  
In Solidarity with Destitute Asylum Seekers in Bristol

**About us**  
BHN is a registered charity. We are not part of any religion, and we welcome people of any faith, or of no faith. We work alongside asylum seekers whose claims have been refused, who don’t know what their status is, and / or who are being forced into destitution.   
  
We do this by finding accommodation with volunteer hosts, and providing advice and casework. We provide financial support through our destitution fund for hosted people, until they are able to make new asylum or other immigration applications which mean they can move on to Home Office accommodation and financial support.  
  
Our Hosting Manager oversees our 11-bedroom men’s hostel, supported by live-in House Hosts and by volunteers. Our Host volunteers offer a spare room for a short or longer stay. The Hosting Manager coordinates these placements and gives Hosts induction, training and support for the duration of the placement.   
  
Our volunteer advice team is led by the Advice Manager. We aim to support people to make successful asylum claims or to find other long-term solutions to the crisis they face. All hosted members are required to engage with this, so they can move on from BHN to more stable lives. We also provide advice to other asylum seekers who attend our drop-in.  
  
**Our drop-in**

We run a drop-in ‘Welcome Centre’ every Monday, attended by between 100 and 150 people each week. All people seeking asylum are welcome, and are provided with breakfast and a hot lunch cooked by service users. We also have English classes /reading group, a barber, games (pool, table tennis, scrabble, table football), a sewing table, arts table, and volunteering opportunities, and sometimes opportunities provided by our volunteers or partner organisations. Everyone attending the drop-in can access advice on a range of issues, including Home Office support entitlements, asylum processes, and getting healthcare.

**Our staff**

Most of our staff work part time. We are currently a Director, Hosting Manager, Welcome Centre and EDI Manager; Finance Manager, Kitchen Manager; Monitoring, evaluation and data Administrator, Advice Manager and Moveable Feast Coordinator.   
  
 **Our volunteers**

We depend on volunteers for the provision of our services, including as Trustees, running the Welcome Centre, cooking, hosting, advice, participation in our member inclusion and consultation processes, and speaking at events. Many of our volunteers are service users, and supporting their inclusion and empowerment is a priority.   
  
**Our culture and values**  
We try to make a welcoming space which lets everyone at BHN express their individuality, in a culture of acceptance, openness, curiosity, discussion and learning.   
People do not all have the same power, privilege or opportunity, and our service users are often very disempowered and experience entrenched structural and social oppression. We aim to support people to have the power to make decisions and take control of their lives, and we always respect their autonomy.   
   
We try to be open about our decisions and actions, and to create a culture which everyone who uses BHN feels like they ‘own’. We stand up for the rights of marginalised people, advocating for the lives and rights of asylum seekers in our city. We try to do this creatively, and to be willing to change for the benefit of those we support.   
  
We work to ensure that the voices of people seeking asylum inform our strategy, and have an advisory board of service users who inform our Trustees.   
  
**Why are we needed?**

The UK asylum process is complex, making it very challenging for people seeking asylum to provide the evidence required to be granted protection. Many asylum seekers are made destitute as a result, without the right to work, claim any benefits or apply for housing. They may be extremely marginalised, often sofasurfing/sleeping rough and with little knowledge of their rights or how to change their situation. Many experience the effects of living with the consequences of trauma, loss, exclusion and long-term homelessness.   
Our hosting gives people the safety, time, support and stability to act to make a safe and sustainable future; our advice helps people to make well-informed decisions, and our Welcome Centre provides friendship, practical support, and solidarity.