

Bristol Refugee Rights

Partnerships Strategy - 2019-2022

Section 1 – Introduction

In 2019, Bristol Refugee Rights has been operating for 13 years. Starting as a small service from a church hall and growing rapidly in 13 years; partnerships have always been a part of BRR’s DNA. The founders of BRR were a group of professionals, coming together from different disciplines to develop a new unique service.

From the early days we have worked closely with other local refugee services – Refugee Women of Bristol; Refugee Action. Over time, a number of new services evolved out of BRR and we have been able to maintain a close relationship with them – Bristol Signing Support; Bristol Hospitality Network.

In more recent years we have entered into funded partnerships locally (e.g. Bristol Impact Fund partnership with Refugee Women of Bristol and Borderlands) and nationally (e.g. Refugee Action lead partnership around the Early Action Charter).

In 2019 we have developed a new Strategic Plan for the next 3 years. This document sets out the reasons why Partnerships play an important role in the Strategic Plan and our detailed plans for the next 3 years. This version is a refreshed version completed following a Financial Sustainability Project completed in 2019/20 with the support of an External Consultant funded through Lloyds Bank Foundation Enhance Programme.

For more information on BRR and our Strategy, please refer to the Strategic Plan:
<https://www.bristolrefugeerights.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/BRR-Strategic-Plan-2019-2022.pdf>

Section 2 – Learning from Partnerships History

As stated in section 1, BRR has a long history of partnerships, ranging from informal alliances which are unfunded to consortium for a specific activity/funder. There is much to be learned from what has worked and what has not worked in the past.

Staff and Trustees held a workshop with VOSCUR in early 2019 which included looking at this:

What’s worked	What’s not worked
Informal alliances	Partnership which is unequal or not reciprocal
Partnerships where the partner organisation initially grew out of BRR – personal connections and shared history	Where the partners cannot trust each other
Where organisations have shared values	Differing values which cannot be aligned

Where organisations have overlapping or the same service users	Lack of clarity
Putting a contract in place from the start	Competition
Mutually beneficial	Language means different things
Dedicated time/role to making the partnership work	Premises
Having clarify about leadership and partnership model	

Section 3 – Current Partnerships

Bristol Refugee Rights has informal alliances with numerous organisations including:

- British Red Cross (Bristol)
- Refugee Council (Bristol)
- Bristol Bike Project
- ACH
- Other local refugee drop ins/service providers – Refugee Women of Bristol, Borderlands, BHN, ABC etc
- The Haven
- Refugee Forum participants
- UWE
- University of Bristol
- Bath Spa University
- WEA
- ESOL/Employability Providers as part of the NetworkBristol Law Centre
- Migrant Legal Project
- Fountain Solicitors
- ACFA and its members
- Central Bristol Children’s Centre
- Bristol and Bath Freedom from Torture Young People’s Forum attendees
- Golden Key
- WECIL Bristol City Council

Bristol Refugee Rights is part of the following funded partnerships

- Refugee Women of Bristol/Borderlands (Bristol Impact Fund)
- The Spicery cooking partnership (funded through The Spicery paying us to support a member to visit them)
- Refugee Action (lead partner); Action Foundation; Brushstrokes; MRANG; Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum; PAFRAS; Southwark Day Centre for Asylum Seekers (Early Action Charter)
- PAFRAS/Children’s Society; Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit; South London Refugee Association (Paul Hamlyn Foundation Funded project relating to Young People)

Bristol Refugee Rights has also worked in partnerships with organisations who have funded us to deliver a service or programme which supports the strategic aims of the funder. Such partnerships have been funded by Bristol City Council; Paul Hamlyn Foundation. These partnerships are both strategic and transactional.

Section 4 – 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

Partnerships are central to BRR's Strategic Plan.

One of BRR's 6 values is: **Collaboration:** *We build, support and encourage partnerships between individuals, teams and organisations.*

Partnership is also one of 6 Strategic Priorities for 2019-2022: "We will work together to achieve the best outcomes".

Section 5 – The Benefits of Partnerships

Why does BRR want to enter into partnerships:

The following were identified as the main reasons for BRR to work in partnership at the Voscur workshop in early 2019:

- Sustainability
- The antidote to competition is collaboration
- Giving people the best possible service
- Learning from others

The Charity Commission identifies the most common drivers for partnership as:

- **Reduced costs and lower overheads:** Charities can improve their organisations' effectiveness, reduce duplication, benefit from increased purchasing power and make better use of resources, e.g. sharing back office services.
- **Increased reach of services:** Charities can reach a wider number and range of beneficiaries.
- **Greater fundraising capacity:** Charities can reach a wider pool of donors and increase the range of publicity opportunities e.g. disaster appeals. It may enable us to bid for larger contracts.
- **Stronger campaigning, lobbying and public awareness:** Charities can speak with greater authority, access a wider supporter base, increase public awareness and improve credibility with decision makers, e.g. joint anti-poverty campaigns.
- **Improved access to funding:** Increasingly funders see partnership working as a way of getting better value for money, and many small grant funders offer funding to allow charities explore the possibility of working together or merging.
- **Improved learning and skills:** Charities can share experiences and learn new and better ways of working.
- **Benefits from scale:** Large charities can benefit from the expertise of small specialist organisations. Small organisations can benefit from the profile, capacity and reach of larger organisations. There may be economies through the reduction of administrative functions.

Bristol Refugee Rights wants to enter into Partnerships that are:

- **Impactful** – they help us achieve our Strategic Plan, are within our charitable objects and are beneficial to our members; they help us be better at what we do or our services to reach more people in need.

- **Able to generate income, preferably unrestricted** – unrestricted income provides us with flexibility and security; we want to enter into partnerships which will help us reduce costs, give us greater access to funding and improve our fundraising capacity.
- **Strategic** – strategic relationships and partnerships have the potential to be more impactful; we may advocate with greater authority when connected with groups of or larger organisations.

Our offer to partners:

Bristol Refugee Rights works to fulfil our vision:

A society where refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are welcomed, feel safe, live free of poverty and are able to positively build their lives. A society where everyone's rights and entitlements are respected.

We do this through the delivery of unique, direct services to asylum seekers, refugees and some other migrants. However, we recognise that we are stronger when we work together and that through collaboration, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have better experiences, are treated better and have better long term outcomes. For this reason, we want to work together.

We are an organisation with strong values; here is what we offer our partnerships:

- **Value #1 Respect:** We are committed to equality and treating everyone fairly.

We strive to be member led and have good relationships with established refugee and asylum communities locally.

- **Value #2 Shared humanity:** We are all human beings; we are all global citizens.

We have knowledge of issues and needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants; we have experience.

- **Value #3 Integrity:** We have strong moral principles and act in the interests of people we work with.

We are realistic about the challenges of taking on a new project; we have capacity; we do what we say we will; we keep you informed.

- **Value #4 Collaboration:** We build, support and encourage partnerships between individuals, teams and organisations.

We have local knowledge, understanding of local services, a good understanding of the local authority and connections nationally.

- **Value #5 Empowerment:** We encourage people to be stronger, more confident and to claim their rights.

We work together. We value the contribution each person makes. Our members' successes are testament to our achievements.

- **Value #6 Innovation:** We are adaptable, respond to the changing world around us and strive to be the best we can.

We are well established, strategic and know our direction; we learn from our impact monitoring and evaluation; we are willing to try new things and support new ideas.

Section 6 – Objectives

As set out in our 2019-22 Strategic Plan, we have the following:

Key Priorities:

- Provide a hub from which others may provide outreach
- Facilitate and participate in sharing of best practice, knowledge, expertise and resources
- Develop a range of formal and informal partnerships of benefit to members including joint funding bids and joint delivery of services
- Working with others to campaign for better treatment for our members and against injustice

Key outcomes:

- Opportunities for collaboration are maintained or increased
- New partnerships are developed outside of the refugee sector
- Improved sharing of communication, best practice, expertise and resources

Section 7 – Criteria for establishing/maintaining partnerships

We will only enter into partnerships where we are satisfied with the answers to all of the following questions:

1. **Primary criteria:** Do we want to enter into this partnership: would developing this partnership benefit BRR members and/or refugees, asylum seekers (and migrants) in Bristol and the surrounding areas; would it lead to them receiving a better service?
Do we know what we are trying to achieve from the partnership and what the drivers are for this specific partnership? Do we understand what our partner wants to achieve and what their drivers are?
2. **Does the potential partnership fit with and further:**
 - Our charitable objects
 - Our vision, aims and ways of working
 - Our strategic priorities**Do we have a shared vision for the partnership?**
3. **Do we have compatible values and culture?**
BRR's values and culture: Respect; Shared Humanity; Integrity; Collaboration; Empowerment and Innovation; being member led.

4. **Can we reach agreement on how the partnership will work** – who will lead; what will be the governance arrangements; who will deliver which element; how funding will be secured/shared?

5. **Are we in a position to deliver what is required of the partnership?**
 Consider cost benefit analysis.
 Are they honest and trustworthy, do they have the knowledge and experience to deliver what they say they will?

6. **What will or might we gain or lose from this collaboration?**
 - Have we considered the wider impacts on our charity?
 - Do we need to approach stakeholders for their views? What would our members think?
 - Is it an appropriate use of charitable funds?
 - Are there any significant reputational or financial risks?

These criteria should also be used to monitor existing partnerships.

Section 8 – Process for entering into a Partnership

Authority: A partnership must only be entered into if the criteria contained in section 7 are met and the appropriate authority (as set out in section 10) has been given.

Memorandum of Understanding: It is recognised that in all partnership working, even in the case of informal alliances, having a full and frank discussion about how things will work at the earliest opportunity and making sure this is recorded can be of benefit to all involved. For that reason, we will aim to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with all Partners. A standard MoU has been developed for use with informal alliance partners and VOSCUR’s template MoU will be adapted for use in other situations where this is not appropriate.

At the very least, a Memorandum of Understanding should cover:

- Values/guiding principles
- Leadership
- Governance arrangements
- What happens if something goes wrong
- In the case of a partnership for the purposes of a joint funding bid, this document is likely to form the grounding for a legally binding contract when funding is obtained.

Due diligence: In all partnerships, a certain amount of due diligence is required to satisfy ourselves that the other partners are in a position to uphold their side. What will be required of the due diligence will depend on the nature of the partnership as a funded partnership in which we would be contractually obligated to deliver if the partner failed would require significantly more scrutiny than an informal alliance. Examples of what due diligence should cover include:

- Governance arrangements

- Organisational financial procedures
- Financial health of the organisation
- Whether they have good, transparent communication and decision-making
- Checking human resources/personnel policies are legally compliant
- Whether appropriate policies are in place

A template Due Diligence Questionnaire produced by VOSCUR may be used where appropriate.

Section 9 –Aims for 2019-2022

Our organisational Aims are:

- Prioritising the development of relationships which lead to funding and/or improve policy and practice for our members or more generally for asylum seekers, refugees, or migrants with insecure immigration status
- To explore opportunities for developing paid for support for other organisations e.g. training packages as a source of income
- Holding an Away Day for the refugee sector in Bristol with specific aims around sustainability
- To use the Away Day process to consider whether we want to and can position ourselves as the anchor refugee organisation for Bristol and whether this would involve forming new or damaging existing alliances

The Welcome Team has the following specific aims:

- To explore the division of activities (e.g. arts, trips) with other refugee community organisations in Bristol with the aim of reducing duplication
- To explore new partnerships focused around work with families and improving child and family wellbeing
- To work with the Advice Team to continue to explore and develop partnerships which benefit members who often fall through gaps or struggle to move on because of their physical or mental health difficulties, disabilities or multiple complex needs
- To develop strategic partnerships relating to employability and education and to position ourselves as an essential organisation in this field
- To review existing partnerships in line with criteria

The Advice Team has the following specific aims:

- To explore partnerships which will increase our volunteer interpreter pool and capacity, thus reduce our spend on paid for interpreters
- To continue to work through the Young People’s Immigration Project to support young people to campaign and to work with Bristol City Council to improve their policy and practice
- To continue to develop partnerships with advice sector and legal firms, formalise, review and refresh as appropriate

- To work with the Welcome Team to continue to explore and develop partnerships which benefit members who often fall through gaps or struggle to move on because of their physical or mental health difficulties, disabilities or multiple complex needs
- To continue to seek opportunities for training swaps/delivery of paid for trainings with/for voluntary and statutory sector service providers
- To develop partnerships with Law Schools and Universities in the UK and other countries which support placements and internships to increase our advice capacity and widen knowledge of asylum seekers' rights
- To review existing partnerships in line with criteria

Section 10 – Authority and Decision Making

Project Managers may enter into informal alliances which meet the partnership criteria in consultation with their Team Manager (who must be a member of the Strategic Management Team - SMT).

Partnerships which will have a more than minimal impact on staff, are for the purposes of applying for joint funding, or would require funding to deliver/sustain must be authorised as follows:

- If clearly within the remit of the Strategic Plan 2019-22, its Action Plan agreed annually by Trustees and/or this Partnership Strategy, it may be authorised by the Director having consulted SMT.
- If not clearly within the remit of these documents, the authority of the Trustees is required. This authority may be sought from the Finance and Staffing Sub-Committee or the Fundraising and Communications Sub-Committee.
- In the case of a partnership which may be controversial or which has the potential for a wider impact on the organisation (e.g. partnerships involving the Home Office or police), authority must be sought from the whole Board of Trustees, ideally at a Trustees meeting but where due to time constraints this is not possible, by email and the Board of Trustees should consult with staff.

Section 11 – Monitor and Review

The operation of this Strategy is the responsibility of the Director who will report on progress to Trustees at least annually.

Approved by BRR Board of Trustees – 19.09.2019

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