

ANNUAL REPORT



bristol hospitality network

solidarity · equality · mutual empowerment
hospitality · integrity · creative resistance



APRIL 2020 -
MARCH 2021

www.bhn.org.uk



In solidarity with asylum seekers
experiencing destitution



GROWTH AND CHALLENGES



Sarah Webb
Chair of
trustees

We are so proud that Bristol Hospitality Network has done incredibly well during an extraordinarily difficult year in which we faced the Covid pandemic head on. We are a small charity, but with dedicated staff and generous supporters we have continued to offer destitute asylum seekers a home as well as additional support throughout the year. It was a great testament to our wonderful Bristol community that a number of the public stepped up during Covid to offer a room and a home to destitute asylum seekers.

We value our wonderful Board of Trustees and this year welcome very able new trustees. We are open to considering more, especially those with lived experience.

As we move into 2021 we hope to re-open as many of our services as possible, according to our members' needs: as we emerge from the pandemic, it is more important than ever that we honour our values of *hospitality, solidarity, equality, mutual empowerment, integrity and creative resistance*, which must all be shaped by their needs - a new BHN Equity, Diversity and Inclusion group will be working on this.

BHN's members have faced many hardships over this last year, compounding their already precarious situations as destitute asylum seekers living in the UK. Due to COVID19, a number of asylum seekers became street homeless, and even those accommodated by BHN had to be moved around as hosts and friends self-isolated. Income stopped overnight, which simultaneously made the purchase of food and bare essentials very difficult. Language and cultural barriers, alongside tech poverty, made accessing services very challenging. Asylum claims slowed to a standstill for some and, coupled with the isolation and loneliness of social distancing and various lockdowns, mental health difficulties soared. This is the context within which BHN has been working, and we are so glad as a team to have been there to meet both the new and exacerbated needs of our members over the past year, working as a community to get through it together.

I am so immensely proud of our members, staff, trustees, hosts and volunteers for connecting and supporting each other. As we look to the future, I feel we will all, as a community, meet every challenge head on, led by our vision to work in solidarity with people seeking asylum and experiencing destitution.



Lizzie Briggs
Director
(Maternity
Cover)



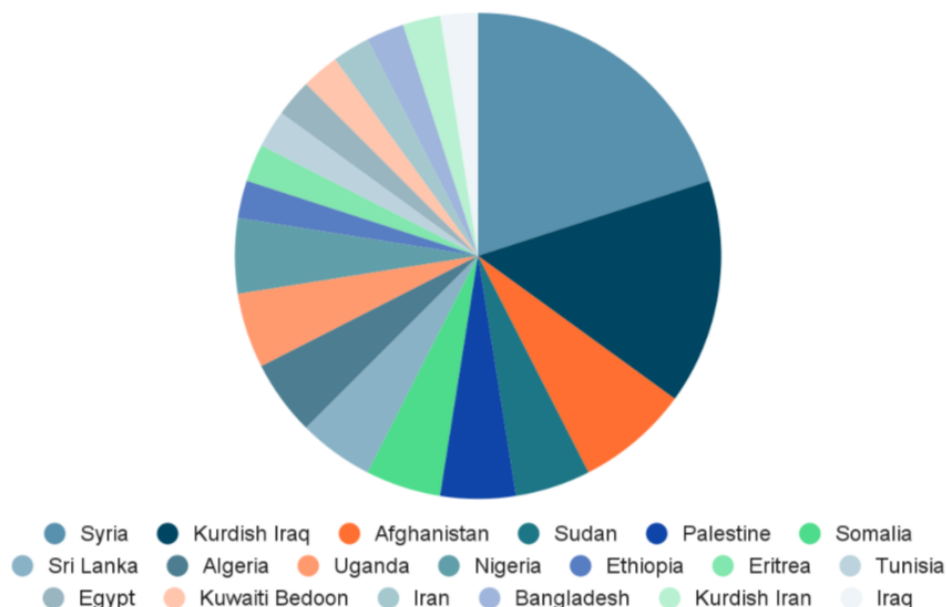
hosting network

Through the host network and Men's house we hosted 40 members last year, providing 9,491 nights of accommodation!

We welcomed hosted members from 20 countries of origin.

We launched our Host Expansion Project in conjunction with Bristol City Council and the Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees on 5th August 2020, covered by BBC Points West and various other local and national news outlets. Amazingly, ten new households came forward happy to host an asylum seeker housed by the council under the Government's 'Everyone In' campaign. BHN members stayed in 24 different host households (family homes), 1 collegiate accommodation (Trinity College) and 1 supported accommodation for young people (The Foyer). We recruited 9 new Host households during the year. We ended the year with three members on our waiting list in council-funded hotels and many more on our general waiting list.

Thank you to everyone who continued to host members and to all those new hosts who so generously opened their homes during a global pandemic!



Mortada - a BHN Member Story

I moved to the Bristol City Council hostel in the first lockdown and I was there for six months. Whilst I had a roof over my head which I am grateful for, the place was hard as there were people with different mentality. The first few days when people don't know you it is fine, but as you get to know each other it becomes really difficult. I moved from the hostel into a BHN host home in October 2020 and the family is very generous and good to me and it was a really good experience!



BHN Men's house

We have hosted a total of 14 members at our men's house this year, with seven moving out, ending the year with two spare rooms for new members (which are being fixed up and redecorated). Some went to friends, others to a new host home and some onto Home Office accommodation. We are very grateful to the Barrow Cadbury Trust for allocating £2,820 of their £30k grant to much needed items for the house, including a new sofa, dining table and stove. It gave our members a much-needed but unexpected boost part way through the year!

A huge thanks to James, Susan and Graham for keeping the house running so well and looking after the members.

HELP team



Our 5 Help Team volunteers (David, Georgina, Tom, Jeff and Beryl) are amazing! Despite not having any of the human contact, shared meals, laughter and games which are the fun parts of what we do, all of them stayed with us through this often tedious year of weekly zoom meetings and remote work with members.

Covid caused a huge crisis in homelessness, and we were lucky to have such great partners in Bristol City Council, the Red Cross and Bristol Refugee Rights. The Council accommodated around 40 homeless people seeking protection as part of 'Everyone In', and we all worked together to make sure we could establish their asylum status, work out what needed to be done next, and identify any accommodation options. We focussed on 'meeting' those people who came onto our waiting list as soon as possible, so we could start to assist with their asylum claims and make as much progress as possible whilst they were still accommodated.

Over the year we worked with 44 people, mostly on

- helping people to understand asylum processes and find evidence for their claims
- finding and liaising with solicitors
- helping manage remote calls with medical/ legal professionals
- access to healthcare and mental health support
- negotiating NHS fees and payments
- applying for Home Office accommodation once their fresh asylum claim had been made.

Ali had witnessed horrific violence in his home country. His mental health and memory were very badly affected and he'd been unable to engage with legal advice and keeping the numerous appointments required, which resulted in him being destitute and his asylum claim refused. After he was hosted in a safe and supportive place we were able to assist him with taking him to appointments, regular phone calls, and liaising with his medical and legal advisers. He's now made a new asylum claim and knows that people he trusts are there to help him.

welcome centre



We closed our Monday Welcome Centre on 23rd March 2020. To keep supporting our members, we set up welfare calls with our accommodated members on a weekly basis, also regularly calling their hosts. We increased our Solidarity Fund from £10 to £20 per week, with volunteers delivering payments weekly to our accommodated members. We facilitated food parcels throughout the year for those who needed it most, working with Aid Box Community, FareShare, Community Care Package, Baraka Café and 91 Ways. We worked with the refugee and asylum sector to get smartphones and tablets to members who needed them for communication.



We delivered a six week 1:1 ESOL course online and, alongside Bristol language school 'International House', we facilitated eight members to register for English classes with the option to take a GCSE and a further 9 people to do basic ESOL with Trinity College. We also connected members with Wesport (sport coaching), City of Bristol College (chef, sewing), WEA (teaching assistant) and Campaigning Bootcamp.



volunteers

Due to the reduction in services, we have relied on a small group of seven volunteers over the past year (not including the Help Team volunteers and trustees), but what an amazing job they have done. Most have delivered Solidarity Fund payments either on a weekly or monthly basis to our members, having a quick chat and checking in on their welfare where possible. Mark, a new volunteer to BHN, delivered all of our Christmas boxes and, alongside his mum, made up a few extra when we were short. Two other volunteers have been instrumental in facilitating truly transformative change for two of our members. One has been suffering terrible back pain, with support from a volunteer they now have a diagnosis and medication to ease it. The other member has been really struggling with PTSD, but has connected with our volunteer and is now moving forward with their asylum claim and feeling much less lonely as a result.

We would not be BHN without our volunteers.



A BIG thank you to all our volunteers

Staffing

As our services shifted so too did our staff focus. Helen Kidan, who was primarily brought on to develop member participation and leadership has been partly seconded to support our Hosting Manager Laura Chester and BHN's accommodation provision. She has worked tirelessly to ascertain member need and facilitate opportunities for them during the pandemic, and BHN want to extend a huge thank you to her for her flexibility during this time.

We also said goodbye to Clare Peacock (Volunteer Coordinator) in December 2020, who was working three part-time jobs but is now focusing on her roles at Bristol Refugee Rights and Brigstowe. A massive thank you to Clare for all she added to the BHN family during her time with us.



Complaint

BHN received a complaint from an ex member which we took very seriously, appointing independent advisors and investigators to look into our affairs. Most aspects of the complaint were not upheld by the independent investigator, but it was found that there had been some blurring of boundaries with the Christian religion. We are now working hard to create better clarity that BHN is not a religiously affiliated organisation, and to ensure inclusivity is fully embedded in all of our service delivery. Members should lead all we do, their voice must be paramount in how we deliver services – we need to do even better on this next year. We welcome any feedback, comments or suggestions info@bhn.org.uk

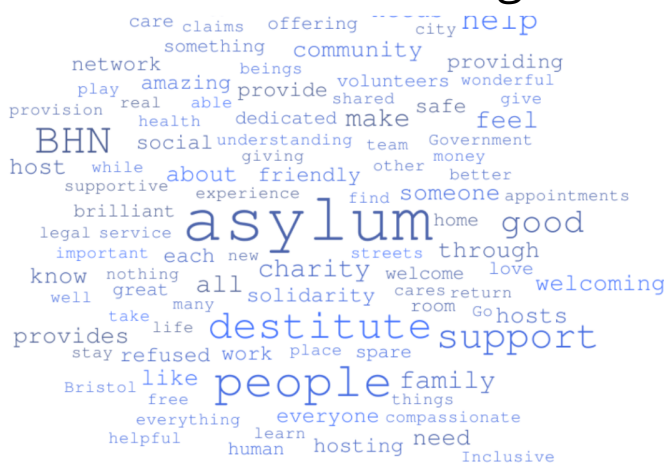


annual survey

We conduct an annual survey to get the views of BHN staff, volunteers, members and supporters.

We were so pleased to receive 60 responses, twice the number from the previous year, most respondents were members and hosts. Hosting and the Help team were the most appreciated services. There were some comments reflecting an incorrect impression that BHN is a Christian charity, something we are committed to clarifying through the actions we are taking to respond to the complaint we received last year from an ex-member of BHN.

The feedback from respondents has helped to guide our priorities for the year. You told us to listen more to members and increase diversity. In response, we are setting up an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion group and plan to increase staff resource to support member involvement in the organisation. You also asked for more support for hosts and in response we set up a mentoring scheme and are working on improving our hosting policies and resourcing the hosting network.



How would you describe BHN to a friend?



finances & funding 2019-20

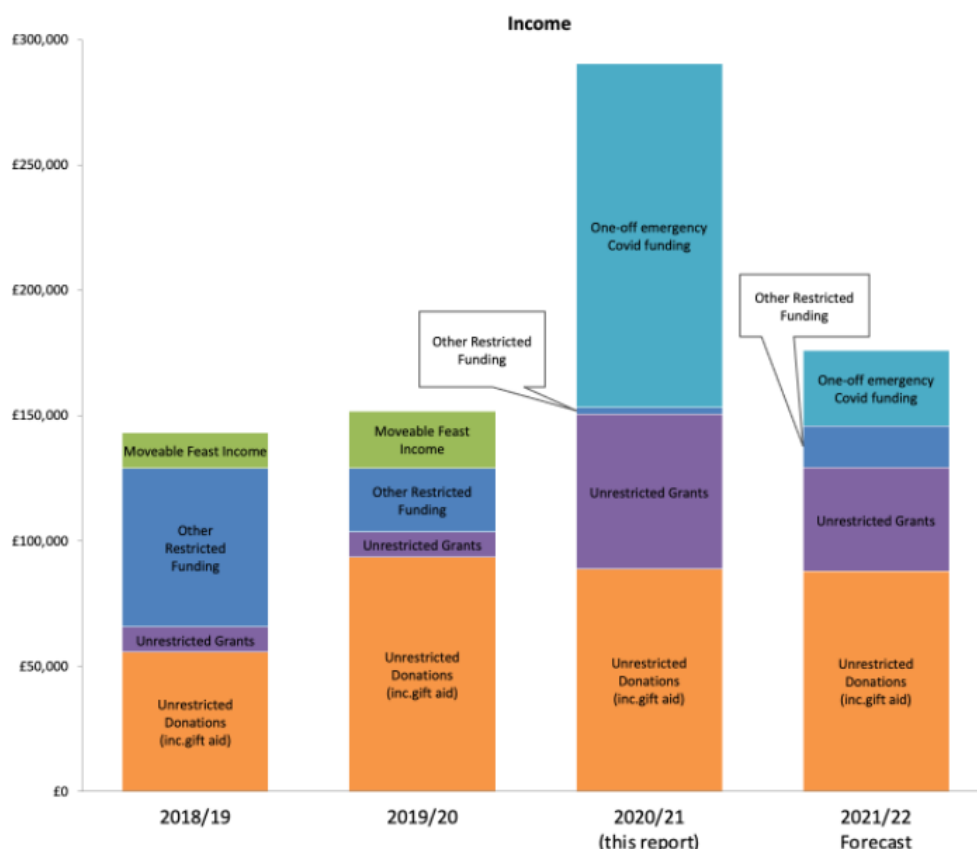
Our income for the year to March 2021 was £291,000. This included £137,000 of one-off emergency funding for our Covid-19 response. This one-off boost to income has helped to secure the activities of BHN for our members for the year ahead, as funding becomes more challenging post-Covid.

We had no income from Moveable Feast as we couldn't trade during Covid (£23,000 in previous year).

Around 60% of our normal income comes from individuals and groups who give generously through regular monthly donations and one-off donations in response to appeals.

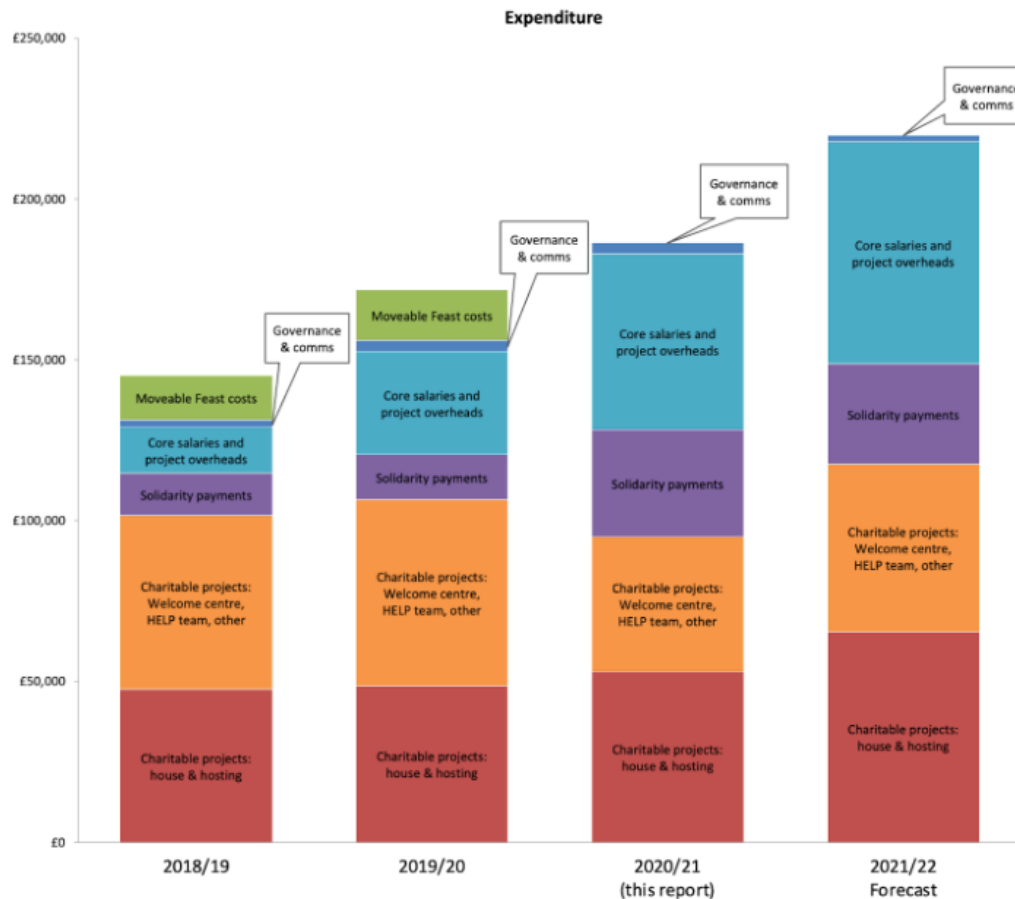
Our expenditure for the year to March 2021 was £186,000; 98% was spent on charitable activity. This included a significant increase in solidarity payments, in response to Covid-19. Our total costs increased by 9%.

We ended the year with a surplus of £104,000 which gives us a headstart on funding 2021, as we expect a significant £115,000 drop in income and a £40,000 increase in costs.





finances & funding 2020-21



A huge thank you to The Burden Trust, The Big Give, The Barrow Cadbury Trust, Bristol City Council, Crisis UK, The Leathersellers' Company, Lloyds Bank Foundation, NACCOM, One Percent Scheme, Quartet Community Foundation, Swire Charitable Trust, and to our many individual donors, particularly those who donate regularly.

Many thanks are also due to our wonderful team of volunteers.
We are so grateful for your invaluable support.

Trustees: Sarah Webb (Co-Chair), Steve Watters (Co-Chair), Oona Goldsworthy, Leila Nicholas (Secretary) Laura Barrow (Treasurer), George Perry, Rachel Short



REGISTERED CHARITY #1138498



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