

Bristol Refugee Rights



Impact Report

2022/23

Safety • Solidarity • Action for Change

bristolrefugeerights.org



Chair's Report

Welcome to Bristol Refugee Rights' Impact Report for 2022/23.

At Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR), we are proud to reflect on another successful year of providing a diverse range of services, support, and social opportunities for our members. However, we acknowledge that these continue to be challenging times for asylum seekers, refugees, and the refugee sector as a whole. The increasing costs associated with living crisis situations, coupled with the prevailing hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees, have amplified the difficulties of our work. Additionally, securing funding has become more challenging due to its scarcity and the heightened competition for resources.

Therefore, we recognize the need to redouble our efforts to raise income from our supporters. As an organisation deeply rooted in psychologically informed ways of working, we were originally set up by retired professionals, including social workers and mental health practitioners. However, in 2022, amidst rising stress levels in the general population and significant staff turnover, we have felt the need to focus more concretely on becoming trauma-informed in everything we do. Recognizing the prevalence of trauma among our members, we strive to ensure that our services and approach are sensitive, compassionate, and attuned to their unique needs.

We are delighted to welcome two new members, Cyril Babeev and Elise Ford, to our Board. Their expertise and perspectives will undoubtedly contribute to the continued growth and success of BRR. Over the past year, we have made significant progress in implementing our strategic goals and are on the right path towards achieving them.

In conclusion, despite the challenges we face, Bristol Refugee Rights remains committed to its mission of supporting and empowering asylum seekers and refugees. With the invaluable contributions of our dedicated team, we will continue to adapt and evolve, ensuring that our services remain impactful, responsive, and inclusive.

Together, we will strive to create a more compassionate and welcoming environment for all those seeking refuge in Bristol.

Kenneth Macharia, Chair of Board of Trustees

People with Lived Experience

BRR has reviewed our volunteer program and conducted an extensive audit of our volunteer activities to ensure the effectiveness of our systems and offerings.

We have made significant improvements to our volunteering offer such as enhancing role descriptions, revamping our recruitment process to attract a broader and more diverse team, and refined our support and supervision procedures.

28 members
volunteered
their time for various
BRR projects

86 non-members
volunteered
their time for various
BRR projects

84% of member
volunteers
found great satisfaction
in their volunteer work

Among our member volunteers, seven individuals dedicated their efforts as community interpreters, providing support in eight different languages. Our volunteering program focuses on empowering members, aiming to boost their confidence, recognize the value of their skills, and enhance their readiness for future employment. We provide tailored training opportunities and additional support based on each member's specific needs and aspirations. We also offer guidance on external learning resources and career coaching to further aid their personal and professional development. Moreover, we have extended opportunities for member volunteers to participate in job interviewing panels within BRR, enabling them to enhance their skills further.

Remarkably, 100% of member volunteers reported feeling more prepared for the workforce as a result of their experiences with us.

"I really wanted to get involved in some way through volunteering as I was hoping it would help me get things off my head. I was feeling depressed. I volunteered with others who embraced me, they didn't put me down because I was an Asylum seeker - that made me feel empowered."

Additionally, we have actively supported one member volunteer in joining the Board of Trustees, thereby increasing the representation of individuals with lived experiences within our organisation's governance structure.

Overall, our revitalised volunteer program has yielded substantial positive outcomes, benefiting both our dedicated volunteers and the community we serve.

CEO's Introduction

During the year 2022, the hostile attitude towards individuals seeking protection in the UK persisted.

While the plans concerning Rwanda were put on hold, the looming threat of deportation continued to haunt our members. The enactment of the Nationality and Borders Act exacerbated the situation by prolonging the decision-making process for asylum claims and further swelling the waiting list of asylum seekers. The number of hotels in and around Bristol that accommodated asylum seekers notably increased throughout the year, placing immense strain on local services.

Nonetheless, our dedicated staff and volunteers displayed unwavering commitment as they worked to create a welcoming, secure, and professional environment for our members, all while upholding high service standards. We achieved significant progress in the initial phase of our five-year strategy, diligently pursuing our goals. Each activity was carefully crafted and executed in alignment with our core principles: Safety, Solidarity, and Action for Change.

Furthermore, we provided vital psychosocial support to our frontline staff and volunteers, emphasising the empowerment of individuals with lived experiences to join our organisation and forge partnerships. Unfortunately, this year also marked the departure of some valued long-serving colleagues who played instrumental roles in the growth and advancement of Bristol Refugee Rights. Among them were our Head of Services, who dedicated over 10 years of service, and our CEO, who served for more than 8 years. Their absence is deeply felt, and we extend our heartfelt wishes for success in their future endeavours.

Despite these transitions, our commitment to fostering an anti-racist environment remains steadfast, as does our dedication to promoting representation, participation, and leadership among those with lived experiences within our organisation.

Qerim Nuredini
Chief Executive Officer

Tackling social isolation

82% of members feel part of a community as a result of engaging with BRR services

86% of members say that BRR has made them feel more supported and less anxious

“It’s great, they are a second family for me, they help us when we need it.”

“The place is welcoming and [I] feel home and safe.”

Pride Without Borders

100% of PWB members felt better; welcome and included; treated with respect; and felt part of a community as a result of attending PWB

Creche / Family support

Enabling children to make friends:

88% of members said that their child had more opportunity to play with others and make friends as a result of attending the Creche

Enabling parents to make friends:

“I can chat with people and make friends and use the Creche because as a single mother it’s hard for me to get time to drink coffee or any time to study.”

Social drop-in

96% of members feel more connected to other people and made new friends as a result of attending our social drop-in

100% of members feel welcomed and included when attending our social drop-in

Attending classes

96% feel more connected to other people or made new friends as a result of attending our classes

100% feel part of a community as a result of attending our classes

“I have travelled 1000s of miles to get to the UK, I have no family or friends here, but through BRR I have community and assistance.”

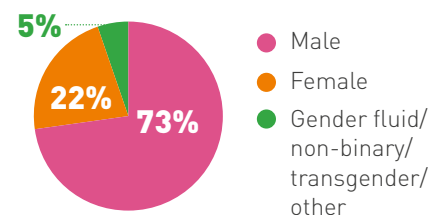
“I always leave BRR with a positive mind ... I always feel hopeful.”

Bristol Refugee Rights: Impact Summary 2022/23

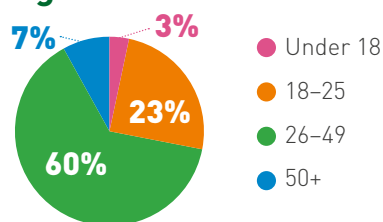
Our Members (service users)

We supported **1330 people seeking asylum and refugees**, including 701 who contacted us for the first time. They were from over 58 different countries, and they spoke at least 70 different languages.

Gender



Age



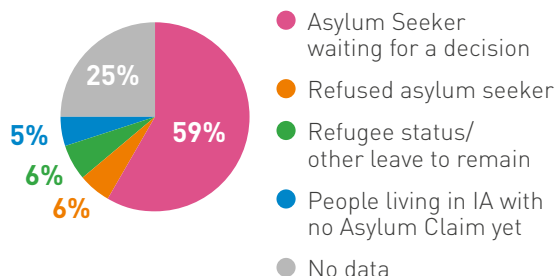
Country of Origin

Afghanistan **21%**
Iran **11%**
Iraq and Sudan **8% each**
Eritrea **6%**
Bangladesh **5%**
Pakistan, Syria **4% each**
Somalia and Albania **3% each**
Other countries or no data **27%**

Disability

3% of our members told us they have a disability

Immigration status



A day at BRR

Walking into the BRR office there is a large sign with an arrow pointing past a vibrant flower bed filled with lavender, vegetables and trees. A small group of volunteers are having a coffee together before their shift and admiring the pergola that stretches across the beds.

A member arrives who has not been here before and rings the bell, our receptionist greets them with the warmest of smiles. As someone with lived experience of the system and having worked previously as a volunteer, she knows the importance of a good welcome.

She escorts them up to the main hall. He is met by a multilingual staff member, a highly skilled interpreter who was a volunteer and now has finally got their status. He explains what will happen next. It is the last week of the Afghan group, a service delivered by Trauma Foundation South West, their first group therapy, set up in response to long waiting lists and the desperate situation for many people from Afghanistan. BRR provided the room and paid for an interpreter. "We didn't know if it would work, at first people could only talk about their own struggles but a real sense of group support has developed." our staff member tells me.

After being offered tea and a seat to wait to do an assessment, our staff member shows them around: "There is a barber, an important contribution to feeling OK can be a haircut! Or you could join in the scrabble!" After the new member interview the first priority is to fill in a Haven referral form which asks for any immediate health needs. The new member reports sleep problems, nightmares and pain in his leg from an injury.

Back at the office, recently covered in plants due to a donation; someone is photocopying for her basic literacy class. It's only a few people and lasts just 40 minutes but it's about as long as some can manage. "We aim to build confidence for people to feel OK in a classroom, this is like phonics for adults."

The advice workers are preparing for a monthly, mental health pathways meeting to help understand where people are at and if consent has been given to coordinate work.

It is so hard to distinguish between the high level of distress many of our members experience and an active safeguarding risk.

* Data throughout this report are based on our Annual Member Survey and our Database records

* You can view more content about our impact online

Staff and volunteers

“I find volunteering with BRR a very good and creative experience. The staff really listen and respond to any problems and there is mutual respect. I’m very glad to be part of such a good community.” Volunteer

“I absolutely love my time at BRR. I feel such acute support from the staff, I feel valued.” Volunteer

Our survey with our volunteers shows that:

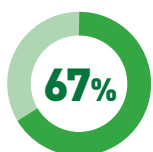
97% feel confident and effective in carrying out their role

94% found the volunteer training very useful

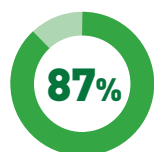
Our Survey with Staff shows that:



of staff rate BRR as a good or excellent place to work



of staff feel well supported, the other 33% feel supported in some aspects



of staff think that leadership of the organisation is excellent or good



of staff feel valued

In the past year, several changes and developments have taken place within our organisation. We implemented a restructuring, which included the creation of the Specialist Services Team, and expanded the responsibilities of the Welcome Service.

We also updated our supervision forms and processes, providing training to all Line Managing staff on the new procedures and providing good and effective supervision.

During Learning Week, with our team of volunteers, we emphasised the importance of maintaining professional boundaries, reinforcing our policies and procedures. We have also been reviewing and refreshing our approach to member participation.

Partnerships

We have supported the development of the Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seekers Partnership (BRASP) team.

The BRASP team were supported by BRR and VOSCUR to set up this ground-breaking project. They spent time with all the partners looking at the 4 pillars of the work: operational collaboration; increasing the voice of people with lived experience at all levels of the sector; infrastructure and governance; and fundraising. A lot of learning was taken from the first year and it is hoped that further substantial funding can be obtained to build on this groundwork.

Total grants for 2022/23 resulting from partnership bids / working in partnership =

£270,282

(48% of secure grants for the period)

Total grants for 2022/23 resulting from partnership bids excluding funding specifically for BRASP =

£132,829

(31% of secure grants for the period)



We have secured funding through joint response to hotels from both South Gloucestershire and North Somerset local authorities and the CCG. BRASP has been able to coordinate joint working around hotels which has significantly relieved pressure from BRR staff who might in other circumstances have been expected to step into this role.



We supported national and local campaigns (Bristol City of Sanctuary, Bristol Defend Asylum Seekers Campaign) against the Nationality and Borders Act and Rwanda flights.



We are currently working with the BRASP steering group to plan fundraising for next year. A proposal will be put forward to the Finance and Fundraising committee/Board of Trustees in November.



The BRASP Partnership away day in July explored the city wide strategic representation model. We are continuing to support this development through a Task and Finish group.

Raise our profile to influence others

To raise our profile and effectively influence others, we have taken several strategic steps:

Staff Inset Day and Priorities: In July, we organized a staff inset day to delve into our influencing priorities. Subsequently, we established a dedicated Working Group responsible for addressing these priorities and supporting the development of a comprehensive Communication Strategy. Additionally, this working group is working on formulating Social Media Guidelines to enhance our online presence.

Member Participation: As part of our ongoing review and revitalization of our member participation approach, we are actively exploring ways to better involve members in the process of setting influencing priorities. This inclusive approach will ensure that their perspectives and insights are incorporated.

Conference with Bristol City Council: In collaboration with Bristol City Council, we successfully organised a conference for professionals working with children and young people in care who are subject to immigration control. The positive feedback received from this event emphasised its significance and relevance.

Social Media Engagement: To increase our visibility and engagement, we have significantly expanded our presence on various social media platforms. We consistently share informative and relevant content through regular posts on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and WhatsApp.

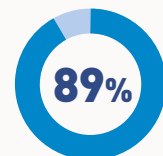
Asylum Guides and Trainings: We have actively delivered Asylum Guides briefings in four “contingency” initial accommodation hotels within the Bristol area. These briefings are available in seven languages, ensuring accessibility for a diverse range of individuals. Furthermore, we have provided Asylum support training for our partners in the region and are currently planning to extend our support to partners throughout the South West.

By implementing these initiatives, we aim to elevate our influence and make a positive impact on our target audience while addressing the needs of asylum seekers and supporting professionals working with vulnerable populations.

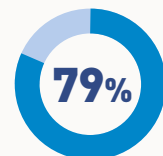
Member Survey results

Each year, Bristol Refugee Rights asks our members to complete a survey. The answers we get help us to make sure our services are the ones that people really need. It helps us report to funders and supporters on the impact we are making as an organisation. It is an opportunity for members to tell us how they are doing.

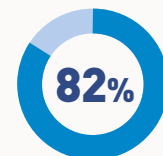
There were 83 responses received in total. This compares to a total of 1330 members that have engaged with us during 2022/23 at 6%.



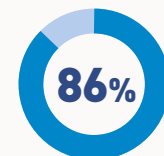
of members were satisfied with the BRR services that they received



of members got help from BRR at the time that they needed it



of members feel more connected and part of a community from attending BRR



of members feel more welcome in Bristol thanks to BRR

“The place is welcoming and [I] feel home and safe.”



Member Empowerment

Shantal first came to Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR) in 2021 seeking social connections. She had heard about BRR from other asylum seekers in the community and was drawn to the warm and welcoming environment.

Reflecting on her initial experience, Shantal shared:

“It gave me joy when I entered the Welcome Centre drop-in – seeing people gather, laughing, and playing games. There was joy on everybody’s face.”

As Shantal became more familiar with BRR, she discovered the opportunity to volunteer, which excited her. She expressed her gratitude for being able to contribute to society in her own small way. Every week, she eagerly looks forward to seeing the people at BRR. Volunteering has had a positive impact on her mental health and has provided her with valuable knowledge on how to interact with others. In particular, her role in cooking has granted her greater insight and confidence. She takes pride in preparing meals that are enjoyed by individuals from diverse cultures, and through this experience, she has also gained exposure to various global cuisines.

At the beginning of 2023, Shantal found herself at risk of homelessness. However, the Advice team at BRR stepped in to provide support and help mitigate this risk. They offered assistance through letters of support, guidance, and referrals to appropriate resources. Shantal expressed her gratitude, stating that being at BRR has given her more confidence and trust that help is available when needed. Her social network has expanded, and her overall mental well-being has improved.

Shantal harbours a passion for hair and beauty and hopes to pursue a career as a hairdresser once she obtains the right to work. In addition to her volunteering role, she is attending career coaching sessions offered by BRR. She sees these sessions as a stepping stone toward her future, enabling her to plan her next steps once she is granted Leave to Remain in the UK.

“BRR is a lifeline for me,” Shantal emphasised, acknowledging that without the support and community provided by BRR, she would have faced significant emotional challenges.

“BRR is a lifeline for me.”

BRR's impact case study

Nelson was brought to Bristol Refugee Rights by a friend, after he was moved by the Home office from a hotel in London to Bristol.

When he first came he was depressed, confused and unhappy as the Home Office were taking too long to respond to his Asylum Claim. He was looking for Advice on his claim. He also wanted an opportunity to occupy his free time, meet people and gain more experience so when it was time to get a job it would not be difficult for him.

“When I joined BRR, I met a lot of people like myself, I made friends and not long I understood how the asylum system worked and the problems asylum seekers face.”

Although Nelson used to be a shy person and found it hard to communicate with people or start a conversation, he expressed interest in volunteering and started volunteering in the kitchen. He reported that the opportunity enabled him to become confident and his interactions with both staff and members built up his confidence.

Within a few months after joining BRR, Nelson was given the Right to Remain in the UK. He was signposted to the career coach who is supporting him with his CV and looking for jobs. “The career coach is helpful and explained what a CV is about.” Nelson was also supported to apply for the Prince’s Trust grant to pay for his Security badge which cost £190. This has enabled him to find Security employment with an Agency. Nelson would not have been able to pay for his badge were it not for the grant.

Nelson feels that BRR is an important space for those seeking Asylum “BRR space offers opportunity for people to come and have a chat, the space helps us forget our worries and problems. In the hotel most people are feeling depressed, bored and desperate and need somewhere to go”

“I would have had mental health problems and been depressed if I had not been in contact with Bristol Refugee Rights. BRR is like a family – you have someone to talk to, some people just want someone to listen to them.”

Thank You

**“To me, this [BRR] is my family and friends
who make me happy and feel good all the time.”**

BRR PWB group member

We wanted to share this quote with you for 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 and the CEO who left us during the year** but who gave so much to our organisation and to whom we will be ever grateful, we may have lost colleagues but gained lifelong friends and supporters;
- **Our volunteers and trustees**, some of them, themselves refugees and asylum seekers, who give their time and humanity for free;
- **Our current and past donors and funders** who have been and continue to be generous with their funds, their trust and their support;
- **Our partner organisations** who work closely with us and share our vision.

Our 2022/23 Funders and Current Major Donors

AB Charitable • Access to Justice (Help Accessing legal Support) • Awards for All (National Lottery) • Barrow Cadbury - NLF • BBC Children in Need • BCC • Blue Thread • Jubilee Foundation • Brigstow Award • Community Justice Fund • Garfield Weston • John James Foundation • John Murray Charitable Trust • Justice Together • Leathersellers • Lloyds Foundation • Medlock Foundation • Merchant Venturers • National Lottery • Nationwide • NHS Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group • Nisbet Trust • North Somerset Council • Paul Hamlyn Foundation • People's Postcode • PHF Emergency • Quartet • Reed Foundation - Big Give • Refugee Action/ National Lottery Community Fund • SC and ME Morlands • South Glos Council • St Stephens and St Johns Church • The Blue Thread • Tudor Trust • We Sport

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

Financial Review

BRR's total income in 2022/23 was **£781,755**. This includes multi-year restricted funds for use in subsequent financial years. BRR's total expenditure in 2022/23 was **£809,234**.

Most of our funding came from trusts, foundations and Bristol City Council. £106,604 of income came from individual donations and subscriptions. We raised funds for the Welcome Project and the Early Years Project through crowdfunders and raised funds for BRASP.

A full copy of our Trustees report and further detail on 2022/23 finances can be found in our Annual Financial Statements 2022/23 which are submitted to the Charity Commission and are freely available on our website.



Grants = **£624,555**
Subscriptions and Donations = **£106,604**
Gift Aid = **£19,771**
Other charitable activities = **£10,671**
Gifts in Kind = **£9,142**
Investments = **£8,216**
Trading activities = **£1,260**
Membership fees = **£493**
Misc = **£1,043**



Staff salaries = **£580,360**
Other staff costs = **£16,733**
Office costs = **£106,633**
Fundraising = **£8,450**
Hardship payments = **£11,519**
Interpreting = **£31,314**
Grants Payable = **£30,738**
BRASP inclusion fund = **£9,452**
Governance = **£4,103**
Other admin costs = **£9,932**

How each £1 was spent

For every **£1** raised, we spent **93p** delivering services and **7p** Fundraising

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



Fundraise for us



Leave a **gift in your will**



Follow us on social media



Businesses can support us through donations and volunteering



Sign up to our free quarterly e-newsletter at: **rebrand.ly/BRRnews**

To donate or find out more about ways to support us, please visit:

www.bristolrefugeerights.org/support-us/donation/

Contact Us

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 **facebook.com/bristolrefugeerights**

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Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Registered charity no: 1126646 Registered company no: 5669208

*Throughout this report, all member names have been changed *