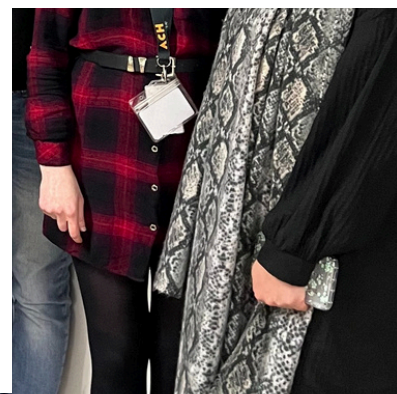
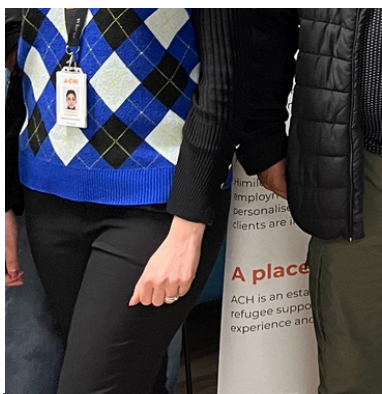


2024

Impact Report

Driving Change & Integration
for Refugee & Migrant
Communities





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Breaking barriers and opening doors

We are delighted to report that 2024 has been our most successful year to date. We have housed over 1,400 people over the course of the year, provided bespoke training and business advice to over 500 of our service users, ensuring our clients, from across the west of England and the West Midlands, can take the first steps towards full integration.

These accomplishments are despite another tumultuous year internationally for the refugee and migrant communities we serve. Conflicts flared up and persisted across the world whilst 2024 was also the warmest year on record. These factors combined to drive up the global number of refugees and internally displaced people to over 122 million.

The summer race riots, here at home, led by far-right groups across the country, deeply impacted our communities. In contrast, we at ACH received an outpouring of solidarity from people determined to ensure these shameful incidents do not and will never represent the views of most British people.

Despite these challenges, we achieved these exceptional outcomes because fundamentally ACH is a driven, grass roots social enterprise comprising over 35 nationalities across our small dedicated and inspirational workforce. At least half reflecting the lived experience of our service users. Our client successes have been alongside and never at the expense of recognised external quality validation across all our provision. It's what makes us unique and special.

We've driven social innovation in the range and spread of our housing offer from securing new investment in new homes to the consolidation of two major meanwhile use projects.

That same spirit of creativity led to new initiatives providing effective employment and business support including the Bridge to Employment and the UP Collective programme, to name a few. During 2024, we published groundbreaking research via the Comic Relief-funded Changemakers programme on the need for a new approach to the supply and delivery of learner-led English language skills to improve employment outcomes.

The spring and summer local and national elections opened new doors for ACH which culminated in a compelling parliamentary reception co-hosted by Kerry McCarthy MP and Paulette Hamilton MP drawing in stakeholders from government and the refugee support sector to hear success stories from ourselves and partners.

In late autumn we hosted our inaugural Welcome Party to celebrate the contribution of our communities make to the UK through cuisine, music, product development and economic impact through employment and new business startups. We were delighted to host the legendary athlete Sir Mo Farah as our guest alongside employers and employees who have benefited from our initiatives.

I'll leave you with the words of the esteemed guest speaker at the Welcome Party reflecting on growing up as a marginalised trafficked child to a national hero and role model:

'..... It takes just one person to trust you'.
He is not alone and not the last, more will follow if the right support and trust are provided.
We hope you will be that next "one person".

Fuad Mahamed

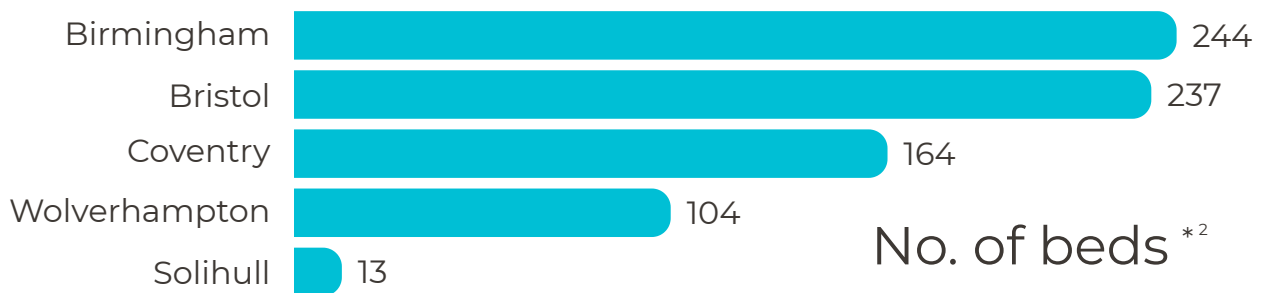
Chief Executive Officer



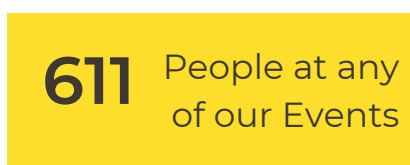
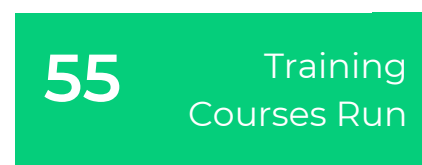
2024 in summary

The number of people given refugee status in the UK is on the rise. In the year ending September 2024, 52,739 people were granted refugee protection or other leave at initial decision, over a third more than in the previous year*.¹

We've been dedicated to unlocking human potential within refugee and migrant communities for the past year by **supporting**:



Tenant Satisfaction*³



*1: Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-september-2024/how-many-people-are-granted-asylum-in-the-uk>

*2: Made of multiple use of schemes. Numbers calculated as of 31st December 2024

*3: 200 people were interviewed

Empowering refugees & migrants

ACH is a leading social enterprise founded in Bristol in 2008 dedicated to providing supported housing and integration services for refugees and migrants in the UK.

With offices in Bristol, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and Coventry, and services extending to Solihull, ACH delivers holistic support that empowers individuals to build stable, independent, and fulfilling lives. We currently have **781 beds** for refugees and vulnerable migrants across our five UK locations and an annual turnover of more than £10million.

A Place To



Our mission is 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.



Caring
Respect
Empowering
Excellence
Integrity



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

A place to live



ACH exists to help refugees and migrants live independent and ambitious lives. Led by lived experience, we have a track record of delivering effective support services that give people the tools they need to succeed.

We offer a safe and secure accommodation for refugees in Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton and Solihull. Our houses are shared, fully furnished and suitable for single adults with low to medium support needs. We also provide a small number of non-supported and emergency houses.

Tenants supported in 2024

Bristol	Birmingham	Coventry	Wolverhampton	Solihull
461	449	297	169	25



“

“I am very happy with the support I have received from ACH and especially how nice the support and integration officers are. 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”. - Ayan, ACH Bristol tenant



Welcome to ACH

Building a better future for refugees and migrants in the UK through supported accommodation and tailored integration services.



CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

THIS CERTIFIES THAT

has demonstrated outstanding commitment, teamwork, and support as a volunteer for the Tenant Festival hosted by ACH Birmingham

Given this April, 19th 2024

LIZWIE CHIGAMA
BIRMINGHAM OFFICES MANAGER

MARY UNSWORTH
SUPPORT TEAM LEADER

ACH Birmingham is as good as gold

ACH Birmingham awarded SEAQS gold status



ACH Birmingham was honoured to receive the **Supported Exempt Accommodation Quality Standards (SEAQS) Gold Status** - the highest recognition awarded by the **Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC)** in partnership with **Birmingham City Council**.

This award is a testament to our unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality, safe and dignified accommodation for vulnerable tenants.

Through rigorous inspections and policy reviews, we have continuously raised our standards to not only meet but exceed the expectations set for exempt accommodation providers. This achievement underscores our role as a sector leader, ensuring that vulnerable communities receive the support they deserve.

I've seen first-hand the effort you've made since the last assessment, where you won silver. These rigorous assessments reflect real experiences of those receiving your support - from policy reviews to housing conditions and tenant feedback. Commissioned by Birmingham City Council, this process reassures that, despite sector challenges, organisations like yours provide excellent services - Derek, BVSC Quality Standards Manager



Case study

Reuniting families: Hossein's Journey in Birmingham

Four years ago, political unrest in Iran made me decide to leave my country in search of a safer life. When I first arrived in the UK, they placed me in a small countryside town near Norwich, where I stayed in a sort of camp for six months. In 2021, I was transferred to Birmingham. By that time, I had received my refugee clearance to live here. Some Iranian friends recommended I reach out to ACH, they all said it was a great organisation that helps refugees and that the team was very friendly and supportive. I'm so happy they did.

I remember my first meeting with ACH; they explained all the processes and told me about the support I could expect. The ACH team was always there whenever I needed help. They helped me sort out my driving license and immigration-related needs, they helped me find the best nearby college, where I enrolled and improved my English language skills. I could barely speak English when I first came to the UK. I really feel like they were always by my side. ACH helped me feel at home and knowing I can rely on them has given me so much peace of mind.

A few days ago, one of my big dreams finally came true: my wife and daughter arrived in the UK. I am grateful that the family reunion process was successful. It's been an emotional experience reuniting with them! They were a little shocked by the cold but warmed by the people's kindness and multicultural environment here. At the airport, I was so excited, nervous and filled with so many feelings that I even forgot to take a picture with them for memory's sake.

I've more hope that things will be better in future. I used to work as a lab technician, but here, I've started learning carpentry. I enjoy working with my hands, and carpentry feels like a good fit for me – it is a skill that is always needed. One day, I may return to lab work, but for now, I'm focused on building this new path.

Thank you to everyone at ACH Birmingham. They did not only give me support, but also kindness and friendship. I am very grateful. My wife is happy, and my daughter is very delighted too!



Case study

Reuniting families: Nehzat's journey in Wolverhampton



Thanks to the support I received from ACH, I no longer feel lost. I now have a clearer path forward - Nehzat, ACH Wolverhampton Client



Finding My Way in a New Country

When I arrived in the UK as a refugee from Iran in May 2022, I felt uncertain about my future and completely lost. Despite having a vocational diploma in beauty therapy and food hygiene, along with significant experience in both, I struggled to find work. My qualifications weren't recognised in the UK, and without local work experience, securing a job seemed impossible. On top of that, my limited English made everything even harder.

ACH Wolverhampton's Intervention

Then, I found ACH Wolverhampton. From the start, they provided me with one-to-one guidance, focus groups, and social activities that helped me regain confidence and plan my next steps. They encouraged me to enrol in an ESOL course to improve my English, and I started volunteering at St. Chad and St. Mark Church kitchen, where I serve many other refugees with delicious Asian cuisines.

One of the biggest moments for me was reuniting with my husband through family reunion. I'm very happy that it was successful and he has finally joined me. Having him here gives me strength as I work toward a better future. I've made significant progress in improving my English and employability skills. My goal is to continue studying and pursue some additional vocational courses, gain UK qualifications, and one day become a professional beauty therapist and food hygiene specialist.

Building new foundations

Last March, ACH joined forces with Bristol & Bath Regional Capital (BBRC) to secure a £2.5 million investment package, an innovative funding model that has enabled the purchase of 12 much-needed flats in Bristol. This milestone represents a significant step forward in tackling housing insecurity while ensuring long-term community impact.

The investment structure blends £1.1 million in grant funding from Bristol City Council's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), £400,000 in repayable debt financing from BBRC-managed City Funds and £1 million from an impact-aligned private endowment fund.

Now, with all 12 properties secured, four owned directly by ACH and the remaining eight by BBRC, the partnership is unlocking sustainable housing solutions. BBRC will lease its properties to ACH at a significantly below-market rate for ten years, allowing ACH to purchase them at a discount before the lease term ends. This innovative model allows ACH to responsibly expand its housing portfolio while maintaining financial sustainability.

Critically, these homes will provide immediate relief for those in need. For the next decade, Bristol City Council will hold nomination rights, prioritising Ukrainian refugees initially before opening up availability to the wider housing waiting list. The tenants that have moved in are settling into high-quality one- and two-bedroom homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard. With rents set at 80% of market rate (including service fees), this initiative directly contributes to the availability of truly affordable housing in the city.

This investment is more than just bricks and mortar, it's about creating long-term stability, fostering community resilience, and setting a precedent for innovative housing solutions.

12

affordable flats
have been offered
to refugees

£2.5M

investment
package



Susan Cataldi - ACH, Cllr Tom Renhard, BBRC CEO Ed Rowberry, and Georgina Cremin, BBRC impact investment associate

A place to learn

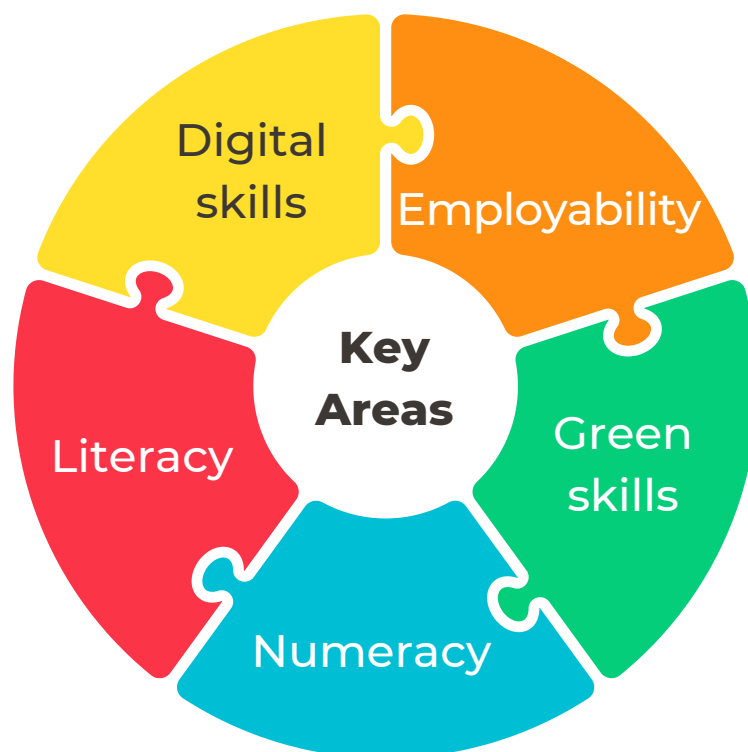


ACH and Himilo provide innovative training and integration programmes to support refugees and migrants achieve their education, career, and entrepreneurial goals in the UK. We also deliver international training, such as for the Institute of Civil Servants in Somaliland.

In 2024, we have offered both accredited and non-accredited learning. Our non-accredited courses include **Life in the UK**, a Pre-Entry ESOL course focused on employability, and **Green Skills**, which introduces language and concepts related to sustainability. We are piloting an innovative ESOL, employability, and mentoring approach with Coventry City Council and West Midlands Combined Authority, integrating learning into real-life situations.

Digital skills have been a major focus, with both introductory and accredited courses in Birmingham and Bristol. In addition, we have delivered accredited **Maths** courses in Bristol since 2021 and plan to expand non-accredited Maths training to Birmingham in 2025.

Structured training





A strong endorsement of our progress

Last November, we welcomed Ofsted to our Bristol Training Centre for a Monitoring Visit focused on **Leadership & Management, Teaching & Learning and Safeguarding**. This thorough evaluation involved meetings with internal staff, senior managers, board members, employers, and our safeguarding team, along with lesson observations, work scrutinies and learner feedback sessions.

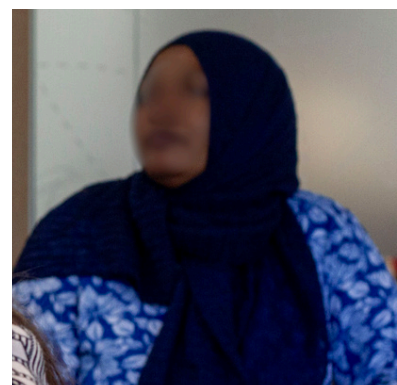
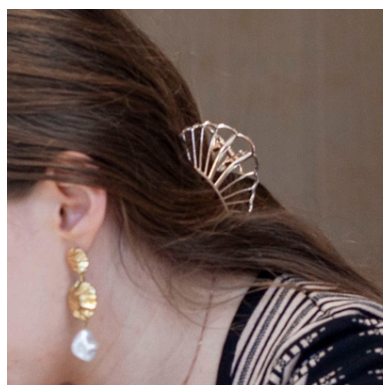
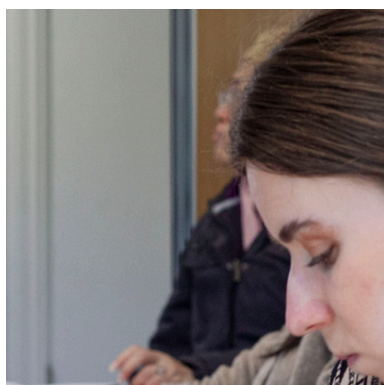
The result? **A solid reasonable progress across all areas**, with some aspects nearing significant progress, a testament to our rapid development and commitment to excellence. Inspectors commended how far we've come in such a short time, reinforcing confidence in our approach. With no further visits until at least September 2025, our next full inspection is expected within 24 months.

This year, we've focused on refining and standardising quality processes, ensuring our Quality Calendar is a dynamic, widely used resource. We've also conducted two rounds of our Voice of the Customer initiative, gathering valuable learner and client feedback to continuously elevate our standards. The response has been overwhelmingly positive and we remain committed to acting on all constructive input.

Our journey so far has been one of **dedication, growth and impact** and we're excited to keep building on this success.

600+

training and
education
outcomes



55

education
and training
courses

500+

learners who
have received
training

Case study

Empowering refugees and migrants through ACH's English for Work programme

The ACH English for Work programme equips refugees and migrants with essential language skills, helping them integrate into their new communities and prepare for employment. In 2024, the programme provided 18 learners with practical, real-world English training in a supportive and inclusive environment.

*"Before joining ACH, I couldn't speak English. Now, I feel confident to communicate fluently, and it's making a huge difference in my daily life."
- Filmon, ACH resident and English for Work program learner*

"ACH's program helped me prepare for real-world situations, not just exams. My confidence in English has grown, and I'm now volunteering to teach others." - Ghofram, English for Work program learner

”

The English for Work programme (as well as other programmes offered by ACH) doesn't just teach English - it provides learners with the tools to access education, employment and social inclusion.

We are committed to continuing to deliver high-quality, impactful classes that empower refugees and migrants to build confidence, integrate successfully and achieve their goals. Our focus remains on supporting learners in practical ways to prepare them for real-world challenges and opportunities.



A place to thrive



Housing service provision is important, but it is not sufficient on its own, as economic independence and career progression are also essential for refugees and migrants to achieve self-sufficiency. In 2024, our entrepreneurship and careers teams have made a substantial impact on the lives of refugee and migrant communities in the UK by providing high-quality education, career advice, and support for aspiring entrepreneurs and newly established businesses.

Start-up Migrants	Bridge to Employment	Community Climate Action
Up Collective	UKSPF - Employment & Skills	Homes for Ukraine - Bridge to Business
Our Coventry	Transition Housing	Coventry Language Integration Project

These are some the projects we have run in 2024 to ensure our communities thrive.





Turning ideas into reality

ACH partnered with London-based refugee entrepreneurship support organisation, TERN, to deliver the UP Collective programme, a 12-week entrepreneurial programme which supports individuals through forming a business idea to business testing and a final showcase and pitching to the public.

On this pilot programme, taking place for the first time in the South West, 11 individuals were uniquely matched with an experienced business mentor for 1:1 coaching sessions complementing weekly workshops. The programme focused on idea-formulation, working with individuals to identify what they want to offer, research-based activities which encouraged the ideapreneurs to identify their target market and competitors and practice requesting feedback from the public to improve their product or service; all with the end goal to build confidence to pitch their product or service to a public audience of supporters.

The UP Collective has been instrumental in helping me refine my business vision. Through the program, I gained invaluable feedback and insights from experienced entrepreneurs. It wasn't just about learning - it was about being part of a supportive community that understands the unique challenges of starting a business. I truly feel more confident to continue my business journey, thanks to their support - Programme Participant



11 people

graduated from the programme



12 week

entrepreneurial programme



BRISTOL

Afghan Bristol Cuisine
Vida and Khanjar

Afghan Bristol Cuisine at the 'Test My Idea' event

Case study

More than housing: Ali's journey in Wolverhampton



I want to say thank you to ACH and everyone in the Wolverhampton team who has been part of my journey. What more can I say? ACH has had my back since day one, and I'm deeply grateful. - Ali, Wolverhampton Resident



Starting Over

I came to the UK in 2017 from Sudan and first connected with ACH Wolverhampton later that year. Starting a new life was very challenging, but things gradually took shape with their support. At first, I stayed in temporary housing, unsure where to go next. Through word of mouth, I heard about ACH. Some friends from Afghanistan, Kenya, and Ghana all recommended them. ACH supported me with housing, community integration, GP registrations and job searches. Their courses also helped me improve my English and other skills. Anytime I faced an issue, the ACH team was there to lend support.

Finding My Passion

In 2018, I joined an ESOL course and also started going to the gym. Fitness has always been my passion - whether running 10 miles, boxing, or lifting weights, it kept me strong, both physically and mentally. When the pandemic hit, I paused college and took on temporary work to further support myself. Despite those setbacks, I never let go of fitness. In 2022, while still receiving support from ACH, I pursued boxing seriously. This year, I completed a gym instruction and personal training course and I'm now awaiting certification to become a personal trainer.

Living in ACH's supported accommodation taught me the value of respect, positivity, and persistence. If you abide by the rules and stay committed to thriving, organisations like ACH are there to help you succeed. Today, I volunteer at a local gym, helping others with their workouts, and my next goal is to secure a stable job in fitness or sports.

Enabling self-reliance

Fostering independence and wellbeing in Coventry

In Coventry, our recent initiatives have focused on move-on accommodation, employment, and wellbeing support, ensuring our tenants have the resources they need for long-term stability.

To tackle challenges around securing private housing, we engaged tenants in related sessions such as the Coventry Homefinder, and the Department for Work and Pensions, migration team sessions. This gave tenants direct insight into the realities of social housing availability and introduced private renting as a viable path to independence. As a result, several tenants have started actively searching for private rentals with our ongoing support. Notably, two tenants from the same supported accommodation have successfully moved into a property together, and 10 other tenants who secured employment in the last quarter, have moved into private rentals by themselves or with friends.

Recognising the importance of engagement, we've also prioritised tenant focus groups to understand barriers to accessing our Himilo training services. A key takeaway was the need for greater wellbeing support, which has led to the launch of Wellbeing Wednesdays in Coventry. These bi-weekly sessions at our office provide a space for tenants to explore wellbeing practices, build connections, and engage in new activities, helping to foster a sense of community and support integration.

Through these efforts, we continue to champion a holistic approach to resettlement, ensuring that refugees and migrants in Coventry not only find housing but also gain the confidence, skills, and networks to shape their own futures.



Building businesses

Through our Homes for Ukraine initiative

Our Homes for Ukraine (HFU) initiative aims to establish active businesses by supporting refugees and migrants in overcoming barriers to entrepreneurship. Since launching client engagement in September 2024, we have made significant strides, providing commercial support to **24 businesses**, many of which are already trading or ready to launch.

Through targeted business support, we address key challenges such as regulatory uncertainty, language barriers, and social isolation, ensuring that clients not only meet compliance requirements but also gain the confidence, networks and knowledge necessary to succeed.

We work closely with partners such as **Refugee & Migrant Centre**, the **Department for Work & Pensions**, and **Centrala** to provide holistic support and we plan to launch a business club to further enhance peer learning. The impact of our approach is already visible - 10 businesses are now operating in the market, 2 businesses are prepared to commence operations, whilst other clients report increased confidence, motivation and readiness to succeed in the UK business landscape.

When we arrived, we were uncertain about our future. We waited, hoping to return, but as the war dragged on, we had to think about how to move forward. I remembered everything my father taught me and this work allows me to contribute despite my language skills still improving. - Sergiy, HFU Programme Participant



10

businesses are fully operating

24

clients received business support



L-R: Sergiy and Anastasiia, both HFU programme participants

Beyond housing

Our mission goes beyond providing accommodation. We empower people to rebuild their lives, regain independence and contribute to the economy.

Through **Our Coventry** and **the Transition Housing Project**, we help individuals move from our temporary accommodation into stable jobs and homes, restoring the stability they once had. We provide interview skills sessions and Job Search Cafés, equipping clients with the tools to succeed in job applications and interviews. We have also recently received **20 free laptops** from Cov Connects (Coventry City Council), which will help us enhance our employment support.

So far, **13 people** have secured employment and **5 people** have transitioned into private rented accommodation. Additionally, **200 people** have received support with employment, self-employment, English language and digital skills.

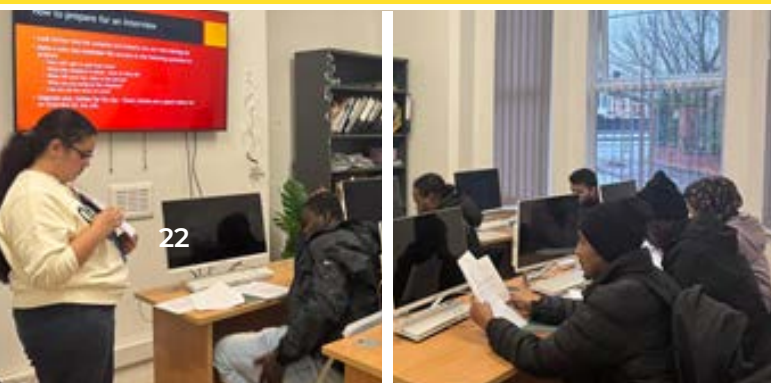
Before, I didn't speak English. I've learned how to speak and understand it. I now know how to find a job and how to communicate with people. I understand how to answer questions and express myself clearly. - Our Coventry Programme Participant

Through this project, we've helped migrants and refugees gain English language skills, digital literacy, and employment support - giving them the tools to become independent, self-sufficient and build a better future. - Sonia Nazir, Careers and Enterprise Manager



200 people

supported with employment, self-employment, English, and digital skills



13 people

successfully placed into employment

Bridge to Employment

We successfully delivered four of our new Bridge to Employment programmes, collaborating directly with employers to provide pre-employment training, placement opportunities, and pathways to secure permanent employment.

We supported 41 participants across these programmes, resulting in 19 securing employment. The employers included hotel members of Visit West including; Hotel Du Vin, Doubletree by Hilton, Radison Blu, The Gainsborough, Hampton by Hilton, Delta Hotels by Marriot, The Doyle Collection, Pret a Manger and Bristol Waste.



The Bridge to Employment programme has transformed both my professional and personal outlook. Without it, I might still be sending out applications with little idea of how to improve my chances - Wylie, Bridge to Employment participant.

This collaborative programme has provided refugees and migrants with the opportunity to contribute positively to their community. We are incredibly proud of all participants and we're grateful for the support from all the employers involved in this project. - Julia Dixon-Barrow, Entrepreneurship and Engagement Manager.



19
people secured
employment
after the
programme



Khalid and Mazin Ali have successfully completed the programme. The brothers are now fully-trained refuse and recycling loaders and have joined a team collecting the bins and recycling around Bristol. More refugees and migrants are expected to graduate from the programme and get jobs both at Bristol Waste and other key roles in the city.

The partnership between ACH and Bristol Waste Company works both ways - as well as the programme teaching refugees how the world of employment in Bristol works, and what will be expected of them, it also means employers like Bristol Waste are supported to better understand and help overcome the challenges refugees face in adapting to a new country, new systems and a new city.

Read the full press release here: <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/new-programme-sees-first-refugees-9752741>

Case study

A recipe for success: Celia's journey through the ACE course.

In collaboration with Coexist Community Kitchen and BrisBES, we have carried out 2 successful rounds of the Accelerated Cooking and Entrepreneurship (ACE) course in 2024. This eight-week programme is designed to equip participants with essential skills in professional catering and all the information needed to start a business. Over the eight weeks, we cover topics such as bread baking, butchery, food hygiene, budgeting, and business management, aiming to empower and encourage chefs to embark on their own culinary ventures. Throughout multiple cohorts, we've seen remarkable journeys unfold, and we would like to shine a spotlight on one of our standout chefs, Celia.

Celia relocated to Bristol in 2023 and brought with her a wealth of experience as the founder of a cooking school and a seasoned cookery teacher from Hong Kong. With over seven years of experience, she has a passion for cooking. "I love cooking, sharing my recipes, mixing and matching different ingredients with a twist of traditional food."

Discovering the ACE course through an Instagram post, Celia recognised its potential to embark on her entrepreneurial aspirations in the UK. "I was lacking local knowledge and network," she shares. "Although I'm confident in my cooking and teaching skills and have experience running a business, navigating the legal and tax systems in a new country is crucial for starting a food business here. This course covered exactly what I needed to know."



"Thanks to the ACE course I could refresh my teaching skills and become more comfortable teaching classes in English. The cookery teacher, Kelly, is great and gives clear instructions. During the cooking sessions, I also had the chance to try and learn different cuisines from different countries. The entire team is very helpful, especially Eloise; she has already passed me some referrals and potential opportunities."





A place to work



Our deep well of lived and learned experiences at ACH empowers us to take a truly unique approach to refugee and migrant integration. We don't just support diversity, we thrive on it. By embracing the collective strength of different cultures, we create a dynamic and inclusive environment where innovation and understanding flourish.

With a team of over **130 employees** representing more than **35 nationalities**, our offices are a vibrant tapestry of backgrounds, perspectives and languages. This diversity isn't just a statistic, it's the heartbeat of our organisation, allowing us to connect with our clients and tenants on a deeper level. Every language spoken and every lived experience enriches our cultural identity, reinforcing our mission to build stronger, more inclusive communities.



I am proud to be part of an organisation which is willing to think creatively about how to best support refugees and vulnerable migrants. The sheer diversity of people I get to work with is amazing and joining ACH will see you enter the most welcoming workplace you could ask for, with the freedom and space to explore your ideas! I have made lifelong friends here who I would never have met anywhere else. - Tom, Head of Business Development



And the award goes to...

In 2024, we have been honoured to receive numerous awards, commendations, and shortlistings, recognition that reflects our dedication and impact. We take immense pride in these achievements and believe they will help us connect with an even wider audience.



We love sharing our success and keeping our community engaged. Stay up-to-date by following us on social media, subscribing to our newsletter, and visiting our website, so you never miss an update!

7,500

people read
our blogs

+11k

people followed
us in social
media

+100k

people visited
ACH's website
ach.org.uk

+600

people receive
our *Think*
Thursday
Newsletter

Amplifying migrant voices with UWE

Podcasting is a powerful platform for connection, and transcending boundaries to bring diverse voices from around the world. For us at ACH, it's more than just storytelling; it's about fostering a brighter future for refugees and migrants by amplifying their voices.

In 2024, we launched a new podcast series in collaboration with the University of the West of England (UWE)*. This series showcases podcasts recorded by talented UWE students alongside our valued service users. Through these episodes, you'll hear firsthand about the impact of ACH services on our community: entrepreneurs sharing their journeys of starting businesses, students demonstrating the power of training for integration, support workers providing testimonies about the vital assistance ACH offers to tenants and much more.

Listen to our podcasts here:

5
podcasts were
released in
2024

160
total number of
streams



**Wisdom
from the
Global
Majority**

*This project is funded by CATE Public/Community Engagement and Knowledge Exchange Funding.

Case study

From unemployed to employed

My life changed for the better after meeting Kateryna from ACH. I found her through a group platform where she shared some helpful information, and when I reached out for support, she was more than willing to assist. Through ACH's Employability Programs in Birmingham, I learned how to apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and find roles on my own. Before long, I felt confident managing these steps independently.

Since 2022, I had been searching for a job, but it wasn't until I connected with ACH in 2023 that I finally felt hopeful. My biggest challenge was the language barrier, so I attended ESOL courses each week to improve my English. Kateryna also introduced me to interview techniques such as the STAR interview method and recommended relevant coaching and mentoring courses. With her support, I pursued these qualifications to upskill and position myself for better employment.

Eventually, she referred me for a volunteering opportunity and I began volunteering. I gained real-life insight into the organisation's processes and interacted with people from various countries who each brought unique perspectives. Combining their experiences with my own was incredibly helpful and broadened my understanding. The experience was invaluable, and I made sure to ask questions of the support and housing teams to learn as much as possible. Sonia, ACH's Careers and Enterprise Manager, also took time to guide me, showing me what I needed to succeed. All these experiences led to my current role as an Employability Mentor with ACH in Coventry.



I am grateful and proud to be part of ACH. Though I'm still improving my English, ACH has given me the chance to support others while growing myself. The biggest impact ACH has had on me is restoring my confidence. It's truly challenging to start over in a new country, knowing you don't have the same familiarity as local people. But through ACH, I've found a community that believes in me, and I'm so thankful for that. I'm happy, I'm very happy.



Changing career can be challenging, ACH offers support to make informed decisions and choose a career path that's right. We offer free Careers Advice service to help refugees and migrants find the right employment or education opportunity. For more information, go to: ach.org.uk/career-advice

A time for change



ACH provides vital, hands-on support to refugee and migrant communities across the West of England and West Midlands, empowering individuals to rebuild their lives. Beyond direct assistance, ACH is deeply committed to bridging the gap between research, policy, and real-world impact, ensuring that innovative solutions translate into meaningful change on the ground.

ACH is proud to be working with universities in Bristol and Birmingham in different projects that aim to bridge the gap between migration research, policy, service delivery and lived experience.

University of
Bristol

Aston University

University of the
West of England

- MMB Webinars
- Language, Literacies and Education Network
- BDFI
- Knowledge Transfer Partnership
- Internships
- Wisdom from the Global Majority Podcasts
- Live brief sessions

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.

Investing in refugee integration

ACH hosted a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons, hosted by Rt Hon Kerry McCarthy MP and Rt Hon Paulette Hamilton MP. The event showcased the transformative impact of tailored support for refugees and migrants, demonstrating how investment in integration services strengthens communities and drives economic growth.

Attendees heard from Sudanese brothers Khalid and Mazin, who arrived in the UK in January 2024 with no English but, through ACH's training with Bristol Waste, secured jobs within four months. Daud, an Afghan refugee, shared his inspiring journey from ACH's employment and language support to earning a Master's degree alongside his son and becoming a Procurement Officer at Brunelcare. Meriam, from Ethiopia, transitioned from ACH tenant to successful café owner through tailored business support.

Experts from Oxford University's COMPAS, Migrant Help, and the International Rescue Committee underscored the urgent need for strategic investment in refugee employment and integration. The event reinforced a clear message: investing in refugee integration is both morally right and economically smart.

Our work at ACH shows that investing in tailored, holistic support to refugees and migrants lays a firm foundation which enables them to find sustainable work and contribute to their communities - Fuad Mahamed, CEO.





THE WELCOME PARTY

Celebrating journeys from sanctuary to success

The Welcome Party drew over 140 employers, policy makers and community activists to the iconic Mount Without venue in central Bristol in November. 2024 to celebrate the unique contribution migrants and refugees continue to make to the economic cultural and social fabric of the city and beyond.

We were delighted to host **Sir Mo Farah**, himself trafficked here as a child, who spoke of his journey from domestic servitude to Olympic glory.

Alongside our special guest we enjoyed delicious cuisine served from migrant and refugee owned catering businesses and heard compelling stories from refugee employees, their employers and business owners who made the case for effective integration and offering opportunity.

As a result of this successful event, ACH is currently developing **The Welcome Pledge**, which is aimed at encouraging companies to make sure their recruitment and selection processes are better geared towards selecting and retaining refugees and migrants.





Pic above: The Welcome Party guests enjoying a 3-course meal made by refugee-led businesses

Pic below: MP Kerry McCarthy, Elham Fardad, Sir Mo Farah, Zara Mohammed, Museji Takolia CBE





160
participants

72
people with lived experience of displacement

28+
stakeholder organisations

13
interviews with specialists in ESOL, career guidance & recruitment

31
experts in two stakeholder workshops

50
input from those stakeholders at our interim report event

Research impacting policy and delivery

Our 2024 **'From Sanctuary to Opportunity'** research, funded by Comic Relief, is helping to improve training and employment systems in the West of England Region. The findings are underpinned by robust evidence drawn from the expert opinions of refugee and migrant communities as well as ESOL, training, employment and policy professionals.

We are working with key stakeholders, such as the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, Bristol City Council, City of Bristol College and the Department for Work and Pensions, to ensure training and employment support properly meets the needs of refugees and migrants, while aligning with local employer and skills requirements.

For example, our research has informed the design of a **common ESOL initial assessment tool** by Community Learning at Bristol City Council, and the ongoing development of a **common ESOL assessment process** for the West of England.



For future reference

ACH has successfully navigated the challenges of the last 12 months, continuing to grow whilst strengthening the foundations of the organisation. We will now continue to consolidate these strengths in the face of an uncertain national and global picture to ensure that we continue to deliver our core mission. This approach can be summarised across the following four themes:

Promotion

The ACH brand will be refreshed to better reflect our status and aspirations. The website and social media presence will also be updated.

Collaboration

Actively collaborate with funders and partners to ensure the importance of lived and learned experience is put in the foreground.

Resilience

Diversify our service offer to enhance resilience. Continue working on the organisational foundations.

Engagement

Reflexively codesign delivery with residents and wider service users to make sure we iteratively evolve to meet their needs.



Female tenants coffee mornings

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, Zhenya Melesyk, Colin Moody, Sam Carpenter, Piers Allardyce and Shalini Sivakrishnan.

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

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



Thank You





Thank You

Join us in supporting refugees and migrants to build a better, brighter future.

 info@ach.org.uk

 [@ACHintegrates](https://www.instagram.com/ACHintegrates)

 ach.org.uk

Keep in touch, join our monthly newsletter

