



Impact Report

2024/25





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Introduction

At Borderlands, we believe in a world where every person seeking sanctuary feels safe, heard, and empowered. Our work is shaped with and by our members; people who bring strength, resilience, and richness to our community.

This year, our commitment to walking alongside those experiencing the asylum system has remained steadfast. Together, we've responded to a challenging and rapidly changing environment with compassion, adaptability, and collaboration.

From warm meals and language classes to community connection and wellbeing support, every part of Borderlands reflects our core belief: that belonging is a human right.

This report shares the stories, achievements, and impact of the past year made possible thanks to the tireless dedication of our staff, volunteers, members, partners, and supporters.

Thank you for being part of the journey in helping asylum seekers and refugees move from 'exclusion to belonging'.



Vision & Mission

Vision

Our vision is a world where refugees and asylum seekers can seek sanctuary and justice, can make full use of their talents and abilities, feel valued for their contributions, and build worthwhile lives.

Mission

Our mission is to support asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable migrants in the Bristol area to move 'from exclusion to belonging' by:

- Enhancing their social inclusion and wellbeing,
- Supporting those in poverty,
- Raising awareness of their needs and experiences among the wider community.

Our Values

Warmth

A community with genuine relationships that creates a warm feeling, just like with friends and family.

Sharing

We share with each other and help one another.

Dignity

Everyone is recognised as an individual and embraced with dignity and we strive for justice and dignity in the world.

Respect

Individual and group identities are respected and celebrated.



Our Projects



Welcome Centre

The Welcome Centre is the heart of Borderlands- a warm, inclusive space where members can find connection, community, and comfort. Open each Tuesday, the centre offers a delicious hot meal, essential groceries through our social supermarket, and a calm environment to rest, chat, and access support. It is a place where relationships are nurtured, where new arrivals meet old friends, and where exclusion begins to give way to belonging.



Learning Project

Our Learning Project supports members to learn English in a way that is member-led, trauma-informed, and accessible. We run weekly English classes and deliver 1:1 learning support, helping people build the skills and independence needed to confidently navigate life in the UK. This year, we focused on shaping our learning environment with and by members through feedback sessions, team reflection, and even role reversals where our staff experienced being language learners themselves.



Feel Good Activities

Our Feel Good activities bring members together to connect, relax, and enjoy new experiences. From creative arts and crafts to music sessions, forest walks and yoga, these activities are about joy, healing, and self-expression. They also offer space for members to lead sessions and share their own skills, building confidence and belonging in the process.



Mentoring Project

The Mentoring Project pairs members with trained volunteers from the local community to build consistent, trusted relationships. Mentors walk alongside members as they navigate life in a new country, offering practical help, emotional support, and a listening ear. At its core, the mentoring project is about building community, fostering trust, and ensuring no one feels alone on their journey.



Outreach

Borderlands continues to show up in the everyday spaces where our members live - from housing and hotel accommodations to broader community settings. Our outreach work helps us build relationships with those who may not yet feel ready or able to access our main services. By going where people are, we ensure our support is welcoming, visible, and rooted in trust.

Our Members

63%

of our members are
asylum seekers,

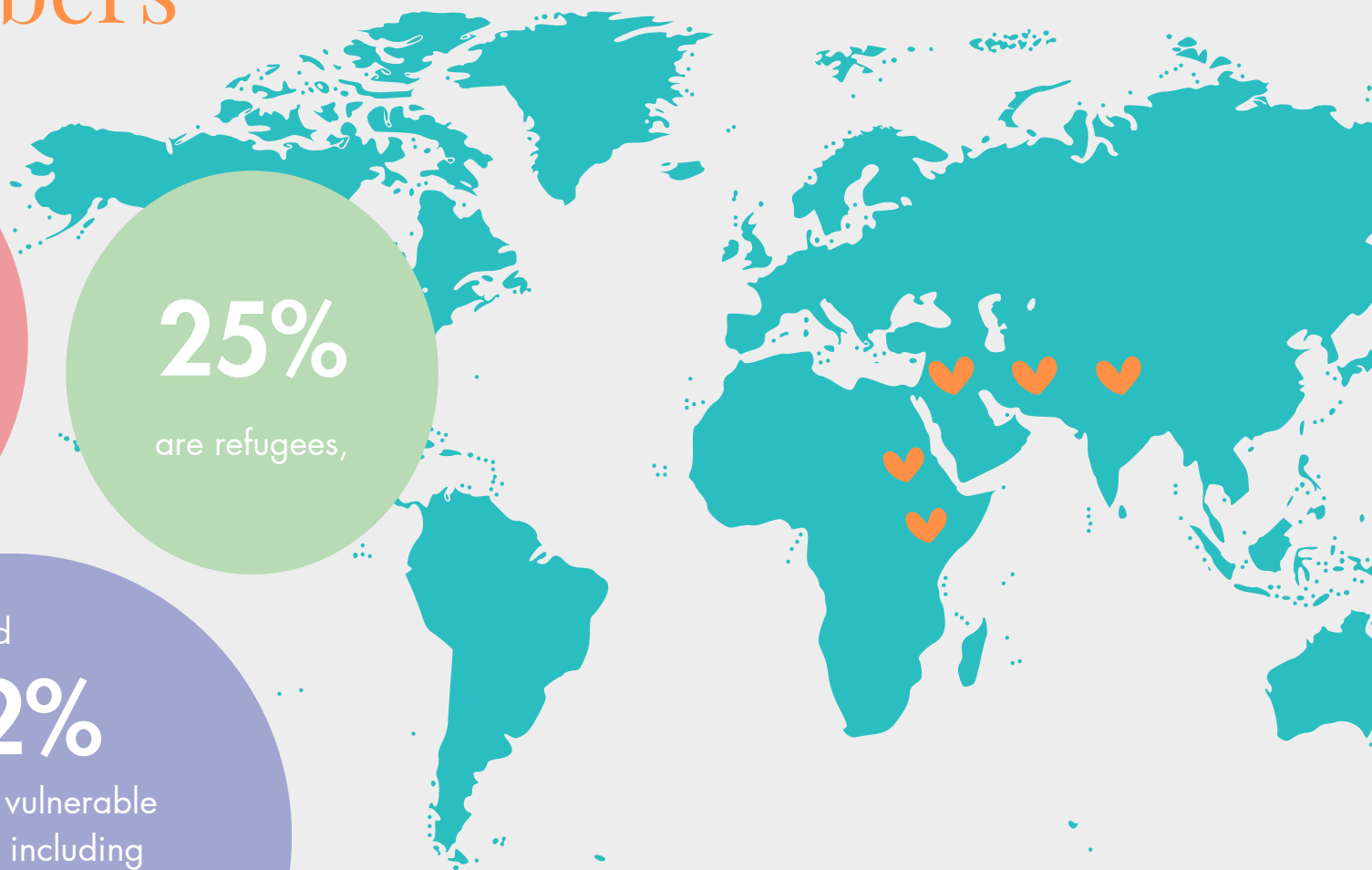
25%

are refugees,

and

12%

are other vulnerable
migrants including
asylum seekers with
refused status and
survivors of trafficking
and modern slavery.



Our members come from many different countries including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Iran and Iraq.

Our Volunteers

We encourage our members (people registered at Borderlands) to volunteer with us, as this helps them to practise their English, make friends, connect with their community and gain new skills. All member-volunteers receive training and guidance for their professional development, as well as a reference and experience for their CV (our volunteer chefs and kitchen assistants also complete their 'Food and Hygiene level 2' certificate with us).



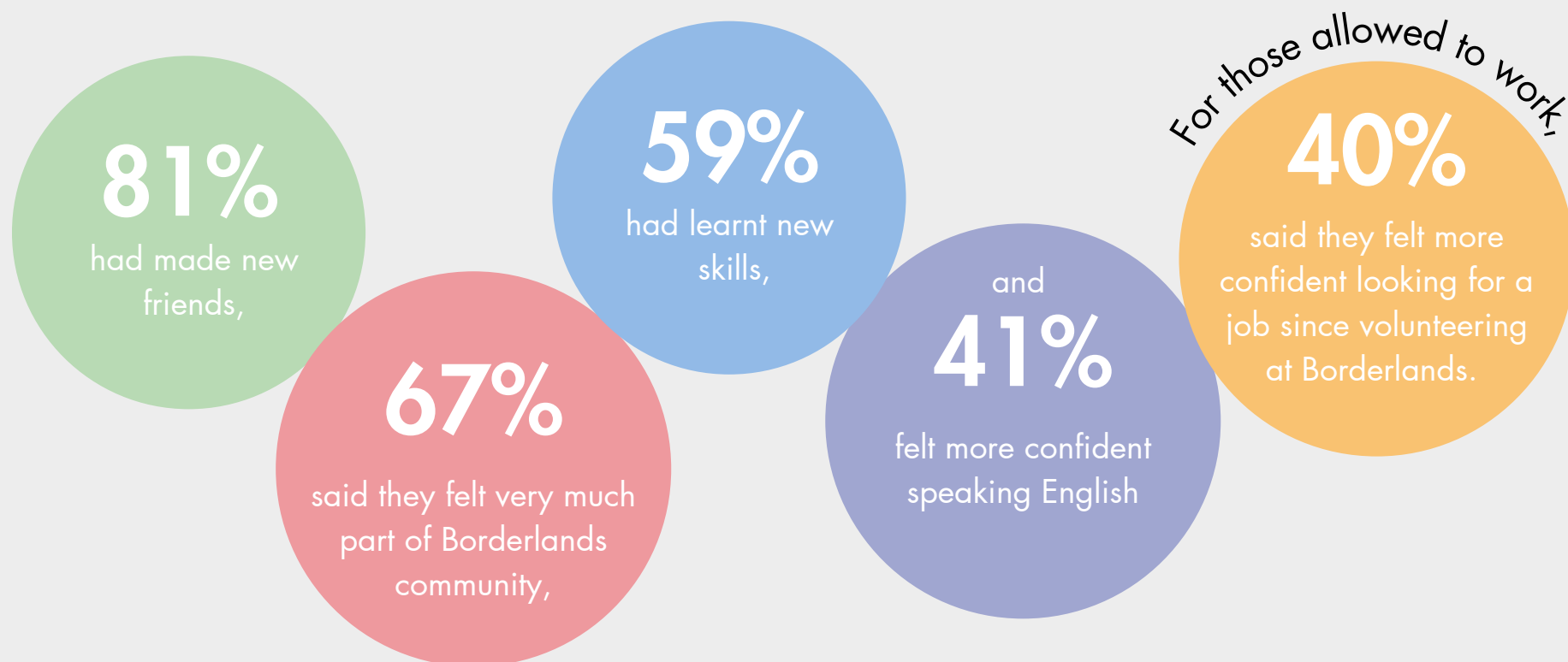
100+
volunteers

1/3
from asylum
seeking or refugee
background

185
hours volunteered
weekly

“Borderlands is good and its helpful for me I like to volunteer at Borderlands, as it is like my home. I think Borderlands is improving day by day.”
Member-volunteer

In a survey of our member-volunteers in January 2025:



“Borderlands is like a huge tree with many branches that caters to diverse groups with many aspects of need. I love that people can come here, be fed and get the help they need. Whatever Borderlands can't offer, they signpost to the relevant services. I'm super proud to be part of the team.” – Member-volunteer



Case study: A members journey

In August 2024, SA moved into an asylum hotel in Bristol. She soon met our **Outreach Officer**, and the following week came to our **Welcome Centre** and registered as a **Borderlands member**.

SA quickly became interested in our work and asked to become a volunteer. After a successful induction and training, she joined our **Welcome Desk team** to register new members, make them feel welcome and provide signposting resources. Over the next few months, SA **joined our cooking sessions** for people living in the hotel, preparing delicious food from her country for all our community. She also **enrolled into our mentoring programme** and received support from a trained mentor to achieve her goals of accessing courses and education **to either pursue a law degree or become a social worker**.

SA is now **one of our leading Welcome Centre volunteers**. She recently attended a **public speaking training held at Borderlands**, for people with lived experience who are keen to mobilise communities and campaign for social change. She then **participated in a listening event with local MPs**, the combined authority Mayor and city councillors, where she and other lived experience leaders put forward the **campaign for free bus travel for asylum seekers**. SA said: **"Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend the event and be one of the persons representing Borderlands, it was a great experience....I felt extremely proud of our organisation's presentation."**

Our Impact in numbers

48

members were supported through a mentoring partnership

203

members enjoyed our Feel Good activities

202

new members were supported

150

members enjoyed trips or special events that took place through the year

835

members were supported at our Welcome Centre

898

members reached through our Outreach work

509

learners were supported through our English classes

51

new volunteers joined Borderlands across the year

150

members were supported through our hot meals and social supermarket

Welcome Centre

Food has always been at the heart of Borderlands. From sharing community meals to swapping recipes, food has always been a way of bringing people together. Food insecurity is a big problem for our members: asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation (shared housing) struggle to feed their families on very limited financial support, and although food is provided in the hotels it is unhealthy, culturally inappropriate and insufficient, especially for children.

Cooking Groups

Through our Monday Community Cooking Sessions Borderlands has the pleasure of inviting groups of friends and families living in Bristol's asylum hotels to cook together and share a meal. We provide cooking facilities and fresh ingredients for 2-4 cooks to prepare dinner. Members then invite up to 20 neighbours, friends and community members to join them for lunch at our premises. The response to the project has been hugely positive. We have watched different cuisines from around the world be prepared in our kitchen and it so nice to see our members share a meal with their loved ones. As one member put it, the space transforms into their "home".

"I feel happy to be here and share with my friends and community. It takes a bit of our daily stress and help us carry on. Thank you very much for helping us. For us having access to a kitchen means a lot to us." -

Cooking group participant



Case Study: Mo's Journey through the Welcome Centre

Mo began his journey with Borderlands four years ago, **volunteering in our Welcome Centre drop-in**. His first role was as a welcome volunteer: **greeting people as they arrived, helping with registration and making newcomers feel comfortable**. From time to time, he also supported with other tasks around the centre, always eager to get involved.

When Mo first came to England, **he wanted to do something meaningful for his community**. He also recognised the importance of improving his English and gaining confidence in social situations. The **Welcome Centre provided him with a safe, supportive environment** to achieve both.



Mo faced real challenges when he arrived: adapting to a new culture, communicating in a second language and building the confidence to socialise and study. His motivation was clear - **he wanted to grow, to learn and to find ways to give back**. The Welcome Centre was his first step in this journey.

We supported Mo through encouragement, practical help such as reference letters and guidance with applications for education. More importantly, the **community spirit** within the Welcome Centre gave him a sense of **belonging**. By working alongside people from many different backgrounds, Mo **developed stronger English skills, built friendships and grew in confidence**.

The difference has been **life-changing**. Mo is now studying at Oxford University and continues to volunteer whenever he can. He speaks passionately about the **positive impact** of Borderlands: the **teamwork, kindness and shared experiences** that gave him the platform to succeed. He describes the Welcome Centre as "the best community in Bristol."

Looking ahead, Mo hopes to study business, join organisations such as the Red Cross and even open a charity shop to continue giving back. His story shows how vital the Welcome Centre is in helping people **build confidence, community connections and brighter futures**.

Learning Project

In a survey of Learning Project participants at in August 2024,

40% said very much

55%

improved their English,

40% said very much

65%

had improved confidence,

50%

has improved their wellbeing,

55%

said classes gave them good knowledge of Bristol and the UK.



“I didn’t speak English, when I came here. Because of this I felt lonely, insecure and helpless. It was very difficult! English lessons at the Borderlands gave me a lot of useful information and the necessary knowledge and skills. I feel much better now..... And I also had a strong feeling that I had a new family and cheerful friends here.” - Member

In addition to English classes, we provided the following learning opportunities:

Our new Learning Navigators worked one-to-one with around 300 members at our Tuesday drop-in to help them plan their educational journey.

A weekly Reading and Conversation Group for those with a higher level of English, in partnership with national literacy charity 'The Reader'.

Our Creative Women's Group helped 28 participants to connect, share and explore creative activities in a series of workshops covering theatre skills, dance/movement, music, and visual arts culminating in a performance.

Two 8-week Employability Skills courses run in partnership with Curo Housing Association, providing participants with the skills and confidence they need to apply for jobs, write CVs, attend interviews and prepare for getting employment in the UK.

“You make the lessons so interesting and so different. I loved the lesson where you brought in a poem. At first, I didn't understand it but you made it real and I loved how I could understand it at the end.”- Member

“All your workshops which you were organising bring me joy...I enjoyed everything. I like speaking and listening. I would like come again.”- Member

Mentoring Project

Stats for partnerships which ended in 2024-25.

100%

improved their English,

96%

achieved some or all of their goals,

33%

were supported to navigate the UK asylum system.

43%

moved into more secure housing

29%

found jobs

43%

found volunteer placements

65%

made progress towards finding employment on securing refugee status

and 65%

went into education or training

For those permitted to work,

Most mentees were asylum seekers and not allowed to work



"[My mentor] was one of the first people I really spoke to - she helped me find friends and community. When we spoke together it improved my self confidence. Before meeting her, I was scared of people and didn't want to share about my life. After we met, I felt so much more confident speaking to strangers." - Mentee

Feel Good Wednesday

Our wellbeing project supported 203 members with weekly 'feel good' activities aimed at promoting mental health and self-care including:

Sleep and relaxation sessions facilitated by the Hope: Asylum Seekers and Refugees Trauma Service.

A sewing group in partnership with Bridges for Communities Stitch Together programme, enabling women to create beautiful textile-based art, practise English, make friends and gain confidence.

A yoga class taught by a Borderlands member who is a trained yoga teacher, which gives women a chance to unwind, relax and meditate, and share healthy snacks after the class.

Women-only dance workshops exploring different styles from contemporary to Bollywood, filled with joy, movement, and a sense of freedom.

A partnership with Easton Leisure Centre offering our members free access to the gym, pool and some exercise classes.

A photography workshop run in partnership with Bridges for Communities, where members learned new techniques and took part in a joint project culminating in an exhibition.

Football for men working with St. Paul's Community Sports Academy. We trained two teams to compete in Bristol's Community Cup. Although we didn't win, we're gearing up for next year's tournament!

Climbing classes in collaboration with Refugees Rock at the Mothership gym, to develop new skills and feel a sense of accomplishment.



Outreach Project

We expanded our outreach efforts this year, working alongside Bristol Mind to run a weekly drop-in service for asylum seekers in three central Bristol hotels, focusing on digital inclusion and promoting events and support networks.

Our model was to first ensure residents' basic needs were met, including phones and sim cards (with free data and calls), clothing and healthcare. We also arranged a number of trips including visits to Westbury Wildlife Park.

769

Sim cards distributed

We helped people to meet their social and wider needs including referrals into **language classes**, **volunteering**, **educational opportunities**, **mental health support**, **leisure activities** and **navigating the city**.

We let people know about our Welcome Centre and wider support and helped those being moved to different cities find services there. We also helped initiate fitness sessions in the hotels, ran taster sessions for our creative women's group, and organised workshops and information sessions from other agencies including SafeLink (sexual or domestic violence support).

Activities and Trips



We organised many events, trips and socials through the year to help our members unwind, explore new places and connect with nature

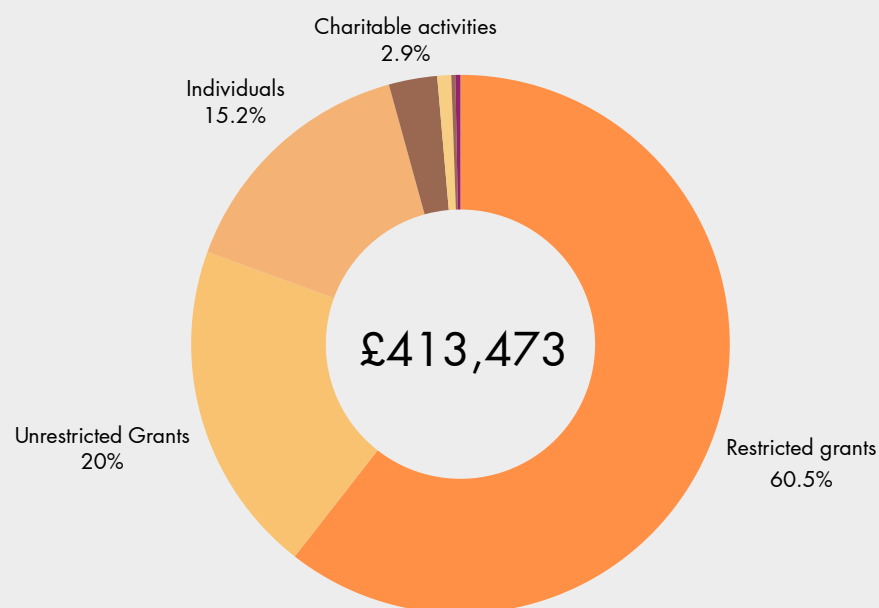




Trips included a day at the beach in Clevedon, two visits to the SS Great Britain and an outing to Bristol Central Library. Our Outreach Project partnered with Forest School to run monthly trips to Westbury Wildlife Park and weekly outings to Ashton Hill focused on walking, foraging, cooking and whittling. Our Creative Women's Group went to see private viewings of exhibitions at the Arnolfini and RWA, a historical walking tour of Bristol and multiple plays at Bristol Old Vic. Mentors and mentees were also able to get out and explore the city together with the option of free entry to the SS Great Britain, We the Curious and the RWA.

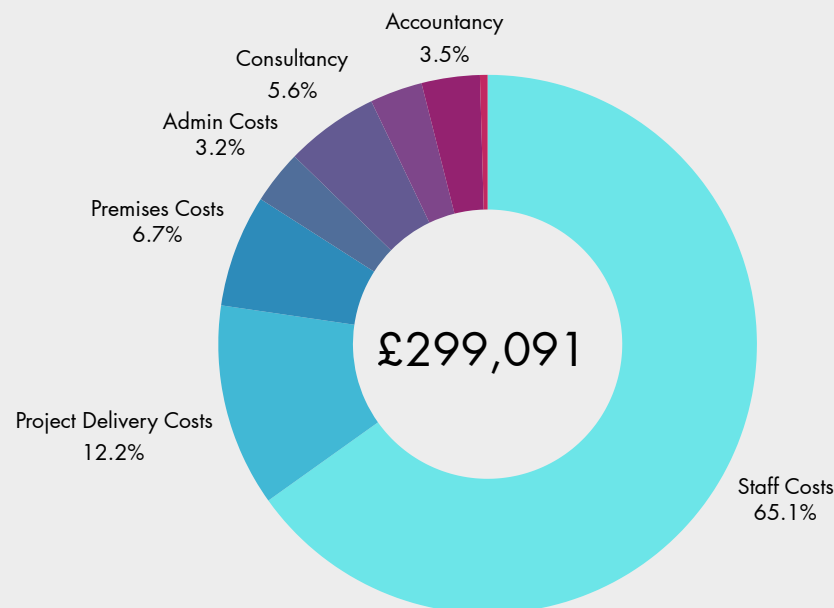


Our Finances



Our Income

Restricted Grants	£250,348
Unrestricted Grants	£82,764
Individuals	£62,647
Charitable activities	£12,000
Investments	£3,463
Gifts in Kind	£1,001
Gift Aid	£1,250

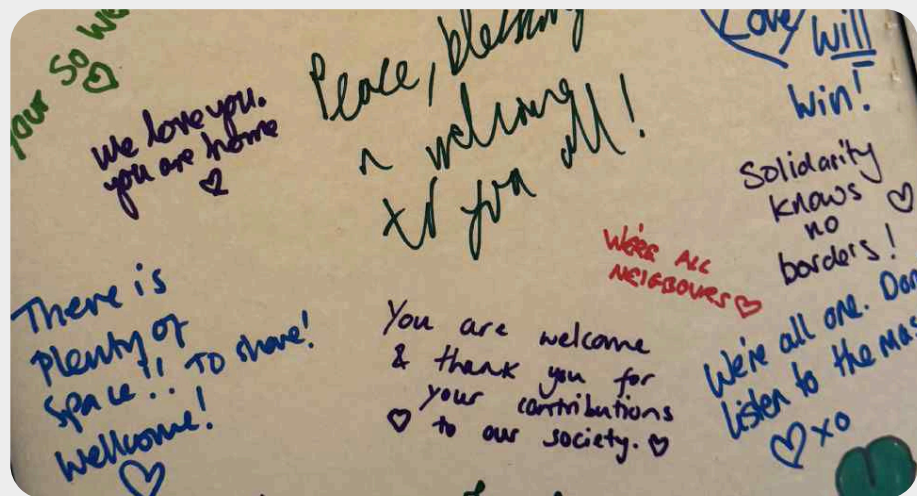


Our Expenditure

Staff Costs	£194,826
Project Delivery Costs	£36,384
Premises Costs	£20,176
Admin Costs	£9,651
Consultancy	£16,800
Depreciation	£9,444
Accountancy	£10,449
Insurance	£1,361

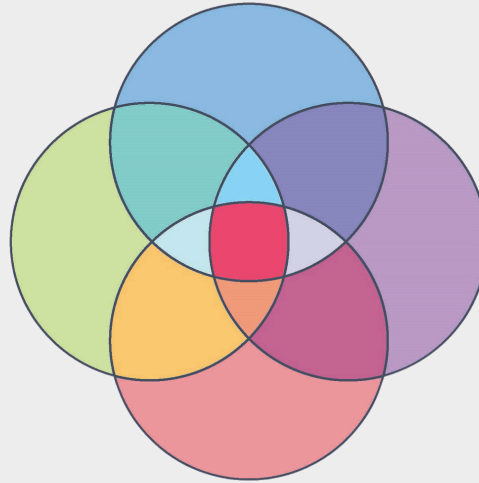
Thank you

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to our work. Our funders this year include the **Garfield Weston Foundation**, **Henry Smith Charity**, **Albert Gubay Foundation**, **John James Bristol Foundation**, **Postcode Local Trust**, **Bristol City Council**, **Van Neste Foundation**, **Harold Hood Trust**, **Medlock Trust**, **Nisbet Trust**, **Mbili**, **Migrant Help**, and others, including those who prefer to remain anonymous. We are also grateful to the individuals, local businesses, social enterprises and charities who have made donations. Last but not least, thank you to our wonderful members, volunteers, partners and staff for your ongoing commitment, expertise, and energy in welcoming and supporting refugees and asylum seekers.



We continued to work as part of BRASP (Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership) to coordinate support throughout the city, support lived experience leadership and strengthen our advocacy and campaigning efforts. This included:

- playing a key role designing and launching a new service mapping website, KOMPASI, to improve interagency referrals and create a more coordinated welcome for new arrivals.
- a coordinated response to the far-right riots in summer 2024 to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our members, staff and volunteers. This included joint risk assessments, additional safety measures and plans, and providing members with accurate information from reliable sources.
- providing accurate information and signposting for those affected by the government's Rwanda plan, which was crucial in avoiding spreading panic.



BORDERLANDS

from exclusion to

BELONGING

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 one off donation
- Volunteer with us
- Set up a monthly donation
- Fundraise for us

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