

**Bristol Refugee Rights**



# Impact Report

**2024/2025**



## Cyril Babeev Chair of Trustees

I'm pleased to introduce you to Bristol Refugee Rights' 2024/2025 impact report. I would like to draw your attention to some of the incredible work delivered by our staff and volunteers, and the meaningful impact that it had on the lives of people seeking safety.

Demand for our services increased, and over the last year we have supported 1,819 people, 97% saying they feel welcomed and supported by Bristol Refugee Rights and 90% saying their wellbeing has improved. These responses are particularly significant given the anti-migrant protests taking place in Bristol and across the country as I write this statement.

We have continued to prioritise Lived Experience voices in our work, a key strategic goal. 45% of the board have lived experience of the asylum system, including myself as chair, and 36% of staff and volunteers.

We have also been fortunate to have new staff and trustees join us in 2024 and 2025. I welcome them all warmly. I want to offer my thanks to Kenneth Macharia, who was our Chair of the Board from 2020 to 2023, Chloe Milloy, Caroline Jowett-Ive and Richard Nforbuh, who have stepped down as trustees. We are deeply grateful for their leadership and service.

**I would like to particularly thank our staff and volunteers for their dedication, professionalism and remarkable hard work in achieving the impacts outlined in this report. I am also deeply grateful to our CEO Danielle Johnson, the senior management team and trustees for leading the charity with great care and listening closely to staff, volunteers and member voices to shape the services we deliver.**

Like so many organisations in the refugee and asylum sector, we have faced many challenges, mostly due to the ongoing hostility towards people seeking asylum. Despite these challenges, we have continued to deliver high quality services to support refugees and asylum seekers in and around Bristol.

I would like to extend a special thank you to all our donors and funders for their continued support, making our work possible

**Cyril**, Chair of Trustees





## Danielle Johnson CEO

Bristol Refugee Rights has delivered against the 5 goals in our strategy, in a way that achieves meaningful impact, reaching the lives of many asylum seekers in Bristol and the South West. Our goals include delivering effective services, being guided by those with lived experience, influencing system change, prioritising wellbeing and working in partnership.

I am constantly impressed by the staff and volunteers who deliver work, from frontline services to influencing change, from housing advice, to supporting people in a crisis. Staff and volunteers work with dedication and compassion. Not only do I have full trust in our staff and volunteer team, but I am inspired by them daily.

What stands out to me is the incredible way we have been resilient and agile through challenges. These have included funding challenges, where some of our services no longer receive funding and we had to make the difficult decision to discontinue services, even when they're very much needed. We have had to respond to financial pressures, political policy pressures and anti-migrant riots. In the face of these things, it is remarkable but so very evident that we have still reached so many asylum seekers with vital services. In the face of financial pressures, we are now financially strong again. In the face of riots, we increase welfare checks, in the face of hostile political policies, we have maintained pressure for fair systems through our influencing work.

**It's through the words of our members, that we are reminded why we do this work and the direct impact it has on people's lives.**

"Thank you for being a light in the dark. Thank you for reminding us that we are not invisible."

We stand in solidarity,

**Danielle**, CEO





# Our Members

We are proud to call the people who use our services 'members' as a term of respect and empowerment.

This year, we supported **1,819** refugees and asylum seekers

In total, we delivered more than **18,900** instances of support

**Our Vision** is a society where refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are welcome, feel safe, live free of poverty and are able to positively build their lives. A society where everyone's rights and individuality are respected.

**Nationality** Our members come from 62 countries. They have been forced to flee their homelands because of war and civil war, discrimination, repression, political and religious persecution, hate crime, and prejudice.



**Immigration Status** All of our members have fled persecution, conflict or violence and are seeking sanctuary in the UK. They fall into three categories:

People seeking  
asylum

People with  
refugee status

Other migrants  
needing protection

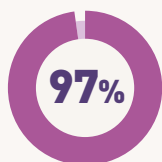
Most of our members are seeking asylum – this means they have submitted an application for refugee status and are waiting for the outcome. People seeking asylum in the UK do not have the right to rent and virtually none have the right to work. They have to rely on Home Office accommodation which is often unsuitable for their needs and unsafe. They receive only a very small amount of asylum support – £9.95 per week for those in catered accommodation like hotels (at time of writing).



# Member Survey

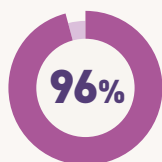
Each year we invite our members to take part in a survey to share their experiences with us. Their feedback helps us understand how well we are meeting their needs, what more we could do, and how they themselves are feeling. This ensures our services continue to be shaped by the voices of those who use them.

We use the results to shape and adapt our services, and get ahead of any developing issues.



said they feel welcomed and supported by our staff and volunteers

**"I've felt very welcomed and supported by the staff and volunteers at BRR. From my first visit, they treated me with kindness and respect. They listened to me without judgment and made sure I knew where to find help when I needed it."**



said they feel listened to at BRR

**"I feel that BRR listens to me. When I speak, staff and volunteers take the time to understand what I'm saying and respond with care. It makes me feel valued and respected."**



told us they trust the advice and information we give them

**"They explain things clearly, give accurate information, and I feel that they genuinely want to help. It gives me confidence when making decisions."**



reported feeling their wellbeing or mood was better

**"My wellbeing and mood have improved since being supported by BRR. I feel more hopeful and less alone. The help I received made a real difference in how I see my situation and my future."**



# Services for People Seeking Asylum and Refugees

1

**Strategic Goal 1:** Ensure services are impactful, accessible and designed to meet our members' needs

## Welcome Centre

Our welcome starts here. Bristol Refugee Rights' Thursday Drop-In Centre is a weekly social hub offering a warm welcome, social connection and practical support. Asylum seekers can enjoy a free hot meal prepared by a group of community chefs, join a sewing table to create or repair things, have a free haircut from the barber, get involved in arts and crafts, play games like Scrabble, and access a helpdesk for information and support.

## In 2024/2025:

- We supported **1,819** people, **809** accessing our services for the first time
- **1,207** different people attended our Drop-Ins
- **60+** people attended our Member Voice Group, where members can help shape services
- More than **350** people used BRR's WhatsApp information group to receive regular service updates, safety alerts and other important opportunities and advice
- We distributed **£3,192** in one-off hardship payments and **500** SIM Cards

"Thank you for being a light in the dark. Thank you for reminding us that we are not invisible."

"A special thank you. You read our messages, acknowledged our fears, and replied with such empathy and humanity. That alone gave us strength and comfort when we truly needed it."

"I wanted to say thank you for everything you did to help me get a bike last week. I know it didn't feel like a big thing, but now I am less isolated. You were patient with me and you listened and I want to say thank you. In my culture I would give you a kiss on your forehead."



## Outreach in Hotels

BRR's Outreach Service provides vital advice and signposting to residents of hotels (Initial Accommodation / IA), many of whom are isolated from their communities. Our Outreach Team visits the city's three IA hotels, offering information, support and a friendly connection to the wider community. This is all underpinned by a dedicated team of volunteers; without them, our delivery would be impossible.

**"You have made my day as I was feeling terrible and scared before talking to you."**

**"You spoke to me and gave me hope last week and you made me smile and happy, can you spare a few minutes to speak with me again today."**

**"Thank you for helping and preparing me for my main interview and for reminding me to make eye contact with the interviewer and tell my story. It was very helpful."**

Following consultation we identified a significant need for women's health education in hotels. Many of the women we work with have not received any formal education and subsequently have little knowledge of their own bodies, how to prevent pregnancy or access health care for female related health care issues. Many are from conservative cultures with poor records on women's rights and health care, and where they may not have access to contraception or specific women's health services. With funding from the NHS, BRR's Outreach team worked to break down these barriers by providing accessible information, bringing the service directly to the women in their own accommodation.

# 538

**different people were supported by our Hotel Outreach project**

# 51

**women and girls, aged between 14 and 58, were supported by this initiative**





## Advice Service

**566** people seeking asylum received support from Bristol Refugee Rights' Advice Service across 2024/2025.

We hold Immigration Advice Authority (IAA) accreditation to Level 2 in Asylum and Immigration Law.

Our advice team focuses on supporting our members to access their rights in the immigration system, with a focus on preventing homelessness and destitution, and empowering members to navigate these complex processes.

In 2024/2025 we supported:

**351** members who needed support accessing

asylum housing, including ensuring members who were inappropriately housed had access to safe accommodation, challenging decisions to ensure members were not forced into homelessness and making applications for homeless members to ensure they could access the accommodation they were entitled to.

**361** members to navigate the immigration system

by making sure they were able to access legal advice and knew their legal rights and were able to appeal immigration decisions, and challenge delays.

**"We are pleased to share that we recently received news from the Home Office that we will be relocated to more stable accommodation, and our situation has started to improve. The kindness you showed us, it has left a lasting mark."**

**"The prolonged uncertainty has been deeply depressing and frustrating for us but your kindness and dedication has been a beacon of hope during this difficult time. Your compassion and tireless efforts have made a profound difference in our lives, and we are forever grateful."**

**"Once again, thank you for everything you have done for us. Please know that your work is truly life-changing."**



# Advice Service

**Project CLEAR** continues holistic work with those asylum seekers facing significant barriers to support, or have other intersectional or complex vulnerabilities. We supported people to attend tribunals, Home Office interviews, securing appropriate accommodation, mental health support, immigration advice healthcare and social services support.

**Case study** Adam is threatened with honour-based violence in his home country, triggering trauma and severe mental health problems, worsened by a hate crime attack. Project CLEAR secured emergency accommodation for him as well as support for his asylum claim and physical and mental health, along with a college course he hopes will support his goal of becoming an architect.

Without BRR support **“I would have been lost. BRR has helped me a lot since I joined, from the Home Office affairs, to finding a solicitor, from my mental health to my social life.”**

## Pride Without Borders

Pride Without Borders works with especially vulnerable LGBTQ+ refugees and people seeking asylum, focused around fortnightly safe-space meetings, where people can feel welcomed, share their experiences and get support.

- **99** members were involved in the project
- **21** Successful asylum claims with PWB providing supporting evidence
- We went to court as witnesses **5** times and had 4 wins

## Safeguarding

BRR looks at how to increase members' safety and wellbeing.

- This past year we had **177** concerns for member's safety
- **49** concerns related to families
- **42** children who arrived alone, separated from their families
- **50%** of the concerns for adults related to poor mental health, exacerbated by hotel accommodation and Home Office processes

**“I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for being such an incredible support system during this ongoing asylum process. Your kindness, patience, and strength have been a light in what often feels like a difficult and uncertain journey.”** PWB member



# Experts by Experience

## 2

### **Strategic Goal 2:** Empower and work in solidarity with people with Lived Experience

Bristol Refugee Rights has a strong culture of lived experience leadership. 45% of our board have lived experience of being a refugee / asylum seeker, along with 36% of our staff and volunteers.

### Member Voice Group

Our Member Voice Group meets monthly so refugees and asylum seekers can shape services, policies and practice. We have also recently established a lived experience staff group to strengthen their voice in the organisation. Members of our senior team undertook in depth anti-racism training and staff members with lived experience were offered coaching and mentoring to support them in their careers.

These are all parts of our plan for a radical power shift where we aim to be more led by 'Experts by Experience' with the skills to shape the organisation.

**Case study** This past year BRR redesigned our member engagement strategy. After consultation with members, the Member Voice Group relaunched, with the ambition to have a more diverse group.

The MVG was restructured to ensure it's accessible to members and we developed a volunteer role to increase inclusion from the wider membership. We offer incentives for attendance, such as training opportunities and we have new systems to communicate feedback and actions.

The MVG has already contributed to:

- Designing the member survey, making the questions clear and more relevant
- Supporting the campaign for free bus tickets for asylum seekers – MVG members met local MPs and First Bus to state the case
- Helping BRR to decide funding priorities
- Supporting service delivery changes – e.g. a confidential space in the hall on Thursdays, changed breakfast menu and more support for English language development



# Organisational Wellbeing

## 3

**Strategic Goal 3:** Be sustainable and invest in the wellbeing and resilience of our people and organisation

## Staff at BRR

2024/2025 was difficult for our staff team as we closed a number of services due to lack of funding. 7 roles were made redundant. People worked hard to support each other, showing strong resilience, staff wellbeing was recognised as a priority. Our staff survey was carried out as we consolidated into our new service pattern.

- **100%** of staff said BRR was a good or excellent place to work
- **100%** said they enjoyed their job
- **92%** said they felt valued

We advertised 4 vacancies, half offered to people with lived experience. Working closely with the Refugee Council led to us reviewing our recruitment practices to ensure they're truly inclusive. We are committed to being an anti-racist organisation.

We are working closely with our BRASP partners to share learning and best practice.

## BRR Volunteers

We are deeply grateful to our dedicated volunteers, whose contributions remain central to our work. **132 volunteers**, 36% of them members, gave an extraordinary **22,000 hours** of their time.

Despite many challenges, our volunteer team remains resilient. They consistently express fulfilment and connection through their roles. Their passion and commitment continue to help shape a strong, compassionate community and lasting positive impact.

**"It's a highlight of my fortnight to be with amazingly strong and brilliant people, our members and volunteers are such an outstanding community of kind hearted folk."** Volunteer

**"I volunteer for BRR because they helped me so much and now God gives me the strength to help others. I am happy to be here because it's a place where I feel relaxed, I have met others in the same situation as me, and I have improved my English by speaking to others."** Member Volunteer



# Partnerships

## 4

**Strategic Goal 4:** Use partnerships to increase impact and resilience

Partnerships lead to more holistic, city and region-wide support for refugees and people seeking asylum. They also help eliminate duplication while ensuring people have plenty of opportunities to find the services they need, when they need them.

Bristol Refugee Rights is proud of our work within BRASP (Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership), a coalition of 15 organisations working in the sector, and we host BRASP's staff.

This was critical during August 2024 when anti-refugee violence broke out in Bristol and BRASP partners were able to coordinate responses to ensure the safety of people seeking asylum and refugees in the city.

Across the past year, the partnership finished its strategic plan for 2024–27, with significant progress on goals around:

- Service coordination
- Lived experience leadership
- Shared campaigns and partnership development
- Sharing resources and training

Bristol Refugee Rights maintains a strong partnership with Bristol City Council and we continue to be proud members of Bristol Migrant Forum.

We are part of the South West Immigration Alliance (SWIA); a collection of partners focused on immigration advice, coordinated by Bristol Law Centre, enabling us to work collaboratively on legal support and advice for our members.





# Action for Change



## **Strategic Goal 5:** Raise our profile to influence others

Bristol Refugee Rights recognises the need to shift public opinion, influence official bodies and campaign for the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants with insecure immigration status.

We are uniquely placed through our member engagement work, trusted relationships with members and our knowledge of their experiences, to have a powerful voice in influencing work. Lived Experience is central to our approach to influencing, our priorities shaped by members and our involvement in campaigns focused on facilitating opportunities for members to speak directly to those in power.

In 2024/2025, we took part in a national Take Your MP to work campaign to highlight the challenges experienced by our members trying to access legal aid. Working in partnership with Bristol Law Centre, our members spoke directly to a local MP, sharing the impact the lack of access to legal aid had on them.

We also worked closely with the Public Law Project on their legal challenge around the legal aid desert in the South West. We provided data and supported members to give direct testimony in the PLP's legal challenge.

Our Pride Without Borders project has been campaigning for safety in asylum accommodation for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

We set up a partnership with key stakeholders including MPs, local council officials, charities and mental health services

We meet with the Home Office in order to advocate for safer systems and policies

We also delivered training to voluntary sector partners on working with LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, co-designed and co-delivered by our service users

Bristol Refugee Rights also contributes to advice, training and collaboration with local authorities to support asylum seekers and child migrants in care.

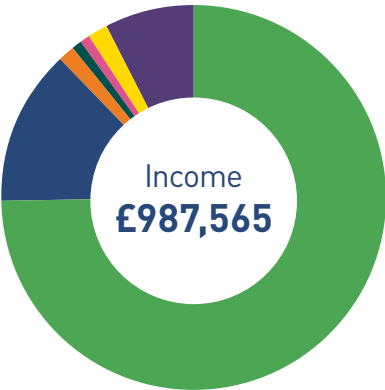


# Finance

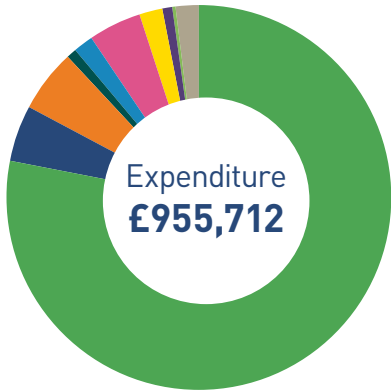
In 2024/2025 BRR experienced financial stress. Of a fundraising target of £550K, we raised £385K and we had to close some services as a result.

Our accounts show we brought in income of **£987,565**, but a proportion was for the following year (restricted funds we couldn't spend in-year). Our expenditure was **£955,712** (including BRASP, which we host). We ended the year with a deficit of £45,808.

A large part of our funding came from trusts, foundations, Bristol City Council and the generous support of many individual donors. All our income has been vital in ensuring we continue to be here for our members, so we thank all donors and funders for supporting us. A full copy of our accounts for the year are on our website and the Charity Commission website.



Grants	<b>£797,222</b>
Subscriptions & Donations	<b>£140,726</b>
Gift Aid	<b>£13,130</b>
Gifts in Kind	<b>£10,700</b>
Membership Fees	<b>£514</b>
Charitable Activities	<b>£7,390</b>
Trading Activities	<b>£1,464</b>
Investments	<b>£16,419</b>
Funds transferred between years for multi-year projects	<b>£78,711</b>



Staff Salaries	<b>£710,176</b>
Computer & Internet	<b>£43,370</b>
Office Costs	<b>£48,395</b>
Fundraising	<b>£5,704</b>
Hardship Payments	<b>£15,256</b>
Interpreting	<b>£40,672</b>
Grants Payable	<b>£18,860</b>
Welcome Centre Meals	<b>£6,206</b>
Governance	<b>£4,137</b>
Training & Trauma support	<b>£15,787</b>

For every pound we earn, 88p is spent on direct support for people seeking asylum & refugees



# Thank You

**We are humbled by the support we receive from people who give regularly and generously, as well as those who make one-off donations or run fundraising events for us - running marathons, hosting birthdays parties, dinners and other fundraising events.**

The funding organisations that support us range in size from small to very large and their grants, whatever the amount, are a very real and generous commitment to caring for refugees and people seeking asylum.

To everyone who has enabled Bristol Refugee Rights to do our work, a huge Thank You, from us and the refugees and asylum seekers we support.

More than 100 people volunteer for Bristol Refugee Rights; without them we couldn't do our work. People who help refugees feel welcome at our drop-in, cook delicious and healthy meals, provide games and arts and crafts activities, help with translation and English language support, or support people with their immigration cases. Volunteers support our Pride Without Borders project, others work behind the scenes sorting out admin and helping with communications and fundraising. To all of you, a very big Thank You!

A special thanks also goes out to our Welcome Centre arts table, whose work illustrates the covers and decorates the pages of this Impact Report.





# Support Bristol Refugee Rights

We need your support to deliver essential services for refugees and asylum seekers in our community.

You can support us in a variety of ways:



Make a donation online



Set up a regular monthly donation by Direct Debit



Fundraise for us



Leave a gift in your will



Your business can support us through donations, fundraising and volunteering



Sign up to our free quarterly newsletter or follow us on social media

For more information about how you can support us, email [info@bristolrefugeerights.org](mailto:info@bristolrefugeerights.org)

Thank you to our wonderful supporters – we couldn't do the work we do without you.

## Contact Us

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



Call our helpline – 07526 352 353  
(Mondays & Tuesdays 10am–1pm)



[info@bristolrefugeerights.org](mailto:info@bristolrefugeerights.org)



[bristolrefugeerights.org](http://bristolrefugeerights.org)



[facebook.com/bristolrefugeerights](https://facebook.com/bristolrefugeerights)



[bristolrefugeerights](https://www.instagram.com/bristolrefugeerights)



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**

Registered charity no: 1126646 Registered company no: 5669208