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Spring News from BHN 2020

"You all make the world better and you make our view better of the world". – Member
in Host Network, Iranian Kurdish - March 2020

Update from the BHN Team

Seven weeks into Government lockdown and BHN has been transformed, with staff and volunteers working from home, our beloved Monday drop-in put on pause and our community scattered across the city. Like all organisations, we have had to create a new structure to meet the real and ever-changing needs of our BHN family during this time. You'll be pleased to know that we have been able to respond effectively with your help, both as an organisation and as a sector, making sure that no one falls through the cracks.

If you have seen our appeal, then you will know that BHN has focused primarily on our members in the Host Network and Men's Hostel. These 29 individuals are all destitute asylum seekers, and so have been wholly dependent on our Solidarity Fund, food referrals (thank you Aidbox!) and, most recently, mobile phone top-ups and tech poverty support.

Of equal importance has been maintaining the stability of our accommodation provision, for wellbeing reasons and to be in-line with Government guidelines. This hasn't been easy, with temporary host placements coming to an end, hosts self-isolating and partner accommodation providers changing.

I want to take this opportunity to give a **big thank you to our Hosts in both the Network and in our Men's Hostel** – this is a challenging time, yet you have continued to support

our BHN family in the most radical of ways. Thank you also to our volunteers and staff (both on Furlough and off), for your commitment, hard-work and solidarity with our members. Thank you.

The path ahead remains unknown, but we will continue to prioritise the needs of our members as outlined above. Going forward, we will improve our communication channels, meet the tech poverty need where it arises, manage the accommodation provision carefully and create a new style of community to keep connected during this time.

Thank you for journeying with us so far. I for one am pleased to be part of BHN's large, caring and supportive family.

“Thank you very much for the care I really appreciate it. I miss you a lot and keep imagining the times we had together at the centre.” – Member in the Men's Hostel, from Uganda - April 2020

Emergency Coronavirus Appeal

A huge thank you to all those who have supported our emergency coronavirus appeal so far. We've been blown away by the donations, offers of assistance, and messages of support received.

In recent weeks, we have been able to double destitution payments to our members to £20, have provided phone top-ups for our members, and have secured access to interpretation services, making sure that members can stay in touch and access vital healthcare advice and online resources. COVID-19 advice has now been translated into 48 different languages, and is available on the BHN website.

Though access to safe, secure and stable accommodation remains critical, the situation is stabilising. As it stands, all BHN members have access to housing, thanks to our host network, the Fishponds house, and a small number of partnerships with Trinity and LiveWest: The Foyer.

We've now raised 25% of our target. **We need to raise a total of £30,000 to maintain the increased weekly payments to our members over the next 12 weeks, and to contribute towards their phone top-ups and internet data needs for communication.**

What we really need during this pandemic and inevitable economic downturn is **long-term support, contributing to BHN's core funds**, thereby enabling us to support our members far beyond this lockdown. Please consider setting up or increasing your monthly standing order with us via LocalGiving so that we can continue to support destitute asylum seekers and operate as an organisation for as long as we are needed.

[Click here to donate](#)



BHN activities in 2019 – 2020.

Accommodation

In 2019 – 2020, BHN accommodated 47 members through our host network, the Fishponds House, and partners, for a total of 9,947 nights.

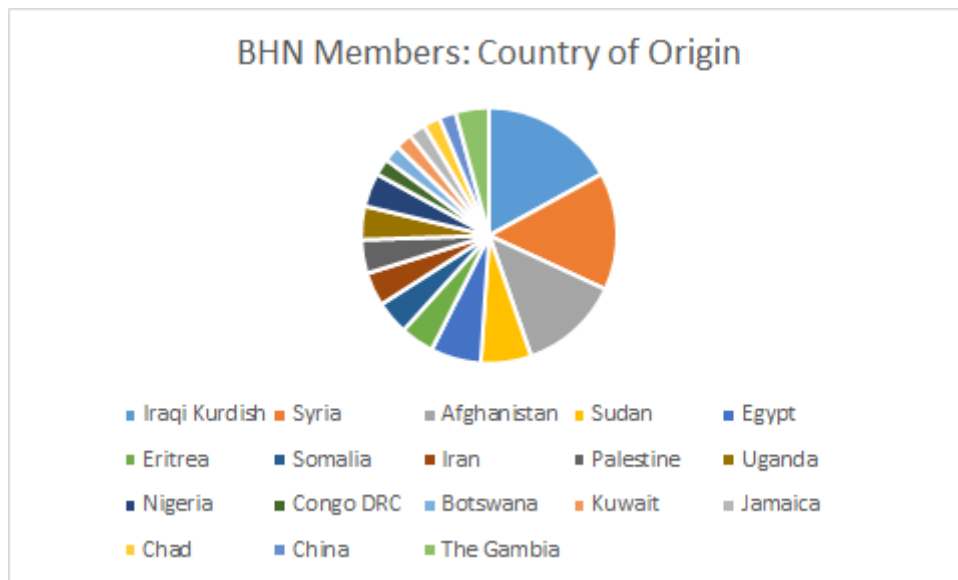
Twenty-one members were newly referred to us during the year, and we continued to provide support to a further 26.



We were supported by 29 host network households, and welcomed 10 new hosts to the network. **We are looking for new hosts. You can find out more on [our website](#) or by emailing Laura at laura@bhn.org.uk**

*numbers displayed add up to more than 47, as some members move between types of accommodation.

Who are our members?



We welcome hosted members from 17 different countries of origin, with over half our members coming from Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Egypt.

The majority of our hosted members (89%) are men. We currently host five women in our host network, a small increase from 2018 – 2019. Sixty percent of our hosted members are under the age of 31.

HELP Team

In 2019 – 2020 the help team supported 134 individuals to prepare new asylum-claims. This was delivered through 614 HELP sessions, with the majority of members attending 1 – 5 sessions. We continue to work to make our HELP sessions as effective as they can be, ensuring that our members get the support they need and can progress with their claim as quickly as possible.

Welcome Centre

On average, we welcome 118 participants to the Monday drop-in each week. Over 100 attendees come together to make new friends, learn new hobbies and skills, and eat tasty food, all supported by member and non-member volunteers. We now have 100 volunteers, including approximately 38 member-volunteers and our five trustees.

Film premiere!



We are delighted to share the full version of our new film, produced by Christy Nunns. The film celebrates what we do at BHN, working together with members, hosts, and volunteers to ensure members have access safe to accommodation, the support they need, and the space to build and sustain connections and wellbeing. A big thank you to Christy and the stars of the show – Emmanuel and Susan.

Positive Stories

Louise (name changed) is one of our hosted-members, referred to us through Bristol Refugee Rights and connected to the charity Unseen who work to end modern slavery.

Louise is new to us, and so her first Solidarity Fund of £80 for the month was delivered during lockdown. She was shocked and said very little when she accepted the money.

Later, she called our Director and said “Hundred times thank you. I was sitting in my host’s living room thinking ‘I don’t know how I am going to look after myself, I can’t see any hope as I don’t have any money’ and then you came and I can’t believe it, thank you’

“I don’t know what I’d do in these days without your support guys, thanks millions BHN.” Member in the Host Network, from Sudan - April 2020

New Trustees

Bristol Hospitality Network (BHN) is looking for dedicated people to join our board of Trustees. The board of Trustees are responsible for overseeing the work of BHN as a charity, to ensure that we are acting in line with our values and objectives.

We are specifically looking for someone with personal experience of the asylum and refugee system. There are also some other roles available. If you have any of the skills

listed below, or feel that you have other skills that may be relevant, then please get in touch

- Experience of the asylum and refugee system
- Secretarial skills
- Health & Safety or Property management skills
- Experience of Management, HR or business development
- Communications & Marketing
- Legal skills

How to Apply:

Please read the [Person Specification here](#) for further details & if you have further questions then you are welcome to get in contact with our Co-Chair of Trustees, Steve for an informal chat about the role (steve@bhn.org.uk).

Dates for your diary

Bristol Refugee Festival is using this year's theme of 'Imagine' to create an exciting online programme for Refugee Week. Running from the **15th – 21st June**, the festival celebrates the diversity and talent that refugees and asylum seekers bring to Bristol and aims to promote understanding of why people seek sanctuary. If you have an idea for a great event or would like to be involved, contact the organisers through the [Bristol Refugee Festival](#) website.



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