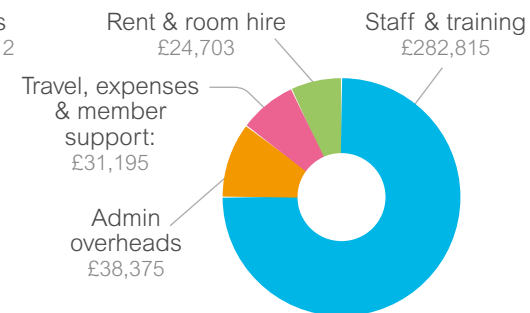
Financial Report

In 2016–17 BRR generated funding of £412,336 and spent £377,088. Trusts, foundations, and Bristol City Council accounted for the majority of funding, while £69,134 came from individual donors; an increase on the £39,521 raised in the previous year. All funding received has been vital in ensuring that BRR can continue to support the varied needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Sincere gratitude is extended to all donors and funders for supporting the important work.

Where did our funds come from?



Where did they go?



Further detail on 2016–17 finances can be found in our Annual Accounts 2016–17, which are submitted to the Charity Commission, and are freely available on our website.

Public Benefit

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

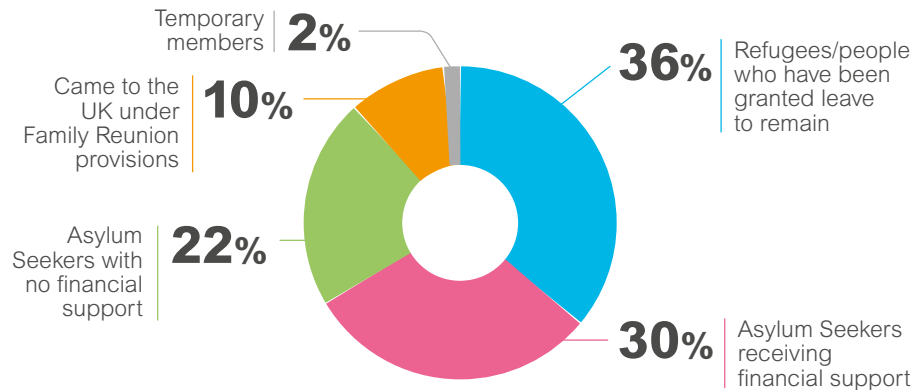
Further information can be found on our website:

www.bristolrefugeerights.org

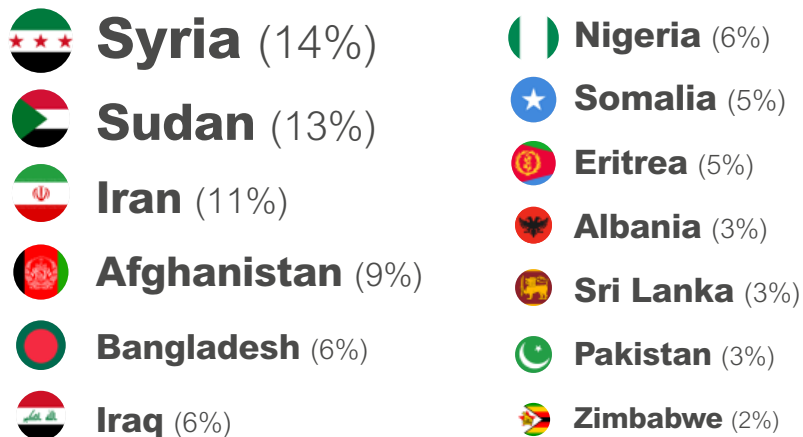
Impact Summary

Status in the UK of our Members

Based on monitoring all members who visited us during 1 week in March 2017



Country of origin of new Members



A further 23 countries of origin account for 16% of the total of new members.

Gender of our Members

70% Male

30% Female

1

Providing a community hub for appropriate services to those most in need

The first time I came, people talked to me and made me feel welcome and not feel lonely. There is always someone to chat to and it makes me feel better

Mansura, BRR member



The Welcome Centre was open
3 days/week, 48 weeks/year



A total of
10,774 visits
were made



391 new members visited
from 36 different
countries



185 people
come through the
doors each week

Meeting the needs of specific groups

Pride Without Borders

BRR staff and volunteers worked with Borderlands and Refugee Action to provide a place for Bristol-based LGBT+ refugees and asylum seekers to meet and tell their stories, chat with others in the same situation, talk about legal issues and hear about other support groups based in Bristol

Early Years Project

- **5 sessions per week***
- **78 new children** have been registered with the project
- **133 different children** benefitted in total
- **31 places used each week***

*Figures are averages

2 Helping asylum seekers and refugees to better integrate into Bristol

It is good here. The community is a great help for asylum seekers – best I've seen in UK and I have been in Cardiff, Swansea and London.

BRR member



Interpreters

24 members spoke at **30 public events**

15 members volunteered as community interpreters, supporting others to access services, whilst developing skills for later employment

Jointly organised the accredited L1 and L2 **Community Interpreting course** through the WEA college



English classes

184 new students were assessed and registered for English classes

Over **100 members** were supported to access college or careers advice

17 classes each week, 44 weeks of the year

89 certificates of attendance awarded

42 students moved up a level



Early Years

Links made by the **Early Years Project*** with other children and family services in Bristol has created opportunities for families to be more integrated into the city

* previously called the Community Creche

Held **12 Welcome Centre Open Days** for the public

Developed partnerships aimed at improving the services we provide and at improving member access to external services

Built relationships with local schools, universities, churches, MPs, NHS staff and other organisations

3 Being a member-led organisation

BRR is the place asylum seekers come and find their identity; it is the place they can come and be normal

Qays, BRR member

7 members have participated in each monthly **Member Consultation Groups***



4 people of refugee background were **elected as trustees**



All projects were reviewed to ensure they **continue to meet members' needs** in the best way possible



44 members volunteered with different BRR projects over the year

4 Improving the wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees

When I come to BRR I have a free mind, I forget everything and I am relieved from stress and worry

Jalal, BRR member



83% of members said coming to the Centre made them feel a lot better

There were **10 educational trips and visits**



69% of members were less lonely as a result of coming to the Centre

Staff worked to develop a **new database** to monitor and measure our impact

5

Reducing the impact of poverty and destitution for asylum seekers and refugees

I'm always happy and relieved when I'm here

BRR member



130 meals cooked and served every week*



23 bags of food and toiletries given to destitute members weekly*



24 people using the free shop each day the Centre was open*



7 people had their hair cut each day the Centre was open*

6

Promoting and protecting the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees

I have been helped in many ways - finding a home, help with my asylum case and having lunch

BRR member



Advocacy & Information Desk (AID)

305 members were assisted during **1179 interviews**

74% of members are less anxious as a result

95% feel more supported

10 unaccompanied asylum seeking children were supported



Asylum Support

223 members were supported by the project

There were **13 successful appeals**

106 people were awarded support

100% of people said the project was useful

82% are less anxious as a result



VOICE

Promoted human rights through public talks and community engagement

Helped our members to speak to the media for campaigning and fundraising purposes

14 members gave evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry into Refugee Welcome

We launched a new website to improve public access to information about the work we do and the need for BRR's work

- First Aid training for members
- Celebrated BRR's 10th Anniversary

- Refresher training for volunteers on the asylum process

- Refugee Week and Celebrating Sanctuary Day
- Expansion of AID Service as Asylum Support Project moved to BRR from Refugee Action

- Eid Celebration
- Kayaking at Bristol Docks organised by volunteers
- Creative Writing Course with Bath Spa Uni

- BRILL walking trip

- Mental Health awareness training
- Summer beach trip

- Vicarious trauma training for volunteers
- VOICE spoke at Ashley Housing Conference on Rethinking Refugees
- Health and Wellbeing Day for members

- BRILL visit to Georgian House
- Day out in Bath visiting Bath Abbey, Roman Baths and the Fashion Museum

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

Case study | Kaywan BRR member

Kaywan, an Iranian national, arrived in the UK in May 2012. He was dispersed to Bristol a few weeks later. When he first came to BRR, he spoke no English so started to learn in weekly classes and started volunteering as a cook and helping set up the main hall. Kaywan said: "I felt happy being able to volunteer; it took my mind off bad things."

At the Welcome Centre Kaywan made friends; he met a lot of people from different cultures. He said, "At BRR it does not matter what country or culture you are from; everyone is welcome."

In 2013 Kaywan received the news that his asylum claim had been refused. He had to wait a long while for his case to be reopened and eventually resolved. During this time he had no family or close friends to support him other than those from BRR. He would have been destitute if it had not been for the referral from BRR to Bristol Hospitality Network. He stayed with BHN until his asylum application was reopened by the Home Office. During this time BRR was constantly chasing for a decision on

Kaywan's case. Eventually in June 2016 he was offered a hostel in Cardiff and had to move there for 11 months.

In January 2017 Kaywan was granted refugee status. He returned to Bristol and BRR referred him to Red Cross for support with finding housing and getting a National Insurance Number.

Through involvement with BRR, Kaywan has fulfilled a lifelong dream of singing. With support from Danny and the LARA Project, Kaywan has sung publicly many times including on the stage in Queen's Square during Refugee Festival. Kaywan said:

"It is BRR that gave me this chance. Thank you very much. BRR has helped make Bristol my home and I am grateful to everyone in this country who has opened their hearts to me."



Case study | Marina Volunteer

Marina joined BRR as an arts and crafts volunteer in February 2016, fulfilling a lifelong interest and doing something positive to help refugees. She started out knitting with members but moved on to establish a sewing table. With the support of other volunteers and donations, BRR now has two sewing machines and a fantastic stock of good quality fabric which Marina estimates would have cost around £1,000 to purchase new. Marina has supplemented this from her own resources, and donations continue to come in of fabric and sewing equipment and accessories.

Marina feels strongly that crafts can play an important role in well-being. She said that a craft to take away and continue outside the Welcome Centre can be an important distraction from the mundane. Members are also producing something useful they can feel proud of.

"Having a purposeful activity is really important for all of us but even more for asylum seekers who are not allowed to take paid employment."

Marina recalls a woman making a quilt for her son, "... something precious for him but also a step towards making a new home for her family and something that is beautiful in their lives". Marina reports that other members have been able to make a gift, a child's dress and cushion covers to send home.

Marina hopes in the future that the sewing table can be expanded to offer mending for members and help with making traditional dresses which are not easily available to purchase in the UK.

"We've had some superb donations but we always need more. If anyone has good quality dress-making material, even just a metre, it would be really useful."



- Human Rights Day event 'Diversity is Strength: Building stronger communities to resist racism'
- City of Sanctuary Walk

- All Party Parliamentary Group Inquiry into the experiences of new refugees in the UK visited BRR chaired by Thangam Debbonaire MP

- Winter party for volunteers and members
- 'Who changes the World?' taster course with Bristol University

- Trip to two music concerts
- Staff received Immigration Act training to prepare for changes to Asylum Support
- Creative writing course
- Prepared for move to new offices
- Launched new database

Looking ahead to 2017/18

We anticipate that in 2017/18, our members will be facing increasing levels of destitution and increasing mental health problems. We also anticipate increasing demand for services from unaccompanied asylum seeking children. We are working hard to prepare for changes to asylum support due to be made soon as a result of the Immigration Act 2016.

With Thanks

We would like to say a huge Thank You to all those who have supported and enabled BRR's activities in 2016/17. In particular we would like to say Thank You to:

All those who have funded our work or donated to us, particularly those who make regular donations

Partner organisations and those organisations who work with us

British Red Cross, Bristol Bike Project, Bristol Hospitality Network, Borderlands, Bristol Signing Support Group, Bristol City of Sanctuary, The Haven, Migrant Legal Project, Fountain Solicitors, St Paul's Children's Centre, St Paul's Learning Centre, Malcolm X Community Centre, Stationery World, Refugee Women of Bristol, Ashley Community Housing, Bristol University, Bath Spa University, Orchard Community Nutrition, Bristol ESOL and Employability Network, Deighton Peirce Glynn, Children's' Scrapstore, Inner City Health Improvement Team, Trauma Foundation South West, all those who have supported trips

Individuals who have worked for or with us

All our current staff (we employed 20 people at the end of 16/17; we recruited 5 posts during the year including 2 new roles); former staff and Trustees including Katie Hope, Chrys Kelson, Matt Bass, Nasim Dumont, Malcolm Jenner, Mohammed Osman and Danny Vincent; and other individuals who have supported and enabled our work including Julia Stafford, Emma Beeston, Julian Guy

Trustees who stood down during the year

Malcolm, Mary, Andrew, Adam, JP, Emmanuel K

Each and every one of our amazing volunteers

Those who help deliver services; those who help organise trips; those who help support fundraising and with social media; those who are Trustees; and those who help behind the scenes. 153 people volunteered for BRR and gave 35000 hours of their time to the organisation – there are too many of you to name!

Partner feedback

We rely heavily on the expertise of the Asylum Support Project (ASP) in helping our members when they're eligible to apply for support or when they're already entitled to support but there's a delay in accessing it (we've seen more of the latter in the last year). They're a crucial part of the process of helping our members out of destitution. ASP have expertise that we don't have and they're accessible and available face to face which makes a great deal of difference to the members. Being based at Malcolm X, which members are familiar with, makes a difference too

Penny, Bristol Hospitality Network

Bristol City of Sanctuary, a grassroots movement promoting welcome and safety for sanctuary seekers across the city knows how valuable the drop in centre run by BRR is to lives of asylum seekers and vulnerable refugees. For us BRR's drop in demonstrates sanctuary in practice. A place where sanctuary seekers are treated with dignity and respect; they are safe and welcome

Forward Maisokwadzo,
Bristol City of Sanctuary

Our funders



Our Early Years project has been funded by Swan Mountain Trust.

And those who started to support us in 2017/18



Our project has been funded by the New Beginnings Programme.

Support us

Bristol Refugee Rights is a charity reliant on the support of our donors and funders. To set up a regular donation online, make a one off donation, or fundraise for BRR, please visit:

localgiving.com/charity/brr

£7

helps a destitute asylum seeker with food and toiletries for a week



£25

helps a family access professional support from our Early Years team



£100

could pay for a year of cooked meals for a member; it could be the only cooked meal they receive each week



Contact us

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To keep up to date with what is going on at BRR or to sign up to our Supporters Newsletter, visit our website.