



BORDERLANDS

FROM EXCLUSION TO BELONGING



IMPACT REPORT 2025- 2026

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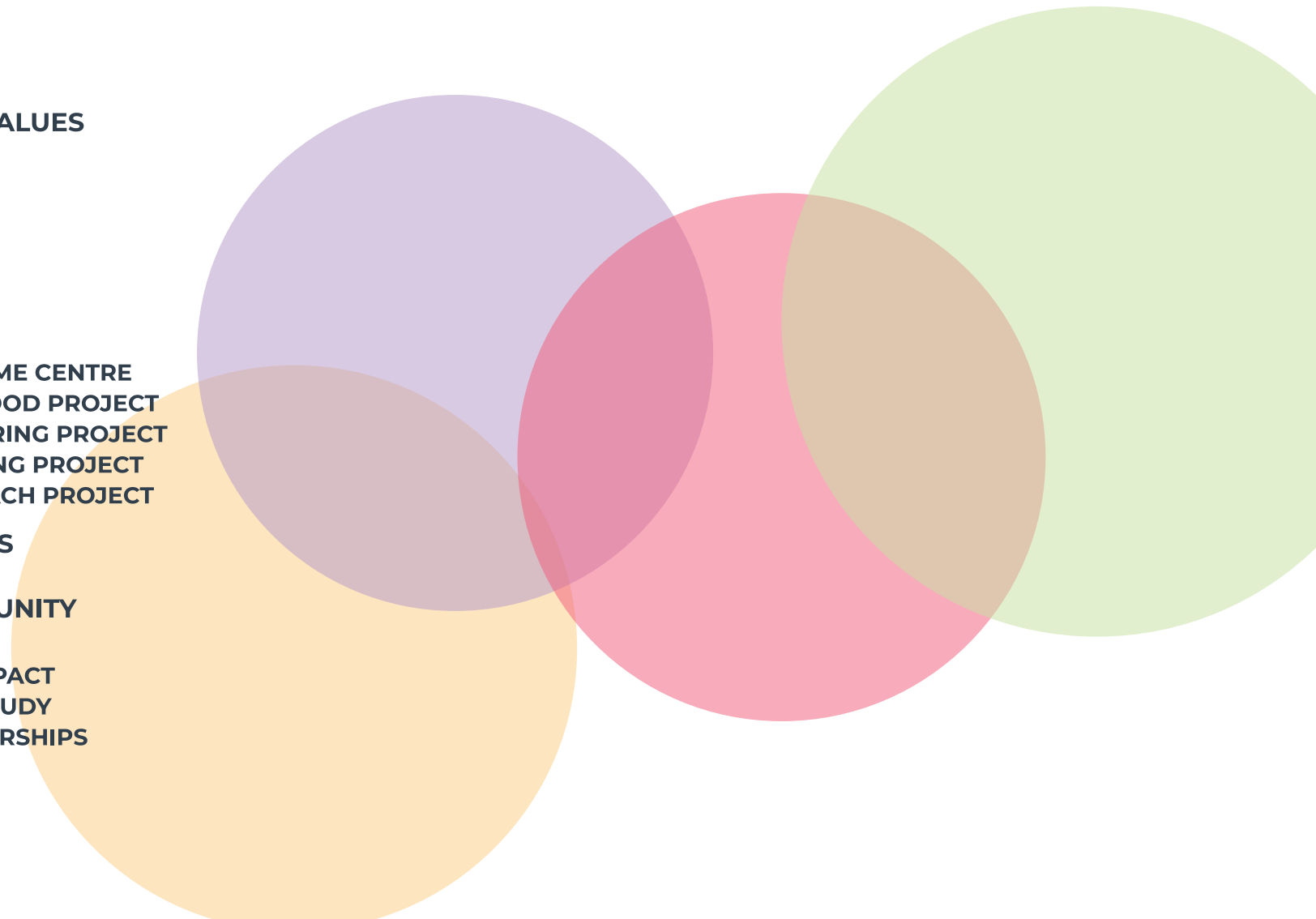
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01

INTRODUCTION

IMPACT REPORT INTRODUCTION

At Borderlands, we envision a society where everyone seeking refuge feels safe, valued, and empowered to thrive. Our work is led and enriched by our members (service users), whose courage, resilience, and diverse experiences strengthen our community every day.

Throughout the past year, we have remained committed to supporting people navigating the asylum system, standing alongside them through an increasingly complex and changing landscape.

Together, we have met challenges with empathy, flexibility, and partnership. Whether through shared meals, English language learning, wellbeing initiatives, or opportunities for social connection, our work is rooted in the belief that everyone deserves a sense of belonging.

This report highlights the achievements, stories, and positive impact of the past year, all made possible by the dedication of our staff, volunteers, trustees, members, and supporters. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has joined us in helping asylum seekers and refugees move from 'exclusion to belonging'.



02

**VISION, MISSION,
& VALUES**

IMPACT REPORT

VISION, MISSION, & VALUES

OUR VISION & MISSION

We have a vision for a world where refugees, asylum seekers and those with insecure immigration status are welcomed with sanctuary and justice, have their needs met and their ambitions realised, and develop the power to build the lives they choose.

We strive for a future in which all vulnerable migrants are supported from exclusion to belonging.

Our mission is to create a welcoming community that supports people on their journey to securing 'leave to remain' in the UK and to feeling included, valued and independent in their new communities. We also advocate for a fair and humane immigration system where people seeking refuge are treated with dignity and respect.

OUR VALUES

All our projects and activities are rooted in our values:

- **Warmth:** an inclusive space that greets people with a warm welcome and creates a sense of belonging

- **Connection:** a community where genuine relationships are forged and sharing is an act of solidarity

- **Dignity:** a place where everyone is recognised as an individual and embraced with dignity

- **Respect for everyone:** we celebrate the integrity of all individual and group identities, empower our members and work alongside them on their journey.



03

MEMBERS

IMPACT REPORT

MEMBERS

OUR MEMBERS

Around 62% of our members are asylum seekers, 23% are refugees and 15% are other vulnerable migrants, including survivors of trafficking and modern slavery. They come from countries including Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Syria and Iran.

Many people seeking sanctuary have experienced trauma before arriving in the UK and continue to face poverty, hardship and social isolation. Years of uncertainty without the right to work or study make it harder to integrate, contribute to society and protect mental wellbeing.



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VOLUNTEERS

IMPACT REPORT

VOLUNTEERS

OUR VOLUNTEERS

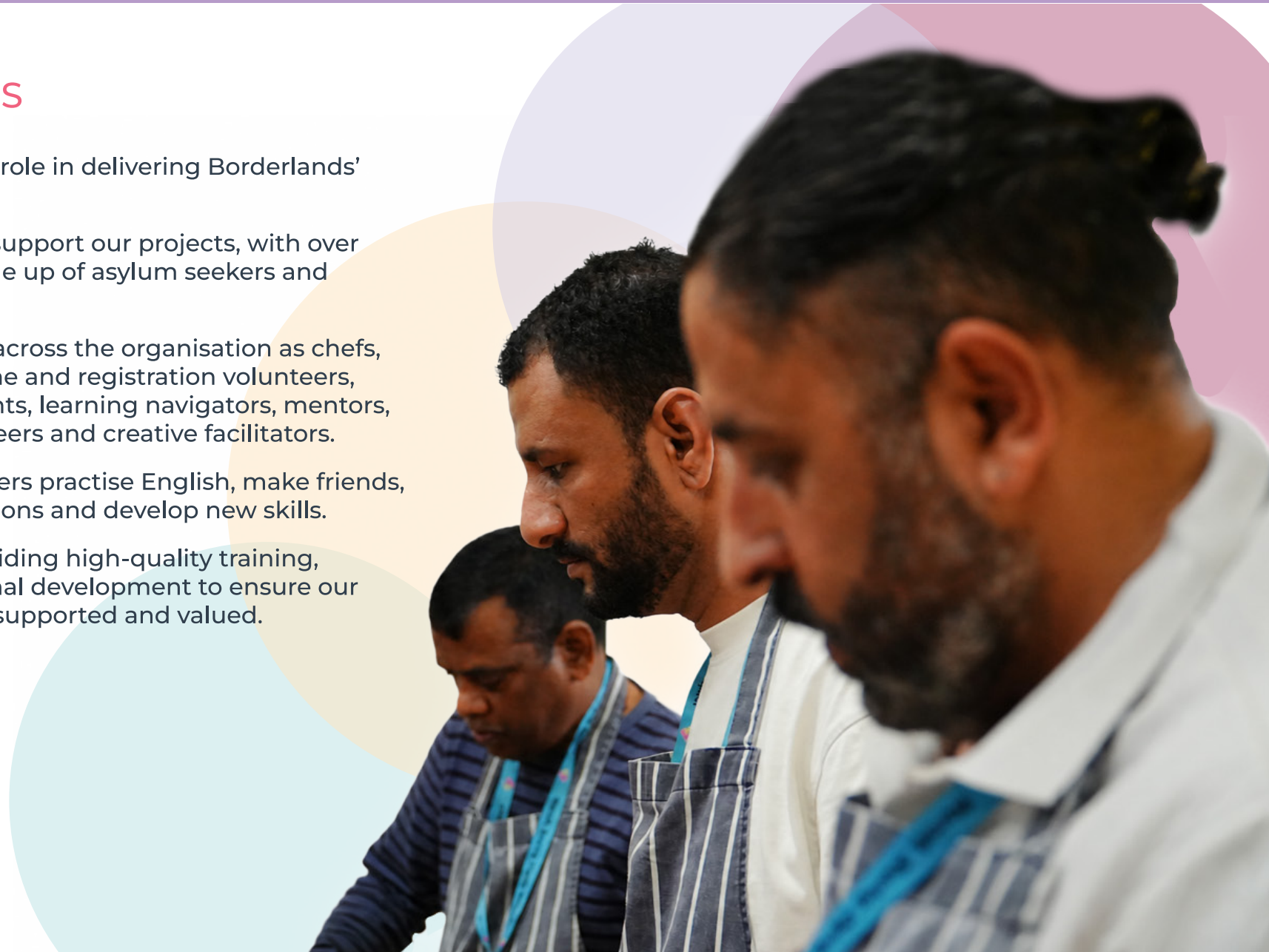
Our volunteers play a vital role in delivering Borderlands' work.

More than 150 volunteers support our projects, with over one-third of the team made up of asylum seekers and refugees.

Member-volunteers work across the organisation as chefs, kitchen assistants, welcome and registration volunteers, teachers, teaching assistants, learning navigators, mentors, social supermarket volunteers and creative facilitators.

Volunteering helps members practise English, make friends, build community connections and develop new skills.

We are committed to providing high-quality training, supervision and professional development to ensure our volunteers feel confident, supported and valued.



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OUR PROJECTS

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OUR PROJECTS

WELCOME CENTRE

WELCOME CENTRE

Based at the Assisi Centre in Easton, our Welcome Centre is a safe, trusted place of support and community for asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol.

We welcome new arrivals and provide a wide range of practical support, including:

- a warm welcome, triage and needs assessment;
- a relaxed social space with breakfast, hot drinks and opportunities to connect with others
- a computer café where members can access the internet, set up email accounts, complete applications, create CVs and print important medical or legal documents;
- cooking groups where people without kitchen facilities prepare and share meals inspired by their home countries with family and friends

- a shared hot lunch prepared by our volunteer chefs
- a social supermarket, allowing members to choose the food they need while ensuring support reaches those in greatest need
- one-to-one problem-solving, advocacy and referrals to specialist services;
- shower, towels and toiletries for members experiencing homelessness;
- therapeutic art sessions that provide relief from anxiety and stress;
- regular visits from partner organisations offering specialist advice and support, including Suicide Prevention UK, Herbalists without Borders and the Haven Health Clinic.

IMPACT REPORT

OUR PROJECTS

FEEL GOOD PROJECT

FEEL GOOD PROJECT

Our Feel Good Project offers a weekly programme of wellbeing activities that help members build connections, improve their wellbeing and find moments of respite.

Activities include:

- the Stitch Together sewing group, helping women develop creative skills, practise English and build confidence.
- yoga sessions that promote relaxation, wellbeing and social connection.

- football and climbing sessions that encourage physical activity and teamwork.
- sleep and relaxation sessions delivered by the Hope: Asylum Seekers and Refugees Trauma Service.
- a Creative Women's Group exploring important themes through games, drama, creative activities and visits to theatres and exhibitions.
- volunteer barbers and hairdressers who help members feel cared for and confident.
- an Access to Leisure scheme providing six months of free gym membership at Easton Leisure Centre.



IMPACT REPORT OUR PROJECTS

MENTORING PROJECT

MENTORING PROJECT

Our Mentoring Project provides one-to-one practical and emotional support from trained volunteer mentors, helping mentees work towards personal goals over a period of six to nine months.

Goals commonly include improving English, getting to know Bristol, accessing education, employment or volunteering opportunities, and improving housing. Mentors and mentees meet weekly and remain available between meetings when additional support is needed.

Mentors stand alongside their mentees as they navigate the asylum system or build independence after receiving leave to remain, providing encouragement, guidance and trusted support throughout their journey.

Of the mentoring partnerships which ended this year:

- 47% of mentees said they achieved all their goals and 53% partially achieved their goals ;
- 69% found volunteer placements and 24% went into education or training;
- 65% were supported to enrol in English classes;

- 100% of asylum seekers were supported to navigate the asylum system;
- 24% were offered employment or training.

“[The partnership] was fantastic... R supported me until I could stand on my feet and get out of the dark place I was in. The friendship has been amazing – it’s a lifetime friendship.”

– Mentee



IMPACT REPORT OUR PROJECTS

LEARNING PROJECT

LEARNING PROJECT

Many asylum seekers are unable to access statutory English language provision for six months after claiming asylum, and existing classes are often oversubscribed with long waiting lists.

Our Learning Project fills this gap by providing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes that help learners navigate daily life and a new culture, build friendships and access education and employment opportunities. We focus particularly on pre-entry and Entry Level 1 learners who are most at risk of isolation and exclusion, while also offering a poetry class for advanced learners and developing intensive Entry Level 2 courses for people with employment goals.

Small class sizes, supported by volunteer teachers and teaching assistants, ensure learners receive individual support. Alongside English classes, we provide learning navigation, including ESOL assessments, educational planning, support with college and university applications, and signposting to further learning opportunities. We also work closely with partners across the refugee sector to coordinate provision and share training, volunteers and resources.

I LIKE CATS

I like cats too
Me too!

So do !! and so does my brother

I DON'T LIKE CATS

Me neither

to - gown

stethoscope

hook

A doctor is ...

unpredictable weather

predict

"Thank you so much for all you do. I love these sessions and they are so good for my English. Before Borderlands I learned English but never like it. Here it changed my life."

– ESOL student

IMPACT REPORT

OUR PROJECTS

OUTREACH PROJECT

OUTREACH PROJECT

Our Outreach Project was initially established to support asylum seekers living in hotels and introduce them to Borderlands. It has since developed into a city-wide project with a strategic focus on health and wellbeing for new arrivals across Bristol.

We continue to deliver weekly drop-ins at hotels housing asylum seekers in central Bristol, working alongside Bristol Mind to provide practical support, health navigation and help tackle social and digital exclusion. We ensure residents' basic needs are met while supporting them to access local services, English classes, healthcare, volunteering and social activities. Our regular presence also enables us to identify safeguarding concerns and advocate for changes to accommodation where needed.

The project has expanded to include wellbeing activities both inside and outside the hotels, creating opportunities for fun, connection and personal growth during long periods of uncertainty. We have also extended our outreach across the city, supporting asylum seekers living in dispersal accommodation through community hubs, practical support, health navigation and wellbeing activities.

From our 2026 Outreach Project survey

- 100% felt supported, and said our services at the hotel have improved their mental health/wellbeing;
- 94% said Borderlands has helped them a lot during difficult times.

"The Borderlands drop-in is very helpful and supportive. It provides important services like English classes, bike support and bus tickets, which make daily life easier. The staff are kind and respectful, and I feel welcomed and comfortable every time I attend."

– Hotel resident



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THE CHANGEMAKERS

IMPACT REPORT THE CHANGEMAKERS

THE CHANGEMAKERS

This year we established and expanded our lived experience Changemakers group, bringing together members from across our projects to ensure lived experience remains at the heart of decision-making at Borderlands.

Meeting monthly with our CEO, the group presented at our AGM, contributed to our new organisational strategy, reviewed our values, Welcome Centre and Outreach activities, supported member consultations, and took part in training on public speaking, charity governance and intercultural communication.

The Changemakers also led our campaigning and influencing work, focusing on the affordability of public transport, conditions in asylum accommodation and protests outside asylum hotels.

“This group is what makes us feel ‘us’ again, like real people”

– Changemaker



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OUR IMPACT

IMPACT REPORT

OUR IMPACT

OUR MEMBERS TELL US

In spring 2026, we carried out a member survey with support from our member-volunteers and Changemakers. From 48 responses:

- 100% felt part of the Borderlands community, with 69% saying they felt very much part of it.
- 82% felt more confident and independent since becoming a member.
- 86% had improved their English and 71% had learned new skills.
- 96% would recommend Borderlands to others.
- 63% said Borderlands had helped them a lot during difficult times.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS



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CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY

B: When B applied to our Mentoring Project, she was living in a homeless shelter. She had recently received refugee status but spoke very little English and faced huge uncertainty about her future. Despite these challenges, she showed remarkable determination to rebuild her life.

B's mentor supported her to apply for housing, navigate local services and find a sense of belonging. After months of sofa surfing, she secured a home in Bristol, and having a stable home has transformed her life. She also enrolled in college courses in IT and English which improved her English and confidence.

Today, B is volunteering at Bristol Refugee Rights and a city farm, giving back to the community that welcomed her. She says: "It was so helpful having supportive company when I was looking for a place, going to house viewings together. I valued the encouragement - when I felt like I'd exhausted my options, [my mentor] would come up with something new."



IMPACT REPORT

PARTNERSHIPS

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP (BRASP)

We continued to work as part of BRASP (Bristol Refugee and Asylum Seeker Partnership) to coordinate support throughout the city, champion lived experience leadership and strengthen our advocacy and campaigning efforts. Borderlands plays a strategic role in a common needs assessment approach to inform the activities we develop as a sector and as individual organisations. As well as BRASP, we are active in several forums including the Bristol Refugee Forum, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Wellbeing Forum, the South West ESOL Network and the Young People's Forum.

As a direct result of close partnership work in 2025-26, the Peer Support Network has been formed, providing staff members with lived experience a regular, safe space to share the challenges and highlights associated with careers in the refugee sector. This year has also seen the launch of the Kompasi website, which provides a digital list of service providers that people seeking asylum and refugees can use or be signposted to.

THANK YOU

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have contributed to our work. Our funders this year included Bristol City Council, Garfield Weston Foundation, Henry Smith Foundation, Lloyds Bank Foundation, John James Bristol Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, Van NESTE Foundation, Quartet Community Foundation, Harold Hood Trust, Medlock Trust, Nisbet Trust and others, including those who prefer to be 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.

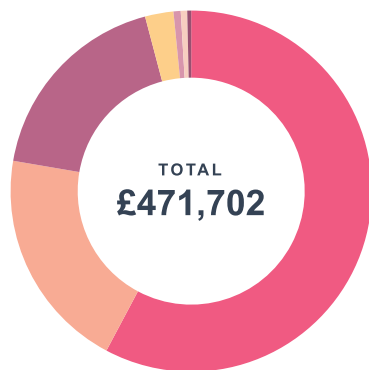
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FINANCIAL REVIEW

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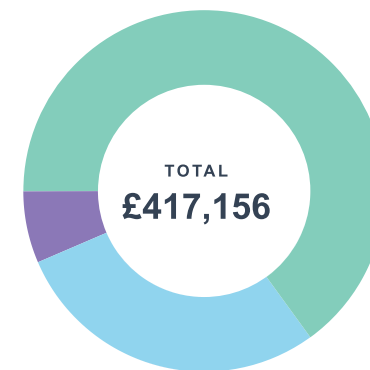
FINANCIAL REVIEW

OUR INCOME



Restricted grants	£272,525	57.8%
Unrestricted grants	£93,940	19.9%
Individuals	£85,834	18.2%
Charitable activities	£12,000	2.5%
Investments	£3,040	0.6%
Gifts in kind	£2,712	0.6%
Gift Aid	£1,651	0.4%

OUR EXPENDITURE



Project Delivery	£271,309	65.0%
Core Costs	£119,068	28.5%
Administration	£26,779	6.4%

* Core costs include expenditure on fundraising.

* Staffing costs are distributed according to relevant activities.

IMPACT REPORT

VOICES FROM OUR MEMBERS

“I learned so many new things and had a wonderful time. A special thank you to everyone who organised this fantastic trip. Your hard work made it a memorable experience.”

– Summer School Learner

“These small acts of kindness really give dignity to the asylum process. We don't take it for granted.”

– Hotel resident

“Thank you for your kindness, before coming here I felt despair but now I have some hope. This place is warm and friendly, I am so happy for your help.”

– member at the Welcome Centre

“Long live Borderlands. The staff are just too good, out of this world. Warm, concerned and caring. This is home away from home.”

– member supported by the Help Desk

“For the first time, I'm starting to feel that maybe I have a place in the UK too.”

– Mentee



BORDERLANDS

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BRISTOL
BS5 0RE

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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