

Bristol Refugee Rights



Impact Report

2021/22

Safety • Solidarity • Action for Change

bristolrefugeerights.org



Chair's Report

Welcome to Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR) Impact Report for 2021/22.

We moved to our new home at Wellspring Settlement during lockdown and we have not had a chance to introduce the public to our new home with a big party as we would have wished. BRR provides facilities for volunteering and recreation and this was one aspect that was significantly hampered by lockdown restrictions. There were still recreation and volunteering opportunities during lockdown but social contact was not at the same level while doing this online. As lockdown restrictions ease, we are getting back to offering face to face social interaction opportunities.

BRR works with other organisations to offer holistic support. This continued to be formalised through a project called Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership or BRASP in short and funding was secured for 2021/22 financial year to support this objective.

I wish to thank all the volunteers, donors, staff and fellow trustees for all their support.

A number of staff, including some very long-standing staff moved on during the year and I would like to thank each of them for their contribution. We have also been extremely lucky to have been joined in the last year by some new members of staff, including a number themselves with lived experience of fleeing persecution. In the year ahead we will be looking at recruiting more trustees with lived experience. This will be in line with BRR's aim of being lived experience led.

Kenneth Macharia
Chair of Board of Trustees



CEO's Introduction

In 2021, the government introduced the most inhumane piece of immigration and legislation I have seen in my career. The Nationality and Borders Bill (now Act) and other new government policies represent a fundamental expansion of the hostile environment and demonstrate a strong message against welcome and willingness to tear up human rights legislation. Fundamentally, I believe, the legislation is a significant misstep – it is out of touch with public opinion, (shown by public support for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees) and fails to address key problems within the UK asylum process: delays, poor decision making and a lack of safe and legal routes to the UK.

In the last year, we have continued to do all we can to counter this hostile and unwelcoming environment by providing welcoming services and working in solidarity with people seeking asylum and refugees. Over the last year, numbers of individuals housed in Initial Accommodation hotels in the region have grown, representing a tripling of the number of people in the local area and in need of our services. As services re-opened face to face, we returned to a “new normal”; building energy and bustle back into our drop in spaces. All activities were designed and delivered in line with our aims and ways of working – Safety/ Early Action; Solidarity/Empowerment; Action for Change/Advocacy. We also re-launched our Asylum Guides project, involving multilingual staff and volunteers in providing outreach, information and support to asylum seekers newly arrived in Bristol.

The organisation grew in size and underwent a staff restructure which bolstered our resilience and succession planning. Long standing staff moving on represented a challenge and an opportunity as we worked hard to fill vacancies with people with lived experience. BRR continued to lead the development of a city-wide sector partnership of 15 organisations, Bristol Refugee Asylum Seeker Partnership (BRASP), securing funding and managing a number of new staff posts assigned to the partnership. We continued to work on our commitment to being anti-racist and build representation, participation and leadership by those with lived experience within our organisation.

Beth Wilson
Chief Executive Officer

Our Goals for the Future

In 2022, we committed to a new 5 year strategy with a focus on 5 goals. Our Goals set out the sort of organisation we want to be and our framework for designing and delivering services:

1 Ensure services are impactful, accessible and designed to meet our participants' needs

By 2027 we will offer a manageable range of welcoming, empowering and trauma informed services, which are: unique and transformative; help us achieve our vision and purpose; and deliver sustainable impact.

2 Empower and work in solidarity with people with Lived Experience

By 2027 we will have representation by people with lived experience at all levels of the organisation; empowering services will be designed and delivered together with people with Lived Experience.

3 Be sustainable and invest in the wellbeing and resilience of our people and organisation

By 2027 we will have invested in skills and wellbeing to ensure our people are resilient; we will have fit for purpose premises and sufficient funding to achieve our purpose.

4 Use partnerships to increase impact and resilience

By 2027 we will be at the centre of a sustainable, impactful and resilient local refugee sector partnership (BRASP) working together to meet the needs of the local asylum seeker and migrant population.

5 Raise our profile to influence others

By 2027 we will be recognised as a local sector leader; have worked with others to positively influence the asylum and immigration system and to create a more equitable system.

Commitment to anti-racism commitment and approach: our new Strategic Plan also re-affirms our commitment to being anti-racist.

My Journey with BRR

In late 2009 I dropped by a church hall on Stapleton Road asking if I could volunteer. I met a hive of activity; people chatting around the pool table, clothes being sorted, an English class, children playing in a crèche and wonderful smells from the kitchen. A few weeks later I began teaching an English class and became part of the very special BRR Welcome Centre.

When I joined the staff team in 2011 there were just 5 part-time staff supported by volunteers. Our doorbell rang frequently and we would pop over to accompany someone to "sign" with the Home Office at Trinity Police Station. We were instrumental in Bristol becoming a City of Sanctuary and organised numerous trips and events. With no paid Advice workers, our "AID" team helped with many of the same issues as today, but referred more complex cases to Refugee Action, who operated around the corner. Bristol Hospitality Network grew out of our volunteers' refusal to accept people being homeless and BRR's "Tuesday Group" developed into Borderlands. We have always worked closely with other partners such as The Haven.

“ We have navigated the path between adapting to meet new needs and keeping the ways of doing things that have got us this far. ”

We have weathered many changes and pernicious policies and have needed persistence, flexibility and passion to meet the challenges. We have developed specialist skills to support people in increasingly difficult situations. We have navigated the path between adapting to meet new needs and keeping the ways of doing things that have got us this far. We have raised our voices against injustices, treated people with dignity and believed in everyone's ability to rebuild their lives; we have been the change that we want to see. As I prepare to move on from this immensely rewarding chapter I feel great pride in what has been created, dread at how new government policies will create even more suffering, but hope that BRR will continue to rise to these latest challenges, drawing on strength from an amazing community.

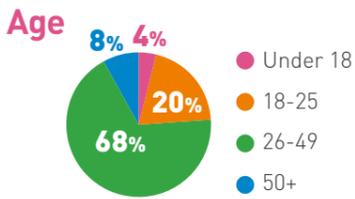
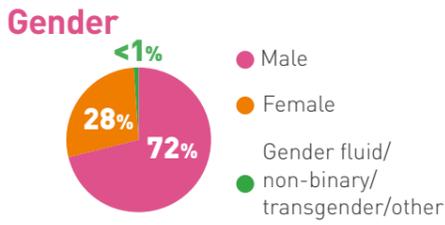
Alice Cutler, Head of Services until September 2022

Impact Summary 2021/22

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.

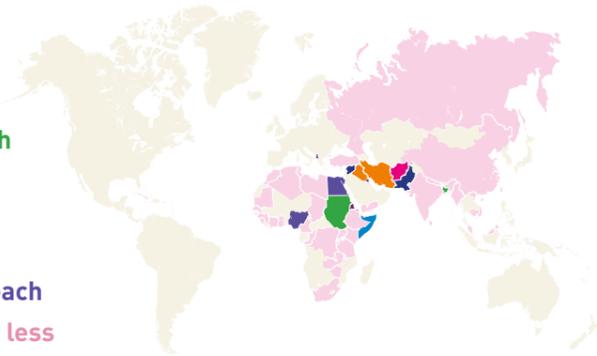
Our Members / Service users*

We supported **1120 people seeking asylum and refugees**, including 381 who contacted us for the first time. They were **from at least 56 different countries**, and they **spoke at least 29 different languages**.



Country of Origin

- Afghanistan **21%**
- Iran, Iraq **9% each**
- Bangladesh, Sudan **7% each**
- Pakistan, Syria **5% each**
- Somalia **4%**
- Eritrea, Albania **3% each**
- Nigeria, Egypt, Kuwait **2% each**
- Other countries **1% each or less**



* In line with our approach to welcome and solidarity we refer to service users as our members, including throughout this report.

** Data throughout this report are based on our Annual Member Survey or our Database records
** You can view more content about our impact online

Partnerships

BRR works in partnership; to combat poverty and destitution and to promote social and legal justice. Working in partnership can lead to significantly better support for the people we work with. Our Project Clear caseworker explained this:

“ Different service expertise compliment each other in supporting the person, risk is shared between agencies and the person feels held by a few involved dedicated workers ”

Over the last year, we continued to participate in a number of local and national partnerships:

- We are a founding member of the **Asylum Early Action** partnership led by Refugee Action;
- We are the lead partner in a partnership of **5 organisations providing drop-in service asylum seeker and refugee hubs** in Bristol;
- We worked with **Bristol Law Centre** to develop a referral pathway to improve access to immigration advice, particularly for complex cases;
- Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership** is a partnership of 15 local organisations; in 2022, we employed a Partnership Services Coordinator and Refugee Participation Officer on behalf of the partnership.

“ Their strength is that they are well informed and well linked with services locally and nationally, well accessible and happy to share their knowledge and experience ”

Partner survey

100% of partners report confidence when signposting people to BRR that they will get the service they need

86% of partners said that working with BRR makes them **feel part of a supportive network** of organisations

“ BRR has the largest overview of services and feels like the leader among refugee charities in Bristol ”

Partner survey

Safety

We prevent and de-escalate crises through the provision of good quality, early advice and information; we build resilience, support networks and well-being.

We met basic needs and alleviated poverty

667 called our Helpline

603 people received specialist advice

regarding access to: housing and financial support, solicitors, health and social services; and on navigating the asylum process

We kept people safe

89 people were supported by our **Safeguarding Team** to reduce risk, (45 adults and 44 children); including 26 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

We supported our members health and wellbeing

83% said BRR had helped them to improve their mental health and wellbeing

94% feel more connected and part of a community



We made people feel welcome and included

367 people attended our **Welcome Drop in**, a social space for service users to meet, have a free meal, play scrabble, have a cup of tea and chat to a friendly volunteer, use a computer or get a free haircut from a barber

97% feel better in our social drop in

99% feel treated with dignity and respect



We supported people to not feel excluded

83 people were supported by our **Pride Without Borders** project which provides emotional and practical support to our LGBTQ+ members

67% feel in a safer position as a result of Pride Without Borders

The Kebede Family

A family of 4, mother, father and two children aged 3 and 4, arrived at our drop-in in November 2021. They told us that they were living in an Initial Accommodation hotel in one room. Neither of the children were attending nursery/school and they were finding it hard to all be in one room all day.

The first step was for our Family Support team to step in and help make applications for the children to attend school and nursery. Once these were submitted and the older one was settled in school, the younger child started to attend the crèche. This meant that both the parents could start to attend weekly English classes and concentrate on their own learning.

In the crèche, the youngest child displayed some challenging behaviour. The mother and father told us that she was displaying similar behaviour at home. At that point, we asked our Advice Team to step in. Our Advice Team supported the family to make a request to be moved out of the hotel into somewhere where they would have a little more space.

The family are now living in a more appropriate property having spent a total of 5 months in the hotel. Once the family knew where their new home would be, our Early Years team stepped in again to apply for new educational settings locally. Parents and children are now thriving. They are linked in with their local Children's Centre and the youngest child is much more settled in the crèche and at home.



Solidarity

We empower people; promote inclusion and equality of opportunity through the breaking down of societal barriers.

Asylum Guides

BRR delivered Asylum Guides briefings in four “contingency” Initial Accommodation hotels in 7 languages to 60 individuals. This is our story, as told by Steve Owen, Learning and Groups Coordinator:

I stand in the lobby of the hotel with two volunteers trying to spark up conversation with the residents. One of the volunteers greets a resident in Arabic - *assalamu alaikum*, peace upon you - while the other approaches a group he recognises as being Kurdish, like him. Both begin explaining that we are there to tell them how the UK asylum system works and what they can do to be prepared. We gather a small group and find somewhere to sit, collecting names and doing introductions.

After doing the necessary paperwork, the Asylum Guides begin, each in their own language. They start with the definition of a refugee, which is unfamiliar to most in the group. They provide an overview of the asylum process and of the support available throughout. The guides talk about solicitors, and give tips on working with them.

The residents have lots of questions; they are particularly anxious at the prospect of being sent to Rwanda. The Guides do their best to answer questions, while carefully avoiding giving legal advice. Each Guide is at a different point now, responding to the different needs in their group. The Arabic group are hearing about the substantive interview, while the Kurdish group are asking about options if the Home Office refuse their claim. There are smiles as one volunteer models how residents can physically shake off their anxiety before going into the interview.

At the end, the hotel-residents report a better understanding of what to expect and how they can prepare for their interview. They exchange friendly remarks with the volunteers, shaking hands, saying “soon, *inshallah*”. Many have been waiting more than 9 months for their interview. They ask about volunteering, English classes and things they can do to pass their time. As we leave, one of the volunteers tells me how much he values volunteering in the programme, because no one took the time to tell him what to expect when he was in the same position.



We built a community

77% of English class attendees **feel part of the community**

83% of members **feel more connected** to other people or have made new friends

We supported people to be more confident to ask for their rights

91% **have a better understanding** of who they can ask for help

89% **felt more confident** to ask for their rights and entitlements

We provided opportunities for learning

196 people were **supported by our Education project** including English classes, conversation clubs, and signposting to access other learning opportunities

77% of English class attendees says that their English is better than before; **76% are more confident to speak English**

We provided opportunities to volunteer

88 people volunteered with us, including **22 member volunteers**

74% of volunteers **made new connections or friends**, and feel more part of a community



We supported children and families

85 crèche sessions were held; there were **252 total attendances** at the crèche and 23 different children attended

61 people were supported through **Family Support**, such as referrals to baby banks, support with nursery placements and school uniform requests

Action for Change

We ensure the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are respected.

We supported people to engage with and progress their asylum claim

38 young people aged 16-25 with insecure immigration status, were helped to understand and access their entitlements

Project CLEAR

Project CLEAR works with our members who are in the most complex situations.

It provides support to address the multiple barriers they face, including **mental health issues, homelessness, and domestic abuse.**

They received one to one support to de-escalate crises, stabilise and re-engage with services

40 individuals were supported

We campaigned for better treatment

We have supported national and local campaigns against the **Nationality and Borders Bill** including taking part in a Bristol Ferry flotilla in March 2022.

We helped people to have their voices heard

Through projects such as “**Dear Home Office**”, **No Recourse to Public Funds** and the **Young People’s Immigration Project**, we provide opportunities for people to tell their stories for the purpose of system change.



We supported statutory services to build understanding and recognise needs

As part of our ‘**Young People’s Immigration Project**’ we worked closely with local councils to advise on best practice, working towards long-term system change

We believed in anti-racism and lived experience leadership

We publicly committed to being an anti-racist organisation and we continue to work towards achieving this objective.

We increased the diversity of our staff team:

16% increase in staff applicants from refugee background

27% increase in job offers to applicants from a refugee background



Rashid

16 year old Rashid grew up in rural Afghanistan. After the Taliban took control he feared for his life and fled. He arrived in the UK after a long and difficult journey to be told by the Home Office they thought he was an adult and was taken to a hotel for adults. As a child, he should have been given accommodation appropriate for his age. Rashid felt confused and scared and decided to leave the hotel to come to Bristol where he had a friend.

When Rashid arrived at BRR he was very quiet, withdrawn and had difficulty talking about his experiences. He was hungry and had no phone, so our first priority was to provide hot food and a mobile handset. We then supported Rashid to understand his options. The only way to challenge Rashid’s inappropriate accommodation offer, was to find a solicitor to bring a Judicial Review to challenge the assessment of his age. We made a referral to a solicitor and supported Rashid to meet with them. Our experienced caseworkers worked in a trauma informed way to build trust and to help Rashid understand that it is the responsibility of the Home Office and Social Services to ensure a child’s age has been properly assessed.

Whilst Rashid awaits the outcome of his case, we continue to support him to understand the proceedings and navigate life in the UK. We referred him for hardship payments, supported him to access mental health support and activities for young people. Rashid has started to attend our beginners English class and came to our social drop in.

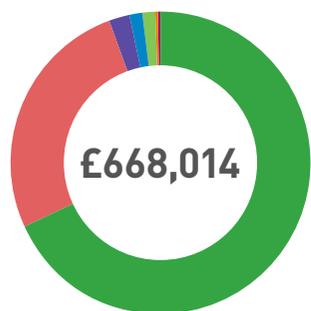


Financial Review

BRR's total income in 2021/22 was **£668,014**. This includes multi-year restricted funds for use in subsequent financial years. BRR's total expenditure in 2021/22 was **£647,972**.

All funding received has been vital in ensuring that we can continue to be here for our members. A full copy of our Trustees report and further detail on 2021/22 finances can be found in our Annual Financial Statements 2021/22 which are submitted to the Charity Commission and are freely available on our website.

Our Income

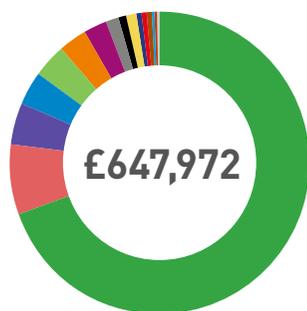


Grants **£455,652**
Subscriptions and Donations **£176,842**
Gift Aid **£13,530**
Other charitable activities **£9671**
Gifts in Kind **£8,720**
Investments **£1,953**
Trading activities **£1,350**
Membership fees **£296**

How each £1 was spent

For every £1 raised, we spent
94p Delivering services and
6p Fundraising

Our expenditure



Staff salaries **£450,537**
Office costs **£48,341**
Grants payable **£28,531**
Computer and internet **£24,249**
Hardship payments **£22,725**
Interpreting **£20,446**
Room hire **£15,376**
Professional fees **£9,104**
Fundraising **£6,873**
Training **£6,465**
Monitoring and Evaluation **£4,330**
Governance **£3,606**
Catering, events and trips **£2,548**
Insurance **£2,467**
Volunteer expenses **£1,766**
Membership fees **£608**

Thank You

“Just want to say thanks from the core of my heart. I am really suffering so many difficulties at this time, BRR helps me a lot.”

This is a quote from a BRR member to us, but we wanted to share it with you because, it is thanks to everyone that supports us that we are able to continue to support our members through their difficulties.

So, thank you from the core of our heart to:

- **Our current staff team**, who continue to work tirelessly to support our members with professionalism and empowerment;
- **The staff who left us during the year** but who gave so much to our organisation and to whom we will be ever grateful;
- **Our volunteers and trustees**, some of them, themselves refugees and asylum seekers, who give their time and humanity for free;
- **Our partner organisations** who work closely with us and share our vision;
- **Our 2021/22 Funders and Current Major Donors** who have been and continue to be generous with their funds, their trust and their support including:

AB Charitable Trust; Allen & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust; BBC Children In Need; Bristol Charities; BNSSG Clinical Commissioning Group; Bristol City Council – Impact Fund; Community Justice Fund; Garfield Weston; Ikea; J&M Britton Charitable Trust; John James Bristol Foundation; Justice Together; Lloyds Bank Foundation; National Lottery Community Fund; Nationwide Community Grants; Paul Hamlyn Foundation; Refugee Action Explore Adapt Renew; Ryklow Charitable Trust; Quartet Community Foundation; SC and ME Morland's Charitable Trust; South Gloucestershire Council; The JJ Charitable Trust; The Nisbet Trust; The Swan Mountain Trust; Tilly Vacher; Tudor Trust; Wesport.

We would also like to thank all the Trusts and Individual donors who wish to remain anonymous.

Support Us

We rely on our supporters and donors to transform the lives of our members. You can support us in a variety of ways:



Make a **donation online**



Set up a **regular monthly donation** by Direct Debit



Make a **restricted donation** to support specific work



Leave a **gift in your will**



Follow us on social media



Fundraise for us



Sign up to our free **quarterly e-newsletter**



Businesses can support us through donations and volunteering

To donate or find out more about ways to support us, please visit:
bristolrefugeerights.org/support-us/donation

Contact Us

Bristol Refugee Rights, Wellspring Settlement, 43 Ducie Road, Bristol, BS5 0AX

☎ **07526 352 353** (helpline – open limited hours)

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**COMMUNITY
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Registered charity no: 1126646, Registered company no: 5669208

Throughout this report, all member names have been changed