

PRESS RELEASE

19/12/2018

*******Vital Advice Services at risk *******

Refugee Charity will have to cut services that prevent homelessness unless they can raise £29K by Christmas

Bristol Refugee Rights Advice Project works with people who are seeking asylum and who have been trafficked, to access housing, food, legal advice and trauma counselling.

Open three days a week at The Welcome Centre in St Paul's the Advice Team support more than 100 people every month and hold about 20,000 appointments per year! Elinor Harris who manages the team of staff and volunteers explains, *"People who have experienced war, persecution and trafficking have nowhere else to go to get advice on these issues. It is essential for Bristol that we are able to keep open. If we can't raise more money we will see an increase in homelessness, poverty and destitution, including for many families with young children."*

The Advice service helps people to understand the complex system and what they need to do to help themselves and move on to rebuild their lives. 94% of people felt more supported since going to the advisers. One asylum seeker said *"Around this time last year my wife had a serious stroke and our claim for asylum was refused. We were faced with homelessness for Christmas, which as Christians was devastating for us. With the Advice Team's help we were able to get a solicitor and the eviction was prevented. I don't know what we would have done without Bristol Refugee Rights."*

This vital project has been open for ten years but even when with an impressive track record such as 100% success on asylum support appeals, it is harder to fundraise for work that is not seen as innovative or a new project. The project is excellent value for money thanks to the wonderful team of volunteer advocates and interpreters. Amanda Wilmott, Research Manager at Bath University said, *"For almost 3 years I have used my day off as a volunteer advisor at BRR because I can see how vital the service is and people's lives are dramatically changed by the support we give."*

The last few days before Christmas for many refugees and asylum seekers, far from their families, is the loneliest time of year. Beth Wilson BRR Director said, *"The advice service is a life line and it is really at risk of closure. We are reaching out to the people of Bristol to help us raise the £29 000 by 25th December. All money raised goes directly to pay running costs and staff time to train and support volunteers. Please give what you can."*

www.bit.ly/BRRAdventAppeal

www.bristolrefugeerights.org

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