THE HARBOUR PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT 25 26

Rebuilding lives through advice, hope and humanity.







CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR	2
MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR	3
OUR VISITORS	4
OUR IMPACT	5
OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	6-7
FUNDRAISING DEVELOPMENT	8
VOLUNTEERING AT HARBOUR	9
THANK YOU	10
CONTACT US	11



Warm & welcoming

We're a warm, welcoming community that offers professional, effective, and reliable support. We provide a safe and friendly environment to help our Visitors successfully integrate into Swindon life.



Visitor Focussed

We make decisions with our Visitors, prioritising their interests and building on their strengths to help them rebuild their lives.



Inclusive & Egalitarian

We offer non-judgemental, equal access to support and advice. We value the diverse skills of our staff, Trustees, and volunteers, and build strong partnerships with other organisations.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

2025/26 was an incredibly special year for The Harbour Project as we were celebrating our 25 year anniversary. It was an opportunity to have a party with Visitors (the people we support), as well as staff and volunteers, together with many of our supporters and local civic representatives to give thanks to every single person who contributes, big or small, to this wonderful organisation.

It was also a year that brought with it challenges, changes and opportunities for development. Over the past 12 months, The Harbour Project has seen the changing needs of our Visitors, the impacts of new legislations introduced by the government (including the pauses on Family Reunion applications, Syrian asylum decisions and access to Legal Aid), as well as changes to our Trustee Board and staff team.

Neda Krishnan resigned from the Board in June 2025 to move to Germany and be near her family. Neda has been a great part of Harbour for so many years and her warmth and compassion for everyone she interacts with will be much missed. We welcomed Julie Linter to the Board in June 2025. Her international experience, both with the Save the Children Fund in Africa and then with British Red Cross in the UK is of great value. She has been assisting closely with our fundraising efforts. Abdulaziz Gulay was then appointed to the Board in September 2025, having previously engaged with our services as a Visitor before securing his Leave to Remain and working full-time in cyber security. His input on our IT processes and procedures are proving invaluable.

This past year has been the first full year under the leadership of our CEO, Tom. With it, we have seen staffing and operational changes. Fouad and Mohammed B. both left the Harbour team to pursue careers in London and we were thrilled to fill the vacant Receptionist position by Majid in September 2025. We congratulate Mia on completing her Fundraising Level 3 Diploma with Distinction in October 2025 and have promoted her to a new role as our Fundraising Officer, alongside her continued responsibility as Women's Engagement Lead. Mohamed has been working towards becoming accredited at IAA Level 2 to enhance our immigration advice services.

We were honoured to be one of Mayor Fay Howard's chosen charities of the year. Her support for the asylum seeking community spans many years and we are so thankful for everything she has done to raise funds and bring awareness to our work. We are also deeply grateful for the Wiltshire High Sheriff, Martin Nye, inviting The Harbour Project to take part in a 'speed dating' event in February 2026 to advertise our work, make local connections and raise funds. Additionally, we are grateful to Will Stone MP who invited us to host a Parliamentary 'Drop In' event for us in June 2025 at the House of Commons. We worked with Swindon City of Sanctuary to co-host this event and focussed on the employment challenges that refugees face and how this could be overcome.

We are so thankful to everyone who contributes, big or small, to the work that we do and the support we give to Swindon's asylum seeking and refugee community.

Emma Graham

Emma Graham
Chair of Trustees



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

As the Mayor of Swindon for 2025/26, I was delighted to have The Harbour Project as one of my two chosen charities.

I have long supported The Harbour Project, having hosted refugees since 2014. We learnt so much from the organisation, as they helped us care for those living with us well. The Harbour Project also empowered them and provided opportunities to build relationships and security in Swindon.

My mayoral year coincided with Harbour's 25 year anniversary, it was wonderful to stand with them, celebrate and acknowledge all that's been achieved.

Fay Howard

Fay Howard
Mayor of Swindon









OUR VISITORS

Our Visitor composition is made up as follows:



926 People with Refugee Status

790 People Seeking Asylum

1,716 people registered with The Harbour Project

226 Visitors granted Leave to Remain

84 countries represented

17,207 total number of on-site attendances

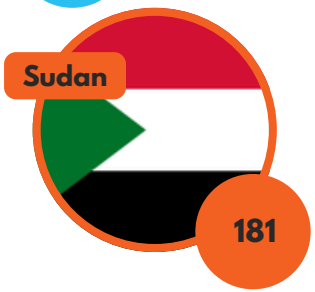


53% of our Visitors come from 5 countries:











Help and Advice

4,606 advice appointments delivered

Asylum appointments:
739 solicitor liaison appointments
321 asylum support issues
210 bank accounts opened
91 liaison with Home Office appointments

Refugee appointments:
365 benefits related help
129 housing referrals to Swindon Borough Council
219 DVLA support appointments
195 eVISA support appointments
179 travel document support appointments

Other appointments:
460 health-related matters (including 86 dentist referrals and 161 GP registrations)
174 education-related help (including admissions to schools and nurseries)

Personal Development

3,597 attendances across 603 English classes
270 attendances across 83 Maths classes

427 Steps2Work appointments:
113 appointments to help with CVs
98 appointments to help people search for volunteering opportunities
98 appointments to help people search for job opportunities
37 appointments to help people search for a course

STEP-UP Project data:
7 Visitors on the programme
3 mentors supporting the Visitors

Eastside Primetimers Foundation

Wellbeing

294 activities held
Total number of attendances across all activities - 2,302

325 attendances across 41 Women's Groups
321 attendances across 42 Youth Groups
202 attendances across 23 Baby Groups
139 attendances across 33 Sewing Groups
30 attendances across 16 LGBTQ+ Groups
1,210 attendances across 64 Football sessions
75 attendances across 75 Counselling sessions

1,233 free haircuts given by our volunteer barbers
111 bikes donated
579 SIM cards administered

OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A key operational development for us this year has been our progression towards delivering IAA (Immigration Advice Authority) Level 2 Asylum & Protection work. It is vital that our Visitors receive accredited and regulated immigration advice to help them with their asylum claim. Unfortunately the Legal Aid landscape has become increasingly challenging over the past few years, meaning that there are less solicitors to meet higher demand. As a result, many of our Visitors do not have the advice that they are entitled to. This is an issue that has been identified by our Lived Experience Panel and they asked whether we could support in this matter.

In response, we have made the strategic decision to move towards delivering IAA Level 2 advice, which will enable us to provide the urgent, high-quality support our community so desperately needs. We've planned this expansion, consulting with organisations like Charis and DCRS throughout 25/26 to understand financial and operational implications. Our strong relationship with Bristol Law Centre, fostered through our membership of the South West Immigration Alliance, means Senior Caseworker, Mike B, is keen to support our development.

Two of our Advisors completed the IAA Level 2 Asylum & Protection training, provided by Refugee Action, in September 2025. They plan to sit their exams in 26/27 and then we will be able to begin delivering the higher level immigration advice that our community needs. This will be a significant step forward for our organisation and reflects our commitment to continue learning, developing and moving forward.

> **Organisations like The Harbour Project are key to improving access to legal advice for vulnerable clients. One of the factors that has proved to be a hindrance to this expansion has been the lack of suitably qualified supervisors who are willing to support and nurture advisors who want to provide this advice. This supervision is crucial to develop confidence in advisors, give them peace of mind - thereby reducing the risk of burn-out and attrition and providing a good quality and reliable service to service users.**
>
> **Through the SWIA initiative, Bristol Law Centre, is exploring ways to provide this supervision to organisations like The Harbour Project who has expressed an interest in providing more advice to their service users**
>
> **Mike B**
> **Senior Caseworker, Bristol Law Centre**

Bristol Law Centre
Helping people access justice

Immigration Advice Authority

REFUGEE ACTION

We have also sought out new partnerships to address other areas of need for our Visitors, including healthcare and employment.

We have worked with a local GP on a project specifically designed to bridge the gap in healthcare access for the asylum seeking and refugee population. This project, funded by the NHS Integrated Care Board, addresses the critical issue of health inequalities, focusing on the historically low uptake of life-saving cancer screenings within our community. By bringing our Visitors and Primary Care professionals together in a trusted environment, we have provided immediate guidance and support, as well as raising awareness within Primary Care on the linguistic and cultural barriers that exist which can often prevent early diagnosis.

Visiting professionals have benefited from seeing the work of The Harbour Project first hand, appreciating particularly barriers like language and navigation of the NHS. Visitors to The Harbour Project have benefited from targeted health messages to small groups, or via translators, or with translated health information, encouraging health to be a priority, de-mythicising cancer, encouraging screening and attendance to the GP.

Dr Ros P

The Step-Up Project is a collaboration between the EPF and The Harbour Project. Our aim is to help refugees restart their career in the UK with one-to-one mentoring, access to professional networks and financial assistance. It's been very satisfying to see the real progress our mentees have made, and we've had wonderful support from Stella and Tom at the Harbour Project.

Ian L
Step-Up Project Lead

We have been delighted to work alongside Eastside Primetimers Foundation on a unique and innovative employment project, called 'Step-Up'. This project is designed to help people with specific qualifications and experiences within their home countries restart their careers here in the UK. We support many people at The Harbour Project with incredible skillsets, but who often struggle to find work within their profession due to the lack of recognition of their qualifications or gaps in their CV. This pilot project provides Visitors with 1:1 mentoring support from a volunteer with professional skills and senior level work experience, whilst also offering financial support to pay for training courses, exam fees and IT equipment. It has been a fantastic start, as we are currently supporting 7 Visitors to restart their careers and we are excited for how we can continue working alongside Eastside Primetimers Foundation to further develop the Step-Up Project.

Our 25/26 Fundraising events have raised:

£3,180
between our Quiz Night and Curry Night



£3,235
by our 7 runners in the Swindon Half Marathon

£6,180
from the Ivo Graham comedy night



A key aspect to our fundraising development this year has been the progression of our long-term team member, Mia. She has been supported and encouraged by the Trustees to complete a Fundraising Level 3 Diploma (achieving a Distinction) before taking on the newly created role of Fundraising Officer in November 2025. Since then, Mia has been working with Triceratops Training, to develop a new Fundraising Strategy, identifying and pursuing new ways to bring in vital funds.

We have been overwhelmed by the support from our local community, as they have turned up again and again to contribute generously to all of our fundraising events in 2025/26. We would not be able to carry out our mission without this support of so many amazing people. In recent years, with the fundraising landscape becoming increasingly challenging, it is more important than ever that we explore new ways to bring in vital funds.

> **I would like to raise money for The Harbour Project because they help new people in the UK. I have learnt English, enjoyed football, joined Youth Group and made friends. I would like to help other new people to the UK by supporting The Harbour Project.**
>
> **Swindon Half Marathon runner**

VOLUNTEERING AT HARBOUR

Volunteering at The Harbour Project continues to be vital to our ability to effectively meet the needs of the asylum seeking and refugee community. We have benefitted from volunteers helping run our social activities, assisting with translation and supporting within the Advice Centre by offering key help and advice.

This year, we have also seen an increase in the number of corporate volunteering days. The Risk and Analysis team at Nationwide came to paint our hall whilst members from Building Energy Experts painted our Activity Room. The Public Policy and Engagement team at ESRC hosted a 'Books + Bake Sale' within their offices, and used the proceeds raised to buy ingredients and cook a meal within our social café for our Visitors.

> **I just wanted to let you know you have really upped the ante on the quality for any ESRC bake sale now. Thank you so much for all the cakes, bread, books, wax melts. Phenomenal effort! Made my day! Thanks to you, I now know more about The Harbour project and will continue to support them.**
>
> **Books + Bake sale attendee**



150
number of volunteers who have supported us this year

5,834
hours spent volunteering at the Harbour Project

THANK YOU

A huge thank you to everyone who has allowed The Harbour Project to remain a safe, welcoming sanctuary for people seeking asylum and those with refugee status in Swindon. We are deeply moved by the extraordinary kindness and solidarity extended to our team and our Visitors throughout the past year.

Without the enduring backing of our funders, delivering our vital local services simply would not be possible. Without the generosity of our individual donors, we could not adapt and respond so effectively to our community's evolving needs. Without the amazing contribution of our volunteers, we could not build the lasting friendships and genuine connections that make The Harbour Project so special.

Thank you.

THE HARBOUR PROJECT



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THE HARBOUR PROJECT

SWIA South West Immigration Alliance

Immigration Advice Authority

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service