

Annual Report 2019 - 2020

43 Ducie Road, Barton Hill, Bristol. BS5 0AX

Tel: 0117 9077994, Email: info@somalicentre.co.uk

Charity n^o. 1128721, Company n^o. 6771265

Table of Contents

	Page(s)
Introduction and Overview	3
• Who are BSRC?	3
• Our Vision and Mission	3
• Bristol Somali Resource Centre Trustees Report	4
Data: Charts and Graphs	5 – 9
• Breakdown of total visits to BSRC by Gender and Disability	5
• Breakdown of total visits to BSRC by Disability	6
• Age Demographics Breakdown	7
• Areas of Advice & Support for Recorded Cases in 2018/19 and 2017/18	8
• The Bristol Wards where Beneficiaries Live	9
Ways we provide Advice & Support	10
• Community Engagement	10 - 11
• Advocacy work	11
• Homework Club / Boost Project	12
• ESOL for Women / Elders Support Group	13
• Coronavirus Support	14
Case Studies	15

Introduction and Overview

WHO ARE BSRC?

The Bristol Somali Resource Centre (BSRC) provides general **free, impartial advice and guidance** (not legal advice) covering a range of issues including welfare, housing, schools and employment. BSRC also organises training activities and workshops to enhance employment opportunities, wellbeing, social interaction and to help reduce isolation within the community. It was established in 2006 to help and assist newly arrived immigrants.

BSRC offers a range of services to other organisations that want to engage with the Somali community. It also **promotes greater integration and cohesion** at both neighbourhood and citywide level between the Somali community and other longstanding communities.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Vision

To **create a healthy and vibrant Somali community that integrates** into **British society** as active, social and economic participants.

Mission

- To work in Bristol and the surrounding district to **promote a culture** that **values all individuals**, in particular, the Somali community.
- Offer **top-quality services** to service users and local communities.

Bristol Somali Resource Centre Trustee's Report

Last year (2019- 2020), we continued to make a significant impact on our service users' lives. It was a challenging year for many of our service users - benefit changes, Brexit, and the Coronavirus had a considerable impact on them. We aimed to support both our service users and local communities, and to offer top-quality services they deserve, to the best of our abilities and capacities.

We provided support on a range of issues, including welfare, housing, schools, and employment. BSRC also organised training activities and workshops to enhance employment opportunities, social interaction, and help reduce isolation.

We worked with the most disadvantaged people in Bristol, resolving many problems and challenges that they face. We are committed to improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in the East Bristol community, who are facing cultural and language barriers.

Over the last 12 months, we supported 674 people with multiple challenges and in need of handholding support. We offered them advice, information, and guidance.

We ran drop-in sessions three days a week where people could get help with immediate crises such as eviction, benefit suspension, and danger to their health and safety. Most people presented multiple issues. 526 people who faced such immediate crises received individually-bespoke information, advice and handholding support.

We have also supported many EU citizens who wanted to apply for Settled Status.

We organised culturally-appropriate information sessions for community members, including elders and women's groups. The sessions were about services available in the local community, how to influence local services, benefit change, and budgeting. The majority of the people participating gained confidence and showed interest in getting involved in community issues.

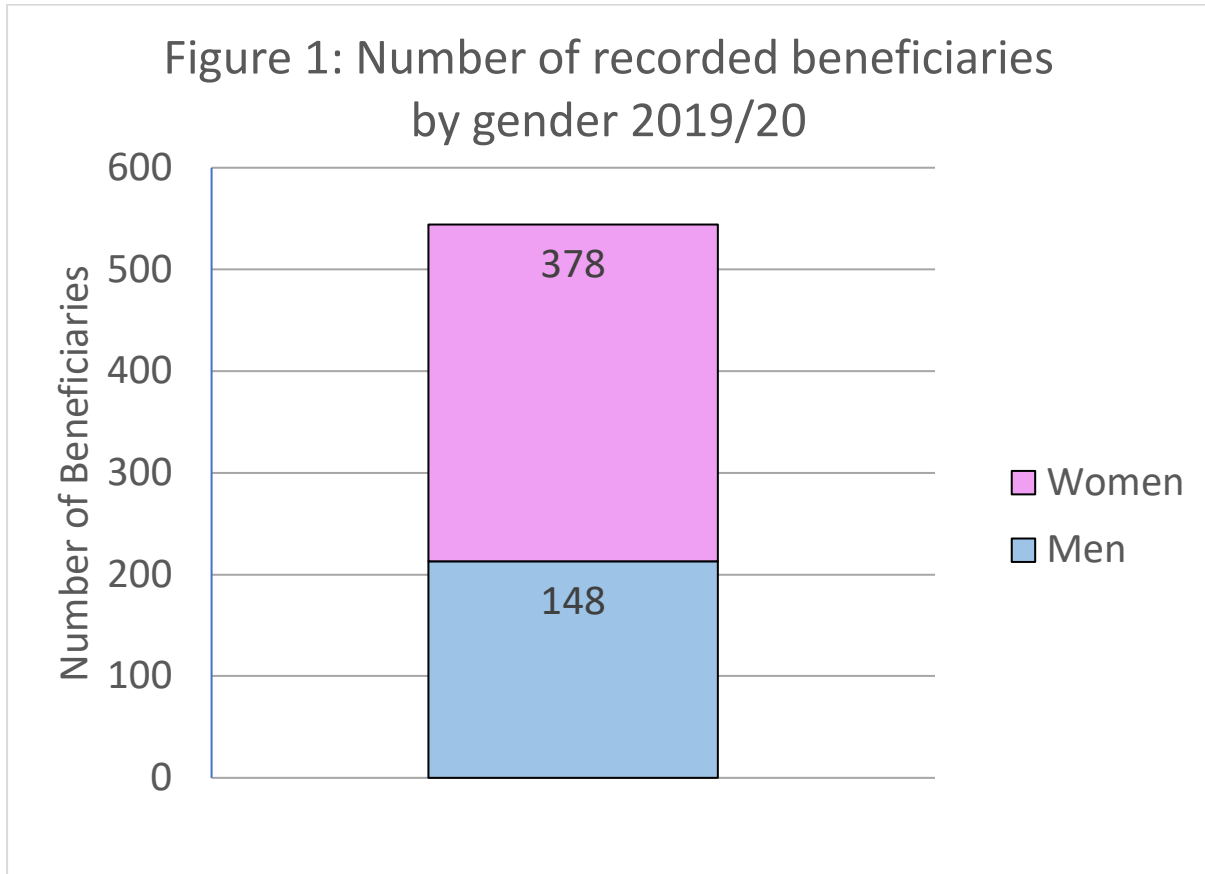
We also ran educational courses such as ESOL classes, a Homework Club, and Wellbeing sessions. More than 148 people attended, gaining skills and improving their educational attainment.

We promoted self-reliance to build up the community's strength and encouraged community members to get involved in our activities and support each other.

Towards the end of the financial year, the Coronavirus outbreak forced us to adapt our services. We started offering telephone support to people affected by Coronavirus. We also started food distribution and befriending services.

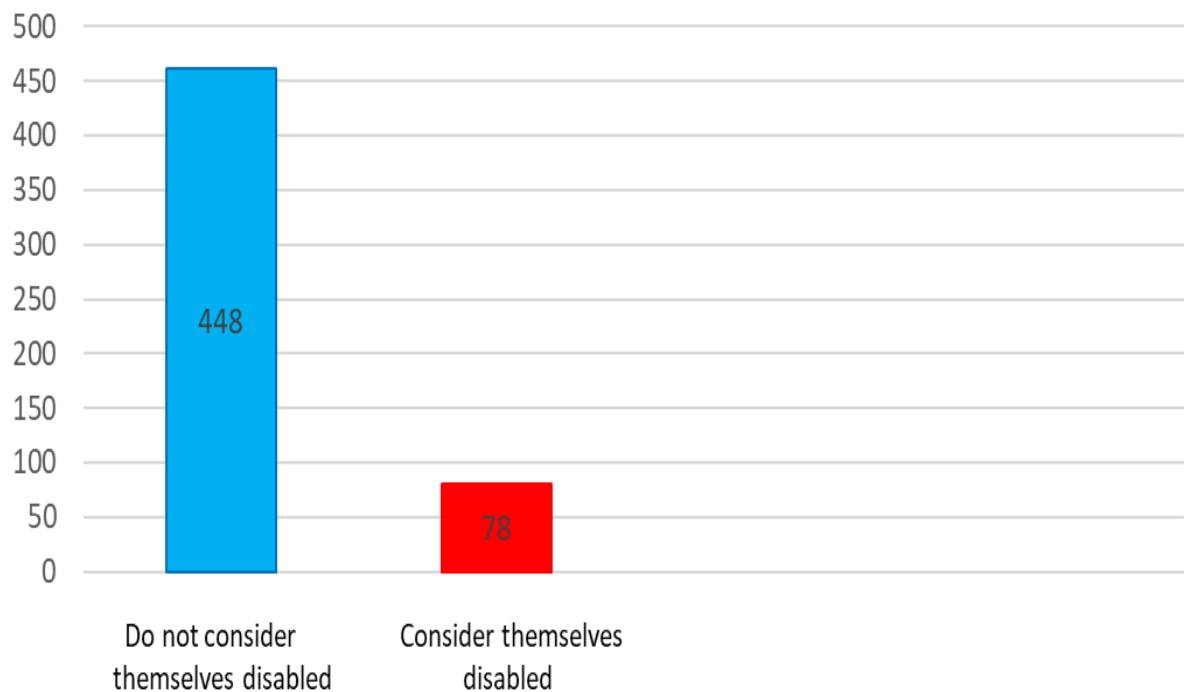
I want to thank our funders and others who gave us moral and financial support.

Breakdown of total visits to BSRC by Gender



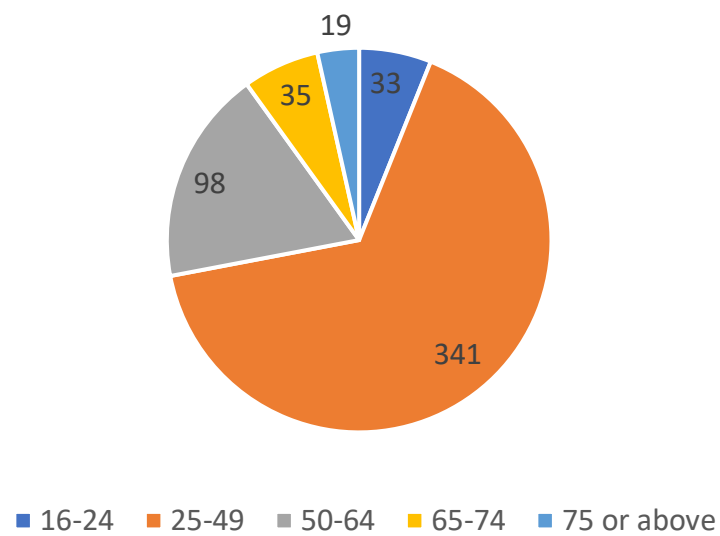
Breakdown of total visits to BSRC by Disability Status

Fig. 2: Comparing the number of beneficiaries who consider themselves Disabled with those who do not (2019/2020)



Age Demographics for Recorded cases in 19/20

Fig. 3: Ages of people receiving advice/
support from 1st July 2019- 30th June 2020
(526cases)



Areas of Advice & Support for Recorded Cases in 19/20

Fig.4: Area of support in 2019-20 (526 cases)

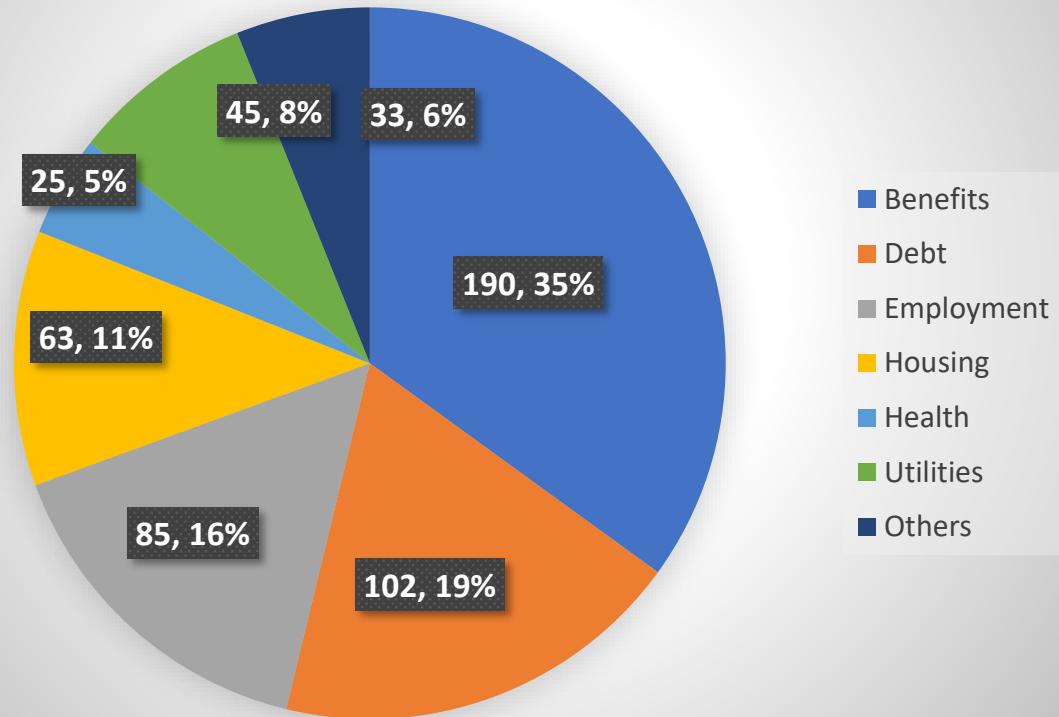
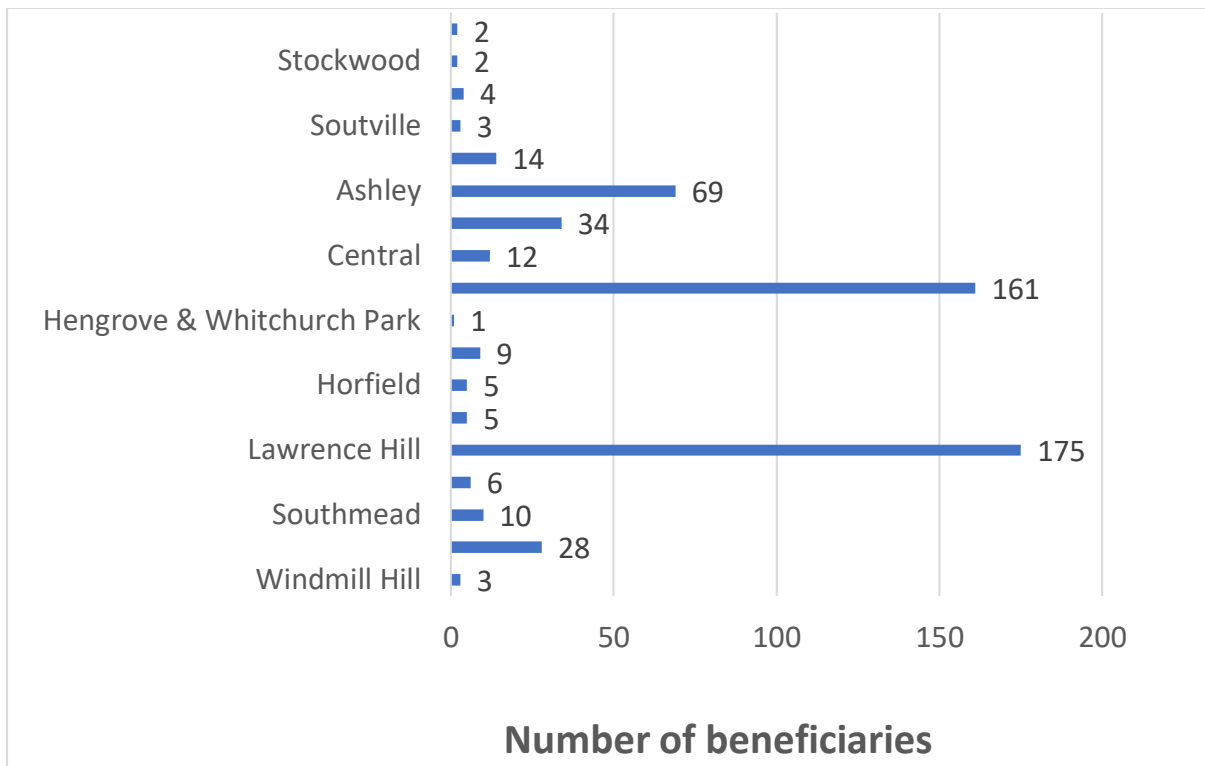


FIGURE 5: The Bristol Wards where Beneficiaries Live





Ways we provide Advice & Support

- Three daily drop-in sessions and information courses.
- Prevention of homelessness, court fines, school exclusions
- Help dealing with threats from debt collectors
- Supporting service users with issues such as benefits, employment, housing, utility bills and debt.



Community Engagement

- People come to our information, advice and guidance sessions
- Provision of one-to-one support.
- Universal Credit information sessions explaining terms to, and impacts on our service users.
- Providing help on Jobseekers Allowance; overcoming language and computer literacy difficulties.

Many beneficiaries presented with complex cases such as multiple debts and needed handholding support. Some of them found it hard to interact with mainstream service providers and needed in-depth help over a long period, and we gave them the right help at the right time.

- Working with Bristol City Council Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service to run benefit advice sessions.
- A benefit specialist from WRMAS runs monthly advice sessions at the BSRC office.
- Working with local agencies, local authority and the police to promote community cohesion and bring together people from different cultural backgrounds.

- **Attending meetings where issues and concerns that affect the Somali community can be raised and discussed.**
- **We are part of the Network Project – a consortium of 4 organisations that help and work with the local community: St.Werburgh City Farm, Wellspring, Barton Hill Settlement and BSRC.**
- **Organising walkabout events around Barton Hill, that brought together Somali families and practitioners. The aim was to help migrants’ families understand the new environment and raise children in a safe and healthy environment.**

Advocacy Work

We worked with the Law Centre and ACAS to address complaints such as several employers taking advantage of the Somali employees because of language and cultural barriers. In some cases, pay owed has been withheld or they have been given inadequate documentation or training.



Homework Club



We have worked with Bristol Star to run a homework club for young children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Many children are from families where parents cannot help them with their homework
- The homework club is free and open to all children in Easton and Lawrence Hill
- These student volunteers are role models for the young people they are helping.

BOOST Finance Basic

We continued to work with our partner organisations to deliver the BOOST Finance Basic project that offers an opportunity for the local community to explore the community and economic benefits of having a range of financial and benefit advice and support services in one place.

The project is delivered by BOOST Finance Basic coordinators from Barton Hill Settlement and a Somali Support and Advice Worker from Bristol Somali Resource Centre. The coordination role is responsible for overseeing the coordination of the Specialist and Community Initiative sessions, supporting volunteers, recruited from service users accessing the project and ensuring the aims and outcomes of the service are being met.

ESOL For Women

Until Covid restrictions, we ran ESOL conversation sessions for Somali women with the help of the Bristol Centre for Linguistics (UWE, Bristol).

These sessions were very popular as it combines learning and socialising. Somali women can often be isolated at home with small children.



The aim of the project is to help Somali women to acquire better English Language skills which will open both social and economic opportunities for them.

Professors, students from the UWE & the BSRC staff were involved in ESOL sessions. The student volunteers helped develop and deliver learning materials, leading to increased confidence and independence of the women who participated in ESOL classes.

Elders' Support Group

We supported Somali elders who are isolated and dealing with physical and mental health issues. We aimed to promote self-reliance and to build their resilience. We organised eight events for them where socially isolated elders received age-related health information and had the opportunity to socialise with others. Sixteen elders participated and gained skills and confidence to deal with isolation and age-related health issues. We offered training on anger management, living with long-time illness, dementia awareness and managing anxiety. After completing these sessions, many elders started to discuss the taboo subject of mental health openly. They also took part in trips and keep fit activities. Some of them became qualified trainers and continued to train others.

Coronavirus Support

During lockdown, we offered telephone advice and support to people affected by Coronavirus including help with Universal credit applications for people who lost income due to the Corona virus. A big number of them were working as self-employed taxi drivers, security guards, bus drivers, cleaners, and agency workers.

- We have given advice and support to 118 people.
- Distributed food to 200 people affected by Coronavirus. Many of those people lost income and were in food poverty.

Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Miss FM

Miss FM has been working for Exclusive Cleaning for the last couple of years. In April 2019, the company lost the contract for the site she was working on, and did not pay Miss FM's last salary for March 2019. She worked 40 hours in March and the company paid her only 1.5 hours, and there were also unpaid hours from the previous 3 months. She complained to her managers, but they ignored her.

She came to us in April 2019 and we contacted Exclusive Cleaning, but they were not cooperative, and told us that they had lost the timesheet that Miss FM signed. We then contacted ACAS as we were concerned there was a deadline for bringing the case to an employment tribunal.

ACAS mediated between Miss FM and Exclusive, and Miss FM passed her time sheet and payslips for December 2018, January, February and March 2019 to ACAS.

Exclusive Cleaning then made the remaining payments for March (38.5 hours) and some hours for December 2018, January, and February 2019.

As Miss FM was still missing payment for some hours, we advised her to go to an employment tribunal, but Exclusive Cleaning has since made payments of the whole remaining hours of 43 hours (£337.55). Miss FM received in total £639.77.

'I worked hard for the money and without the help of BSRC I could not get it. Every morning, I wake up at 03:30 (AM) to start my work at 04:45. There is no bus connection to my workplace, and I must walk about 30 minutes before I get a lift to work. I was not expected to be treated like that. Thank you BSRC for helping me'.

Miss FM

Case Study 2 – Mr IH

Mr. IH is 55 years old, severely disabled and has mental health issues. He is also an alcoholic and very isolated.

Mr IH came to us when he lost his bank card. He was in an unbelievably bad condition and was not looking after himself. He told us that he lived alone and barely left his flat and was not getting any help.

First, we helped him apply for all the benefits that he was entitled to, such as Personal Independence Payment, Employment Support Allowance with disability premium, and a direct payment from BCC Care Direct. Secondly, we referred him to a mental health support organisation with a Somali worker. Thirdly, we are in discussion with him to refer him to an alcohol addiction support organization.

His situation has improved in that, not only does he have more disposable income, but also a care worker who helps him with cooking, cleaning, and other essential care. He also attends the Somali Elders' lunch club regularly and socialises with other men who are in a similar situation.