



Bristol Somali Resource Centre Annual Report



2024-2025



Chair's message

We are delighted to present Bristol Somali Resource Centre's Annual Report for 2024-2025, a year of forward strides for our organisation. After nearly 15 years of working from the same offices, we have moved our centre into a larger premises, one fit for our growing team of dedicated staff and volunteers. Having more space means more people getting support from BSRC each day, a crucial improvement as demand for our services continues to rise.

This was another difficult year for many in our community. Despite rises in the living wage and lower inflation rates, the cost of living crisis has persisted. In March, 82% of Britons told YouGov that the cost of goods is still rising faster than their income. Meanwhile, private housing costs have outstripped inflation, and disproportionately so in Bristol. In the face of these challenges, BSRC has worked doubly hard this year to support individuals and families away from the brink of destitution and towards financial stability and independence.

We are, as always, grateful to our vocal and motivated service user base for guiding us in the development of our services. In response to their requests, we increased the range of learning on offer at our centre to include IT & Maths; we grew our staff in order to deliver more activities and support around mental and physical health, including advice for people struggling with drugs and alcohol.

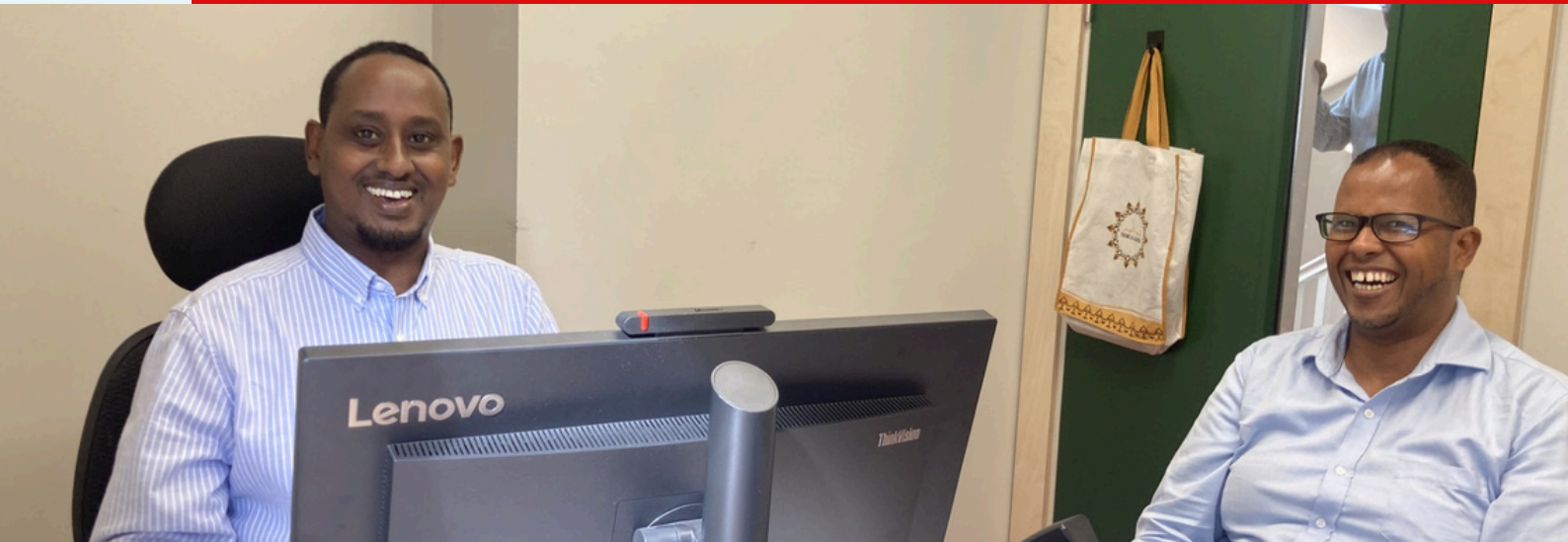
For many in our community, however, the most exciting development this year was the return of youth services to the Barton Hill area after over a decade of no provision. BSRC is proud to be delivering a weekly programme of youth activities in partnership with the Wellspring Settlement, from the brand new Swannery youth club, as well as 1-to-1 mentoring for those in need. Alongside our education advice and support, we hope this work will broaden the opportunities for local young people and help break cycles of generational disadvantage.

Our thanks go out to all our funders, with much appreciation for their ongoing support. Huge congratulations to the staff and volunteer team, including service users who contributed to the work of the organisation and our board members, and we look forward to an equally successful year ahead.

Hen Wilkinson

Chairs of Trustees, Bristol Somali Resource Centre

Who We Are



Our Story

Established in 2006 and a registered charity since 2008, Bristol Somali Resource Centre (BSRC) offers information, advice and support to socially and economically disadvantaged people in the Bristol area.

BSRC offers culturally competent support and services in several languages including English, Somali and Arabic. As our organisation and its reputation have grown, we have come to serve people from an ever widening range of backgrounds, while maintaining a focus on the needs of our city's Somali population.

Our Work

BSRC provides free and impartial information, advice and guidance on range of issues including benefits, housing, immigration, schools and employment.

We aim to get the voice of the Somali community heard in the area, promote community cohesion and reduce the isolation of Somali people.

BSRC continues to serve as a key partner for organisations and bodies seeking to establish an understanding of Bristol's Somali community.

The Need

The most significant challenges reported by our services users this year were:

- 1 The deepening cost of living crisis, which saw prices for essential items and living costs continue to rise far faster than local incomes.
- 2 A shrinking number of stable, permanent job opportunities, as temporary agency work took up a growing share of the labour market.
- 3 The worsening shortage of suitable and affordable housing in Bristol, especially for larger households (5+ people).

The Demand

Across the year, **2382 individuals** accessed our advice services, attending **6222 face-to-face sessions** on a range of pressing issues including employment, housing, debt and benefits. Most (54.5%) needed help with two or more different issues.



Big Changes at BSRC

The increase in service delivery and impact this year would have been impossible without the move to our **new, larger centre**. Still within the bounds of the Wellspring Settlement site, our new office comprises the upper floor of the recently converted Black Swan pub, directly above the new Swannery youth centre.

Our staff now have five rooms in which to deliver confidential one-to-one support, as well as a designated classroom and meeting space, allowing us to run classes and group activities throughout the week. Meanwhile, we have retained our old reception and one advisor's room on the ground floor, to make sure our services are accessible to people with all mobility needs.

With more space to deliver our services in, we have also been able to **grow our staff team** this year, which now includes a Youth Worker and Women and Family Engagement Worker. We have also increased the hours of our part-time **Older Adults Support Worker**. All these changes have helped us make sure we can extend our support to every part of our community.

Clockwise from top right: elders' trip to Barry Island, women's wellbeing group, outreach in Southmead, English class outing to Bath.



Youth Services



Until this year, young people in and around Barton Hill had no youth centre and few freely available activities. The opening of the Swannery youth club (pictured), directly below the new BSRC premises, marked a big change for the better. Since the opening, our Youth Worker Charlie has been running sessions for boys and girls of all ages, offering a safe and supportive place to socialise as well as a range of structured activities, including cooking, sport and indoor games.

Charlie himself grew up in the area and remembers when youth services were still on offer. “For us growing up it brought some consistency, opportunities and new experiences. It kept us out of trouble. As youth services dwindled, unless your parents were able to take you to get those opportunities elsewhere, those benefits just disappeared.”

In addition to these sessions, Charlie provided **one-to-one mentoring to 26 young people** aged 11-17. Most had been referred by their schools, who had identified them as in need of extra guidance. Charlie also spent three hours each week in detached work, speaking to young people on the streets, hearing their concerns and inviting them to get involved.



Our Impact in 2024-2025

This year, our advisors supported a total of **2382** individuals through one-to-one advice. However, with a mean household size of 3.4 among our service users, the true number of people who benefited from our advice services this year is **over 8,000 people**.

We helped **623** people with issues around their housing, including managing rent and council tax, repairs to their properties and communicating with their landlords. Of those struggling with inadequate housing and homelessness (around 200 people), **29** gained new temporary or permanent homes.

670 people accessed our employability advice service. Of them, a record-breaking **260** gained new jobs.

66 adult learners attended our classes, developing key life skills in English, Maths & IT. **26** young people benefited from one-to-one mentoring with our Youth Worker.

We provided work experience to **11** members of the community, both young people and adults.

We also helped...

519 people manage their benefits.

198 people with consumer issues (especially phone and broadband contracts).

226 people to access debt advice and manage their arrears.

330 people to manage their utilities, and 20 of them to pay less for their water.

93 people to handle issues around their immigration status and, where necessary, access immigration advice and legal support through our partners.

187 people to communicate with the local authority around their Council Tax, agree on payment plans and request new bills.

63 people to communicate with HMRC and ensure they have paid the correct Income Tax.

17 families find school places for their children.

Success Stories



Fadumo's Story

"In Somalia there are lots of people around you who can help with everything, but here in the UK you are on your own, especially single mums. We have to be the strongest people in the world, to look after our children and look after ourselves too, waking up early every morning to work and support our families. I have my elderly mum living with us now too, and she has broken her leg, so she needs a lot of help too. Sometimes I feel tired when I finish work but I get on with cooking for today and for the next day, so there is food for my children while I am out at work. I clean the house at night because I am out all day working, doing the shopping and taking my children to school and appointments.

When my marriage ended in 2021, I knew I had to be strong for myself and my children. It was very difficult to do everything on my own, but I never gave up. When I felt tired I said to myself "Fadumo, wake up, don't be lazy". Fortunately, everyone at the Bristol Somali Resource Centre was there to help me. They worked together to help me with different things and knew what I needed to do.

Four years later, after a lot of hard work, life is good. I have changed careers from cleaning to care work, which I love. My new job has also helped me get better at English, so now I am really confident talking to people. I have started studying English at college and passed all my exams this summer. I have even learned to drive and passed my theory test and practical, which is really helpful for my work as a carer. I passed my tests for the British citizenship and am now proud to call myself British. I even managed to save up and travel with all my children back to Somaliland last year. I was so proud to introduce three of my children to their grandfather for the first time. I love living in Bristol and am excited to see what the future holds for me and my family.

Thank you for reading my story. My wish is that all women who are struggling can be strong like me."

Helping the whole family

After moving from Sweden to join his wife Amal, Ahmed sought our help finding work locally that would allow him to support his family. We helped him develop his CV and explore his options. Soon he had found stable warehouse work. Our advisors also helped Amal maximise her income through better paid work and ensure she claimed her full entitlement of benefits, to help cover the costs of a growing household.

We helped Ahmed's daughter, who moved with him to Bristol, to convert her Swedish Early Years qualifications and find work at a local nursery. There she is valued not just for her skills as an educator, but also for her language skills, which helps her communicate with Somali parents.

We signposted Ahmed to immigration advice, allowing him to bring his youngest son to the UK from Somalia. Once here, we helped find a school place for him.

We have supported the family to apply for social housing and now, finally, secure permanent accommodation that suits all their needs.

In recent months, Ahmed has also benefited from our partnership with the careers team at NHS North Bristol Trust, completing a workplace traineeship at Southmead Hospital.

Ahmed continues to visit us to apply for better work, gain advice around bills and benefits, and catch up with friends he has made at our centre.

After three years in Bristol, he has come to view the city fondly: "It's a friendly and open city where you can find work, live in peace and practise your religion. I love being here"





Thank You

...to all our funders, and all those whose donations and volunteering help us meet the demands and needs of our community.

Our vision is to create a healthy and vibrant Somali community, integrated into British society as active social and economic participants.

Our mission is to promote a culture that values all individuals and communities, in particular the Somali community.

If you would like to support our work towards these goals, you can make a donation here. There are plenty of other ways to get involved too, from volunteering to fundraising. Contact us via our website and social media or call our office on 0117 907 7994.



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