



ACH



Impact  
Report 2023

Transforming lives for 15 years



ACH employee giving a gift card to a Birmingham resident



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# A word from Fuad



## 15 years empowering refugees and migrants

Our communities and service users have faced increasing challenges during 2023, ranging from the cost-of-living crisis, a challenging housing market and the impact of the worsening 'hostile environment' narrative.

Despite these barriers, ACH are delighted to report that we have played a crucial role addressing the immediate needs of our communities, whether that's through finding safe and secure accommodation for 1256 people, training places for 260 people or business development support for 340 people. We have also provided essential pastoral support for more than 1,000 service users.

In addition, ACH have worked with the housing sector in Bristol to agree a plan for change following an event we hosted with social housing leaders. We've also galvanised a wider alliance across the health and education sectors as part of our Change Makers-funded initiative 'From Sanctuary to Opportunity', and maintained our contacts with a vibrant network of international partners amid global turmoil.

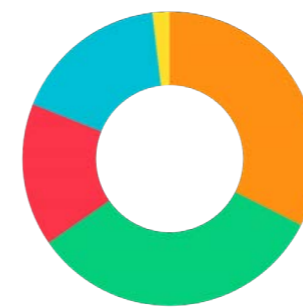
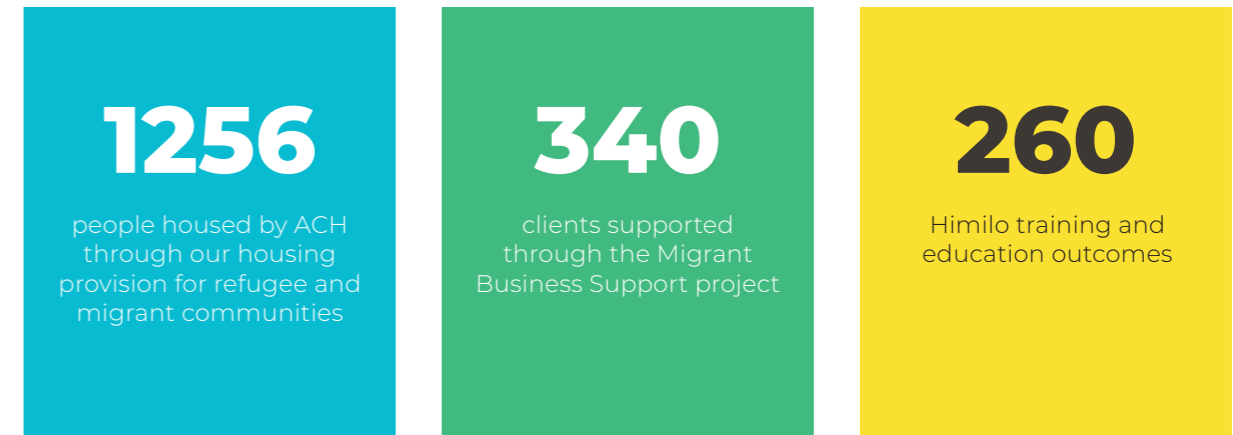
Despite the challenges facing our communities and those fleeing persecution, we continue to advocate for the UK to be a country that is welcoming and open to people with no other choice but to leave their home and seek sanctuary. We know that the majority of people agree with us as a recent [Ipsos report](#) states "Britain is also bucking the global trend in displaying higher levels of support for providing more legal routes so that refugees do not need to enter the UK illegally".

And in spite of the many trials our communities face, there is cause for optimism. We are delighted to report that, over the last 15 years, we have housed more than 6,500 individuals from refugee and migrant communities, and provided business or training support for more than 13,500 people.

These beneficiaries have gone on to play a full and positive role in the UK. This is something that makes ACH proud and encourages us to continue to offer this vital support for the next 15 years.

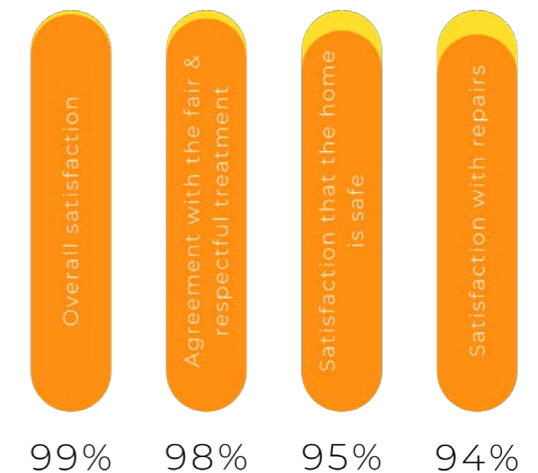
Fuad Mahamed, CEO

## 2023 in summary



**Bristol** | 260 total beds  
**Birmingham** | 264 total beds  
**Wolverhampton** | 126 total beds  
**Coventry** | 137 total beds  
**Solihull** | 15 total beds

### Resident satisfaction\*



\* A sample of 143 people were surveyed - 22% of ACH's residents



**50**

nationalities supported by ACH



**27**

families were reunited



**521**

people attended ACH online events



**39**

training courses run by Himilo

# Transforming lives for 15 years



...and abroad

Here...



**6,500**

People housed



**12,500**

People helped towards employment



**1,000**

Entrepreneurs supported

# ACH

has supported through housing, training and career and business support

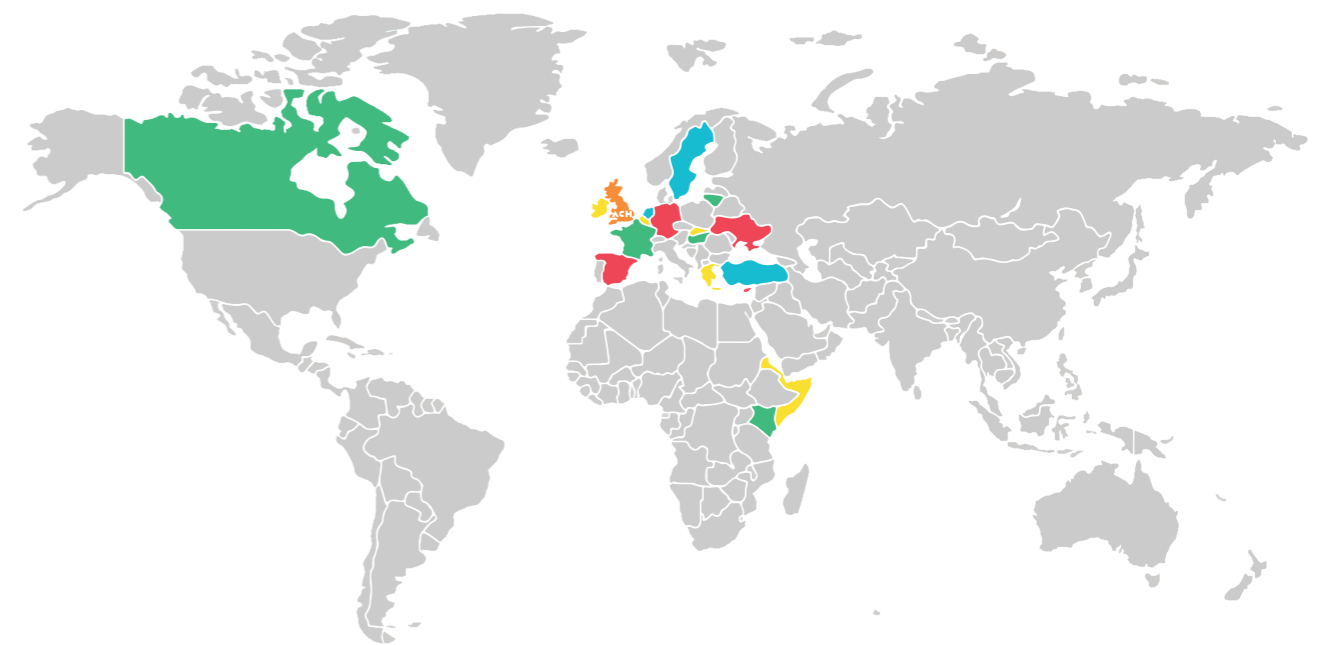
**>20,000** people

over our 15 years of services.

Over the last 15 years, ACH has developed an extensive network of international partnerships.

We have worked with NGOs and institutions ranging from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, to UNHCR and the Global Parliament of Mayors. ACH has been a proud partner on a range of projects. We led a cross-European team to develop a games-based app to help people integrate into their new communities. On another occasion, we developed a tool that our service users could access in their native language to help them translate their skills into English.

However, these are just two examples of the international work which help ACH share and develop ideas to make sure our refugee integration service keeps evolving to meet the needs of our service users.



We've worked in countries all across Europe to ensure we've learned and shared the very best technological and educational innovation to support refugee and migrant integration.

We can only meet the challenge of global displacement by building strong international partnerships to deliver the products and services our communities need. Which is why, at ACH, we are proud of our excellent relations with NGOs and governments, not just in the UK but across many countries including Canada, Kenya, Somalia and Ukraine.



ACH's management team

# Introduction

ACH was founded in Bristol in 2008 to provide supported housing to refugees who had recently received their five years leave to remain. We currently have 802 beds for refugees and vulnerable migrants across our four UK locations and have an annual turnover of more than £8million

## A Place To



## Our vision

Our vision is to empower refugees and migrants who reside in the UK to lead self-sufficient and ambitious lives.

## Our mission

To create spaces and opportunities for refugees and migrants to thrive by providing supported accommodation and tailored integration services. We also aim to disrupt the systems of entrenched inequality in society.



## Our values





# A place to live

Finding a house or, more importantly, a home is key to integration. Without a suitable place to live, our service users lack security, mobility, dignity and the ability to contribute as independent members of society.

Throughout 2023, we have offered a diverse range of accommodation to ensure we meet the specific needs of our service users.

- ▶ **Exempt supported housing** – this remains our largest housing model, providing accommodation to spontaneously single adult refugees following them exiting NASS housing.
- ▶ **Move-on housing** – we provide move-

on housing, at social housing rents, for individuals who have received our support and are now working full-time. This allows them to rent affordably whilst in employment.

- ▶ **Emergency and family supported accommodation** – this is provided on a block purchase model for a mixture of families and single adults.

“At first I was homeless, had lost control of my mind, had no community. Finding ACH meant I had support, had a home and found community. This was huge for me.” *Mohammed, ACH resident*

## 802

Total number of beds for refugee and migrant communities in the West of England and the West Midlands

## 94%

of tenants are satisfied that their homes are well-maintained\*

\*A sample of 143 people were surveyed - 22% of ACH's tenants.

## Our locations

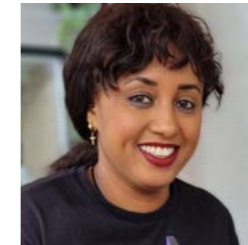
ACH works in the West of England and the West Midlands to provide safe and secure housing to refugee and migrant communities. Our locations are:

Bristol



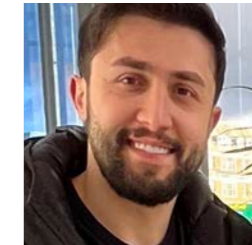
“With training from ACH, I'm one step closer to studying Architecture”

Coventry



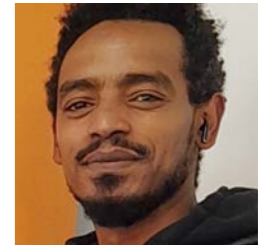
“We are happy to meet, discuss and share our opinion – as long as it makes a difference”

Birmingham

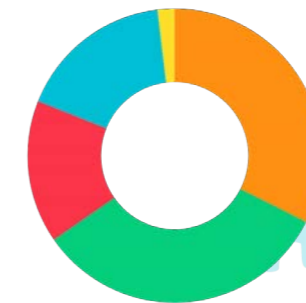


“I'm very happy with the way my support workers always try their best to help me”

Wolverhampton



“Home is a place you feel safe. Thank you ACH”



- Bristol** | 260 total beds
- Birmingham** | 264 total beds
- Wolverhampton** | 126 total beds
- Coventry** | 137 total beds
- Solihull** | 15 total beds



Photo: Birmingham residents



# “On side” with our communities

Our Wolverhampton office organises weekly football matches to bring together our staff and tenant communities. After all, football is a language we can all speak!

These matches are a wonderful bonding experience, not only for our team but also for our clients. Football has become an integral part of their routine and they really look forward to these matches. Everyone’s level of dedication is remarkable, with some clients checking that matches are still going ahead... even on rainy days.

Beyond the physical benefits of exercise, football is a positive outlet for stress and anxiety meaning it helps strengthen the mental health of our community. The excitement on the field also has a profound impact on players’ overall wellbeing.

“This initiative isn’t just about football, it’s about creating a sense of belonging and community. It’s a reminder that we all share more similarities than differences,” says Rashid Guled, Office Manager, ACH Wolverhampton. “We believe in rethinking the refugee narrative and this sport is a demonstration of our commitment to fostering integration, understanding and the breaking down of barriers that often exist between communities.”

The weekly football matches are a big part of the routine for the players and the game offers structure and purpose, helping to rebuild lives and establish a sense of normality when people’s lives have been shaken upside down.



ACH employees and residents at the Resident Engagement Day event in Birmingham

## Listening and learning

At ACH, we make a point of actively listening to our service users so that we are delivering the best possible service and support for them.

That is why we hold regular Resident Engagement Days for representatives from our tenants in Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton to listen to their voices and hear their invaluable feedback.

“I haven’t opened up until now about how settling in UK society feels for an Eritrean woman. My support worker has made this possible.” *Arsema, ACH resident*



Weekly employee/resident football matches have been a big success

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# Changing lives #1

## Ayan's Story

When Ayan fled Somalia in 2017, seeking refuge and peace in the UK, she left behind 11 beloved siblings as well as her parents. After she found ACH, we became her guiding light in a foreign land.

Ayan is one of ACH's many tenants and she is very happy with the support she has received and especially how kind the support and integration officers are. She says: "ACH has been guiding me every step of the way, from securing a safe place to call home to empowering me with the skills I love."

In Somalia, Ayan spent 12 years working as an office manager and she wanted to resume that career here in the UK. However, the language barrier posed a problem as she was initially unable to say even one word in English. But Ayan asked ACH for help with training to improve her English skills and, in time, she was able to have conversations in English with her friends.

Every step of Ayan's journey has been a symbol of hope, resilience and determination.



**95%**

of ACH tenants were satisfied with their safety of their homes

"Thanks to ACH my life is no longer overshadowed by what happened in Somalia but is coloured with the many possibilities offered to me in the UK." *Ayan, ACH resident*



Tamica Williams, ACH's senior housing officer, with a resident in Bristol





## Opening new doors

During 2023, ACH has built strong and enduring partnerships to diversify our housing offer and provide vital homes for our community. We have collaborated with private sector companies and local authorities such as Solihull MBC in the West Midlands and Bristol CC in the West of England and FORE partnership and Socius Dev on a range of innovative housing solutions



### Partnership with Bristol Quakers

The Quakers are a group that have been actively involved in social justice and reform since the 17th Century. As part of that belief, Bristol Quakers wanted to buy a property and lease it back to a vulnerable community, so they contacted ACH and asked for our expertise.

ACH found a landlord with a property for sale, and introduce them to Bristol Quakers. The landlord sold the property to them so that the residents could continue living there.

ACH's housing manager Saed Mohammed with Paul Whitehouse from Bristol Quakers

“With ACH’s expert help, Bristol Quakers were able to purchase a privately owned house leased to ACH and occupied by refugees at risk of losing their homes if sold as a single dwelling. We look forward to working in partnership with ACH to improve the lives of refugees in Bristol for many years to come.” *Paul Whitehouse, Bristol Quakers*

## Shelter in Solihull

15

Ukrainian nationals supported into move-on housing at Sunflower House, supporting their independent living so far

Last year, we transformed an empty building in Bristol into apartments for people with refugee status in urgent need of interim housing.

Following that success, this year ACH was invited by Solihull Council (MBC) to take part in a revolutionary bid. We are proud to say that, as a result, we secured a 15-bed property that is dedicated to providing vital interim housing for Ukrainian refugees. With an innovative meanwhile-use lease, ACH is responsible for the management of the property as well as providing the essential support

services that our tenants need to help them integrate into UK society.

This initiative is testament to our commitment to addressing people’s urgent housing needs. We have created a nurturing environment that also provides a sense of community and stability while people adjust to their new lives. ACH’s work is about more than shelter, it is also about rebuilding lives and igniting hope in the hearts of those who have faced unspeakable challenges.





Mohamed Abdulaziz Mohamed, ACH's support & integration officer with a resident in Birmingham

27

families were reunited with the support of ACH in 2023

# Bringing families together

Mahadi is a resident of ACH living in Wolverhampton. He came to the UK alone and missed his wife dearly.

Mahadi's journey to bring his wife to the UK was not an easy one. After a tedious and lengthy administrative process, Mahadi was able to bring his wife to the UK with him.

However, finding a suitable house for the two of them became an impossible task. It took them two months to find accommodation, but with ACH's referral

to the Wolverhampton Council, they were able to secure a house. The council also made arrangements to cover their one-month deposit and rent.

"Thank you ACH, I now have a house and my wife with me, I couldn't be happier."  
Mahadi, ACH resident in Wolverhampton



Ismail and Rashid from ACH Wolverhampton team with Mahadi and his wife



# A place to learn

Providing shelter without any route to independence simply ‘warehouses’ refugees. That’s why training has always been at the heart of ACH. In 2024, our Profit for Purpose training arm Himilo will reach its 10 year milestone.

During this time, **we have supported over 5,000 beneficiaries** who have received careers information advice and guidance, mentoring, training and entrepreneurship support.

We have developed an innovative range of integration and training interventions to support refugees and migrants to achieve their full career and entrepreneurship ambitions when coming to live in the UK, as well as deliver training overseas to agencies such as the Institute of Civil Servants in Somaliland.

We have also ran non-accredited learning this year including **Reading** and **Writing** courses for Pre-Entry, Entry 1, 2 and 3 and English for Work which has a real focus on employability.

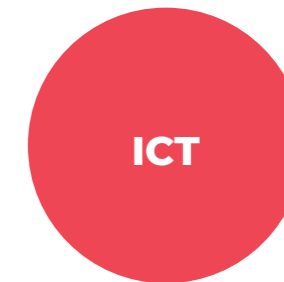
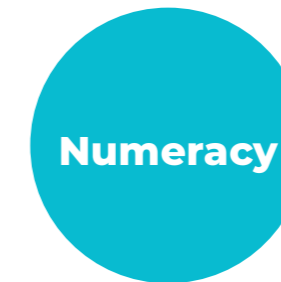
Our non-accredited **Preparation for Work** course, which covered awareness and culture of the UK workplace, was offered to the BNO community in Solihull and led to volunteering and further training opportunities for participants.

We also ran accredited **Maths** in Bristol and are the only training providers in the Multiply group who run their own progression into Level 1 and Level 2 **Functional Skills** courses. In addition we ran Functional Skills English in Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull with a 100% completion success rate.

## Collaborate to educate

ACH and Himilo have worked with a range of organisations to make an impact for our communities from West Midlands Combined Authority to local councils in cities like Bristol, Coventry and Solihull.

We have structured our training around three key areas. The training we provided are centred around improving reading and writing skills, simplifying math concepts, and enhancing computer skills to make interactions more accessible for our clients.



**39**

education and training courses run by Himilo and ACH in 2023

**260**

training and education outcomes for Himilo Training learners in 2023



“I feel much more comfortable communicating in English since attending the English class. My comprehension skills have improved immensely and I am now able to understand letters and documents sent to me. I feel more integrated and confident in the community.” *Sherin, ACH Coventry learner*

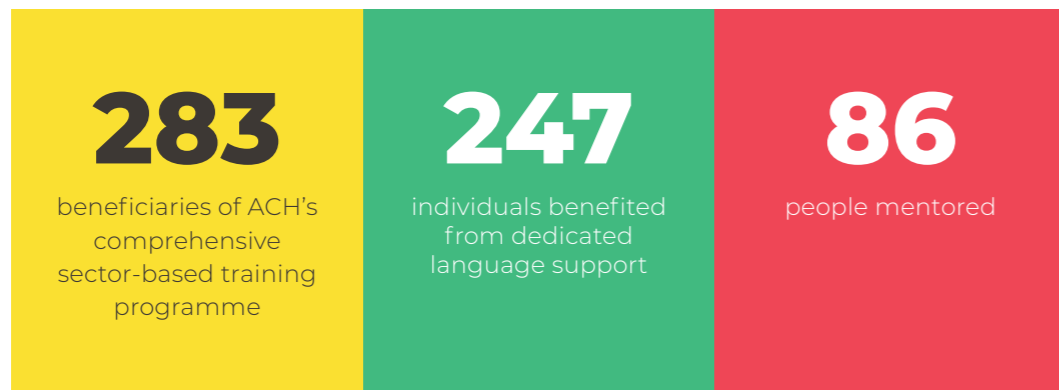
Himilo teacher Robert Pope with a student

# My Coventry, your Coventry

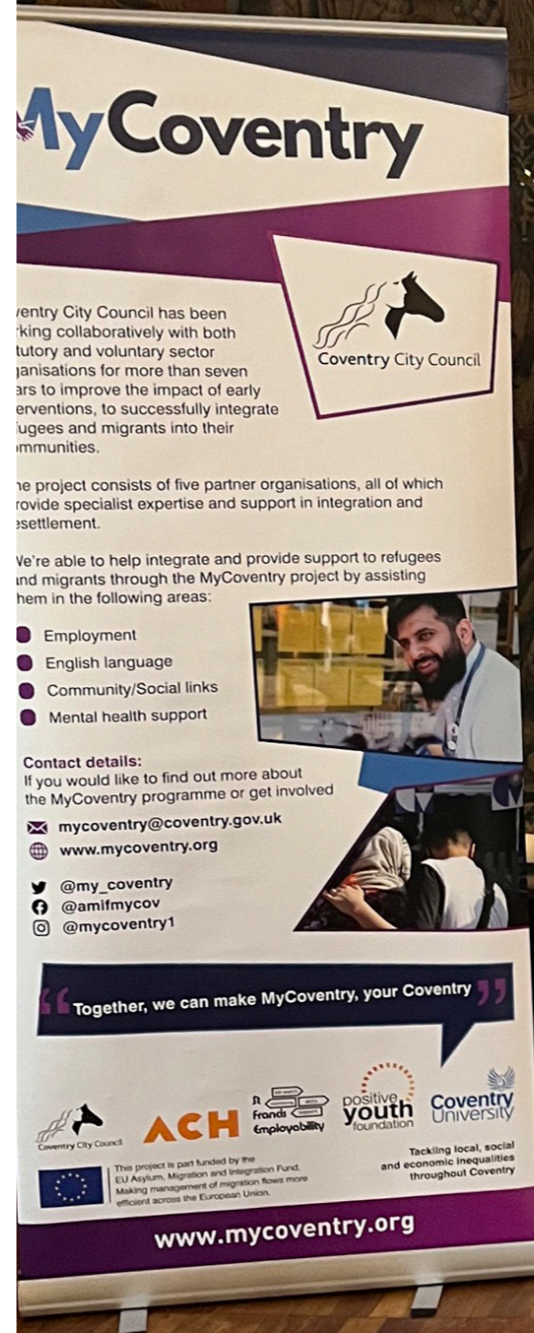


MyCoventry was in 2021 created to provide long term sustainable entry into the employment market for refugee and migrant communities through a range of interventions including job readiness, coaching, training and delivery of information advice and guidance.

ACH are delighted to have been awarded an extension of the MyCoventry Project for a further six months, and hopefully longer. This will allow us to continue to deliver positive impacts for our communities.



“I was looking for housing and support after gaining my leave to remain. As soon as I stepped into ACH, I said to myself ‘I’ve come to the right place.’” *Abed Shayeteh, MyCoventry beneficiary*



# Changing lives #2

## Salem's Story

“Meeting ACH has really helped me. I speak better English now and I have useful qualifications. Now, I'm chasing my dream to be a personal trainer. I am grateful for the support.”

Originally from Libya, Salem faced challenges upon arriving in the UK in December 2019, hindered by a language barrier despite his previous accountancy qualification. ACH's education team guided him through English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and helped him pass the theory test for his Hazardous Goods Vehicle (HGV) driving exam.

Through Himilo's offerings, Salem engaged in one-to-one Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) sessions with his employability worker. These sessions led him to discover his passion for a career as a personal trainer. ACH supported Salem in finding relevant training, crafting a CV, and enhancing his interview skills. Through these efforts, Salem achieved an Amazon Web Services

course, a Level 3 certificate in Planning & Delivering Gym-Based Exercise and obtained an HGV Class 2 license.

Salem also benefited from a Digital Marketing Course, amplifying his skills in social media marketing, search engine optimization, email marketing, and mobile app promotion. This training enhances his ability to promote his personal training business. Volunteering with ACH in various capacities, including reception and as an interpreter, further enriched Salem's skills, and experience. Now, having applied for personal trainer positions at major UK gym chains, Salem eagerly awaits the next chapter in his career journey and we're here to provide further guidance.



Agnes Gaspar (Coventry City Council), Shewit Tsehaye Gebrehiwet, ACH's client and Nevinder Ram, Himilo's Operations Manager at a celebration event in Coventry

“This laptop is proving extremely useful for me, I not only use it to look for jobs or improve my English, but I can also help my kids with their homework as their school is still in Ukraine and they need to access the classes online.” *Alina, ACH service user in Birmingham*



65

laptops were donated  
to ACH to give to our  
service users

## Bridging the digital divide

ACH have collaborated with DigiLocal in Bristol and Birmingham City Council to provide free laptops to refugees and migrants. These laptops open up a world of educational opportunities and career prospects, enabling our service users to work towards a brighter future. This collaboration is critical, extending support to those who require it most.

### **Omar's journey to ESOL classes and confidence building:**

Omar, who was keen to start ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, faced significant barriers due to mental health issues and social anxiety. This meant he needed to attend classes online rather than in person. With the support of ACH and DigiLocal, Omar is able to access free online courses with his laptop, which not only allows him to learn English but also to interact with others, boosting his confidence and becoming part of a community.

### **Sina's ambitions and the power of self-study:**

Sina already had certificates in Functional Skills Level I and ESOL Level II Speaking & Listening. But he faced a long wait before he could start at college. With a free laptop, Sina was able to continue his self-study at home, focusing on improving his English communication skills with the ultimate goal of applying to university.

“The free laptop I received is making my accounting course at college easier. It has helped me with my research and assignments.” *Maria, ACH service user in Birmingham*



# A place to thrive

The housing service alone is not enough, because economic independence and career progression are central to refugees and migrants achieving independence. Our entrepreneurship and careers teams have made a huge impact to the lives of refugee and migrant communities in the UK during 2023.



These are a few examples of the services we operate to ensure our communities thrive

## From start-up to scale-up

The [Migrant Business Support project](#) was established to assist migrants and refugees across every stage of their business development journey through the delivery of a highly customised and bespoke support programme. The support takes clients from inception through to the development of a business plan, launch as well ongoing coaching and support once the business is established to ensure it thrives.



“The Migrant Business Support project exemplifies the best of ACH practice, a holistic approach to working with individual entrepreneurs, partner organisations and communities. This project has further embedded our collaboration with ACH and the West of England Combined Authority. We look forward to a continued partnership to support social and economic development in the South West and West Midlands.” *Ann Singleton, Reader in Migration Policy School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol*

# Green, clean & lean



Building on the Migrant Business Support project, the Green Growth Accelerator project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, provides business support to encourage refugees and migrant-led (RML) businesses to be more sustainable. ACH is providing these businesses with bespoke support and helps them identify for green-focused markets for them to participate in.



“I have learnt a lot from my network, and they always want to help me with my business. They gave me advice about courses, informed me about job opportunities etc. It’s rewarding and gives me motivation.” *Tiffany, GGAP service user*

# 300+

interactions with entrepreneurs under the GGAP project



Baktash Musawer, Julia Dixon-Barrow, Shalini Sivakrishnan and Eloise Clemmings from ACH Bristol. Left: ACH Bristol employees and service users at the Ben & Jerry’s festival





# Changing lives #3

## Amina's Story

In 2020, Amina's journey with ACH began with English and IT skills training, through Himilo, our training subsidiary. Not long after, she transitioned from learning to becoming a volunteer teaching assistant.

Amina's story took an exciting turn when she decided to start nurturing her passion for making authentic Syrian cuisine. Through our Migrant Business Support project, her business concept was refined, offered strategic consulting, and assisted in establishing her food business in the UK. Amina's recipes featured in the Global Recipe Book through our partnership with Enactus at Aston University, where she also benefited from a £1,000 business grant.

As she now gears up for her official business launch, Amina not only caters for our internal events but has also earned the necessary food licenses required to launch, all with our continued tailored support and her dedication.

"ACH is very helpful and friendly. They help me understand how food business in the UK works including licenses, taxes, marketing and so on." *Amina Missi, ACH service user in Birmingham*



Mary Unsworth, Ahmedin Osman Ahmedin from ACH and Birmingham Council Leader, John Cotton and the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Nicky Brennan

## Preserving cultural memories



Over the past two years, ACH and Bristol Old Vic have been working on an exciting project supporting women from refugee or migrant backgrounds.

In 2023, ACH service users from 10 nationalities participated in sessions that were delivered by Bristol Old Vic over 12 weeks. The project involved creating a pickle product based on recipes from the different backgrounds of the participants. Because pickling is a preservation technique, exploring recipes and techniques gave the participants an opportunity to share their food cultures and symbolically preserve their cultural memories in Bristol.

Maria Mohammed, who took part in our Homemade project in 2022, became ACH's Community Engagement Officer this year and helped to deliver this project. Her journey shows that Bristol Old Vic and ACH prioritise empowering participants and focusing on their development.

*“After finishing this project, we came out with new connections, information and friends. We loved coming here to share our stories.”  
Maria Mohammed,  
participant and  
now ACH staff  
member*



Three of the ten ladies involved in the Bristol Old Vic Pickle Project.



# A place to work



Our combined lived and learned experiences at ACH enable us to provide a unique approach to refugee and migrant integration. We value the collective strength of different cultures and are proud to have people from countries all around the world working with us.

At ACH, we celebrate individual differences. Our offices are home to over 115 employees comprising 37 nationalities, and we believe that this diversity helps us better understand our clients and tenants. Our team members bring with them many languages that play a crucial role in shaping our cultural identity.

“Speaking different languages helps me to empathise with the people we support. I understand the difficulty of expressing ourselves in the way we really want to, even with a good level of English. The translator’s apps are handy but imperfect, so if I see the person doesn’t find the word they want, I support them in expressing the feeling, or we find the word together.” *Camille Degois, ACH’s project officer*

## Changing lives #4

### Natalia’s story

When I began working as a volunteer marketer at ACH, I had no idea how impactful this experience would be. ACH is dedicated to working with refugees and migrants, providing them with essential skills, support and opportunities for a brighter future, and that’s why I wanted to be part of this team. From language to maths and finance, ACH empowers refugees to not only adapt to their new lives but also to thrive. ACH also offers guidance and resources to help them start their own businesses, making entrepreneurship seem achievable.

What is remarkable is how ACH demystifies the world of entrepreneurship. Many

refugees see starting a business as an insurmountable challenge but, with the support and guidance they receive from ACH, they realise it’s more attainable than they thought. Seeing their entrepreneurial journey move from inception to fruition is incredibly rewarding.

“My experience at ACH has been wonderful. ACH is making a lasting impact, and I am profoundly grateful for the opportunity to be part of this extraordinary journey.”





# Changing lives #5

## Kateryna's story

76

Ukrainian families arriving to the UK on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme were supported by ACH

In March 2022, my daughter and I arrived in Birmingham, escaping the war in Ukraine while my husband stayed behind for his patriotic duty. It was a very long journey, filled with many difficulties including separation from my loved ones.

I found it quite hard to adjust due to the new challenges like English language difficulties and unfamiliar weather, however my host and ACH Birmingham helped ease the difficulties I was experiencing. This language barrier made it very difficult to gain employment, hence, I didn't have much money to survive on.

I attended a job fair and ACH Birmingham were present. They spoke to me and subsequently offered me English language classes, employability support, revised my CV and provided general guidance.

Thanks to the guidance I received, my proficiency in English improved significantly, leading me to become an ACH volunteer by March 2023 and then a part-time Careers & Enterprise Officer and, most recently, securing a full-time position.

"I am thankful for the English support and job opportunities ACH has provided me so far. This experience will really help me in achieving my dream of starting a career in the IT sector."  
*Kateryna, ACH's Careers and Enterprise Officer in Birmingham*

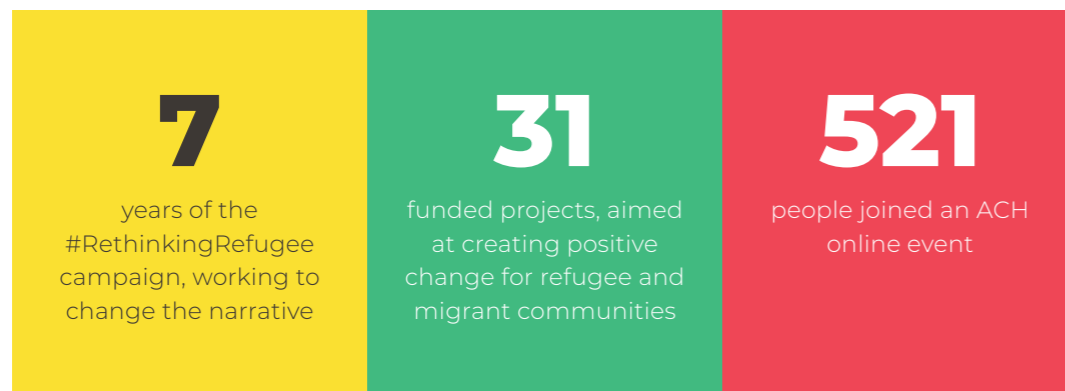


# A time for change

Over the past few years, the UK has experienced unprecedented labour market shortages as well as low levels of productivity and economic growth. At the same time, many refugee and migrant communities are either excluded from the labour market altogether or are under employed, below their levels of experience and capability, in precarious work. This is a huge waste of talent which is not just bad for the communities concerned but bad for us all. That is why ACH launched our [#rethinkingrefugee](#) campaign to invest in the future and drive integration through economic opportunity. This is a time for change.

## Key themes:

- ▶ Making better connections between research, policy development and delivery.
- ▶ Understanding the needs of diverse, newly arrived communities based on their experiences. They are often treated with a 'one size fits all' approach that does not work.
- ▶ Understanding why refugee and migrant communities struggle to find work or are under-employed. This needs to change to create ways to sustainable jobs that benefits the individuals as well as wider society.



## Turning research into practice:

### ACH and University of Bristol

ACH is proud to be working with Migration Mobilities Bristol (MMB), a specialist research institute at the University of Bristol. In 2021, we collaborated to launch a [webinar series](#) to bridge the gap between migration research, policy, service delivery and lived experience.

“This was one of the best uses of an hour for a long time. Very interesting, well-structured and delivered presentations, great chairing and time keeping. I found myself wishing all my colleagues (and others) were listening too.” *Webinar attendee*

### ACH and University of the West of England

ACH, UWE and the West of England Combined Authority have been collaborating to run a series of social impact hackathons. It has been a fantastic collaboration whereby University business students could put their learnt knowledge to the test and support refugee-migrant led businesses to solve a problem that they faced in their business.

### ACH and Aston University

The partnership between ACH and Aston University's Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME) shows the power of trust-based co-working to answer problems relating to inequality, enterprise and integration. A [study](#) by Professor Monder Ram, Director of CREME, found that their ethnic minority entrepreneurs are more innovative, growth-minded and export-oriented than their colleagues. As a result, ACH are actioning the recommendations made in the report.



Paul Hassan from ACH and Lana, Sumer, Mina, Marriia, Abdi and Bushra, panellists at the 'From Sanctuary to Opportunity' event reflecting on their personal experiences as asylum seekers/refugees

## 'From Sanctuary to Opportunity'

The Change Makers project is a five-year collaboration between ACH and Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy (RAMP), funded by Comic Relief, to identify opportunities with the refugee sector to influence city-level and regional strategies.

From Sanctuary to Opportunity is a pragmatic research project designed to speed up integration and opportunities, as heard via the voices of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants (or 'citizens-in-

waiting' as we refer to them). The research has led to our 2023 State of the City report, which puts lived experience at its core.



Right: Camille Degois, ACH's project officer

# Community Climate Action

**30**

entrepreneurs per month were supported to grow their businesses sustainably

In Bristol, ACH continues with the CommunityClimateAction project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, which puts community leadership at the heart of action on climate and inequality. After listening to our community, we focused our activities on creating greater accessibility to the green employment sector and providing support for traders to grow their businesses sustainably. ACH spent several months designing our support package and launched this in 2023.

In terms of employability, we ran a pilot and a further two sessions of our Introduction to Green Employment course. This includes: discussion around climate change in Bristol; how to access green jobs; how to gain skills; and how to prepare a job application. At the same time, our business advisors work with around 30 entrepreneurs a month to help them grow sustainably, to support them with starting or growing existing businesses, and to help them implement sustainable practices.





Camille Degois and Jah Caballero from ACH at a MILE project celebration in Brussels

## Thinking global, acting local

This year saw the completion of our final EU-funded projects: the IEEDO project and the MILE project. As a result, 2023 has been focused on delivering both projects and sharing what we learned.

We made big strides with IEEDO (Increasing & Enhancing Effective Digital Opportunities), an innovative approach to digital self-learning to build resilience through online resources. In 2023, we finalised our Moodle training platform for coaches, and the IEEDO app has been developed via our project partner Video Games Without Borders.

The MILE project (Migrant Integration through Locally designed Experiences) is a

different approach to refugee and migrant integration, focusing on meaningful political participation and engagement. MILE has facilitated a partnership with local councils, refugee and migrant organisations, and research teams in five European cities. They have since created a consultative body in each city with policies to share best practices and recommendations.

“MILE was special in its way of connecting municipalities, local migrant communities and research teams from different countries. Their experiences and expertise harmonised in such a unique way, allowing us to think about migration and participation from new angles and to see challenges and approaches we may not have considered before.” *Vanessa Cotterell, UNITEE (Brussels)*

## Raising Roofs

90

senior housing leaders gathered to discuss housing inequalities faced by refugees

In February 2023, more than 90 senior housing leaders gathered at the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol for the Firming Foundations and Raising Roofs event. This event aimed to discuss and agree how we can collectively address housing inequalities faced by refugees and people of colour, as well as other newly arrived communities.

Because of this event, ACH and Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI), the Black South West Network (BSWN) and a number of housing organisations took forward a plan to address the issues that arose. The plan was endorsed by the Bristol City Homes and Communities Board.

“This was the best event on race and refugee equality I have attended. It managed to be inspirational, open welcoming as well as challenging. The quality of speakers was superb and a tribute to the work of ACH and their networks.” *Simon Nunn Director member services National Housing Federation*



Senior housing leaders at the Firming Foundations and Raising Roofs event in Bristol.

# Digital presence



1492 followers



1221 followers



5154 followers



1513 followers

**9.3k**

total number of followers

**1k+**

total social media posts in 2023

**35k+**

people visited the ACH website in 2023



## Telling our story online

We have published more than 35 blog posts in 2023 where we feature tenants, clients, students and anything else worth sharing.

Please subscribe to our newsletter for all our latest project updates, opportunities and good news stories.

<https://ach.org.uk/join-our-monthly-newsletter-mailing-list>

**521**

people joined an ACH online event

**50**

online / in person events organised by ACH



Fuad Mahamed, ACH's CEO with Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol and Monder Ram, Professor of Small Business and Director CREME, Aston Business School discussing strategic collaboration to support refugee and migrant businesses



# Looking ahead

Whilst 2023 has been a year of extraordinary challenge mixed with opportunity, as we go into 2024 the future looks even more unpredictable. Nevertheless, ACH will in 2024 face these tests with confidence and optimism. Our approach can be summarised in four themes:

- 1 Promotion:** The development and promotion of the ACH brand to reflect our industry-leading position. This will create opportunities to increase our impact on refugee integration outcomes, policy and system change.
- 2 Collaboration:** Value and promote lived experience in ACH and foreground the importance of this in our work. Collaborate with partners to further highlight the benefits of true workplace diversity.
- 3 Resilience:** Improve organisational resilience by further diversifying our housing offer across the regions in which we operate. Work with local authorities and stakeholders to address their challenges.
- 4 Engagement:** Expand and enhance our service user engagement to develop resources and provisions that are reflective of their needs. Remain agile in the provision of services to respond to inevitable future changes.



ACH Wolverhampton team

## Join us

If you are interested in supporting ACH and joining us to create a better, brighter future for refugees and migrants in the UK, then we would love to hear from you.

How can I get involved?

- Rent your property with ACH**
- Join the conversation on social media**
- Work with us as an employer**
- Partner with us**

- **Become an ACH landlord |** Renting your property to refugees via ACH makes good business sense. It saves you money on fees, earns you a good monthly rent, and provides someone with a base from which to build a life in the UK.
- **Follow us on social media |** Join the campaign to make a real change and build a better, brighter future for refugees and migrants in the UK.
- **Employer partnerships |** We can work with you to help your business find the right person for your team. We can run bespoke courses, support you with training, and we can help settle people into your company.
- **Project partnerships |** We partner or lead on a range of projects across the world that enhance integration services for refugees and migrants. These disrupt the systems of entrenched inequality in our society.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of our funders, partners and supporters who have made such a huge contribution to the lives of the refugee and migrant communities we support.

We would like to recognise the tenacity and resilience of our service users, many who contributed to this report. They constantly inspire us to do the work we do.

We would also like to thank the photographers who contributed to the photos included in this Impact Report: Sena Vicdan, Christy Kalu, Laura Llamas, Holly Wallis, Zhenya Melesyk and Jack Merron.

If you would like to learn more about the work we do at ACH, please contact us at [marketing@ach.org.uk](mailto:marketing@ach.org.uk)

Disclaimer: some of the names in this report have been changed to protect their identity.

## References

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