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Newsletter Spring 2026

Bristol Refugee Rights
Safety • Solidarity • Action for Change



Spring at Bristol Refugee Rights

Hello and welcome to our Spring Newsletter! We'd like to start by saying thank you to our wonderful supporters, volunteers, partners and funders - your solidarity is what makes everything in this newsletter possible.

In this newsletter, you'll see updates from our teams who, in the face of new and hostile immigration policies, continue to offer a warm welcome alongside advice and information to empower people seeking asylum to understand and access their rights. You'll also read a story from one of our Pride Without Borders members, and about our inspiring Great Bristol half marathon and 10k runners.

We hope you can take a moment to make a cup of tea and read all about the activities that you help make possible.



20 years of Welcome

This year it's 20 years since we opened our Welcome Centre! In 2006, a group of Bristolians realised there was nowhere for refugees and people seeking asylum in Bristol to access support and information when they arrived in the city, and so they set up our Welcome Centre. Since then, it has become a bustling community hub - we open our doors twice a week for more than 1,000 people seeking asylum a year. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered, fundraised, supported and partnered with us over the last 20 years - we wouldn't have reached this milestone without you!



Musa's story

When we met Musa he was struggling with depression and trauma symptoms. He had escaped persecution in Nigeria, but some of his friends had not been so lucky. In Bristol, he felt alone and unsure who he could trust.



When Musa joined our Pride Without Borders project, it quickly became clear that underneath the trauma and the learned caution was a big personality with a lot to give. He was a big support to other members in the group, and when he was finally granted refugee status, he bought us a pizza with the last ten pounds in his bank account.

Musa moved to London and recently came back to see us with his boyfriend. It was a delight to hear that he has found a job as a trainee social worker and is supporting asylum seeking children. His experience at the sharp end of the UK's asylum system means he can understand and champion these young people.

Welcome Team: Offering a warm welcome, delicious food and essential support

Our talented volunteer chefs and kitchen team at our Welcome Centre have been preparing nutritious community meals for our members. You can see last week's delicious lunch pictured. During Ramadan, those who observed could take these meals away to break fast at Iftar.



Members, staff and volunteers came together to celebrate throughout this period - in collaboration with partner organisations, we brought together 150 people for an Iftar celebration and 120 for a joyful Eid celebration.

Advice and Outreach: supporting people to access their rights

Our Advice Team continues to offer a weekly advice drop-in, casework for those with the most complex cases and second-tier advice for other professionals supporting refugees and people seeking asylum, whilst our Outreach Team offers essential support to those living in hotels and the community. Thanks to your support, our Advice Team has reached 660 people and our Outreach team another 445 in the last year.



We have the largest group of volunteers supporting the Advice Team that we've had in a long time. In total, they give the equivalent of at least 2 full time members of staff each week in additional capacity. We couldn't deliver our work without them!

The policy context continues to be extremely challenging, with further changes which will make navigating immigration systems and preventing destitution even harder for refugees and people seeking asylum. We are challenging these changes by responding to government consultations, meeting with local MPs and developing partnerships with other local and national organisations to raise our voices collectively against these changes.

Our Outreach Team has worked closely with residents at a Bristol Initial Accommodation hotel whilst it closed down. We have been signposting, transferring care plans and advocating for people to be moved to suitable accommodation. We have also been delivering workshops to asylum seekers living in other hotels in Bristol - these will initially focus on norms and culture in the UK, work readiness, health systems and any other topics that emerge.

We have secured funding over the next three years to work closely with Bristol Law Centre to develop our IAA (regulated immigration advice) offer. This aims to give more people access to regulated immigration advice. This need is greater than ever as the legal aid crisis continues to deepen and more and more people seeking asylum are forced to go through their asylum claim without access to a solicitor or any specialist immigration advice.

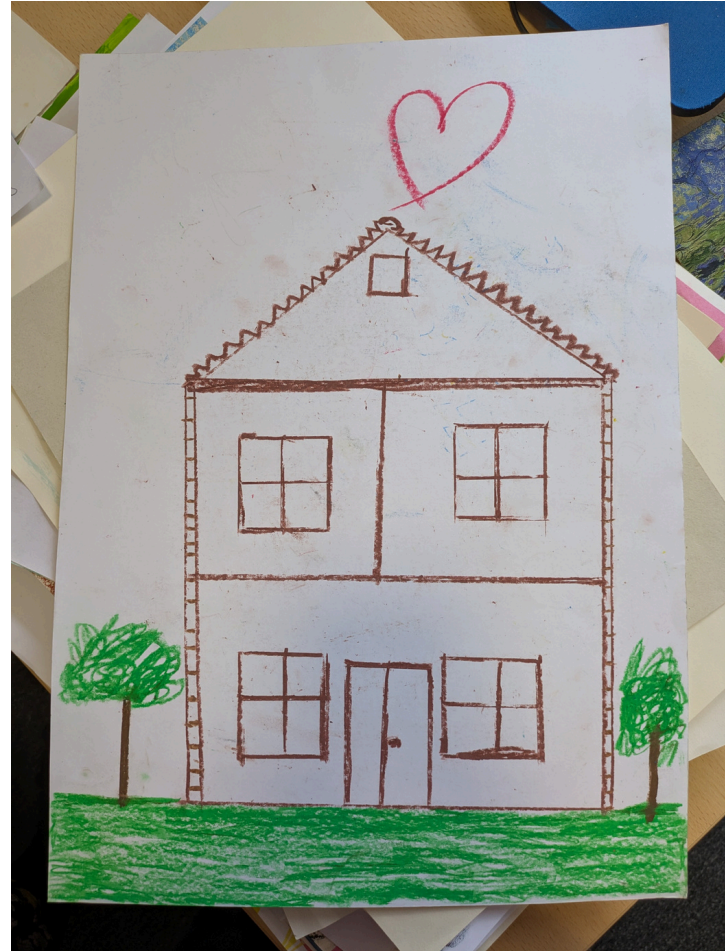


Campaigning to improve housing for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers

Alongside a social support group and specialist advice, our Pride Without Borders (PWB) project has been working to improve housing for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

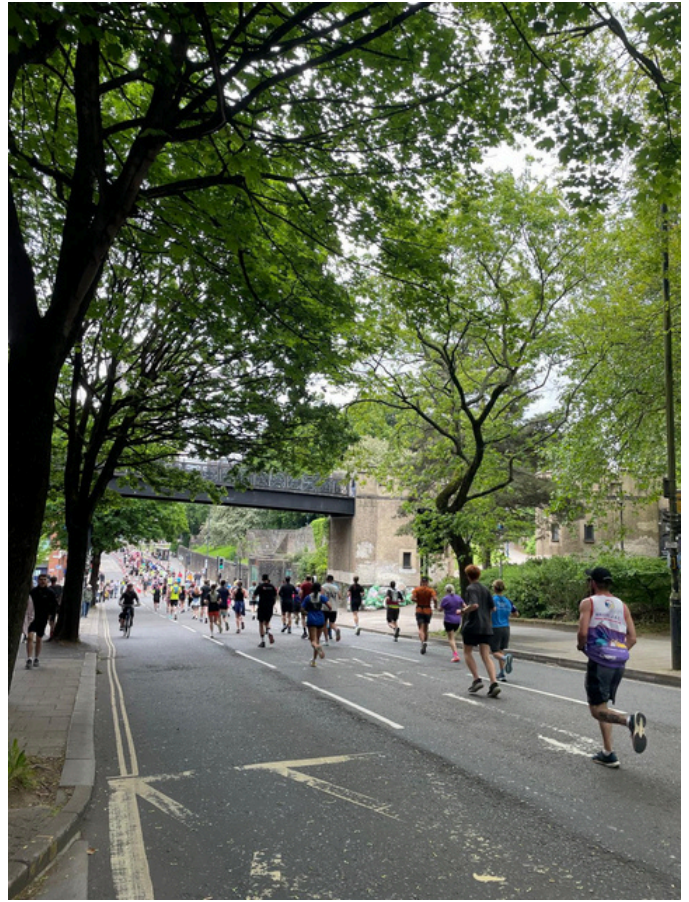
In March, we co-organised a public event about housing for asylum seekers at M-Shed. The event included an exhibition of hotel residents taking photos of their life experiences in Bristol (organised by Bristol Mind). During the event, our anonymised video case studies of experiences of hate crime in asylum support housing were played on loop, and our PWB Co-ordinator and a member of PWB spoke in a panel talk alongside SARI, Bristol Mind and Carla Denyer MP about hate crime and housing.

After several years of campaigning on this issue, the coalition that Pride Without Borders initiated met the Border Security and Asylum Minister Alex Norris to talk directly about the lack of safety for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers in asylum support accommodation and the total lack of provision for transgender people. This went well, and a second meeting has been scheduled.



Fundraising spotlight: Great Bristol Runners

This year we entered a team into the Great Bristol Run for the first time. Our team of half marathon and 10k runners raised an amazing £2,521! This is double the amount we hoped to raise and will support people seeking asylum to feel welcome, overcome complex challenges and rebuild their lives in Bristol. Thank you so much to our runners and to everyone who donated! If you are interested in finding out about future running and challenge events for Bristol Refugee Rights, please register your interest [here](#).



Best wishes,
The Bristol Refugee Rights Team

**If you would like to get involved or support our work, please
click [here](#).**