

Impact Report

Aid Box Community

Support, Supplies, and Sanctuary for Refugees
and People Seeking Asylum in Bristol



 AidBoxCommunity

2024-25



Who we are

Aid Box Community is a registered charity committed to upholding the basic human rights of refugees and people seeking asylum in Bristol.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1



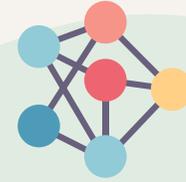
To relieve refugees and those seeking asylum (and their dependants) in Bristol and surrounding areas of poverty and financial hardship by providing free essential living items and other emergency support.

2



To provide opportunities for community engagement, recreation, preparation for employment and access to support services in order for them to become emotionally and financially independent.

3



To work with other organisations to enhance the positive impact of services supporting refugees and people seeking asylum.



VISION

We envision a world where the rights of refugees and those seeking asylum are respected so that they have the opportunity to achieve financial and emotional independence.



MISSION

We provide a warm welcome to people seeking asylum and offer the support they need to access living essentials, emotional support, recreation, shelter, community, legal advice, health care and employment.



VALUES

We treat everyone with respect, compassion and love and seek to offer hope, advocacy and a space to belong. We welcome all displaced people regardless of their faith, race, ethnicity, culture, age, disability, gender and sexuality.

How we achieve change.

The Problem

The basic needs of refugees and people seeking asylum are being neglected.

Activities

Supplies: → Free Shop
→ Essential Aid Fund
Essential living items

Support: → Signposting
→ Bus Fares
→ Crisis Fund
Emotional, financial, and physical

Sanctuary: → Welcome
→ Hub
→ Connections
→ Activity Program
Community and belonging

Outcomes

Refugees and people seeking asylum...

...access appropriate material support...

...live more active lives...

...feel socially connected...

...know where to access the support services they need...

...find volunteering and training opportunities.

Impacts

Basic needs of refugees and people seeking asylum have been met.

Refugees and people seeking asylum have a community they feel they belong to.

Refugees are prepared for employment and independent living.

Vision

(Long-term positive change)

The rights of refugees and those seeking asylum will be respected so that they have the opportunity to achieve financial and emotional independence.



Director's Summary

As we approach the 10th anniversary of Aid Box, I've been reflecting on the moment that led to its creation. Sitting at my kitchen table, I saw the heartbreaking image of Alan Kurdi—the young Syrian boy whose tragic death, along with that of his family as they desperately sought safety, shook the world. The visceral reaction I felt in that moment—an overwhelming sense of sorrow and urgency—led me to put out a call for help. What followed was extraordinary: friends, friends of friends, and eventually the wider Bristol community came together to support the mission. Aid Box was born. What began with a year spent in the Dunkerque refugee camp—meeting the most basic human needs of those stranded and forgotten—has grown into something incredibly special.

We went on to create the Welcome Hub and Free Shop in Bristol—a space filled with warmth, dignity, and humanity. A place for people to belong, where connections are made between individuals who may never have otherwise crossed paths. The mix of cultures, languages, and religions continues to bring joy and meaning in a world that too often brings harm. Ten years on, that visceral feeling remains as we stand in solidarity with those who have been displaced and thank everyone who has made our special community what it is today.

The past year has been one of both challenge and change across the refugee sector. The passing of the Rwanda Bill created widespread fear. In August, far-right violence in Bristol and across the UK deeply impacted our community, followed by a troubling rise in Islamophobic and racist incidents. With the change in government, the Rwanda policy was reversed and asylum claims began to be processed more quickly. This led to increased dispersal to Bristol and greater movement in and out of the city, requiring us to adapt rapidly. These shifts underscored the importance of trauma-informed, compassionate, and inclusive services.

After two and a half years of searching, we're thrilled to be moving into a new home in September 2025. This space will bring all ABC services under one roof.

Together with the BRASP partnership, we advocate for transport access, the right to work, and free legal support, and we continue championing lived experience leadership. Our Lived Experience Working Group continues to shape our work, now supported by four trustees and a new staff lead with lived experience. Our team has grown to 12 part-time staff (equivalent to 5.2 full-time roles), and we're excited to welcome John Aguirre as our new Operations Manager. We extend a heartfelt thanks to Clare Chislett for her lasting leadership.

I am filled with gratitude for our staff, trustees, volunteers, and supporters. Your passion, love, dedication, and commitment continue to inspire us every day.

With Love and Hope, Imogen

Year in numbers

4041

individuals and families have **benefited from our Free Shop.**



4490

bus tickets were provided for people to access our services.

They are very helpful. They are important. I live far away. Now I can get to college, attend football and ABC.



When asked if Aid Box Community had made a **positive impact on their and their family's life...**



89%

said ABC helped improve **physical and/or mental health.**



86%

said they **met new people or made friends** through our programs.



72%

reported **engaging in more activities.**



89%

said ABC made them feel **more confident & independent in their life.**

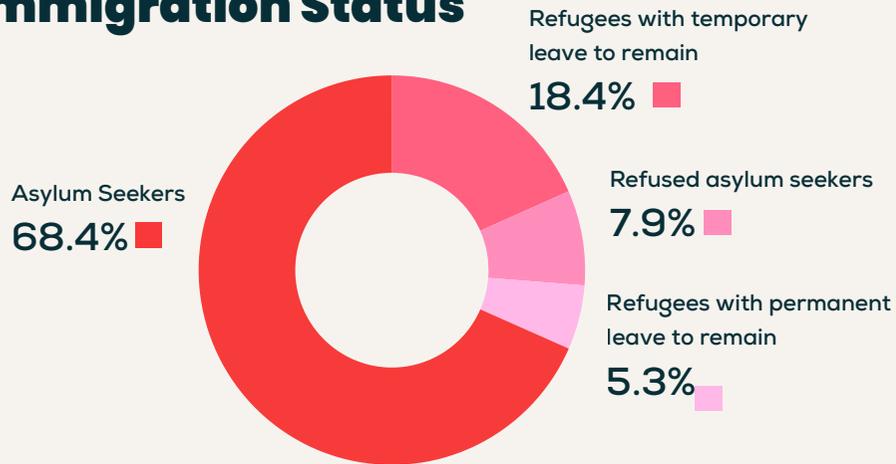
83%

reported to **have learnt a new skill**



89%
said
YES!

Immigration Status



Our Volunteers

This year, over **23,426 hours** were generously given by our incredible volunteers. Their warmth, dedication, and loyalty continue to **inspire us** every day and are the reason we are able to deliver our services.

We introduced a number of **new volunteer roles and welcomed 64 volunteers with lived experience to the team.** We added First Aid and English communication sessions to our training. Regular supervision keeps volunteers supported, connected, and engaged for the long term.



“My experience with the charity was invaluable. Such a beautiful and enriching experience - meeting so many wonderful people with the context of such an unpleasant reality.”

351

volunteers gave their time.

64 of whom have lived experience of the asylum system.

“VOLUNTEERING HELPED ME TO FIND FRIENDS AND FEEL ACCEPTED IN THE SOCIETY.”

A'S STORY – FINDING BELONGING IN BRISTOL



"My name is A; I'm 28 and I am Syrian. I left Syria nearly 5 years ago **looking for a safe place which respects human beings and values human life** – unfortunately, **all my family are back home** because it is such a long and dangerous journey for anyone who wants to cross the borders."

The early days in Bristol were incredibly difficult for A. **"I felt lonely and secluded** from the surroundings, and I was so **depressed** many times because I wanted to go out and be connected with people, but **I didn't know how.**"



A is deeply grateful for the support he's received. "This country gave me a lot," he says, referring to the accommodation and meals provided. But he also reflects on the deeper needs of asylum seekers: **"Most of all, we need people that really care and see us as human beings, I believe that ABC does that, and they're always ready to help in any matter or circumstance."**



A first connected with ABC through the **cooking group** and later **helped raise £6,000 in a charity fundraiser**. He's visited the **Free Shop**, joined our **befriending programme**—remaining close friends with his match—and has taken part in our **men's activity groups**. He's also shared his lived experience to **help train new volunteers** in cultural awareness.

Through ABC, A found not just support, but connection and purpose. **"ABC helped me to face difficulties which any asylum seeker might have, by being close to us and paying attention, giving pieces of advice and creating activities to connect us more with the community, and give us the chance to make friends around."**

These experiences have been transformative. **"All of that made me find myself better than before by doing activities and projects I like with amazing people."**

He now has refugee status, is working, and continues to pursue his passion for food while settling into life in the UK.

"I can say now I'm happy."



Free Shop & Welcome Hub

The Free Shop & Welcome Hub provides essential living items, a warm welcome, and signposting to local support services across Bristol.

This year, our Free Shop has seen an increase in demand,

with **daily visitor numbers** recently increasing to an average of **40–50 people**.

“When I think of ABC, it reminds me that I’m a person — not just an asylum seeker.”

“I was lucky enough to meet people like you in the hardships of my life to realise that kindness is still valuable in the world.”

On the busiest day, we had 83 service users not including children. **Managing** this consistent **high footfall** is a challenge our dedicated staff and volunteers rise to daily — **balancing efficiency, fairness, and** above all, **a warm, respectful welcome** for every individual who walks through our doors.



Visited by **2103** adults.

9524 visits

to the Free Shop & Welcome Hub.

414,490 items

have been **donated, recycled & re-homed.**

An average of **38** visits a day



£25,479

was spent on **new items** (e.g., nappies, underwear, toiletries).



56

agencies refer people to our services.

53 people received

emergency aid through the **crises fund.**



£8,643.61 funds spent.



“ABC help us to look beautiful and keep us warm from the cold”



We continue to **prioritise fair, dignified aid distribution** through ongoing improvements.



Thanks to **generous donors** and our **eight daily volunteers**, high-quality items are quickly sorted and stocked.



Many of those we assist are **relocated at short notice**, often beyond Bristol. We **respond swiftly to urgent relocations** with essentials and emotional support for all involved.



Outreach

This winter we responded to an **outbreak of scabies** in one of the hotels by **purchasing clothes** for the residents who had been affected.

Sustainability

Alongside recycling hundreds of thousands of items for refugee families, **we've cut plastic waste** by encouraging bottle refills for shampoo, laundry, and washing-up liquid. This simple shift is now part of ABC culture, with many collecting bottles for reuse. **Surplus or unsuitable donations are also passed to recycling centres** or other charity shops, so nothing goes to waste.



Crises Fund

- A vital safety net preventing deeper crisis.
- 53 individuals supported with urgent aid when no other help was available.
- Referrals from trusted partners (e.g. BRASP, Unseen, NHS, BCC).

“You have touched our life in so many beautiful ways, and we will never forget the warmth and care you bring into our world.”



The Free Shop is a vital **source of stability, kindness, and support in uncertain times**. For many, we're a constant in a life full of change — often prompting the question during relocations:

“Is there another ABC in that city?”

Activity Groups & Trips

Activity Groups & Trips offer safe spaces for refugees and asylum seekers to connect, share skills and make memories.

In 2024/2025 we ran **7 weekly activity groups** and **17 day trips** in and around Bristol.



583

have **attended regular activities**, sports groups & trips.



Women's Group 161 participants

- Weekly creative sessions: Boost confidence & connection
- Guest workshops: Build skills & inspire growth
- Winter Party: 60+ attendees

Football 327 participants

- Two weekly 2-hour sessions
- 40+ men per session
- Boosts fitness, wellbeing, and community



Multi-Sports 33 participants

- Weekly sessions launched due to high demand
- Now in 3rd successful 6-week cycle, hoping this will become a regular group soon!



Swimming 26 participants

- In partnership with Open Minds Active.
- Builds confidence, connection, and wellbeing.



Gardening 41 participants

- Successful summer sessions
- Future plans: on-site garden groups



Trips & Cooking

- Visits to: Botanical Gardens, Harbour by Ferry, We the Curious, Coexist Kitchen, and local farms.
- Offer joy, exploration, celebration & community bonding.



Evolving Activity Groups Programme

Our groups continue to adapt based on community interest. Multi-Sports has grown into a regular activity, while Gardening will now run as occasional workshops. These changes reflect our **ongoing commitment to co-creating meaningful activities with participants, and in collaboration with partners** like Lockleaze Sports Centre, Open Minds Active, Coexist Community Kitchen, Bristol Old Vic, Trinity Centre and others.



“ABC helped me to socialise with people from different parts of the world. Playing football at ABC is more than a therapist.”



“Because I am an asylum seeker I am not sure if I can do other activities, not to earn money but as a way to make new friends, connections in many environments, like sports for example.”

Day Trips

This year, **286 adults and children** joined us on day trips that offered space to relax, connect, and explore the city. Special thanks to **We The Curious, Bristol Ferry Boats, Bristol Botanical Gardens, and The Community Farm** for making these experiences possible.



Summer Party

One of our favourite traditions at ABC is the Summer Party—a joyful day where our community of volunteers, visitors, members, staff, and supporters comes together to celebrate. Nearly 200 people joined us to enjoy delicious food from around the world and fun activities for all ages. It was a heartwarming reminder of the connection and sense of belonging we share.

“I feel safe there.”

“I am free here”

Aid Box Connections

Aid Box Connections is a 10-week befriending programme that connects displaced people in Bristol with local volunteers to reduce isolation, build friendships, and foster a stronger sense of belonging.

This year marks the **fifth anniversary** of the Connections programme, which began during the Covid-19 pandemic to address the severe isolation experienced by refugees and asylum seekers. **Since its inception, we've connected nearly 400 individuals** through friendship—many of whom remain in touch, with some forming life-long bonds.

What have we learnt in 5 years?

The desire to provide welcome, kindness and generosity has never been stronger. Cultural exchange is enriching and a great privilege!



“

I feel very comfortable to share what is happening to me. She's a close friend now. I like speaking to her and we have lots in common. The time doesn't work to talk to close friends from my country. Joanna is there for me. ”

“ *It a beautiful feeling that I can come to you, talk to you and you'd listen to me.* ”

94%

of those who took part in the programme said they felt **less isolated** as a result.

76

people have taken part in our **Connections** befriending programme.



83%

of those who took part in the programme are **still friends after 6 months.**

84%

report that being connected **improved their mental health** and sense of **well-being.**



**"WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS
AND YOU'RE NERVOUS ABOUT IT, YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THE
WORLD BECOMES VERY PESSIMISTIC.**

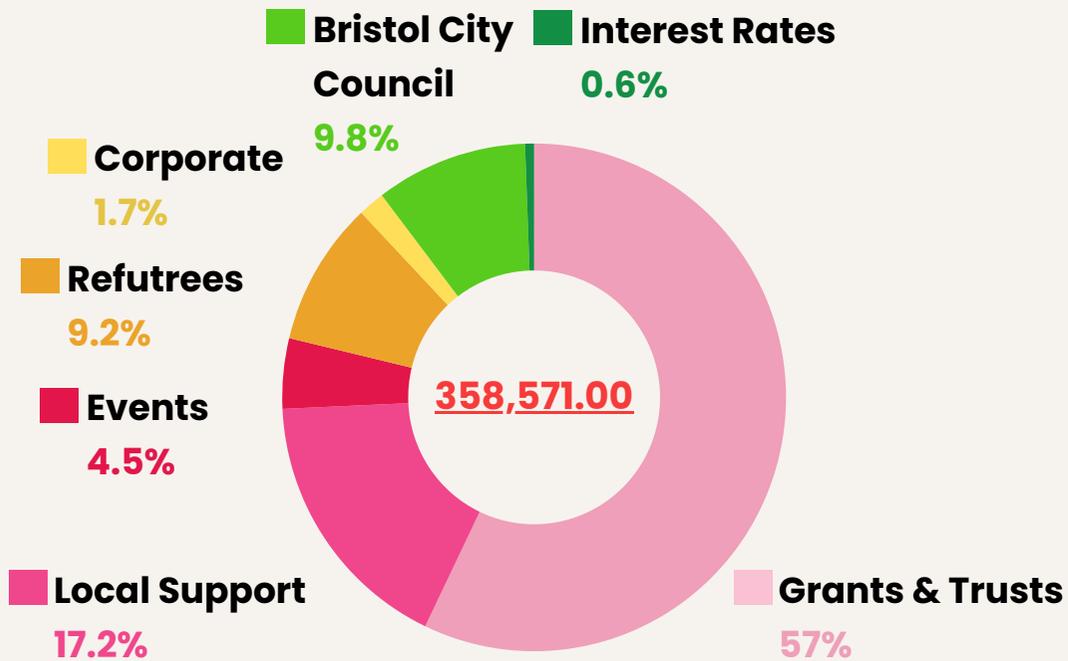
**BUT WHEN THERE'S REAL HELP, YOU FEEL MORE CONFIDENT.
AND PROBLEMS BECOME LESS SCARY."**



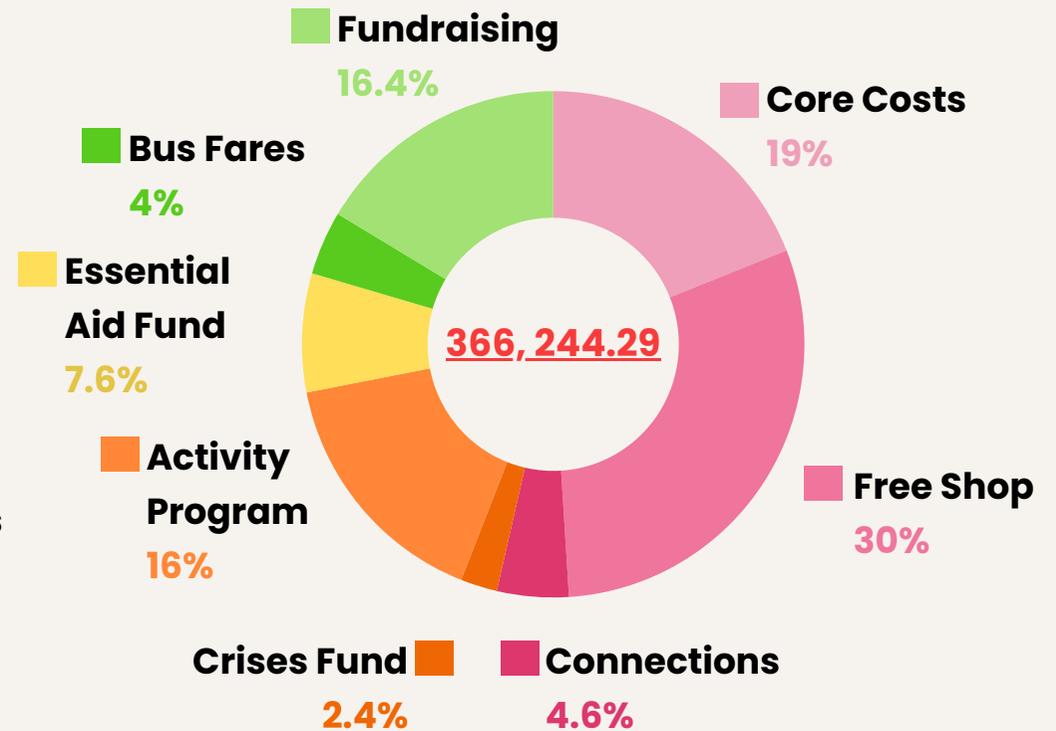
Financial Review

In the year 2024/25 our total income was **£358,571.00** and our total expenditure was **£366,244.29**.

Income



Expenditure



Milestones of the year



25 runners crossed the finish line at the **Great Bristol 10k & HM for ABC!** We collectively ran 272 kilometers & raised £7000 🏆

May '24



'Celebrating Sanctuary' brought community and culture together – and **ABC's team took home the Community Cup!** 🎉

Meet **Kat & Trevor** – our **fab new Finance Team** keeping things running smoothly!



July '24



🏊‍♀️💬 **New groups launched:** Women's Multi-Sports & ESOL English classes!

September '24



🌲 **Our 8th Refutrees launch!**

Huge thanks to the B&A Church, our team, and supporters for a record year of Bristol love.

November '24



💛 Grown our **Ambassador Programme** – looking to partner with businesses in support of refugees in Bristol.

January '25

🎉 **5 years of Connections** – 5 years of friendship and community!

🔥 Our **first-ever FIREWALK fundraiser** was a blazing success – raising £5,000 thanks to our fearless walkers! 🌟

March '25

April '24

Our **second year of Voices Training**, led by lived-experience volunteers sharing culture & traditions. 💛



June '24

☀️ **Summer Party** vibes with 200 friends – food, sunshine, and community joy all around!



August '24

🌿 **Launched two new family day trips** – to the Botanical Gardens & We The Curious! 🚀

Thousands came together against anti-immigration hate – **standing for welcome, unity, and community.**



October '24

Spoke to & welcomed newly elected **MP Carla Denyer** about the needs of refugees and asylum seekers.



December '24

❄️ **Winter Party love** for our amazing volunteers! We joined the **Picton Street Fayre** as one of two supported charities – huge thanks to everyone involved!



February '25

Staff Strategy Day – aligning with our mission, planning ahead, and strengthening our team.



Looking Ahead

01 Our New Home



- Move into our new Welcome Hub – Church Hall, Sommerville Rd, St Andrews – and bring more services under one roof (Activities & Drop-In Space, Free Shop, Offices).
- Hold a public meeting to meet our neighbours.
- Host a 10 year celebration of ABC and the launch of the new space!

02 Expand Holistic Support Services



- Bring our external groups in-house, continuing our collaborations with partner organisations and individuals.
- Expand our in-house activities, making full use of the new space.
- Invite partner organisations to host drop-in sessions at ABC to support their outreach.

03 Strengthen Community & Partnerships



- Develop the impact and sustainability of BRASP (Bristol Refugee & Asylum Seeker Partnership).
- Host community sessions and cultural exchange events to foster connection and inclusion.



04 Empowering Lived Experience Leadership



- Strengthen our Lived Experience Working Group by offering more training opportunities.
- Create a structured pathway for service users to transition into volunteer, ambassador, or staff roles.
- Campaign with BRASP for improved access to bus travel, the right to work, and legal aid.

05 Fundraising



- Launch the Ambassador Programme to build relationships with businesses and corporate partners.
- Launch a community fundraising campaign and explore social enterprise opportunities.
- Tackle today's fundraising challenges with creativity and diverse income streams.

Meet Aid Box Community!



Our Community



Thank You!

A huge Thank You to everyone who supports Aid Box Community: our experienced and committed staff team & Trustees; our tireless volunteers; our extremely generous donors and funders; and our dedicated partner organisations. Thank you to you all!

Funders

Thank you to all current funders; those who funded our work in 2024-25, including those who prefer to remain anonymous.

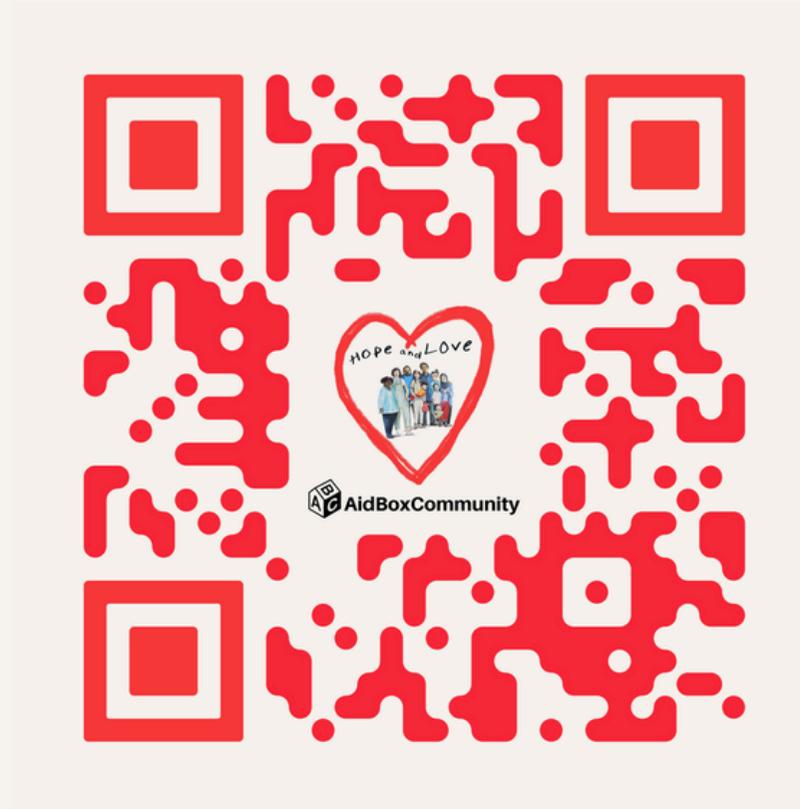


Partner Organisations & Supporters



A regular gift creates real impact. 

♥ Donate Now ♥





 **AidBoxCommunity**

www.aidboxcommunity.co.uk

Charity Registration Number: 1172697

