

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



Message from our Chairs

James Collett

This year, Emmanuel Nsofwa joined James Collett as BHN's Chair of Trustees, bringing valuable experience as a public speaker from Zambia and with first-hand knowledge of the UK asylum system. His leadership is essential as BHN navigates the growing needs of destitute asylum seekers, exacerbated by a significant backlog in the UK asylum system, many of whom face extended waiting periods often over a year for their claims to be processed. This has increased demand for BHN's services, especially as many are placed in inadequate temporary accommodations, such as hotels in Bristol, with poor living conditions.

Our Monday Welcome Centre drop-in saw a surge in demand, providing hot meals to around 150 people weekly. Prolonged uncertainty and substandard conditions have led to increased mental health struggles among asylum seekers, who also face social isolation and language barriers. BHN collaborated with local organizations to support members' mental health needs. Our Moveable Feast project has grown, offering learning opportunities for volunteers, while raising awareness within the corporate and local community.

The Home Office's reduction of transition time from asylum accommodation to seven days has heightened the risk of homelessness. BHN's Advice team has worked tirelessly to mitigate these impacts, demonstrating our charity's resilience and growth.

Message from our Director

Qerim Nuredini

BHN faced many challenges over the past year, including insecure funding, a high demand for services, and the anxiety and uncertainty felt by our members and volunteers. The hostile attitude towards individuals seeking protection in the UK persisted, adding to these difficulties. Despite the challenges, our staff and volunteers remained steadfast, working tirelessly to create a welcoming, secure, and professional environment, while maintaining the highest standards of service.

Through resilience and innovation, BHN navigated these obstacles by securing multiyear funding, and actively recruiting and training both member and non-member volunteers.

Significant progress was also made in developing our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policies and practices.

Additionally, we prioritized the psychosocial well-being of our frontline staff.

This report will highlight the amazing work our team and volunteers have put in to provide a safe, supportive and welcoming space, to boost the wellbeing of our members and volunteers.

BHN remains unwavering in its commitment to fostering an anti-racist environment and promoting representation, participation, and leadership among those with lived experiences. Their voices play a key role in shaping our services and forging meaningful partnerships.

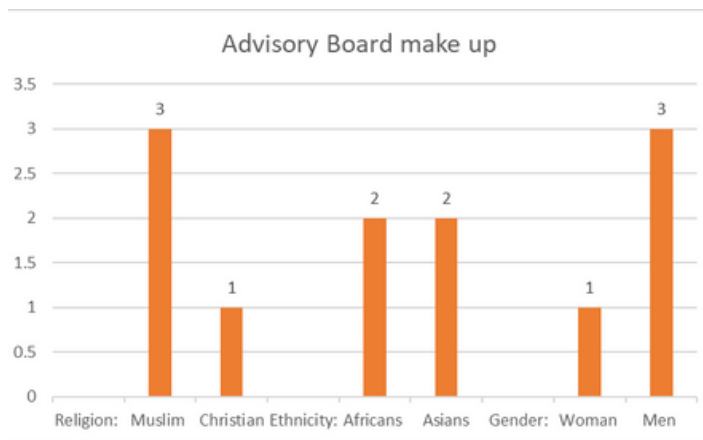
This dedication is at the heart of our mission, ensuring that our organisation continues to evolve and respond to the needs of those we serve.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have the privilege of working with such an amazing organization that is BHN.

Our commitment to Lived Experience

The past year has seen a lot of changes at BHN. Despite the challenges, we have not wavered in our commitment to ensuring that we value the lived experience of people seeking asylum, and always put them at the front and centre of what we do.

Our Advisory Board of people with lived experience of forced migration and the UK asylum system has become more structured and effective over the past year, and we will continue to refine its role and processes. Two of our Advisory Board members now also serve as Trustees, further strengthening the connection between our service users and our Governance. Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is a practical and living document designed to ensure that BHN is truly representative.



Service user volunteers

This year we have run volunteer inductions every three months to ensure that service users get the information they need to be able to volunteer effectively and learn new skills. More than 20 volunteers have had an induction and training.

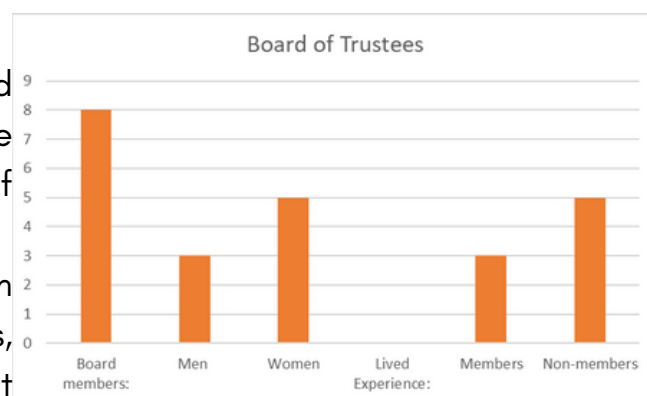
As well as internal inductions and training, we referred our volunteers to external skills development opportunities including

- 12 people referred to Coexist's 'Speak and Eat' project, enabling them to learn English and share food from their country of origin
- 15 people referred to WEA and CCBED to learn English, maths and IT
- 6 people supported in applying for college in Bristol
- 15 people have attended Conversational English
- 8 people referred to our partners FareShare, to do volunteering
- 7 people who attended Bristol Community Learning's Budgeting Course.

Service Users as Trustees

We have 8 Trustees, 3 of whom are people with lived experience of having to seek asylum, and who also use BHN services. In January we elected our first Chair of Trustees to have lived experience.

We will continue to do all we can to make BHN an organisation which promotes the voices, empowerment and leadership of people with direct experience of asylum and forced migration.



Welcome Centre

Our Welcome Centre is as dynamic as ever.

In the first half of the year, we saw an increase in visits, with 160 people attending on some Mondays. Towards the end of the year numbers dipped to around 120, we believe due to people being sent to live elsewhere by the Home Office.

We work in an ever changing environment, and will always be ready for the next change.



Our volunteers

We wouldn't function without them. We usually have around 80 active volunteers, both service users and people from the existing local community. They provide an extraordinary range of services, welcome and opportunities, and have a huge range of skills and professional backgrounds, including in mental health, teaching, IT, advice, and catering. They are the heart of our Welcome Centre. They sit with someone who is traumatised and afraid, encourage someone to join a game of Jenga, teach English, host a homeless person, provide essential interpreting, play scrabble, connect people with communities, do the washing up, organise the arts and sewing tables, do reception, and make everyone feel valued.

Huge thanks to our amazing volunteers.

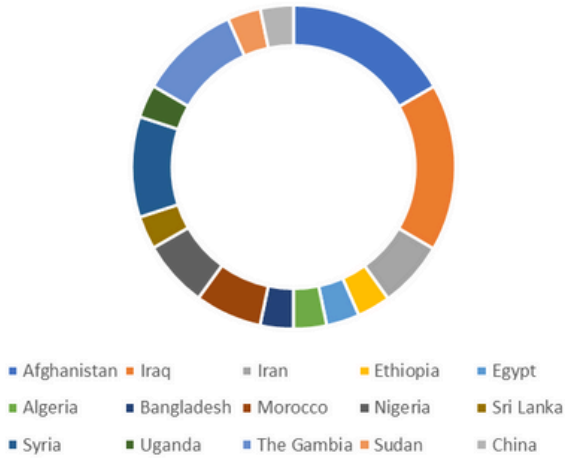
We have increased the learning activities we provide, in partnership with voluntary, private and academic organisations. New activities in the year included poetry sessions, Financial Literacy workshops, short courses in CV writing, and how the process of finding a job works in the UK. We are also partnering with University of Bristol, via the Ollve project, providing IELTS and short courses on how to access Higher Education in the UK, and have started developing a partnership with Art Refuge for fortnightly art sessions at the Centre.

Our service user volunteers are essential in running the Centre, and in making sure that everyone is welcomed and fed on time. Every week, between 25 and 30 service users set up the hall, staff reception, serve breakfast, cook and serve lunch, wash up, and clean, tidy up and put away afterwards. The Welcome Centre is truly a welcome both from and to people seeking asylum.

Hosting

We accommodated 30 guests, from 15 countries this year, for a total of 7,142 nights. We hosted 26 men and 4 women.

Countries of Origin



We have had much to celebrate this year:

Of the 30 guests we accommodated...

- 8 have got Leave to Remain (permission to stay in the UK)
- 8 have submitted a new asylum claim and received Home Office support (or are waiting for it to be provided)
- 4 moved on to stay with friends
- 7 remain hosted with us
- 3 have got Leave to Remain and have stayed on to help BHN manage our men's house.

James, Susan and Saihou

Our 3 wonderful live-in hosts at our men's house all received Leave to Remain in the UK this year. We are delighted, after they have waited so patiently and dedicated so much time and energy into helping BHN meet the needs of so many others. Their dedication has been inspiring to all. They have provided welcome and safety for over 150 guests staying at our men's house since it opened in 2011. We wish them all the very best with their next steps.

Hosting Network

We extend our huge gratitude to the 14 families who stepped in this year to provide a home for BHN guests. To provide a room and a key means to extend hospitality, welcome and trust. This changes lives.



Ahmed, on the left with his hosts, cuts his birthday cake, and speaks about being hosted with the Harris family:

'one of the most beautiful things that happened in my entire life, really'

Advice

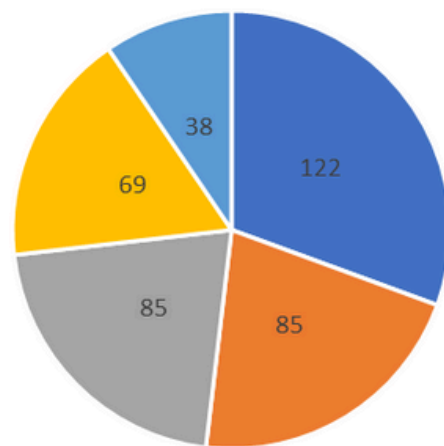


Life as an asylum seeker is full of rules, restrictions, seemingly random things which are either compulsory or forbidden, and very little choice over such basics as where you live and who with, what you eat, and how to sustain yourself. Most people having to seek asylum have little knowledge of how the system works, what the test for 'asylum' is, and how to negotiate it all.

Advice is crucial! Each week at the Welcome Centre, we see 15 to 30 people at our advice drop-in, needing help with issues including access to healthcare, getting somewhere to live, understanding the asylum process, understanding asylum refusals and what they can do next, obtaining documents from the Home Office, liaising with solicitors, understanding letters and dealing with debt.

We are confidential, and open access. Anyone seeking asylum, who has been refused asylum, or who doesn't know where they are in the system, can come to us. We use interpreters where necessary, and have robust case recording systems to help ensure that our advice is transparent and accountable.

Most common issues we helped with



■ Asylum and Immigration ■ Home Office support ■ Health ■ Housing ■ Legal Help

Over the year, we have had 7 wonderful and committed advice volunteers, many of whom are very experienced, and all of whom are trained and knowledgeable.

Between them they saw 525 different people in need of advice, in over 995 meetings at 48 sessions.

We listen to people, to empower and work alongside them, so they leave the room with greater knowledge of what will happen next, and are more able to take action to realise their rights and meet their own needs.

Kitchen

Our kitchen volunteer team delivered a deliciously successful food service, providing hot, nutritious, tasty and culturally diverse meals to asylum seekers, many of whom are destitute or without access to nutritious food. Although our cooks and kitchen staff are often moved away by the Home Office at short notice, we maintained operational efficiency, served a growing number of people, and upheld BHN's values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Weekly Drop-In

Each Monday, we served balanced meals to an average of 103 members, stretching to 175 later in the year, and peaking at 200 on AGM day. Remarkably, EVERYONE who came for food was served, and any leftovers boxed up for those who needed it.

Cultural Diversity

The kitchen team provide meals from their own traditions, including Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, Ghanaian, Syrian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Tunisian, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Indian, Afghani, and Iranian.

Volunteers share life skills and enhance the culinary variety for everyone lucky enough to eat it. Lunch always includes meat, vegetarian and vegan options.



Over the year, we served 5,047 hot meals and takeaways, with an average of six different dishes for each meal, ensuring nutritious and varied food.

94 different volunteers served food on 49 Mondays. Volunteers gave 2,655 hours of service.

24 volunteers participated in Level 2 Food Safety Training, with 23 successfully passing and receiving certification, thanks to free sessions provided by Bristol City Council.

Moveable Feast

Moveable Feast is our social enterprise, raising money for BHN at the same time as providing catering for private and public events, and mirroring the wide range of delicious and global food served at our Welcome Centre.

Our cooks, servers and kitchen staff are mostly service users of BHN, overseen by our Moveable Feast Coordinator. In the year we trained 17 volunteers to Food Safety Level 2, and 5 service users as Chefs.

People in need of protection are not just users of services. They are skilled humans, with the human need to give, to provide, and to be appreciated for their gifts and skills. Moveable Feast offers the opportunity for people who use us to meet people seeking protection as skilled providers, to appreciate their contribution and care, and to break down barriers. It also offers training, support, empowerment, CV support, confidence and well-being to our friends who are excluded from so many opportunities.

Thanks to everyone who booked us for their events during the year, including with The Lido, Feeding Bristol, Natural History Consortium, Bristol Rowing club, NHS, Bristol City Council and Our Second Home.



Our volunteer chefs say...

"I learnt a lot from having a chance to lead a team of volunteers in the kitchen. Learned to deliver an efficient catering service with good quality food and service"

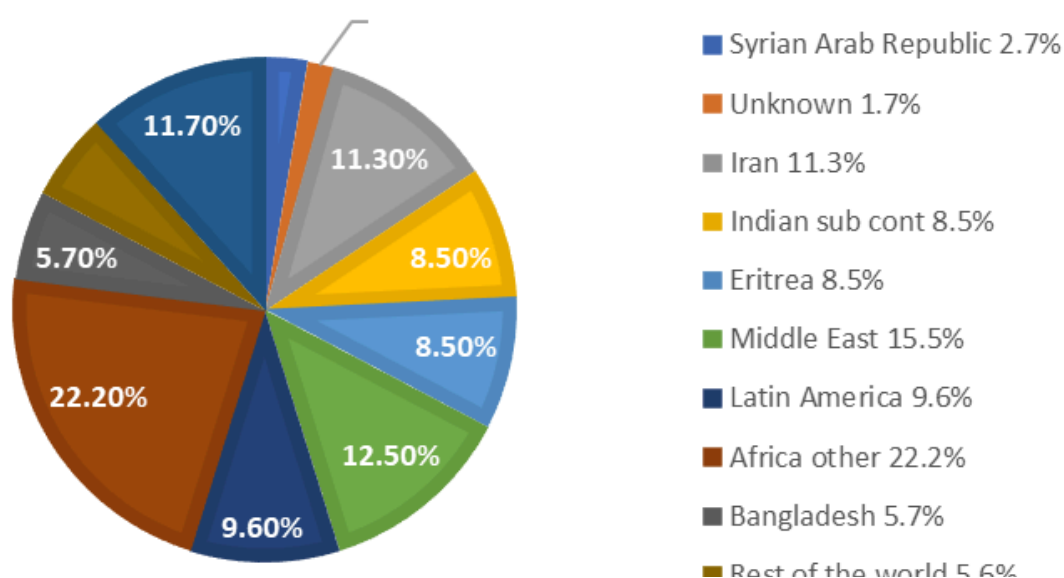
"It was a great experience to work and learn from other professional chefs and see their mastery"

"BHN is my favourite place in Bristol and I would do anything for them."

Where do we come from?

594 different people visited us in the year, up from 375 last year. They came from:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Cameroon, Caribbean Netherlands, Chad, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, India, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Macau, Malawi, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, The Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, Unknown, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Compared to last year there has been an increase in people from Latin America (from 1% to 9.6%).

There was a decrease in people coming from Afghanistan, Syria & Iran, and an increase in those from Iraq. Fewer people came from Bangladesh, but there was an increase in those from elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan & Sri Lanka).

Gender

Of those who attended BHN during this year, approximately 68.2% were men (72% last year) & 31.8% were women (22% last year).

We have seen a big increase in the number of children attending with their parents, and altered our lunch serving and drop-in arrangements to ensure their safety.

Community, holidays and wellbeing

This year, in partnership with Chagford Hospitality Network (CHN), we took 20 of our service users, most of whom are volunteers, on a holiday to Chagford in Devon. A huge thank you to CHN for hosting our wonderful summer holiday on Dartmoor. We enjoyed a week filled with gentle walking, swimming, painting, pottering, shared meals, seeing local countryside, went to the seaside, volunteered at an organic market garden, played music and games with the local community and yoga.

As asylum seekers, we have to live in the city where we're told to live, and don't have money or freedom to explore the peace and beauty of the country. Most importantly, we cherished the hospitality and company of Chagford hosts, and formed lifelong friendships.

What the visitors said:

"I have never been on a holiday and this will stay with me for the rest of my life"

"The friendliness change my heart"

"felt like spending time with family"



What the hosts said:

"We loved the sharing of cultures. They taught us a lot about the Muslim faith, food, recipes".

"A great experience. We loved having our guests"

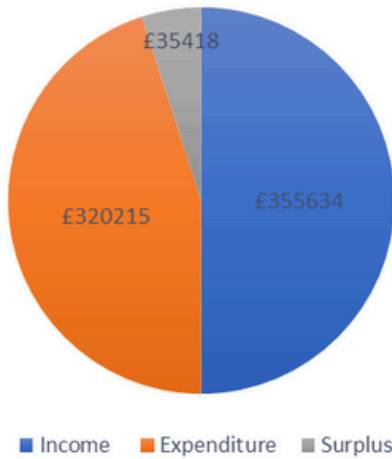
"We feel very privileged to have had them to stay and thankful to CHN for guiding us through it and giving so much support".

We're also grateful to St Werburgh's City Farm and Simms Hill Farm, who have given people seeking asylum a welcome as planters, gardeners and growers. The food grown, nurtured, and harvested by our service users and volunteers has fostered connection with nature, peaceful spaces, local people, and has been enjoyed by all at our Monday drop-in meals.

We also worked with the Dovetail Orchestra, where service users have been able to use, maintain and share their musical skills, build relationships, feel a part of the community, be appreciated in public events, connect with local musicians, and improve their overall wellbeing.

Financial Review

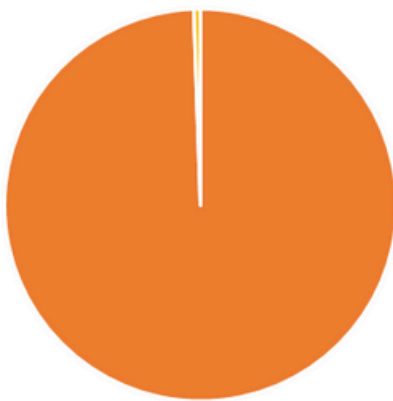
Total Income vs Expenditure



The organisation finished the year with a surplus of £35,428. Income rose by 49% in the financial year ending 2024 compared with 2023.

Expenditure increased by 21% (vs 20% increase in 22/23), reflecting the ongoing growth in the activities of the charity in response to need. These increases were mostly due to cost of living prices.

Total Expenditure

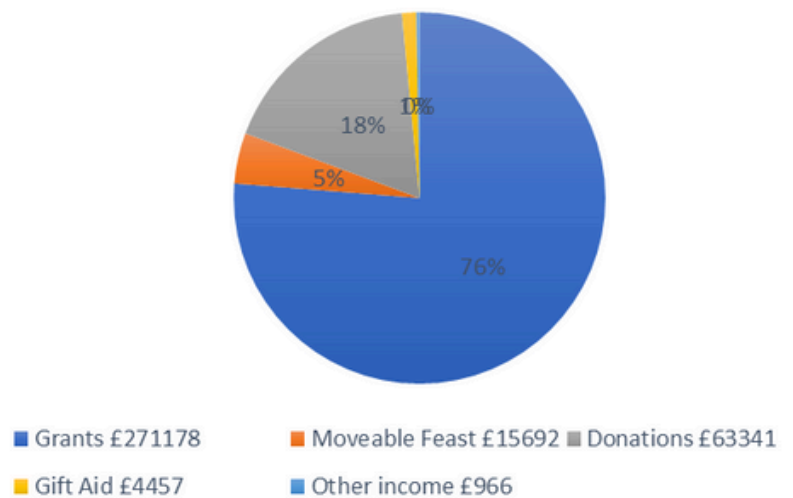


Charitable Activities: £318,462.00 Other: £1,753.00

Total Expenditure:

- BHN House = £50,675.00
- Welcome Centre = £47,743.00
- Solidarity Payments = £33,651.00
- Host Network = £22,729.00
- Member and EDI = £15,121.00
- Moveable Feast = £13,090.00
- Training and Supervision = £7,457.00
- Volunteer coordination = £5,219.00
- Help Team database project = 22,658.00
- Core Salaries = £58,307.00
- Office Cost = £34,228.00
- Insurance = £3,130.00
- Fundraising = £4,643.00
- Other: Governance = £1,711.00; Comms = £42.00

Total Income



Total Income:

- Individual Donations = £64,307.00
- Grants = £271,178.00
- Moveable Feast = £15,692.00
- Gift Aid = £4,457.00

There is continued demand for the provision of accommodation and solidarity for destitute asylum seekers in Bristol, which is the core activity of BHN. The organisation continues to raise sufficient grants and donations to cover operating costs to date. Campaigns are planned and a strategy is in place to raise the required funds to ensure that the organisation can continue to operate and to meet its financial obligations for at least the next 12 months, and with reasonable expectations for the foreseeable future.

Fundraising and Thanks

Thank you

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone whose support has empowered us to continue our work, standing by our service users through challenging times. With deep gratitude, we thank:

Our Volunteers: Many of whom are themselves refugees and asylum seekers, tirelessly dedicating their time to support our staff team.

Our Trustees: for their invaluable dedication over the past year. Your commitment, expertise, and the unique insights some of you bring as refugees and asylum seekers have been instrumental in guiding our mission and strengthening our community

Our Staff: Who have navigated numerous changes and challenges with resilience, supporting and empowering our members with humanity and professionalism.

Our BRASP and other partners: who worked closely with us, shared knowledge, vision, resources and were always there when we needed them.

Support Us

We rely on our supporters and donors to transform the lives of our members. You can support us in a variety of ways:

Make a donation [online](#)

Leave a gift in your will

Set up a regular monthly donation by [Direct Debit](#)

Fundraise for us

Follow us on social media

To donate or find out more about ways to support us, please visit: bhn.org.uk

Funders



Donors: A huge thank you goes to all those who have supported BHN financially this year including The Burden Trust, The Big Give, Lloyds Bank Foundation, The Leathersellers' Company, Quartet, Bristol City Council, Swire Charitable Trust, Tuixen Foundation, Feeding Bristol, NGED WE Plc bike, The Bike Project, The Nisbet Trust, Aid Box Community and The National Lottery Fund.

Our Individual Donors: With special thanks to our generous and dedicated individual donors, especially those who contribute regularly.