



Impact Report 2026



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 Tigrinya

Bienvenidos  Spanish

স্বাগতম  Rohingya

مكـبـ أب حرم  Arabic

تس ال غار هبن  Pashto

歡迎  Cantonese

Welcome! 

Bienvenue  French

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Welcome! 

Ласкаво просимо  Ukrainian

Dobrodošli  Serbian

Bienvenidos  Spanish

歡迎  Cantonese

تس ال غار هبن  Arabic

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A Message From Our Chair

2026 marks the 75th anniversary of the Refugee Convention: an international agreement designed to provide some security for those forcibly displaced from their homes. Everyone who is outside their country of nationality and unable to return due to a “well-founded fear of being persecuted” is protected by the Convention and has the right to claim asylum.

Yet the past year has again seen rising public hostility to refugees fuelled by harsh and increasingly racist political rhetoric and horrifying public disorder, which in turn has fed government initiatives which have the effect of making refugees and those seeking asylum fearful for their future here.

So the work of Bath Welcomes Refugees becomes ever more important both at the simple human level of demonstrating humanity and compassion as well as practically in terms of support, encouragement and solidarity. We say refugees are welcome here!

We now have two people with lived experience of forced displacement on the trustee board, and their insights have fed into our strategy and policy making, together with an Advisory Group drawn from those we support who feed in ideas around measuring our impact, events for Refugee Week and how to provide the people we support with the best insights we can find on changes to Government policy.

Many thanks to everyone who makes it happen, including our partners in Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) and the many different community organisations and supporters who make it possible for us to enable people to feel safe and welcome in Bath and able to build new lives.

Stephen Whittle



About Bath Welcomes Refugees

Bath Welcomes Refugees (BWR) is a small local charity. It was started in 2015 at the time of the Syrian refugee crisis by a group of local people who wanted to do something practical to support Syrian families arriving in Bath. Ten years later, it has grown into an established and effective charity with a significant presence in Bath.

We are a non-partisan group with no political, religious or other affiliations, united in our aim to harness the goodwill of the local community to welcome refugees and asylum seekers to Bath and support them to build a new life here.

The support, mainly delivered by volunteers, ranges from hands on DIY and furnishing houses, to in-person English language classes and social groups and, less directly, campaigning and awareness-raising, hoping to make Bath and the UK a safer, more welcoming place for refugees.

A newly appointed Head of Charity leads a staff team of three. They coordinate the work of our volunteers whilst building and developing the charity to become even stronger and more effective. They are supported by the trustee board, management committee and a beneficiary advisory group, who are all volunteers.

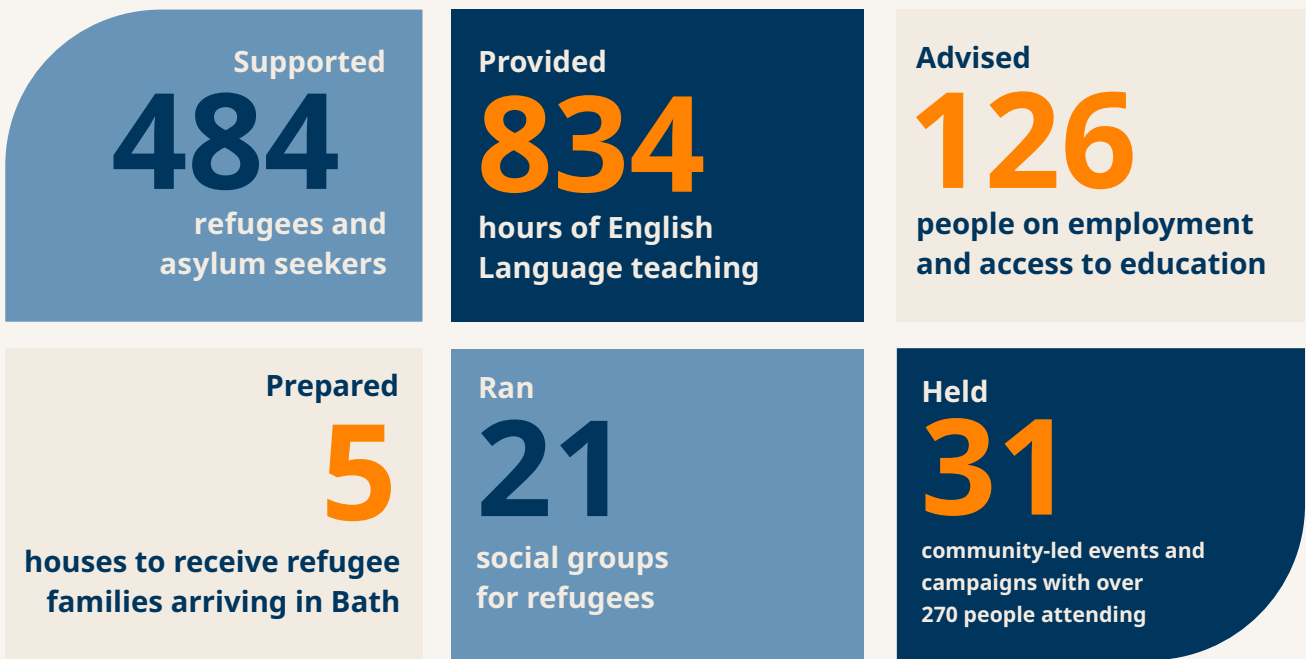
BWR has a close relationship with Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES)'s Resettlement Team and builds links and partnerships with like-minded individuals and organisations to improve the lives of refugees in Bath and work for a fairer society for all.



Our Year at a Glance

2026

Over the last year, BWR has made a real difference to the lives of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Bath. Here are some of the things our volunteers have done:



We have worked with over **15 different nationalities**, including people from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, Hong Kong, Poland, Libya, Thailand, Albania, Iraq, Philippines, Bangladesh, Egypt, Uganda, Pakistan, Tunisia, Palestine, Honduras, Georgia, Yemen, and Myanmar.

This was all done by the hard work of over **170 volunteers** delivering **over 6900 volunteering hours**.

The Journey to Belonging in Bath

When we first arrived in Bath, what I remember most is the warmth and practical support we received from BWR. They had prepared our home with things we would not even have known to ask for. Volunteers checked on us regularly, helped us register with the GP and NHS, supported us with our son's school registration, provided internet access and a laptop, and showed us around the city. In the early days, when we did not understand the transport system, they would drive us to appointments and other places we needed to go. They even helped us find an NHS dentist almost an hour away and took us there.

There was a lot to get used to. The weather was unfamiliar; we did not know where to shop, which places were more affordable or where to find ingredients for the food we were used to. Language was also a challenge for my wife, so BWR arranged volunteers to come to our home and support her with English. We also missed having our extended family around us, especially for our son, who had grown up surrounded by relatives and other children. BWR helped by organising social activities and introducing us to other Afghan families and people in the community.

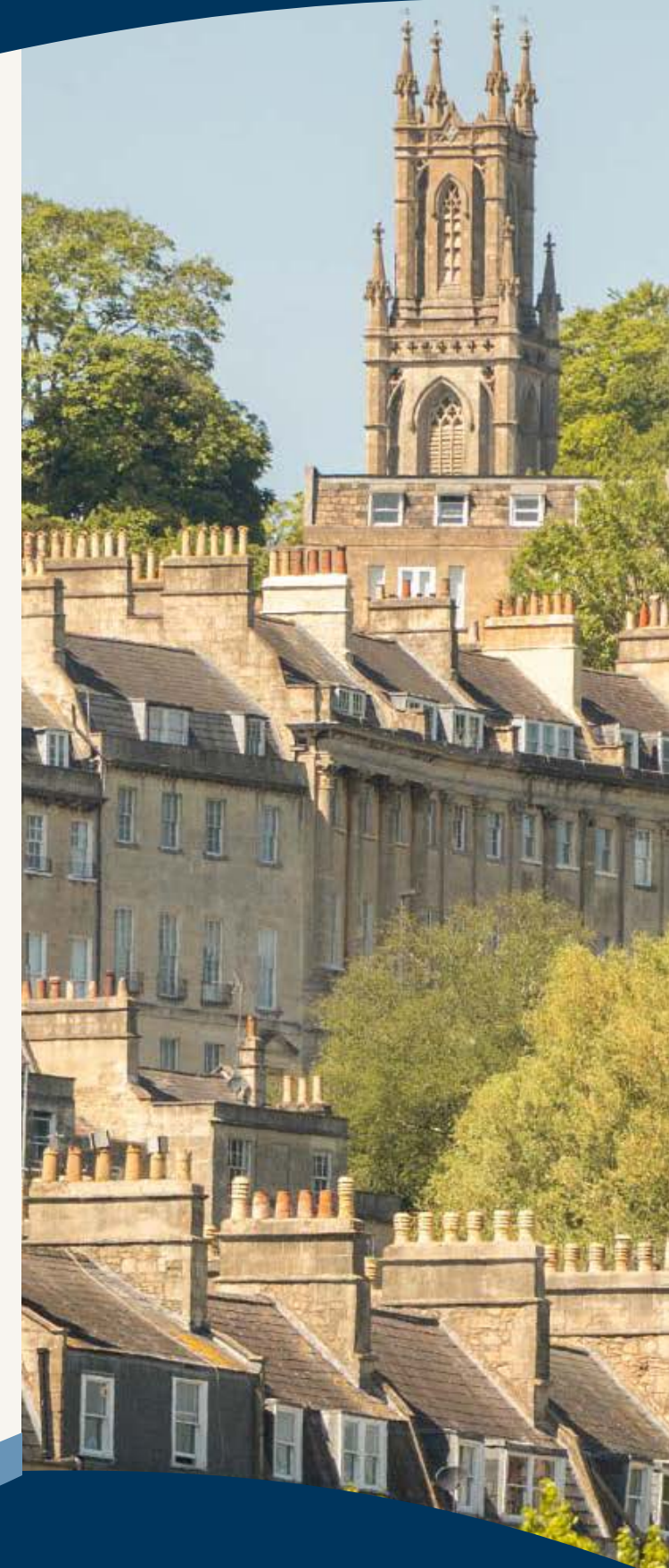
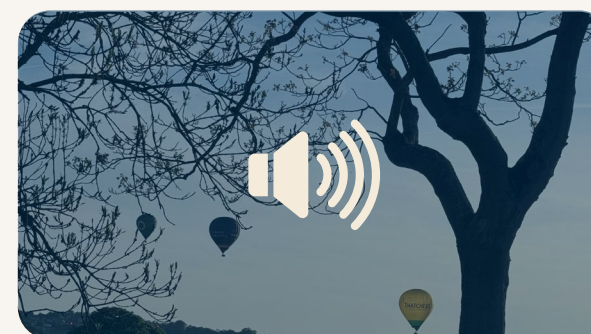
They also supported us with our small garden. We started growing vegetables and fruit, and that became very special for us. In those early days, before we had jobs and while so much of our life still felt uncertain, being able to grow something ourselves gave us a real sense of achievement. It was a small thing in one sense, but it gave us something positive to focus on and helped the house begin to feel more like our own home.

At first, I was not sure how much support a volunteer-led charity could provide, but I soon realised how wrong that assumption was. They often found ways to help even when something was not covered by the formal resettlement scheme. They found us a second-hand television, supported us with practical needs and advocated for us when necessary. They also supported us after our son was diagnosed with autism, helping us think about how to create a safe and supportive environment for him and giving us guidance as parents.

The practical help at the beginning was critical, but the support that continued afterwards made the greatest difference. English support, social activities, encouragement, help with wellbeing and

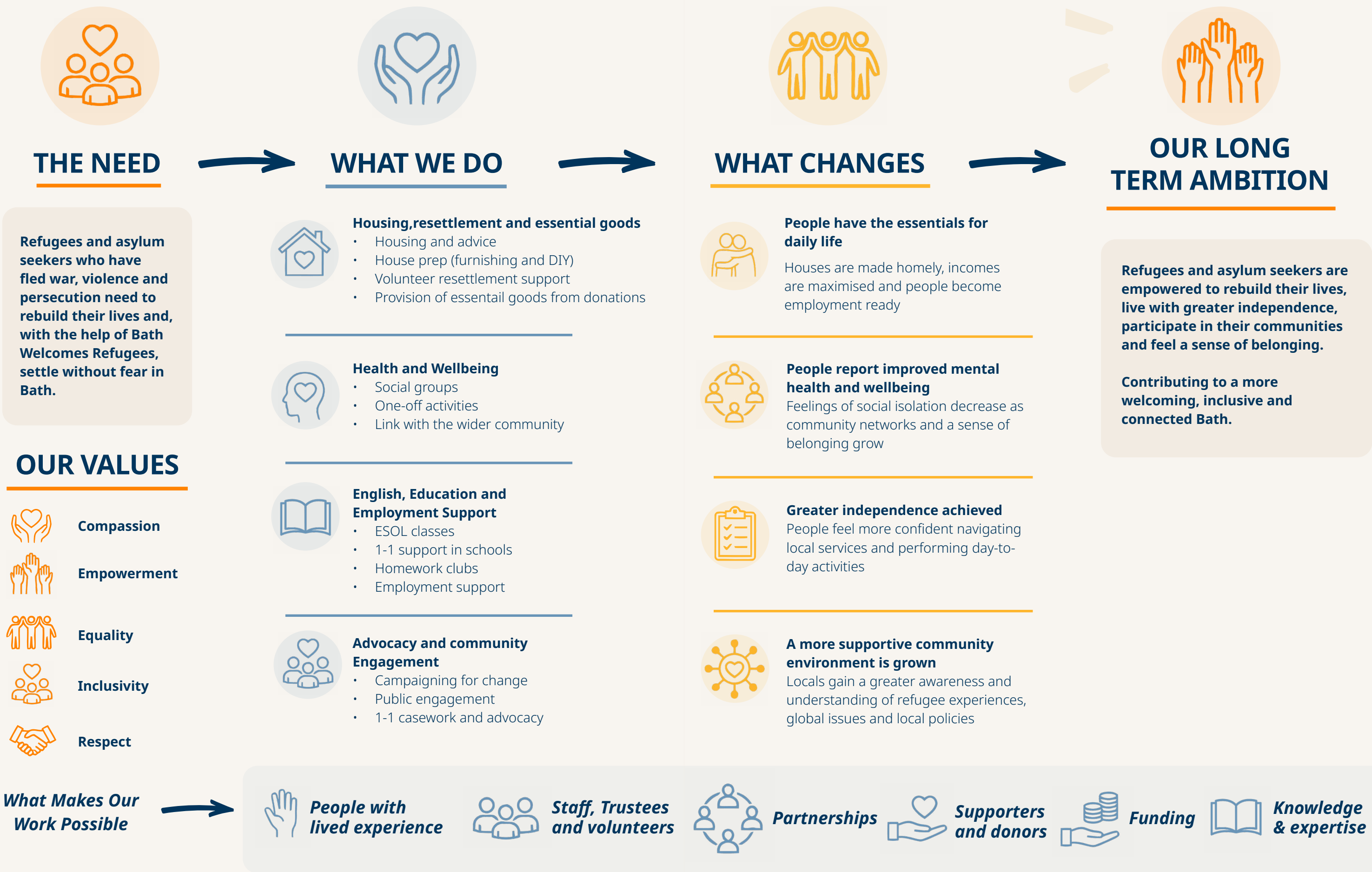
opportunities to volunteer all helped us build a life here. Bath did not become home at one particular moment. That feeling grew slowly as we got to know the city, made friends, found work, built routines and became more involved in the community. I now volunteer with BWR myself, and we are still in contact even though the formal resettlement support has ended.

I am proud of what my family has achieved, but I also know we did not do it alone. I want my family to remember this as a time when we had to start again, but also a time when people welcomed us, believed in us and stood beside us. With perseverance, opportunity and the support of others, we have been able to rebuild our lives, feel that we belong and give something back to the community that welcomed us. We are deeply grateful to BWR for all the support they have given us over the years.



Photograph: <https://explorebath.uk/moving-to-bath-heres-everything-you-need-to-know-first/>

Theory of *Change* - Bath Welcomes Refugees



1

Objective One Having the Essentials for Daily Life

We all know how stressful it can be to find a place to live, and for refugees and asylum seekers it can be even harder as there are often no family or friends to turn to for help, and Bath has many housing challenges.

Our housing advice volunteers support people looking for rented accommodation by helping them navigate the online rental market and provide practical help such as sorting out utilities.

Our DIY and Donations volunteers collect and deliver essential furniture and household items and prepare and furnish homes.



5

Properties have been prepared
for refugees arriving in Bath



13

People have received
housing advice



246

hours on housing related activities were
given by our volunteers



1

Our Impact Having the Essentials for Daily Life

Case Study

Renter's Rights Act Information campaign

With significant changes to renters' rights introduced this year, BWR developed an accessible information resource to help refugees and asylum seekers living in privately rented accommodation understand how the new legislation affects them. Designed in a clear, easy-to-understand format, the presentation explains key changes to tenants' rights and the protections available to those renting privately.

To maximise accessibility, the resource was translated into Arabic, Dari and Ukrainian and shared through our Advisory Group members and partner organisations, alongside an online information session for beneficiaries. By improving awareness of housing rights, we hope this resource empowers refugee tenants to access the protections intended by the new legislation.



Welcoming a Refugee Family to Bath

In March 2025, Bath Welcomes Refugee was contacted by Anne*, who told us that her terminally ill mother (a long-term supporter of BWR) had requested that her house be made available at an affordable rent for refugees when she died.

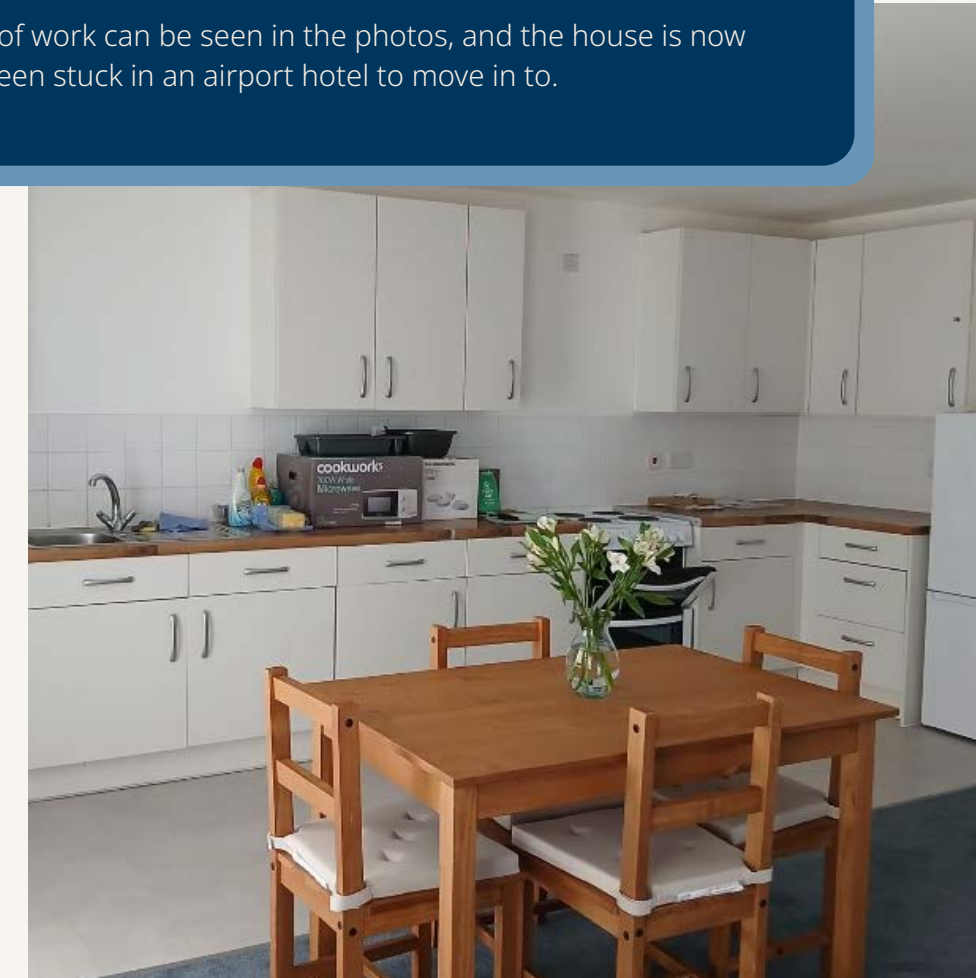
This extraordinarily generous gift meant that BWR could register with the Government's Community for Afghans scheme.

We worked with the Home Office, Charis (the lead charity under the scheme), B&NES Resettlement & Housing Standards Teams to make the house suitable to welcome an Afghan family.

**Not her real name*

Volunteers from our **DIY and Donations teams** spent over 100 hours repairing, decorating and furnishing the property to create a welcoming home for a family beginning a new chapter.

The results of all these hours of work can be seen in the photos, and the house is now ready for a family who have been stuck in an airport hotel to move in to.



2 Objective Two

Improved Mental & Physical Wellbeing

Many refugees and asylum seekers face complex challenges that can affect their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Alongside practical support with issues such as housing, immigration and education, we create safe, welcoming spaces where people can connect with others, share experiences, feel less alone and build a sense of community, belonging and hope.

Our volunteers spent **1,378** hours

21
Organised social group sessions

84 Hours given of one-to-one resettlement help

3 People were supported to access GPs and dentists



2

Our Impact

Improved Mental and Physical Wellbeing

Case Study

Addressing social isolation

Our Afghan women's group grew out of a series of social events for the wider Afghan community, when the women expressed a wish for a space where they could meet to socialise. Now a small group of women, some accompanied by their young children, meet monthly, and BWR has facilitated activities they have suggested, including beauty and henna art sessions, yoga and fitness classes, and a visit from a GP to answer questions about accessing the NHS. We are helping them set up a small catering business.

At our Ukraine social group, an older Ukrainian gentleman and one of our volunteers discovered a mutual enjoyment of playing chess and arranged to play a few games. Our volunteer reports that the gentleman now has an enthusiastic young Ukrainian opponent who also attends the social group and is looking forward to their next match!

"Why do I like these meetings? During them I feel like home, I'm close to people that get me. I can even call them my loved ones. This is very important when you are in immigration and when you are feeling alone. These meetings are like warm corner of light.... I'm very grateful for this opportunity, very grateful for the team members who help us to feel like England is our home. Thank you so much"

Olena - Ukraine Social Group attendee



Case Study

Sasha's art classes

As part of our commitment to improving mental wellbeing and fostering a supportive community, BWR hosted two public art workshops led by an Advisory Group member, Sasha. Participants created either a porcelain lamp or a cast of a personal item with sentimental significance, providing a creative space for self-expression, reflection and connection.

People with lived experience of forced migration were able to attend free of charge, with their places subsidised by paying members of the public. This approach not only removed financial barriers to participation but also brought together people from different backgrounds to share a creative experience.



3

Objective Three Independence & Personal Development

BWR aims to empower individuals to become self-sufficient. We do this by equipping them with the language skills and confidence needed to navigate everyday life, access and succeed in education and to find employment.

We do this through:

- Group and 1 to 1 ESOL (English as a second language) tuition and our weekly conversation club
- Employability support with CV writing, converting qualifications, finding and applying for jobs
- Our weekly study club supports children with reading, homework and revision; and our Education Team liaises with schools over children's support needs
- Help from our Higher Education Team with all aspects of primary, secondary, further and higher applications



People have
attended over

370

group or online ESOL classes



126

People have been advised on
employment and access to education



1,494

hours of education support have been delivered through ESOL classes, Tuesday Learning Space, 1-to-1 sessions and in-school teaching support

3

Our Impact

Independence and Personal Development

Focus on ESOL Teaching

We regularly check with our clients that our teaching sessions are helping them.

Our ESOL learners said:

32%

of respondents say their confidence has increased since they've been attending our ESOL classes

71%

Felt confident practising English after the session

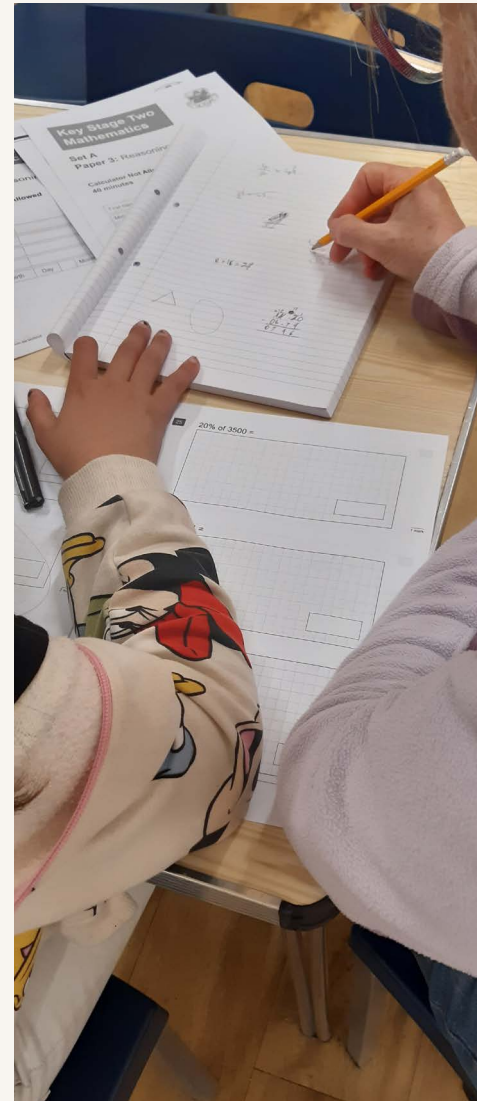
100%

Found the learning activities helpful

"Taking classes here is very helpful for learning English. I hope I can find a job and live a normal life!"

"I am extremely grateful to the teachers and the wonderful staff, as well as the teachers' patient and enthusiastic guidance, which has given me new gains and learnings."

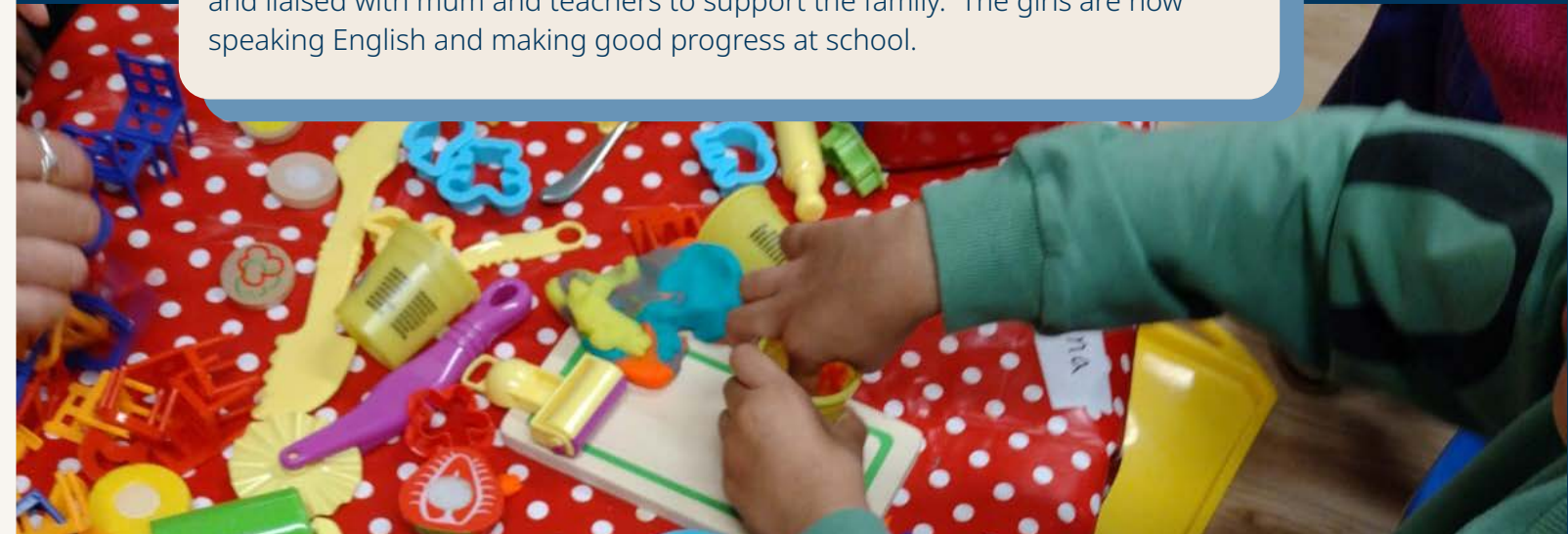
"Thank you for your dedication to our studies. You have worked so hard - I sincerely thank you from the bottom of my heart."



Case Study

Supporting children to settle in school

In 2025, a mother and her two daughters arrived in Bath after experiencing traumatic events in their home country. None of them spoke English, and it was particularly hard for the youngest girl to settle in school. Our volunteer worked closely with our partners in Bath, including B&NES resettlement team, Southside family support and the school, giving specific support with language and literacy and liaised with mum and teachers to support the family. The girls are now speaking English and making good progress at school.



Case Study

How our volunteers help refugees settle into life in Bath

Our volunteer first met with a young Afghan mum to help her learn how to use Google Maps on her phone and find her way around Bath. After finding out what mum wanted to do, the volunteer went with the mum and her son to a local toddler group, which mum now attends independently. They continue to meet for coffee and a catch-up every few weeks.

One of our newly arrived Afghan fathers confessed to feeling bewildered by some aspects of British culture and simply wanted someone to talk about this with. We matched him with a male volunteer, and they enjoyed a few walks along the river and chats together.

4

Objective Four Building a Supportive Community



BWR is built on the goodwill of the Bath community through the fantastic work of our volunteers and our partnerships with local organisations and agencies.

We have **177 volunteers from Bath and surrounding areas** who bring a wealth of expertise, skills, and hard work to support the refugees and asylum seekers in the area.

Through our volunteers we have built networks, creating partnerships and relationships such as our work with Bath Abbey or lawyers in Bath.

BWR's Beyond Bath talks are a series of events that bring the wider community together to shine a light on global migration issues through the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. At each event, local residents, volunteers and those with direct experience of displacement can come together to listen, learn and reflect, challenging stereotypes and inspiring new ways of thinking.

“Alongside delivering practical support to the people we support, through our Beyond Bath programme, we help the local community better understand the global events and circumstances that lead people to seek sanctuary in Bath. Usually delivered through panel discussions, these events bring together different perspectives and create space for audience members to ask questions, explore wider geopolitical contexts and deepen their understanding of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.”



Case Study - Cortado Cafe

This year, BWR began a new partnership with Cortado Cafe, whose team generously offered support through fundraising opportunities, event catering and barista training for people we support. As part of this partnership, three BWR beneficiaries took part in a free barista training workshop, learning to prepare a range of coffees in a calm and supportive environment.

And a quote from a participant: I really appreciate this experience. Thanks a lot for your choicing me to do this experience. thanks for the Boss who gave us this chance. it was really interesting. and the guy who teaches us was very kind, he gave us many times to trying making barista coffee. many thanks.



4

Our Impact

Building a Supportive Community



Case Study

Building networks of support, working with local lawyers

Over the past year, our support coordinators, alongside one of our volunteers, have built relationships with local immigration solicitors and legal aid providers. Their work has resulted in a growing directory of legal aid firms, alongside a network of solicitors willing to provide ad hoc pro bono advice to our staff and beneficiaries on complex immigration cases.

By expanding our network of trusted legal professionals, we are better equipped to signpost clients to suitable legal representation and access specialist advice when needed.

"Bath Abbey has supported BWR's language classes for refugees by hosting a session every Friday since 2022. This year gave us an important opportunity to join BWR in marking Refugee Week by offering an art display space. The powerful portraits by Bill Knight stimulated rich and varied conversations with the public throughout the week, helping to raise understanding of the contribution that refugees have made and continue to make to the UK. Bath Abbey was proud to partner with BWR, and we look forward to expanding our work together in the future."

**Polly Andrews, Learning Manager,
Bath Abbey**



What our Volunteers Say

In May and June 2026 we surveyed our volunteers. 96% of those who responded say they would recommend volunteering with BWR to a friend. Here are some of the things volunteers highlighted:

"Meeting amazing people from very different cultures from mine who have gone through very difficult situations in their life and being able to help them understand the country and culture that has welcomed them."

"Knowing that you make a tangible difference which is disproportionate to the effort involved."

"It's a great opportunity to learn, meet new people, and contribute to building a more welcoming and inclusive community in Bath and beyond."

"Working with these young people is a privilege and a pleasure which BWR manages very well."

"I realise that happiness comes some time when we give, not just when we take."



Challenges from 2025–26 and how we responded

Our 2024/25 Impact Report identified 5 key challenges which underpinned our strategy for 2025/26:



1 Secure accommodation to support an additional refugee family from Afghanistan

What we did

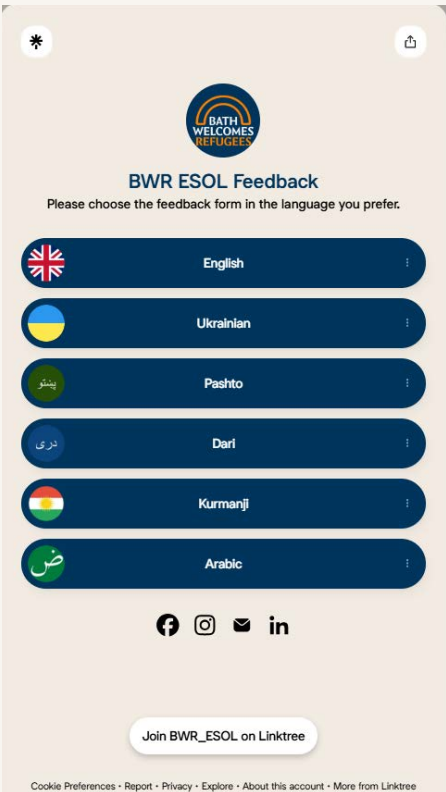
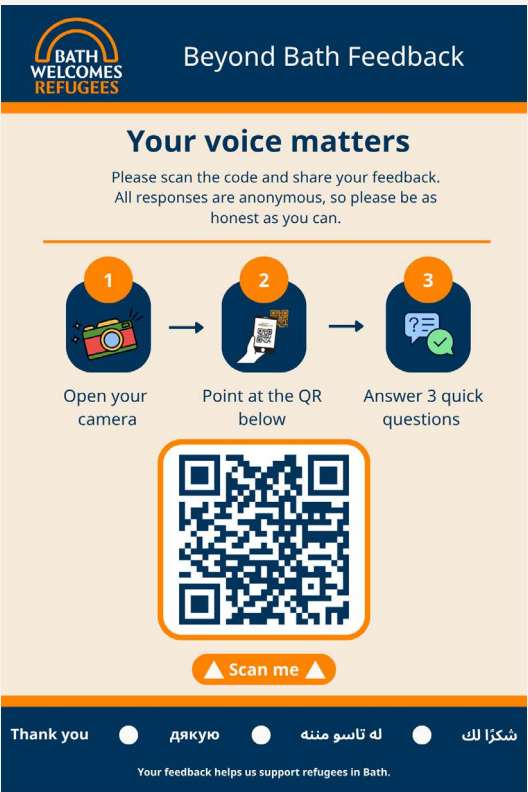
The case study on page details the property we have secured, and the work carried out by our DIY and Donations teams to prepare this for a new Afghan family.

2 Co-create plans for Refugee Week 2026 in partnership with the communities we support.

We wanted Refugee Week 2026 to reflect the ideas, priorities and aspirations of the communities we support, rather than simply creating a programme on their behalf.

What we did

- BWR staff and people with lived experience attended open festival planning meetings, contributing ideas and sharing the aspirations of the communities we support.
- Shared our planned BWR programme with the Advisory Group for feedback.
- Used this input to consider the accessibility, relevance and financial viability of our activities for refugee and asylum-seeking communities.
- This helped us take a more participatory approach to planning Refugee Week and strengthen the role of people with lived experience in shaping our activities.



3 Deepen our understanding of our impact by involving people with lived experience in decision-making and strengthening our feedback mechanisms.

What we did

We have appointed two Trustees and a staff member with living experience.

Our Advisory Group, made up of current and former people supported by BWR, has been formally incorporated into BWR's governing structure ensuring its insights and recommendations are routinely shared with staff, the Management Committee and the Board of Trustees. This has strengthened our commitment to co-production, helping to ensure that the voices of those we support are not simply heard, but actively inform decisions across every level of the organisation.

We have introduced multilingual feedback posters with QR codes at group activities to make it easier for people to share their feedback.

We revised volunteer monitoring forms to better capture the impact and outcomes of our work and deepen our understanding of the difference our work makes.



4 Ensure long-term sustainability by focusing on financial resilience and funding diversification.

Financial sustainability remains an ongoing challenge for BWR. We recognise the importance of building a stronger and more diverse financial base so that we can continue to support refugee and asylum-seeking communities over the long term.



What we did

- Continued to focus on financial resilience and funding diversification.
- Developed priorities for the next 18 months as part of our organisational strategy.
- Began planning for a more sustainable funding model that can support our future ambitions while protecting our core services.
- This remains an area of ongoing work rather than a challenge that has been fully resolved.

5 Support and develop our volunteers to enhance the effectiveness of their work.

Volunteers are at the heart of BWR and deliver the majority of our support.

What we did

This year we have inducted 38 new volunteers. 15 volunteers completed BWR's Volunteer Development Training, 33 completed Safeguarding Refresher training and 11 completed First Aid Training.

Our Volunteer Survey highlighted training needs identified by volunteers themselves, and we are putting together a programme of training and events for the coming year based on these.

We are also developing new volunteer teams, including housing and wellbeing teams, to respond more effectively to the needs of the people we support.



Milestones



BWR's 10th Anniversary

BWR marked the occasion by hosting celebrations for beneficiaries, volunteers and partners. This milestone provided an opportunity not only to reflect on a decade of supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary, but also to invest in the charity's future. Alongside delivering vital frontline support, we strengthened our strategic direction, improved how we understand and demonstrate our impact, ensured the voices of those we support inform our decision-making, and positioned the organisation to respond to the changing needs of our community for years to come.



Building communications capacity through partnerships

Our partnership with Bath Spa University saw nine teams of Promotional Media students pitching ideas on how to improve BWR's external communications using social media, which we will be developing in the next academic year. We also welcomed our first student intern from BSU. The placement brought fresh perspectives and additional capacity to the charity while providing valuable experience for a future professional entering the voluntary sector. Developing opportunities such as this not only strengthens our own organisational resilience but also helps cultivate the next generation of people committed to supporting refugees and people seeking sanctuary.



Advice Desk – improving access to advice

The launch of our weekly volunteer-run Advice Desk has significantly strengthened our frontline support. By providing a clear first point of contact, we are able to respond quickly to straightforward enquiries, identify emerging issues earlier and connect people with the most appropriate support, whether within BWR or through specialist external agencies. The service has improved both accessibility for clients and efficiency within the organisation, making use of our skilled volunteers and freeing up our Support Coordinator's time to dedicate to more complex casework.

Milestones



Theory of Change

This year we developed BWR's first Theory of Change, creating a shared framework for how our work contributes to lasting change for those we support. It provides a clear steer for decision-making, helping us to prioritise resources, shape future services and ensure every aspect of our work contributes towards our long-term mission. It also strengthens our ability to communicate our impact to funders, partners and supporters, laying the foundations for a sustainable future.

Theory of Change - Bath Welcomes Refugees



Wilson's: Solicitors

Building links with asylum lawyers

Our Support Coordinators identified securing legal advice and representation as a huge challenge for many of the people seeking asylum we support. Over the past year, supported by one of BWR's volunteers, they have built relationships with immigration solicitors and legal aid providers. Their work has resulted in a growing directory of legal aid firms, alongside a network of solicitors willing to provide ad hoc pro bono advice to our staff and beneficiaries on complex immigration cases.

By expanding our network of trusted legal professionals, we are better equipped to signpost clients to suitable legal representation and access specialist advice when needed.



Challenges for the year ahead

Strengthening BWR:

- 1 Strengthening impact monitoring**
by developing more streamlined, focused monitoring systems to ensure data we collect meaningfully supports learning, reporting and decision-making.
- 2 Developing stronger partnerships**
in order to increase BWR's service offer while maintaining long-term sustainability. As a small organisation with a limited staff team, BWR must focus on working collaboratively and avoid duplicating services that are already being delivered effectively elsewhere.
- 3 Widen the reach and impact of our communications**
by building on our partnership with Bath Spa University as well as our Beyond Bath work, to ensure key messages reach both those we support and the local community.

Responding to global challenges

Preparing for policy change

With proposed changes to UK immigration policy expected to place greater emphasis on higher-level English language proficiency for settlement, we have begun preparing to expand our ESOL provision to include B1 to B2-level learners. This proactive approach will help more people gain the English language skills needed for settlement and, where applicable, British citizenship, while also improving employment opportunities and supporting long-term integration into UK society.

Bringing Communities Together to counter hostile narratives

By continuing to build strong and effective partnerships to establish refugee (co)-led projects and projects which explicitly seek to bring together different community groups, and support our beneficiaries in building connections with the wider community.

Talks, exhibitions, community meals and art workshops provide opportunities for local residents to learn, connect and celebrate together. As the festival grows, so too does its role in challenging misconceptions, amplifying refugee voices and strengthening community cohesion across Bath and North East Somerset.



Our Partners & Supporters

This year, BWR worked in partnership with **over 15 organisations** across the charity, education, business, and cultural sectors, demonstrating the pivotal role collaboration plays in helping us achieve our mission. These partnerships have significantly increased our capacity, enabling us to offer opportunities and services that would not otherwise have been possible through BWR resources alone.

Together, we have delivered community events, exhibitions, wellbeing activities, employment support and fundraising opportunities, while also securing access to specialist equipment and a range of venues.

Our partners have helped us reach new audiences, raise awareness of the experiences of people seeking sanctuary, and create more opportunities for meaningful connection between refugee and local communities. As a result, we have been able to respond more effectively to the diverse needs of people seeking sanctuary, while helping to make Bath & NE Somerset a more welcoming and inclusive place for everyone.

Particular thanks to B&NES Council who fund the co-ordination of volunteers to assist the Resettlement Team at B&NES in supporting refugees and displaced communities.



How You Can Help



Become a volunteer - see our website for an overview of volunteering opportunities, and email volunteering@bathwelcomesrefugees.org.uk for more information.



[Donate or fundraise for us](#)



Provide storage space for the donations of furniture and household items we receive - contact donations@bathwelcomesrefugees.org.uk if you have storage space available.



Attend a Beyond Bath event

keep an eye on our [website](#) for upcoming events. Share our story. Talk to people about what we do!



Offer training, mentoring or employment to someone BWR supports. Contact

info@bathwelcomesrefugees.org.uk



Thank You

On behalf of Bath Welcomes Refugees, a massive "Thank You" to our team of dedicated volunteers, and our partners and supporters who make it possible for us to enable people to feel safe and welcome in Bath and build new lives.

Thank you!

To learn more and keep up to date visit
bathwelcomesrefugees.org.uk



Bath Welcomes Refugees is a registered charity, no. 1171442

Report designed by Madeleine Lumley