

ANNUAL REPORT



bristol hospitality network

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

APRIL 2021 -
MARCH 2022

www.bhn.org.uk



In solidarity with asylum seekers
experiencing destitution



GROWTH AND CHALLENGES



Sarah Webb
- Chair of
Trustees

"Bristol Hospitality Network has gone from strength to strength over more than a decade, and most amazingly, through a global pandemic. The strength of BHN is thanks not only to our hard-working staff, volunteers and trustees, but also the incredible resilience of our members - destitute asylum seekers who have kept on going, in a country where the government is actively hostile, but with BHN, they are welcomed as "family".

It has been a privilege to Chair BHN for another year, during which I've enjoyed a strong working relationship with our excellent Director Rachael, and supported by a great team of trustees.

This year we have made ED&I - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion- a key priority within BHN. We have already made great progress, with the recruitment of three trustees with lived experience, and the setting up of an advisory Board to hear the views of our members. It is an ambitious target to be member-led within the next few years, but a welcome and necessary one.

Recently we have added to our existing values of Solidarity; Equity; Mutual Empowerment; Hospitality; Integrity and Creative Resistance, a key additional value of Anti-Oppression: recognising the structural oppression in society and working together to raise the power of our members. You can find more about this at <https://www.bhn.org.uk/our-story>.

Sadly, I will be stepping down after four years as a trustee, making way for an excellent new Chair in James Collett. A strong and heartfelt Thank You to our brilliant members, volunteers, staff, hosts, trustees and supporters."

"I continue to be honoured to lead an organisation of such resilience, solidarity and compassion, not to mention the fun we have together! BHN continues to be a wonderful family for our members from all over the world and to grow and develop in depth and quality. The pandemic has taught us how precious our time together is and we have really valued returning to our welcome centre this year and eating together once again.

Read on in this report to find out about the developments with our Help Team, Hosting Network and House, Welcome Centre changes and the work of our wonderful volunteers and staff. It's exciting times for BHN as we develop and grow together with our members.

BHN has always had a value of Equality but this year we have developed our work around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and you can read more about that in the EDI section of this report. It's exciting stuff and we're all really committed to the journey. BHN will be led by our members so watch this space to see what develops through this process in the coming years."



Rachael Bee
- Director

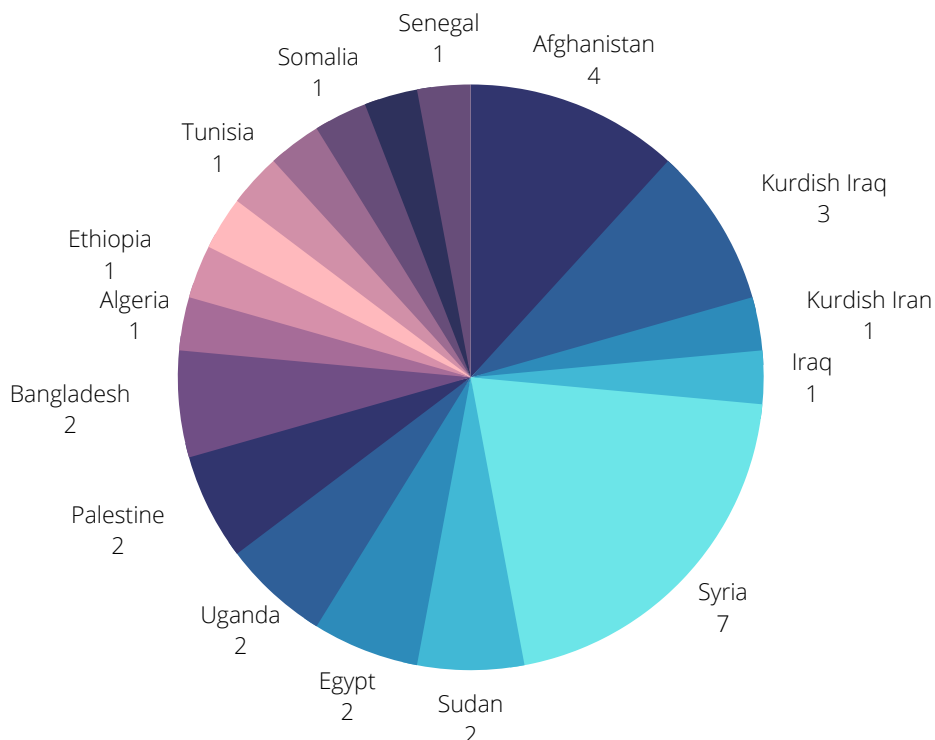


We acomodated 34 members in our Host Network and Men's House, providing 8,202 nights of accommodation. We welcomed hosted members from 18 countries of origin.

The Afghan crisis markedly increased the number of Afghans we supported this year, both due to increased asylum seekers and current seekers who can't return. Thankfully, two out of the four Afghans we hosted this year have received their Leave-to-Remain, and we fully expect the remaining Afghan members to receive this status soon.

The high number of Syrians we accommodate reflects a struggle to prove their nationality, which is a common problem for the wider BHN member community.

Thank you to the 21 households who continued to host members this year. Your support is life-changing to asylum seekers needing a safe place to live.



HOST NETWORK STORY

BHN hosted A from Bangladesh during this last year. She was initially in emergency hotel accommodation, being moved to a different hotel every week as she waited for the Home Office to respond to her application. This was understandably very stressful and debilitating for someone with PTSD. A says *"In the hotel through the winter, I couldn't cook or even warm up my food. There was nowhere to wash my clothes. Every Friday morning I packed my bags and waited to be moved again. I was very distressed and not sleeping at all. BHN hosted me with a very kind family who welcomed me into their home. They have supported me with my studies and cooked for me and made me laugh when I thought I couldn't. Being hosted has made a huge difference to my life"*.



MEN'S HOUSE STORY

BHN hosted D from Syria in our men's house during this last year. D was supported to submit a fresh asylum claim and is now in Home Office accommodation while his claim is being assessed. He stays in touch regularly and tells us that he really misses the men's house because he felt so safe and relaxed there. He had support and company when he wanted it, joined in with shared chores and responsibilities, but had the freedom to come and go and to live his life in Bristol as a young man.

Of the 34 guests we accommodated during this year:

- **Three have got their Leave-to-Remain**
- **15 have submitted a fresh claim and received Home Office support (or are waiting for it to be provided)**
- **Seven have moved on to friends (including 2 marriages)**
- **Nine are still hosted with us.**

HELP TEAM



HELP Team Volunteers

A huge thank you to our seven HELP Team volunteers, David, Georgina, Tom, Jeff, Beryl, Pete and Lex, the latter of which joined us at the beginning of 2022.

The team are rightly proud of having provided a sustainable and sustained service throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and of being a point of consistent support for asylum seekers during this time. We have seen how this has helped maintain people's mental health, as well as to progress their asylum claims and have their rights recognised.

Casework

Over the year we worked with 62 different people, compared to 44 people in the previous financial year. We carried out 182 face-to-face meetings, phone and video calls. Most of the casework involved helping people to understand asylum processes and their own cases, to find evidence for their claims, and liaising with their solicitors. We also helped asylum seekers access healthcare, prescriptions and mental health support, negotiating NHS fees and debts on their behalf and applied for Home Office accommodation.

It's key for the recovery of people with very poor mental and / or physical health that they can continue to live near their support networks. For more than half of the people we assisted with these applications to the Home Office, we provided evidence and advocacy to show that local accommodation was essential, and all of these were successful. This is something we as a team (and BHN as a whole) are very proud of.

We continued to work with Bristol City Council, identifying the status and rights of people originally accommodated under 'Everyone In', and advising them of their options.

Training, systems and standards

We began working on our new database and case recording system, which will be more robust, more user-friendly and more reliable than our current systems. Volunteers and staff benefitted from valuable training from the Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) and Refugee Action's Frontline Immigration Advice Project, who have assisted us with working towards our planned OISC registration in 2022-23.

WELCOME CENTRE



We re-opened our Welcome Centre in May 2021, restricting it to 40 of our hosted members and volunteers. We met in the Family Centre garden and shared samosas from local restaurant Jeevans. We then started having hot lunches from September 2021, and we have since served 1,600 people. We have gradually expanded the number of people at the Welcome Centre and currently have an upper limit of 90 people. The Home Office has also started using Bristol hotels to house asylum seekers who have newly arrived or are awaiting decisions. We have thankfully been able welcome these individuals at our drop-in for socialising, volunteering and English classes.

From April 2018 to March 2019



VOLUNTEERS

A big **thank you** to all our volunteers who have done an amazing job in supporting our members during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your help opening the Welcome Centre drop-in has also been invaluable and made a real difference to our asylum seekers.

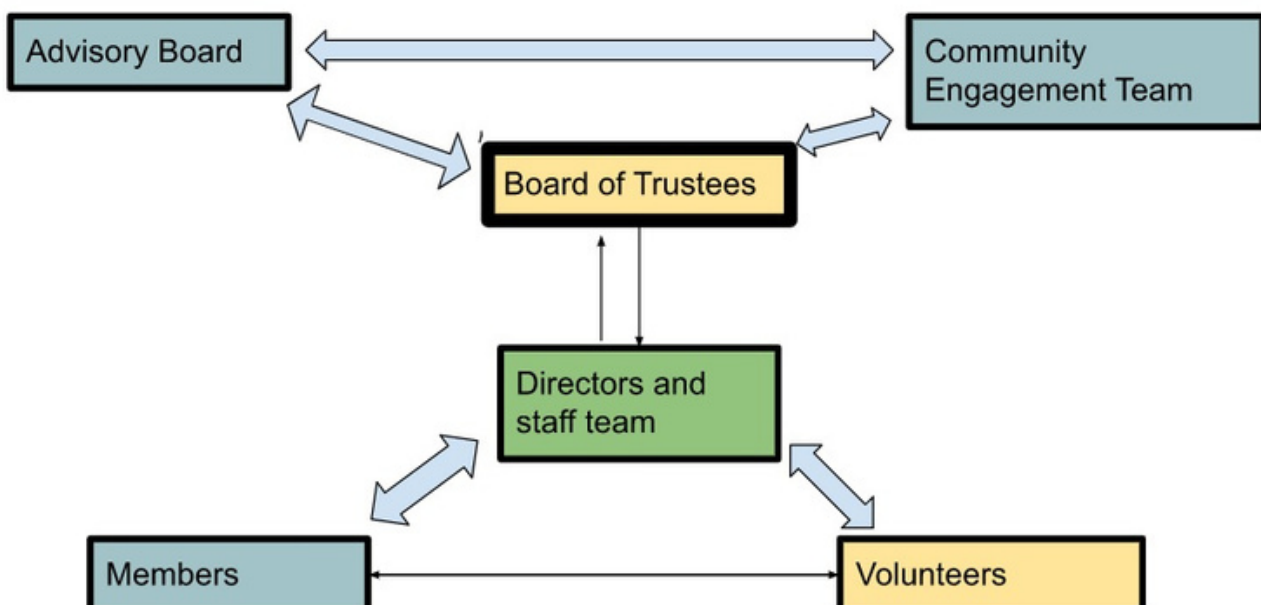
From 53 volunteers at the centre, 30 volunteers were from asylum seeking/refugee backgrounds and 23 UK born volunteers. We have had amazing lunches, activities, ESOL and started new computer classes for our members. Seven of our volunteers from asylum seeking backgrounds have completed Emergency First Aid Training Course, and we are looking to further upskill our members in the future. We have also conducted two induction sessions for new volunteers and the next one is due to be held in July 2022.

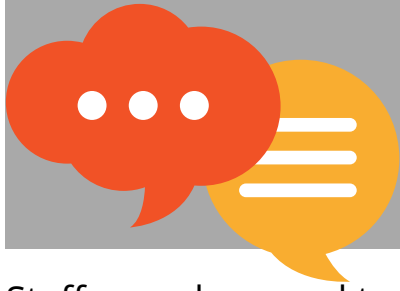
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI)

BHN has committed to being member-led in decision making and developing the leadership of our members within the charity. We know we have a long journey ahead. This year we made ED&I one of our three key priorities and allocated substantial staff time to the development of this work.

We have developed a plan to make BHN member-led including our new Community Engagement Team (CET) which will decide our BHN priorities for the next three years via wide research with members, recruiting new trustees and staff with lived experience of the asylum system and developing an advisory board to guide the board of trustees on members views on key decisions.

We are training all our new trustees, staff, advisory board and CET to ensure we develop the leadership potential of our members to its fullest extent. Our new BHN decision making structure is as follows:





ANNUAL SURVEY

Staff, members and trustees once again filled out our annual survey, which this year focused on how BHN could become more member-led and also improve our equity, diversity and inclusion. We were pleased to see that 84.5% of respondents felt that we listen well to shared views and feedback.

60% of respondents were members of BHN, which is an increase on last year. Overall, feedback was positive, with the majority of respondents stating we do 'very well' in creating an inclusive space, providing safe accommodation and caring for member needs. We didn't score as highly for 'being led by members' and 'making public aware' of our work, helping us see that these are areas of improvement for BHN.

Comments also pointed to how we could improve our equity, diversity and inclusion, focusing primarily on having more members in leadership positions, involved in strategy and delivering the work. Other's stated that we needed to think about how best this could be achieved, when current members are destitute asylum seekers.

The survey also showed us that our work to find courses for members had become more effective over the past year, which is something to celebrate.

STAFFING & TRUSTEES



We welcomed a new member of staff to BHN, Carol Billingham, who will be setting up our new database. We also welcomed two new trustees, Rhodri Jones and Ben Whitnall, who are experts in the law and marketing/comms respectively. Welcome to the BHN family!

We would also like to say a huge thank you and goodbye to two trustees, Steve Watters (thank you for your hard work and dedication as our Chair and Co-Chair - you truly went above and beyond), and Leila Nicholls (who was a dedicated trustee and also served effectively as our Secretary). Thank you!

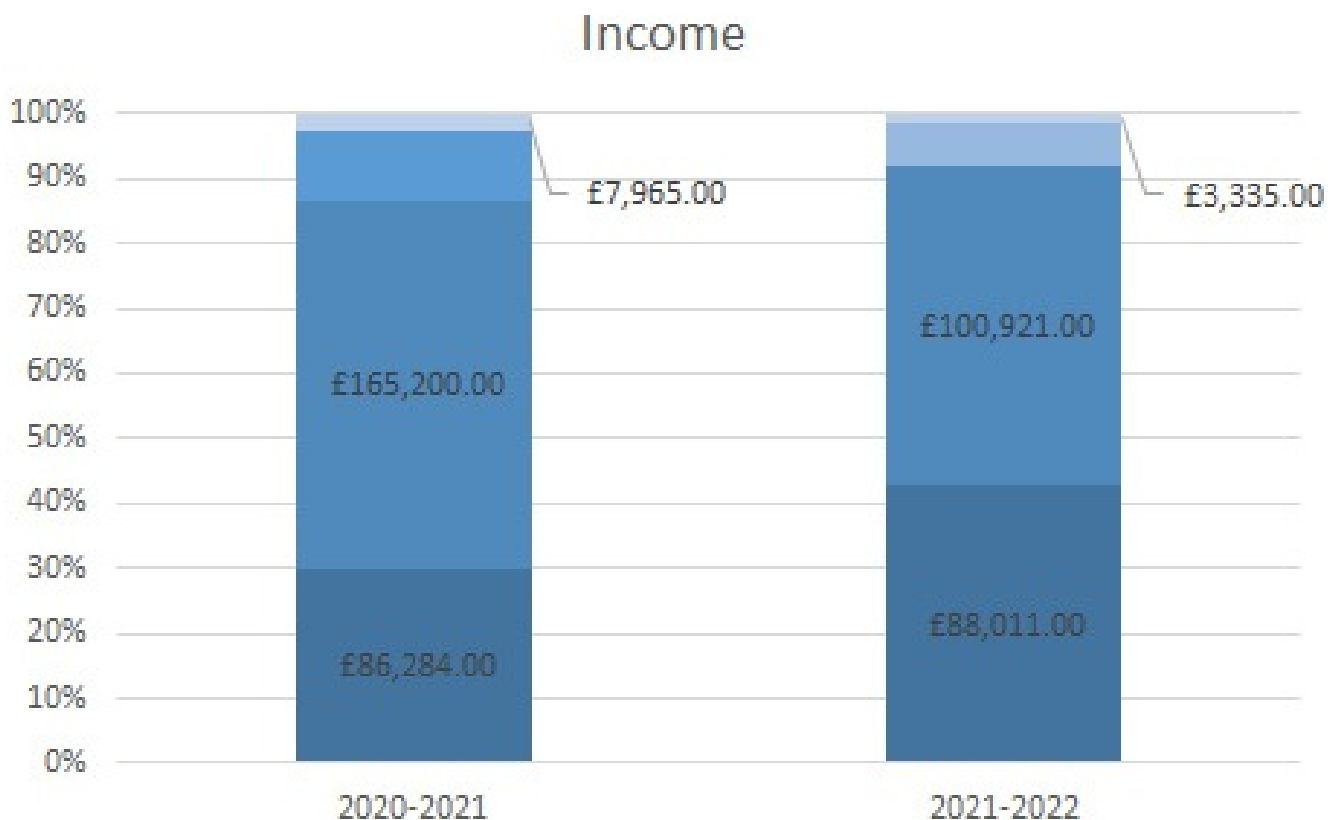


FINANCES & FUNDING 2021 - 22

Our income for the year to March 2022 was £206k. This included £88k from regular and one-off donors and <£114k from trusts and foundations. Thank you to everyone who donated so generously over this last year, as we recovered during this challenging post-pandemic year.

Our expenditure for the year to March 2022 was £219k, with 98% spent on charitable activity. Our total costs increased by 17.5%.

We ended the year with a deficit of £13k, but due to our surplus from last year and our reserves, we started April 2022 with c.£156,000 total funds. This includes our reserves of £110,000 (6 months, based on the last year's average monthly expenditure) and £46,000 of funding which is being used for the 2022-23 period. BHN's policy is to aim for six months unrestricted reserves in our account at all times in addition to the funding we have raised for the next period.





FINANCES & FUNDING 2021 - 22



A huge thank you to The Burden Trust, The Big Give (and all our donors, including The Medlock Charitable Trust), The Souter Charitable Trust, Bristol City Council, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Brisdoc, John James Foundation, The Leathersellers' Company and new trust funders, Austin Hope Pilkington Trust, Amazon Community, J&M Britton, Tuixen Foundation and Arnold Clark Community Fund. Also, to our many, dedicated 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 (Chair), Laura Barrow, Rhodri Jones, George Perry, Rachel Short, Ben Whitnall



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