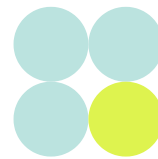




# Annual Report

2025/26



**Supporting New Arrivals and Settled  
Migrant Communities Across  
Sandwell and the West Midlands**



**Phone**  
0121 565 2234

**Website**  
[www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](http://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)

# Project Manager's Report



This year has seen Brushstrokes operating through one of the most challenging periods in its recent history. The organisation faced a convergence of funding instability, organisational transition and rising demand for support, all within a wider context of sustained pressure across the voluntary and community sector.

Against this backdrop, Brushstrokes experienced a period of significant internal change. A necessary organisational restructuring took place alongside leadership transition and financial uncertainty, resulting in the loss of a substantial number of staff posts. These changes were difficult for the organisation and for colleagues who had contributed many years of commitment and skill to the project. At the same time, demand for services continued to rise, particularly in areas such as immigration advice, housing and homelessness prevention, No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) support, family work and crisis interventions.

Throughout the year, Brushstrokes also continued to operate as a trusted quasi-statutory partner to local authorities and other public bodies. This brought with it ongoing responsibilities around safeguarding, governance, monitoring and reporting, which had to be sustained even as staffing capacity reduced. Practical constraints, including limited space at the Smethwick centre, further added to the complexity of day-to-day delivery and required flexibility and adaptability across services.

Despite these challenges, Brushstrokes ends the year in a very strong position. Services have been reviewed and reshaped to be more focused, efficient and responsive, allowing the organisation to continue supporting comparable numbers of people with greater clarity and resilience. Crucially, significant progress has been made on financial sustainability, with multi-year funding secured and stronger oversight of risk and resources. As a result, Brushstrokes enters the new year consolidated, confident and well-placed—operationally and financially—to continue strengthening and empowering the communities it exists to serve.



*Henry Joy*

Project Manager



**Brushstrokes**  
Community Project

# Head of Community Projects Report



Brushstrokes' 26th Anniversary gathering in November 2025 was a wonderful celebration of years of service in the local community. The event honoured Brushstrokes' founder, Sister Margaret Walsh, and affirmed the longstanding partnership of this community project between Father Hudson's Caritas, the Infant Jesus Sisters, the parish of St Philip Neri and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. It also marked the recovery of Brushstrokes following a turbulent financial year culminating in many staff redundancies. It was a joy to be able to celebrate the resilience of the project, commitment of staff, and Brushstrokes' ongoing achievement in responding to the needs of a record number of people.

The three strategic goals of Father Hudson's Caritas - financial sustainability, living the mission, and excellence - are very evident in Brushstrokes Community Project. Good financial management and uptake of funding opportunities enabled Brushstrokes to end the year without a deficit or need for further redundancies. Never losing sight of its purpose 'to support new arrivals and settled migrant communities' enabled the living out of its mission and positive impact on people's lives. Reflective monitoring and evaluation similarly enabled Brushstrokes to deliver quality services to those it supports.



The strategic outcomes of Brushstrokes Community Project were admirably achieved across the year. Note how sections in this annual report bear witness to the success of 1) strengthening voice, 2) reducing crisis, 3) improving health, 4) increasing belonging, and 5) empowering resilience. The adoption of triage on Mondays - a drop-in enabling clients to see multiple specialist advice teams on a single day - also proved an effective model. Remarkably it improved capacity and increased casework clients by 23% on the previous year. In conclusion, I wish on behalf of Brushstrokes' management committee and Father Hudson's Caritas to thank the staff and volunteers for their dedication and skill in responding to need. I am grateful to Henry Joy (now Project Manager) and Claire Langley (now Centre Manager) who steered Brushstrokes through a time of transition to a place of stability and renewed purpose. Thanks to our partners and funders too, who contributed to the project's successful outcomes.

*Shari Brown*  
Head of Community Projects, FHC





# Support In 2025/26



5,997 Advice Clients Supported  
An increase of 23% on last year



1,104 Families and  
418 Single Parent Families  
Supported



123 Nationalities Supported



Clients Spoke 55  
Preferred Languages



1,144 Asylum Seekers  
826 Refugees  
492 Limited Leave/Leave to enter  
412 Leave To Remain



£947,816  
in Financial Outcomes





# Support In 2025/26



**3,551 Visits to Monday Triage  
Since June 2025**



**5,285 Visits to Foodbank,  
12,898 Beneficiaries Supported**



**Households Supported with:  
Clothes, 1,035  
Household Goods, 670  
Baby Packs, 166  
Toiletry Packs, 448**



**Guided Learning Hours of:  
English (ESOL) 3,024  
Digital Skills 1,531**



**Total Client Visits to Brushstrokes  
15,915**



**Total Volunteer Hours  
6,299 worth £80,060 at  
living wage**

[www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](http://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)





# How Did We Do It?

So, how did we manage to increase our advice clients year on year after losing a third of our working team at the beginning of the year?

After a period of allowing the dust to settle on the wide-reaching and upsetting changes to the team, we consulted with the staff team on what changes they would like to see to Brushstrokes operations.

The team identified that they would like to trial moving away from the appointments only system and to trial weekly triage, drop-in days to on-board new clients.

After a closedown period of a week where we did a Big Clean of the entire building, we started weekly triage days on a Monday from the beginning of June.

At these sessions, every team has a desk around the edge of the Main Hall. Clients queue up, present their issues at a reception desk and can see multiple specialist advice teams in a single day.

Advice matters that can be dealt with in 30 minutes or less are resolved on the day, clients with more complex advice issues are invited back for longer appointments the same week.

This approach hasn't just protected our capacity, it has significantly increased it.

We see anything from 80-120 clients every Monday working in this way. 3,551 visits this year!

In spite of losing one third of the advice team, we have increased casework clients by 23% this year.



# Volunteers In 2025/26



- Volunteers remain central to the delivery, reach, and impact of Brushstrokes' work. Their contribution goes far beyond practical support; they bring lived experience, cultural insight, language skills, and a deep commitment to supporting others within their communities. This strengthens our ability to deliver trusted, accessible, and responsive services to refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants across the region.
- Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, volunteers contributed a total of 6,299 hours of invaluable support. This represents a significant investment of time and dedication, enabling Brushstrokes to extend its capacity and maintain a high level of service delivery across all programme areas.
- During this period, we recruited 25 new volunteers, of whom 17 have lived experience and are from migrant backgrounds. These volunteers represent a wide range of countries, including:
- Nigeria, Malawi, Syria, Ukraine, Iran, Sri Lanka, India, South Sudan, Norway, Pakistan, China and Kurdistan
- Their diverse experiences and perspectives play a crucial role in ensuring our services remain inclusive, culturally appropriate, and grounded in the realities faced by our service users.



**In 2025/26 volunteers  
contributed 6,299 hours to  
Brushstrokes at a wage  
value of £80,060**

- As of 31st March 2026, Brushstrokes had a total of 88 volunteers engaged during the year, with 10 volunteers successfully moving on into employment opportunities—an important outcome reflecting the role of volunteering as a pathway to skills development and integration. This leaves a strong and active base of 78 current volunteers supporting our work.
- We are particularly proud of the diversity within our volunteer base. Our volunteers come from a wide range of countries, reflecting the communities we serve. These include:
- Nigeria, Malawi, Syria, Turkey, Portugal, India, Kurdistan, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Italy, Sudan, Pakistan, Cameroon, Iraq, Jamaica, Eritrea, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Libya, El Salvador, Republic of Guinea, Albania, Spain and Algeria
- This breadth of backgrounds enhances our organisational strength, enabling peer-led support, improved communication, and a greater sense of belonging for our service users.



# ESOL Volunteers



- Our volunteer ESOL teachers have been an essential part of our provision this financial year, and their commitment has been particularly noteworthy given the significant challenges we have faced. Following the loss of our full-time ESOL Coordinator in April 2025 due to severe budgetary constraints, we entered a period of considerable uncertainty. Despite this, and with the support of an extremely generous individual donation of £25,000 which enabled us to sustain a level of coordination and administrative support, our ESOL offer has not only continued but remained accessible and consistent.
- This has been made possible by the dedication, resilience and professionalism of our volunteer teaching team, alongside the valued contribution of our administrator and the retained coordinator capacity. Together, they have worked collaboratively to ensure continuity of delivery, adapting to reduced infrastructure while maintaining quality and structure across the programme.
- Over the course of the year, our 13 weekly classes have supported up to 300 learners, delivering a total of 3,024 guided learning hours. This level of output, in the context of reduced staffing and increased operational pressures, is a clear reflection of the strength of our volunteer base. Their willingness to step forward, take on additional responsibilities, and remain committed to our learners has been central to sustaining what is a critical strand of our work.
- We remain deeply appreciative of their contribution. The programme's continued reach and impact is, in no small part, a result of their expertise, generosity of time, and belief in the importance of providing accessible language support to the communities we serve.



## Conversation Cafés

- Thanks to funding from Birmingham City Council's sanctuary grants, this year we have also expanded our Conversation Café provision into Birmingham through the establishment of three new Conversation Cafés. These sessions have been intentionally designed to be highly accessible and low-threshold, providing informal English language practice for individuals who may not yet be able to engage with more structured ESOL provision. This includes transient users, such as asylum seekers accommodated in contingency hotels, for whom continuity and flexibility are essential.
- The cafés offer a welcoming and informal space where participants can build confidence in spoken English, develop social connections, and reduce isolation. Three of these sessions are delivered in partnership with Tabor Living and are also open to their homeless residents, reflecting our commitment to reaching those facing multiple forms of exclusion. Across these sessions, we are seeing strong engagement, with up to 15 clients attending at any one time.
- These Conversation Cafés are now an important complement to our core ESOL offer, enabling us to engage a wider and more transient cohort, while supporting progression into more structured learning where appropriate.





# 26th Anniversary

## Celebrating 25+ Years in the Community



This year also provided an important opportunity to pause and reflect on the journey of Brushstrokes Community Project as we marked our 26th anniversary. While the milestone itself fell in the previous year, it was not something we felt able to celebrate at that time. The organisation was navigating a period of restructuring, difficult decisions and uncertainty, and it did not feel appropriate to mark such an occasion in that context.

Being able to come together this year to celebrate was therefore particularly meaningful. It reflected not only the longevity of the organisation, but also its resilience—both in terms of the communities we serve and the people who make the work possible.

The celebration itself brought together a wide range of people who have been part of the Brushstrokes Community Project story over the past quarter century: staff, volunteers, partners from across the statutory and voluntary sectors, and supporters past and present. We were also pleased to welcome local representatives, including elected officials and civic leaders, recognising the long-standing partnerships that have helped shape and sustain our work.

True to the ethos of the organisation, the event was delivered by our own staff and volunteers. This gave it a sense of authenticity and community ownership that felt entirely appropriate. It was not just a celebration of organisational history, but of the collective effort that continues to underpin everything we do.

A particularly powerful element of the day was the contribution of the Oya Batacuda Samba Drumming Group. Their involvement reflected the strength of our community-based work and its long-term impact. One former participant—initially a highly vulnerable and isolated unaccompanied young person—has since developed into a confident and regular performer with the group. Seeing that progression, and the sense of belonging it represented, captured something important about what Brushstrokes Community Project seeks to achieve: not just immediate support, but lasting transformation and connection.

In many ways, the anniversary celebration was a reminder of what sits at the heart of the organisation. It is about people—those who come to us in need, those who choose to support others, and those who work in partnership to respond to complex and changing challenges. It was also an opportunity to reaffirm the role that Brushstrokes Community Project continues to play across Sandwell and the wider region: as a trusted, community-rooted organisation providing practical support, advocacy and a sense of belonging to those who need it most.



We're delighted to invite you to a special event to celebrate our

**(Belated) 25th Anniversary** of Brushstrokes in the community!

Saturday, 8th November 2025 12:30 - 15:30

Brushstrokes Community Project  
253 High St, Smethwick B66 3NJ

Everyone is welcome — friends, families, volunteers, partners, and members of the community past and present.

RSVP: [info@brushstrokesandwell.org.uk](mailto:info@brushstrokesandwell.org.uk)

Join us for an afternoon of celebration, reflection, food, community and joy as we look back on 25 plus years of supporting and working alongside local people.

# Strategic Outcomes



## GREATER VOICE

We enable new arrivals and settled migrants to actively shape the decisions that affect their lives and communities. Through collective voice, lived experience, and meaningful participation, individuals are supported to engage with policy makers, commissioners, and service providers, ensuring services are responsive, inclusive, and grounded in real needs and aspirations. In doing so, communities become stronger, more sustainable, and more representative of all who live within them.



## REDUCED CRISIS

We believe in prevention rather than response. By providing timely information, trusted advice, and effective advocacy, people are supported to take early action and access help before problems escalate. This reduces the risk of homelessness, destitution, unemployment, and declining health, enabling individuals and families to maintain stability and dignity during periods of uncertainty.



## BETTER HEALTH

We work to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for new arrivals and settled migrants by reducing barriers to care. Through increased understanding of NHS services, support with self-care, improved accessibility, and strong collaboration with local health providers, health inequalities are reduced and individuals are better able to manage their physical and mental wellbeing.



## INCREASED BELONGING

We support new arrivals and settled migrants to build strong, lasting connections within their local communities. Through effective integration support, individuals are enabled to feel safe, access secure accommodation, education, training, and employment, and work towards financial stability. A genuine sense of belonging is fostered when people are welcomed, valued, and able to participate fully in community life.



## EMPOWERED RESILIENCE

We empower people to build resilience and independence by recognising their strengths, skills, and potential. Through access to language learning, advice, education, training, and employment support, individuals are supported to secure meaningful work, improve their standard of living, and better withstand social and economic pressures.



## GREATER VOICE

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### Greater Voice

Brushstrokes' service users are playing an increasingly significant role, both within the busy community of Brushstrokes, as well as in the wider public sphere.



Over the last few years, external organisations have strengthened links with Brushstrokes and consequently gained a deeper understanding of our service users' needs. Fircroft College, a residential college located in Selly Oak, Birmingham, is one such organisation that has actively sought input from our service users during meetings held at Brushstrokes. Prior to launching their Transitions course, which is aimed at serving asylum seekers and refugees, Fircroft College staff consulted with service users to hear what skills and knowledge they wished to develop through this 3-week residential course. Asylum seekers and refugees were able to articulate the range of challenges that they face in accessing education, employment and successful integration into their communities.

Orientation Sessions have been another arena where relevant community services have increasingly sought to hear the needs of our service users. Orientation Sessions have seen the participation by representatives from the West Midlands Police, Migrant Help, Sandwell Libraries and the King's Trust. This has given service users an avenue to raise their voice to influential local stakeholders who really do impact the lives and futures of our service users.



As a response to service user input, Educational Information Sessions have also been regularly delivered at Brushstrokes. The organisations, Refugee Education UK, Fircroft College and Sandwell Adult & Family Learning Service have contributed to these sessions and a significant development this year has been their willingness to carry out assessments at Brushstrokes. This has made it considerably easier for our service users to access a whole range of educational opportunities.

Away from Brushstrokes, service users have been eager to voice their opinions through participation in several public consultations and meetings. These included community workshops at Thimblemill Library where service users actively expressed views on how capital investment funds should be spent in the Smethwick area. Service users shared their contributions with several influential stakeholders such as the local MP, Gurinder Singh Josan, local councillors, faith group leaders and staff associated with other established local community groups. Our service users' growing confidence in these scenarios has been very heartening to see.



## GREATER VOICE

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Service users have also made valuable contributions to the Safer Sandwell Partnership Consultation Survey, which allowed them to share their opinions on how safe they feel in their community and the Sandwell Community Safety Strategy. Having the ability to express their feelings has been particularly important given the hostility and violence shown to immigrants in a lot of communities in the UK and the greater visibility of the Far-Right in several communities in Birmingham and the Black Country. The attack on a young Sikh woman in Oldbury caused a lot of distress amongst sections of the local community, so it has been important for people to express their concerns regarding their safety and security in their communities.



Brushstrokes' service users' involvement in the RSPB's Nature Prescription was a significant landmark and illustrates the esteem in which our service users are held by other organisations and service users' ability to influence other members of the community. RSPB has been a long-time supporter of Brushstrokes' Men's and Women's Group, particularly through the Nature & Gardening Sessions. Our service users were chosen by the RSPB to be part of the Nature Prescription programme that seeks to encourage people to spend more time in green spaces and to engage with nature related activities in order to have positive impacts on patients' mental and physical health. Nature Prescription was trialled by the NHS in Scotland with positive impacts experienced. Our service users were trained by RSPB staff on the concept of Nature Prescription and are now considered as advocates of Nature Prescription with the abilities, skills and knowledge necessary to engage and encourage the public.



Several new community activities have been launched this year to meet the changing needs of our service users. This has only been possible through the significant responsibilities taken on by service users across a range of projects and activities. Service users have drawn on their skills and experience to lead their own sessions, such as Amrik Singh, who delivered four very successful clock-making sessions. Amrik is one of several service users whose confidence has grown immensely during his involvement at Brushstrokes. He has evolved from being a participant in community activities to someone who is now using his knowledge, experience and skills to provide well-planned and highly enjoyable sessions for the wider community.



## GREATER VOICE

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## Empowering Service Users

Members of our Service User Panel are similarly playing an increasingly responsible role in the running of Brushstrokes' activities and services. Parveen Akhtar regularly caters for over forty members of the community at Brushstrokes' monthly community film evenings. Bally Kang, has played an invaluable role at the busy football sessions giving more than two hundred service users the chance to get essential exercise which has been vital for their physical and mental health. Kabilan Govindan has continued his professionalism with regards to the cricket sessions, which have brought a lot of new service users into Brushstrokes. Rajab Ali Sarbar is a vital member of the Bike Project, whose bike repair skills have developed significantly and have contributed to the repair and distribution of several bikes that have benefitted service users, especially fellow asylum seekers.



Members of the Service User Panel continue to engage with national organisations dedicated to the welfare of asylum seekers and refugees. Sarbaz Abdullah for instance, contributes to Refugee Action's Experts by Experience research. This brings Sarbaz into contact with asylum seekers and refugees from other corners of the UK and allows him to offer the perspective of someone who has a physical disability and thus has different needs.

Angela Kamuhuka and Ethel Mkandawire are two other members of the Service User Panel who have shown lots of personal growth despite challenging domestic situations and a willingness to contribute to society. Angela is still appealing her asylum decision but has gained employment as a Support Worker with an organisation that assists unaccompanied asylum seeker children. With her skills and first-hand experience as an asylum seeker in the UK, she is in an opportune position to support these young and vulnerable teenagers. Ethel has successfully secured a scholarship which will allow her to study Nursing at De Montfort University.



## REDUCED CRISIS

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## Foodbank

The most acute crisis facing many of the people we support continues to be the very real and persistent risk of destitution, most visibly reflected in the inability to consistently access sufficient food. National Trussell Trust data shows that food bank use remains at historically high levels, with around 2.9 million emergency food parcels distributed in 2024/25. While this represents a modest reduction on the previous year, demand remains close to record levels and far higher than before the cost-of-living crisis. National datasets do not disaggregate food bank usage by immigration status, and there is no published data quantifying year-on-year food bank use among households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). However, wider national research consistently demonstrates that families subject to NRPF face an exceptionally high risk of hunger and destitution, and historic Trussell Trust analysis shows a sharp rise over time in NRPF-related food bank referrals. This context makes our provision of an NRPF-specific food bank increasingly vital, particularly given that NRPF households are not eligible for government food vouchers and frequently experience barriers to accessing mainstream food bank provision.

**In 2025/26 we provided  
5,285 food parcels  
supporting 12,898  
beneficiaries**



**Warburton's**



**FareShare**  
Midlands



St Vincent  
de Paul Society  
England and Wales  
Turning Concern into Action



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## Non-Food Items

Alongside food provision, access to essential non-food resources is a critical element of our approach to preventing crisis and restoring dignity for people experiencing poverty, displacement and exclusion. Many of the individuals and families supported by Brushstrokes arrive with little more than the clothes they are wearing, often following periods of homelessness, unsafe accommodation, or prolonged destitution linked to immigration status or No Recourse to Public Funds. Practical support such as clothing, toiletries, baby equipment, household items, travel support and digital access enables people to meet basic daily needs, attend appointments, maintain accommodation, and engage with advice, healthcare and employment services. These resources play a vital role in stabilising people at points of acute vulnerability, reducing harm, and creating the conditions in which longer-term advice and casework can be effective. By responding flexibly to individual circumstances, non-food resources help remove barriers to participation and support people to regain confidence, safety and a sense of belonging.

### Households Supported with:

**Clothes, 1,035**

**Household Goods, 670**

**Baby Packs, 166**

**Toiletry Packs, 448**



**BARRATT**  
HOMES

**Dunelm**

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## Glasspool Charity Trust

We have had another very successful year as a beneficiary of the Glasspool Frontline Flexible Fund, which allows us to purchase essential new goods for any vulnerable household, from white goods and furniture, to laptops, driving lessons and fuel vouchers.



**In 2025/26 Glasspool provided 41 households with £18,240 in essential household goods**

## WMCA RSPARG

For those who found themselves at our door homeless and destitute this year, we have been able to access the West Midlands Combined Authority's "Rough Sleeping and Recovery Grant" to provide emergency accommodation, travel, food parcels, documentation and support homeless individuals into employment with essential workwear. This has been worth £2,000 to homeless clients this year alone.



**West Midlands  
Combined Authority**

## Asylum Support

Across Sandwell and Birmingham, Brushstrokes Community Project has continued to play a critical role in reducing crisis for people seeking asylum who are accommodated in contingency hotels and dispersal accommodation. Many of the individuals we support arrive having experienced displacement, trauma and prolonged uncertainty, and on arrival in the UK face restrictive asylum support arrangements, limited financial allowance, and significant barriers to accessing employment, mainstream services and community networks. These factors contribute to a high risk of isolation, poor mental wellbeing and destitution, particularly where individuals are placed in hotel accommodation with limited opportunities for independence or engagement. During 2025/26, we supported 1,144 people seeking asylum, providing consistent outreach, advice and practical support to stabilise situations and prevent escalation into more acute crisis. This included addressing urgent issues relating to housing, safeguarding, health access and immigration advice, while also offering pathways into wider services such as ESOL, digital skills and community activities. By maintaining a strong presence both within contingency settings and across the community, Brushstrokes Community Project has helped reduce immediate pressures, improve access to support and create opportunities for individuals to move beyond crisis and begin to engage more positively with their new environment.



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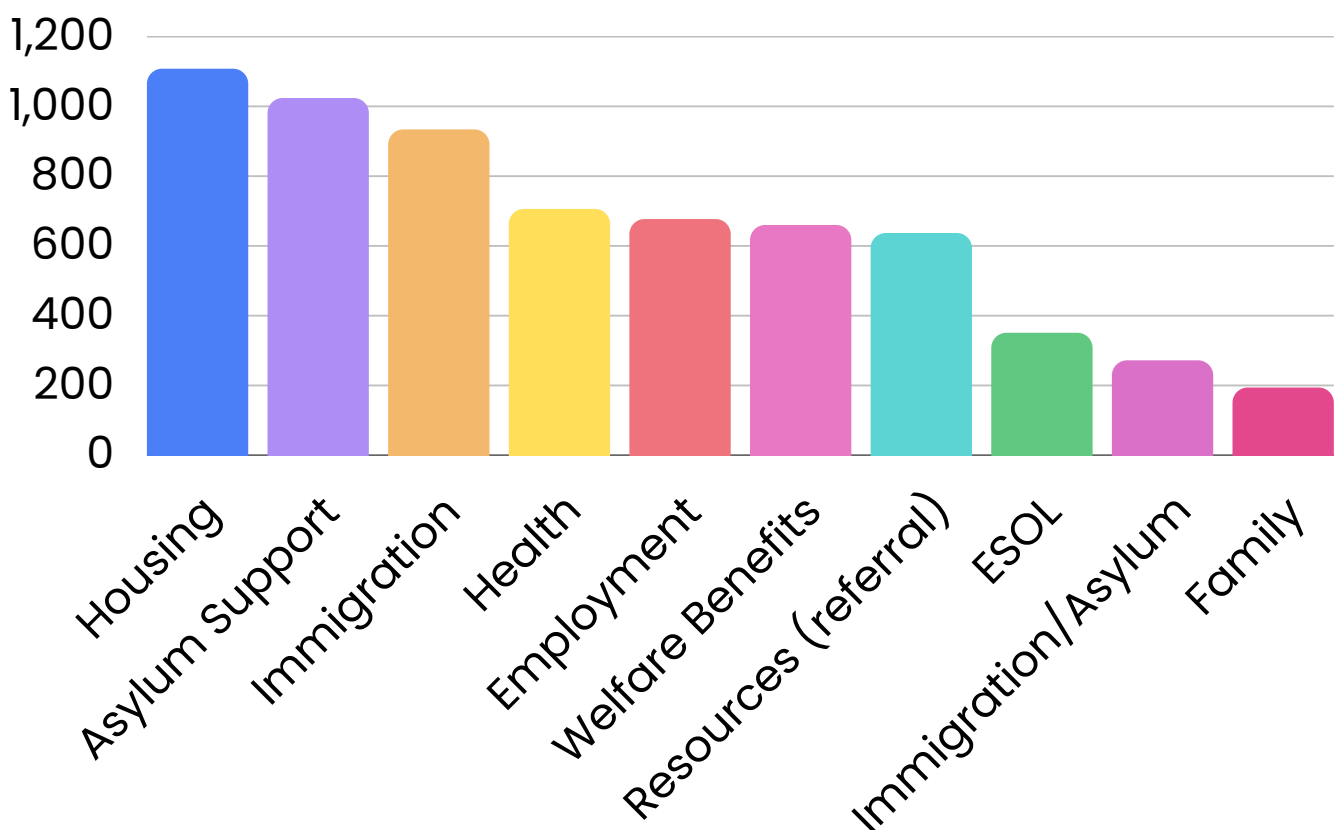
## Advice Work

Our advice work remains central to the role that Brushstrokes Community Project plays within the local community. For many of the people we support, access to timely, trusted advice is often the difference between stability and crisis. Whether addressing issues related to immigration status, housing and homelessness, welfare benefits, or wider family and health concerns, our advice provision enables individuals and families to better understand their rights, navigate complex systems and make informed decisions. In doing so, it not only resolves immediate problems but also prevents escalation into destitution, safeguarding concerns or long-term exclusion. Importantly, our approach ensures that people are not supported in isolation, but are connected to wider services, opportunities and community networks, strengthening resilience and enabling more sustainable outcomes over time.



**3,551 visits to Monday triage drop-in**  
**5,997 advice appointments supported**

## Advice Matter Top Ten



## REDUCED CRISIS

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## Immigration and NRPF Advice

Our immigration and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) service remains one of our hallmark offers, with a strong reputation across Sandwell as one of the only providers delivering free, specialist immigration advice. Over the course of 2025/26, demand has continued to rise significantly, reflecting both growing need and the trust placed in our service by partners and communities. We have operated as a critical safety net for migrants facing homelessness, loss of legal status, family separation and domestic abuse, providing timely advice and crisis intervention that prevents escalation and stabilises some of the most complex and high-risk cases

Throughout the year, our NRPF work has remained at consistently high levels, with a strong focus on early intervention and partnership working. We have worked closely with Sandwell Children's Trust and local authority partners to support families at risk of destitution, helping to prevent homelessness and reduce reliance on statutory services. This has included intensive support for families experiencing domestic abuse, securing fee waivers and progressing complex applications that enable individuals to regularise their status and access support. Our approach not only delivers life-changing outcomes for individuals and families, but also generates wider system benefits by reducing pressures on local authorities and safeguarding services through earlier, specialist intervention.



**934 Immigration Cases**  
**101 NRPF Cases**  
**£245,700 in Fee Waivers**

## REDUCED CRISIS

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## NRPF Case Study

In 2023, conflict in Sudan prompted a rapid evacuation of British nationals, forcing many families to leave homes, livelihoods and long-term plans behind. For mixed-nationality families, the situation exposed significant legal barriers: while British citizens could return to the UK, non-British partners were not automatically eligible to relocate. One such family experienced this stark divide, with a British mother and her two children able to reach the UK, while the father was left stranded overseas with limited visa options, resulting in prolonged and distressing separation.

In 2025 Brushstrokes supported the family to pursue reunification despite significant challenges. With no financial means to cover application costs, a successful fee waiver application was secured before submitting the main visa application, supported by detailed evidence and a request for discretion due to the family's exceptional circumstances. Although the Home Office initially refused the case, the decision was challenged through an appeal, with continued advocacy focusing on the impact of forced displacement and family separation.

After more than a year of uncertainty, the case was heard at tribunal. Following consideration of the evidence, the judge ruled in the family's favour, allowing the appeal and enabling the family to be reunited. This outcome highlights the importance of specialist immigration advice and sustained advocacy in achieving positive resolutions for families facing complex legal and humanitarian challenges.

The family literally wept with joy upon hearing the outcome.

# BETTER HEALTH

We work to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for new arrivals and settled migrants by reducing barriers to care. Through increased understanding of NHS services, support with self-care, improved accessibility, and strong collaboration with local health providers, health inequalities are reduced and individuals are better able to manage their physical and mental wellbeing.



## Health Team Overview

During 2025–2026, the Brushstrokes Health Team continued to deliver a wide range of activities aimed at tackling health inequalities and addressing the wider determinants of health among asylum seekers, refugees, migrants, and vulnerable people across our local communities. Our activities were delivered at Brushstrokes Community Project, community centres, and asylum seeker contingency hotels.

### 1. Improving Health Literacy and Access to Healthcare

We supported people to better understand and access healthcare services by:

- Providing advocacy to improve understanding of health rights and entitlements.
- Explaining how the NHS works and how to navigate the healthcare system.
- Reducing barriers to healthcare, including language, stigma, fear, and discrimination.
- Providing accessible health information using simple language, visual resources, and multilingual materials.

### 2. Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing

Our work focused on early intervention and community-based support through:

- Mental health awareness and early intervention sessions.
- Creating safe and welcoming community spaces.
- Referrals to social activities and community groups.
- Referrals to counselling and specialist mental health services.

### 3. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

We empowered individuals and communities to improve their health by delivering:

- Health information and awareness sessions.
- Behaviour changes programmes promoting:
  - o Smoking cessation
  - o Healthy eating
  - o Physical activity
- Cancer awareness and screening promotion.
- Blood pressure awareness.



# BETTER HEALTH

We work to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for new arrivals and settled migrants by reducing barriers to care. Through increased understanding of NHS services, support with self-care, improved accessibility, and strong collaboration with local health providers, health inequalities are reduced and individuals are better able to manage their physical and mental wellbeing.



## One-to-One Health Support

Throughout the year, we provided personalised support including:

- 47 GP registrations.
- 34 Dentist registrations.
- 207 HC2 certificate applications.
- 84 free gym passes secured.
- 67 referrals to social activities and volunteering opportunities.
- 37 referrals to counselling services.
- Support with 29 NHS Penalty Charge Notices.
- 180 individuals received 1-2-1 health advice on accessing NHS services, including:
  - o GP services
  - o Urgent Treatment Centres
  - o Pharmacy First
  - o NHS 111 and 999
  - o Dental services
  - o Sexual health services
  - o NHS screening programmes
- 132 referrals to other Brushstrokes services and external organisations.



## Group Health Sessions

During the year we delivered regular group health sessions to combat health inequality in our community. These sessions were delivered at Brushstrokes alongside foodbank sessions and community cafés and on outreach at our contingency hotels and captured 280 clients over the year.

- Understanding the NHS and accessing healthcare services.
- Mental Health and the Five Ways to Wellbeing.
- Tuberculosis (TB) awareness and initial health screening.
- Cancer awareness workshops.
- Pharmacy Day, promoting the Pharmacy First service, NHS 111, and offering blood pressure checks in partnership with Razi Pharmacy.
- Community wellbeing trips, including visits to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and Birmingham Christmas Market.



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## Health Literature

Producing clear and accessible health literature is essential to enabling our clients to understand their health, make informed decisions, and take an active role in managing their wellbeing. High-quality written resources reinforce conversations, improve confidence and engagement, and support better outcomes by helping people follow advice and navigate services more effectively. Here is a selection of our literature from the past year.

**It is OK to say I am not OK !!**  
 (You Are Not Alone – We Are Here to Help)  
 Our team is available to support you.

If you are feeling one or more of these symptoms, please don't hesitate to talk to us:

- Anxious or worried for more than 3 weeks.**
- Depressed, sad or unhappy for more than 3 weeks.**
- Feeling guilty or worthless.**
- Can not cope with stress.**
- Difficulties in concentration, confused thinking.**
- Difficulties in dealing with other people.**
- Becoming withdrawn and isolated (avoid friends and social activities).**
- Having suicide thoughts.**
- Sleep problem, feeling tired and low energy.**
- Change in weight and eating habit.**
- Loss of interest in activities which previously enjoyed.**

0121 565 2234  
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 www.brushstrokesandwell.org.uk

**Healthy Diet:**  
 Well-balanced diet means divide your meal as following:

1/4 Fresh chicken, fish, bean or eggs

1/4 Potatoes, brown rice, bread or pasta

1/2 Salad or vegetables

**Do not forget to drink a lot of water.**

0121 565 2234  
 253 High St. Smethwick. B66 3N3  
 www.brushstrokesandwell.org.uk

**STOP SMOKING**

If you need help to **stop smoking**  
 Please come to book **1-2-1** appointment.

**Do you SMOKE?**

Would you like to **STOP SMOKING?**

We are here to **Help..!!**

253 High St. Smethwick. B66 3N3  
 0121 565 2234  
 www.brushstrokesandwell.org.uk

**5 Ways to Wellbeing**

- 1 Connect with Other People**  
 Spending time with family and friends, make new friends or engaging in any group activities helps you feel less alone and more supported and feel part of a community.
- 2 Be Active**  
 Moving your body is good for both your health and mind. Walking, playing sports, or doing any kind of exercise can help you feel happier, more energetic as well as improve overall well-being.
- 3 Give to Others**  
 Helping others can make you feel good, too. A small act of kindness, like listening to someone, helping others, or even sharing a smile, can bring happiness to both you and those around you.
- 4 Be Mindful**  
 Take time to enjoy the present moment. Notice your surroundings, take some deep breath and think positively. Being mindful can help reduce stress and bring more peace into your life.
- 5 Learn New Skills**  
 Whether it's learning new language, digital skills, gardening, music, or engaging in art and crafts. Learning new things can give you a sense of achievement and increase your...

By following these 5 Ways to Wellbeing, you can all feel healthier, happier, and more connected. Brushstrokes is here to support you on your journey.

253 High St. Smethwick. B66 3N3  
 0121 565 2234  
 www.brushstrokesandwell.org.uk

## BETTER HEALTH

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## Partnership Working and Collaboration

Working in partnership remains central to our approach. We actively participate in local networks to improve public health outcomes and strengthen collaboration across the voluntary and statutory sectors.

Regular meetings and partnerships included:

- Sandwell Migrant Health Needs Assessment Group (monthly).
- Smethwick Public Health Networking Meeting (monthly).
- Black Country Mental Health Stakeholder Advisory Group (quarterly).
- Community Cancer Champions Network (quarterly).
- Collaboration with Birmingham City University to provide public health placement opportunities for two master's students.

Through these partnerships, we continue to improve access to healthcare, reduce health inequalities, and empower our communities to lead healthier, more independent lives.



## INCREASED BELONGING

We support new arrivals and settled migrants to build strong, lasting connections within their local communities. Through effective integration support, individuals are enabled to feel safe, access secure accommodation, education, training, and employment, and work towards financial stability. A genuine sense of belonging is fostered when people are welcomed, valued, and able to participate fully in community life.



## Increased Belonging – Community Activity and Engagement

At Brushstrokes Community Project, our busy and diverse activity schedule continues to play a central role in delivering the outcome of increased belonging. While advice, housing and financial stability form the foundation of our work, a genuine sense of belonging is built through consistent opportunities for people to connect, participate and feel valued within their local community.

Throughout 2025/26, our programme of weekly and monthly activities has continued to create welcoming and inclusive spaces where individuals from a wide range of backgrounds can come together, build relationships and develop a shared sense of community. These activities provide more than social interaction—they enable individuals to move from isolation towards connection, contributing to improved wellbeing and stronger local integration.

Our approach recognises that belonging is developed through repeated engagement. Regular activities such as sports sessions, creative workshops, community cafés and social groups allow individuals to build familiarity, develop friendships and establish routines. By offering a wide and accessible schedule of activities, Brushstrokes Community Project ensures that individuals at different stages of their journey can find appropriate entry points into community life.

## A Diverse and Inclusive Activity Offer

The strength of our activity programme lies in its breadth and accessibility. As in previous years, our weekly schedule has included a wide range of social, physical and creative activities, bringing together people from different cultures, languages and life experiences in a positive and inclusive environment.

Activities such as football sessions, wellbeing walks, creative workshops and social events provide opportunities for individuals to engage in shared experiences and build relationships that extend beyond the activity itself. These activities are particularly important for those who may otherwise experience isolation, including people seeking asylum, newly arrived families and individuals living in temporary or unstable accommodation.

The Community Café remains a cornerstone of this offer, acting as a bridge between local and newly arrived communities. Through a simple but powerful model of shared meals in a welcoming environment, individuals are able to connect across cultures and build friendships that contribute to a stronger sense of community cohesion.

Similarly, initiatives such as Welcome Wednesday, film evenings and group-based activities continue to provide regular opportunities for social interaction in a relaxed and informal setting. These spaces are essential for individuals who may lack confidence or familiarity with formal services, offering low-barrier entry points into wider participation.



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## Participation, Ownership and Progression

A key feature of our activity programme is the progression from participation to ownership. Increasingly, individuals who first engage as participants begin to take a more active role in shaping and delivering activities. This shift reflects growing confidence, agency and a deeper sense of belonging. This approach was evident in last year's work, where service users moved from being recipients of support to active contributors—planning events, leading group sessions and supporting others within the community.

Activities such as the Bike Project, community sports sessions and creative workshops provide opportunities for individuals to develop practical skills and take on responsibility. In doing so, they not only strengthen their own sense of identity and purpose, but also contribute to the wider community. The cumulative effect of this approach is a more resilient and connected community, where individuals feel valued and capable of contributing, rather than excluded or dependent.



| Brushstrokes Community Project COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE  |  |
|---|--|
| SPRING & SUMMER 2025  |  |
| MONDAYS 9:30 – 11AM<br>CONVERSATION CAFE – ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRACTICE<br>BRUSHSTROKES HALL             |  |
| MONDAYS 11AM – 1PM<br>WOMEN'S GROUP – DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES EACH WEEK<br>BRUSHSTROKES HALL             |  |
| MONDAYS 4:30 – 6PM<br>FOOTBALL SESSION<br>HADLEY STADIUM, WILSON ROAD, SMETHWICK, B66 4NL             |  |
| TUESDAYS 9:30 – 10:30AM<br>SWIMMING SESSION FOR WOMEN<br>SMETHWICK AQUATICS CENTRE, B67 5QT           |  |
| THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH 12 – 4 PM<br>CYCLE REPAIR SESSION<br>BRUSHSTROKES HALL / CAR PARK         |  |
| WEDNESDAYS 2 – 4 PM<br>GARDENING & NATURE GROUP<br>BRUSHSTROKES GARDEN AREA / HALL                    |  |
| WEDNESDAYS 5 – 7 PM<br>WELCOME WEDNESDAY TABLE TENNIS, CHESS, TEA & COFFEE, CHAT<br>BRUSHSTROKES HALL |  |
| FRIDAY 10-11 AM<br>WELLBEING WALK<br>BRUSHSTROKES RECEPTION (MEETING POINT)                           |  |
| FRIDAY 12 – 1PM<br>COMMUNITY LUNCH (FREE)<br>BRUSHSTROKES HALL  |  |
| FIRST FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH 6PM<br>FILM EVENING (FREE)<br>BRUSHSTROKES HALL                            |  |

BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ - 0121 565 2234

### COME & LEARN HOW TO MAKE A CLOCK WITH AMRIK SINGH !!!



AMRIK WILL BE GUIDING US THROUGH THE DESIGNING, THE DECORATING & THE FITTING OF THE CLOCK MECHANISM TO MAKE YOUR OWN PERSONAL CLOCK TO TAKE HOME.

SESSIONS WILL TAKE PLACE ON :  
WEDNESDAY 18TH FEBRUARY 2-4PM  
WEDNESDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2-4PM  
WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2-4PM

IT IS NOT REQUIRED TO ATTEND ALL THREE SESSIONS. FEEL FREE TO JUST TURN UP & ATTEND AS MANY SESSIONS AS YOU WISH. ALL MATERIALS PROVIDED & SESSIONS ARE FREE OF CHARGE.



EVERYONE'S WELCOME - ANY QUERIES - 07827 258680  
BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ



COME AND HEAR MORE ABOUT THE UPCOMING BRITISH CULTURE COURSE  
BRUSHSTROKES COMMUNITY PROJECT - HALL  
WEDNESDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER AT 3 - 3:45 PM



**RON DAVIS CENTRE**  
TUESDAY  
23RD SEPTEMBER - 2ND DECEMBER  
1PM - 3PM  
Enrolment will be at the Ron Davis Centre 16th September

Fun and engaging course for adults who would like to find out more about British Culture, including:

- Geography of the UK
- Government
- Places of interest in the UK
- Roles and responsibilities of British Citizens
- Diverse range of festivals and celebrations in the UK
- Free daytrip to Birmingham City Centre. We will visit Centenary Square, the Library and the Museum and Art Gallery, and then have a picnic in the grounds of Birmingham Cathedral.



## BIKE GIVEAWAY FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES

WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE  
3PM - ARRIVE EARLY

LIMITED AVAILABILITY  
DON'T FORGET TO BRING ID - ARC / BRP CARD / E-VISA ETC.

BRUSHSTROKES CAR PARK  
253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ



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## Movie Nights

Our regular film nights, in collaboration with Black Country Touring, have continued to play an important role in bringing together a diverse cross-section of the community in a relaxed and welcoming environment. Through a carefully chosen programme of thoughtful and accessible world cinema, these sessions provide an opportunity for people from different backgrounds to come together, share a common experience, enjoy Parveen's excellent cooking and engage in conversation beyond the screening itself. The combination of entertainment and cultural exploration creates a space where individuals who may not otherwise connect are able to build relationships over shared enjoyment, laughter and reflection. In doing so, our film nights contribute to reducing isolation, strengthening social cohesion and fostering a genuine sense of belonging within the wider community.

**COMMUNITY FILM EVENING**

**FUN QUIZ ABOUT AFRICA!**

**TASTY VEG CURRY COURTESY OF CHEF PARVI!**

**'A TRULY GREAT FILM ABOUT SENEGAL'**

**FREE EVENT!**

**EVERYONE WELCOME!**

**MANDABI**

**FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER**

5PM - FOOD (VEGETARIAN CURRY) & QUIZ  
6PM - FILM - ENGLISH SUBTITLES  
1HR 30 MINS - PG RATING

BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ - 07827 258 680

BLACK COUNTRY TOURING | B&FAN | THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

**MOVING AND VERY, VERY FUNNY**

**A FILM THAT MIGHT JUST CHANGE SOMEONE'S LIFE**

**"A BRILLIANT LEAD PERFORMANCE"**

**"UNMISSABLE" "UPLIFTING"**

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

**I SWEAR**

BASED ON THE REMARKABLE TRUE STORY

**COMMUNITY FILM EVENING**

**FRIDAY 6TH MARCH**

5PM - FOOD (VEGETARIAN) & QUIZ  
6PM - FILM STARTS

ENGLISH AUDIO & SUBTITLES - 2HRS - 15 AGE RATING

FREE ENTRY, FOOD & QUIZ - EVERYONE'S WELCOME

BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ - 07827 258 680

BLACK COUNTRY TOURING | B&FAN | THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

**CONCLAVE**

**FRIDAY 9TH MAY 6PM**

FREE ENTRY - EVERYONE WELCOME

FREE LIGHT REFRESHMENTS - ENGLISH AUDIO & SUBTITLES

2 HRS - AGE RATING 12A

BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ  
ENTRANCE VIA CAR PARK - 07827 258 680

BRUSHSTROKES | B&FAN | THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

## FAMILY FILM EVENING!! FREE ENTRY, SNACKS & DRINKS



## FRIDAY 15TH AUGUST

4PM - ART ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN  
5PM - FILM  
6:30PM - FOOD SERVED (VEGETARIAN)

'FLOW' AWARD WINNING ANIMATION FILM

1HR 25 MINS - U RATING

BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ - 07827 258 680

BLACK COUNTRY TOURING | B&FAN | THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

**COMMUNITY FILM EVENING**

**FUN QUIZ ABOUT MEXICO!**

**FOOD COURTESY OF CHEF PARVI!**

**'RADICAL - CHARMING AND INSPIRATIONAL!'**

**EVERYONE WELCOME FREE EVENT!**

**RADICAL**

**FRIDAY 7TH NOVEMBER**

5PM - FOOD (VEGETARIAN) & QUIZ  
6PM - FILM - SPANISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES  
2HRS 6 MINS - 12 AGE RATING

BRUSHSTROKES, 253 HIGH STREET, SMETHWICK, B66 3NJ - 07827 258 680

BLACK COUNTRY TOURING | B&FAN | THE NATIONAL LOTTERY



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## Participation, Ownership and Progression

A particularly important strand of our work in increasing belonging has been our continued development of Family Support activity and strong partnership working with Family Hubs, funded by Sandwell Council. During 2025/26, our Peer Support "Embrace" project supported large numbers of families to access services and build connections within their local areas. Across reporting periods, over 300 individuals from more than 100 households were engaged through this programme, with consistent delivery of advice sessions, stay and play activities and information sessions.

Crucially, all new families were introduced and registered to Family Hubs as part of their initial engagement, ensuring that they were connected to a wider network of support.

Our Stay and Play sessions have been at the heart of this work, offering a welcoming and accessible environment for parents and young children. These sessions combine play, learning and peer support, helping families to build confidence, develop relationships and access wider services. The sessions have supported parents to:

- Build confidence in supporting their child's development
- Form friendships and reduce isolation
- Gain awareness of local services and opportunities
- Strengthen parent-child relationships through shared activities

The impact of this work extends beyond the sessions themselves. Families are increasingly supported to access Family Hubs and other services independently over time, demonstrating progression towards confidence and integration.

Partnership working has been central to the success of this approach. Collaboration with organisations such as the National Literacy Trust, local schools, NHS partners and community groups has enabled the delivery of culturally appropriate, accessible and engaging activities that resonate with families.



**STAY AND PLAY**  
FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 0-2  
**FREE**  
12:30pm - 1:30pm  
Every Wednesday

Brushstrokes Community Projects,  
253 High St, Smethwick  
B66 3NJ  
Bus pass available.

For More Information contact Funke: 0771348161

[www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](http://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)



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### Case Study

Client M, a young mother seeking asylum, arrived in the UK with limited English and no support network. She experienced isolation and uncertainty about how to care for her child in a new environment.

Through engagement with Stay and Play sessions, she gradually became more confident, moving from observing activities to actively participating and engaging with other parents. Over time, she developed friendships, improved her confidence in communication, and began to support her child's development through reading and play at home.

Her own reflection captures the impact of this approach:

**“When I first came here, I was scared and alone...  
Brushstrokes has made us feel part of a family.”**



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## Social Activities in Pictures



**Volleyball at Windmill Centre**



**Winter Canal Walk**



**In the Nets**



**Table Tennis at West Smethwick Pavilion**



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### Case Study

The Brushspokes Bike Project and one of its leading volunteers, Rajab, have both taken great strides over the past year. The Bike Project now focuses in three areas of support to the wider community: (1) Increasing people's access to good quality second-hand bikes through Bike Giveaways, (2) Helping existing cyclists maintain their bikes through a monthly bike repair session, and (3) Offering regular Community Bike Rides which allow people to become more confident cycling in public spaces and to explore their local area. Rajab is a 58-year old asylum seeker from Iran who was relocated from Telford to Smethwick in 2025. He has engaged with many of Brushstrokes' services and this commitment has been admired by many people connected to Brushstrokes. Rajab has dedicated a lot of time and effort to developing his previously limited English language skills. He has attended ESOL classes at Brushstrokes as well as at a variety of other locations, such as ASRA, Brasshouse Community Centre and Smethwick Baptist Church. He is hoping to study at a local sixth form College from the beginning of the next academic year. As well as ESOL classes, Rajab is a regular at the football, cricket, nature and gardening, Wellbeing Walk sessions and is a member of the Service User Panel.

Rajab has a lot of practical and manual skills, which he has acquired from his career as a carpenter back in Iran. He has used these skills at our popular repair sessions which take place on the third Tuesday of each month. There is a real lack of bike repair facilities in the local area, so our sessions play an important role in keeping people on their bikes. Typical tasks that keep our volunteers, including Rajab, busy, are: the fixing of punctures, the replacement of bike brake blocks, the replacement of gear and bike cabling systems, replacement of gear shifters and derailleurs. We also provide new and second-hand equipment such as helmets, locks, bells, phone holders, mudguards and panniers, which all seek to encourage service users to cycle as much as possible.



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## Support From The Wider Community

The wider community's support of Brushstrokes' work has been particularly meaningful amid the hostility shown towards migrants from some sectors of society. Several local businesses and organisations have opened their doors to our service users courtesy of free or reduced-priced tickets to events. These trips into the community are always appreciated by our service users, as it gives them the chance to explore areas with which they are not familiar, the opportunity to learn about local culture and history, and the chance to engage in entertainment that is often inaccessible due to their financial limitations. Visits over the year have taken in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, (which was particularly aimed at our ESOL students), Birmingham Botanical Gardens, the Mockingbird Cinema, which allowed us to explore the Custard Factory and Digbeth as well as enjoy the Table Tennis-themed film, Marty Supreme, and an evening at the Midlands Art Centre in Cannon Hill Park to watch the football-themed film, Saipan.

We have also continued our partnerships with the Rivers and Canals Trust, Spectra, RSPB, Black Country Touring, Cycling UK and Sports England.

Our Community Outreach Programme is generously supported by the National Lottery Community Fund.



[www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk](http://www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk)



# EMPOWERED RESILIENCE

We empower people to build resilience and independence by recognising their strengths, skills, and potential. Through access to language learning, advice, education, training, and employment support, individuals are supported to secure meaningful work, improve their standard of living, and better withstand social and economic pressures.



## Empowered Resilience

Brushstrokes Community Project defines empowered resilience as the process through which individuals are supported to recognise their strengths, skills and potential, and to build the independence required to navigate social and economic pressures. Central to this is access to language learning, advice, education, training and employment support, enabling people to secure meaningful work, improve their standard of living and respond more effectively to the challenges they face.



## Strengths-Based Support and Pathways to Independence

At the core of our work is a strengths-based approach. Individuals often present to Brushstrokes Community Project at points of crisis, including insecure immigration status, restricted access to public funds, housing instability and limited work opportunities. Our approach does not define people by these challenges, but instead focuses on identifying existing strengths, aspirations and skills.

Through tailored advice and casework, individuals are supported to understand their rights, explore viable options and take informed steps towards improving their circumstances. This may include securing immigration status, accessing benefits where eligible, stabilising housing or exploring employment pathways. As barriers are removed, individuals are better able to make decisions independently and take greater control over their own futures.

This progression from crisis response to informed decision-making is fundamental to resilience. It enables individuals not only to resolve immediate issues, but also to develop the confidence and knowledge needed to respond to future challenges without becoming reliant on ongoing intervention.



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## Supported Housing

From April 2025 to March 2026, Sophia House and Nicolas Barré House continued to provide safe, secure accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity and significant personal challenges. More than simply providing a place to live, both projects created the stability needed for residents to rebuild their lives, improve their wellbeing and plan for the future.

Nicolas Barré House is a large presbytery offering affordable accommodation to single men for up to 12 months. In partnership with St John Henry Newman Parish in Walsall and Wolverhampton, Brushstrokes supports the residents to secure employment, training and permanent accommodation.

Three residents were supported to attend college or university, while four residents secured employment during the year, including one resident who obtained a role working directly for the local parish. Residents were also supported to develop independent living skills, improve their English language abilities and build the confidence required to sustain long-term independence.

Sophia House is an accommodation project delivered in partnership with the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. Affordable safe accommodation is offered in south Birmingham for women at risk of homelessness. Brushstrokes provides support to help residents move into employment and independent tenancies.

Across both houses, the combination of secure accommodation, practical support and opportunities for education and employment helped residents develop the confidence and determination to move forward with genuine optimism, reflecting Brushstrokes' commitment to building empowered resilience within migrant and refugee communities.



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## Supported Housing Case Study

### Background

JT is a 55-year-old individual who came to the UK in 2020 to support a family member with significant care needs. Following the death of the family member, JT remained in the UK on the family route, continuing to provide informal care while working part-time. Over time, the living situation became increasingly unsustainable, with expectations placed on JT that were not compatible with maintaining employment or personal stability. Recognising that the situation could not continue, JT sought advice and support from Brushstrokes Community Project to understand their rights, access to public funds, and options for independent accommodation.

### Support Provided

Brushstrokes Community Project worked with JT to assess their situation and identify appropriate next steps. This included:

- Supporting an application for accommodation at Sophia House
- Providing advice on entitlement to public funds
- Assisting with a Universal Credit application and evidencing housing costs
- Offering ongoing guidance to help JT understand the system and make informed decisions

This support was designed not only to resolve immediate issues, but to build JT's confidence and ability to manage their own situation independently.

### Outcome

JT successfully moved into Sophia House, securing safe and stable accommodation. While not eligible for the standard Universal Credit allowance due to part-time earnings, JT is awaiting a decision on housing cost support and has been able to maintain employment throughout the process. Crucially, JT has transitioned from a position of uncertainty and dependency into one of greater independence and control. With stable accommodation and a clearer understanding of their entitlements and options, JT is now better equipped to manage their circumstances and respond to future challenges.

### Evidence of Empowered Resilience

This case demonstrates empowered resilience through:

- Increased confidence in navigating complex systems such as welfare benefits
- Sustained participation in employment despite challenging circumstances
- The ability to make informed decisions about housing and personal wellbeing
- A shift from reliance on informal and unstable arrangements towards independent living

### Resident Reflection

"I am so glad that I have a room at Sophia House now... I am looking forward to relaxing in the garden and planting some of my African vegetables... I will be spending most of my time here."



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



## From the Community, For the Community

In a climate where Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are sometimes questioned or misunderstood, Brushstrokes continues to actively champion these principles as fundamental to our purpose. The diversity within our organisation is one of our greatest assets. This is reflected not only in the communities we serve, but within our staff team itself. Around two-thirds of colleagues bring lived experience of seeking sanctuary or establishing a new life in the UK. This insight is invaluable, shaping our approach and ensuring that our work is grounded in real understanding, compassion and authenticity.

Our workforce reflects a broad range of cultural and national backgrounds, alongside a rich mix of languages spoken across the team. This enables us to engage people in ways that feel accessible, respectful and culturally relevant, strengthening trust and reducing barriers from the first point of contact.

Together, this breadth of experience supports a working environment rooted in mutual respect, where different faiths, cultures and perspectives are recognised and valued. It also informs how we support individuals to navigate life in the UK with confidence, ensuring our services are delivered without judgement and with a strong emphasis on dignity and belonging.

We remain committed to building and sustaining an inclusive culture where staff feel supported and able to contribute fully, and where diversity continues to shape and strengthen our work.

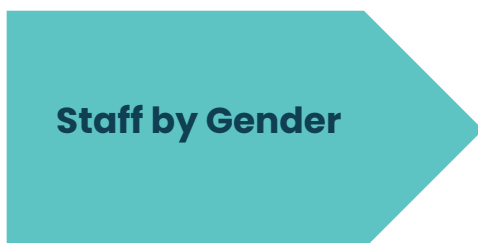


**15 Staff Nationalities**

**28 Volunteer Nationalities**

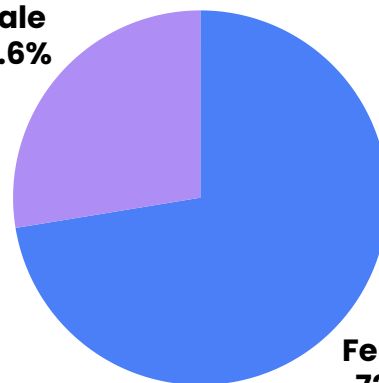
**17 Staff Languages**

**23 Volunteer Languages**



**Staff by Gender**

**Male  
27.6%**



**Female  
72.4%**





# Casework Report

## Financial Outcomes for Clients

Financial outcomes this year represent about 50% of what we achieved in 2024/25. This is due wholly to the loss of the Refugee Resettlement contract we held last year with SMBC and in that year represented 533 cases for whom we recorded claims for Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and ancillary financial outcomes associated with initial settlement; a significant sum in 2024/25.

**Total Financial Outcomes for Clients 2025/26-£947,816**

### Top 10 Financial Outcomes 25/26

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>Universal Credit</b>                    | <b>£410,453</b> |
| <b>Fee Waiver Secured</b>                  | <b>£203,600</b> |
| <b>Child Benefit</b>                       | <b>£58,407</b>  |
| <b>Asylum Support</b>                      | <b>£52,786</b>  |
| <b>Disability Living Allowance</b>         | <b>£38,270</b>  |
| <b>SIM Cards and Phone Credit</b>          | <b>£25,660</b>  |
| <b>Travel Passes Secured</b>               | <b>£21,051</b>  |
| <b>Council Tax Relief</b>                  | <b>£18,399</b>  |
| <b>Pension Credit</b>                      | <b>£18,316</b>  |
| <b>Personal Independence Payment (PIP)</b> | <b>£17,766</b>  |



# Casework Report

## Non-Financial Outcomes for Clients

Non-financial outcomes are arguably more important for our clients in the long-term than the financial outcomes. These often represent the work we do to empower clients to be more self-sufficient in their socio-economic mobility.

### Top 10 Non-Financial Outcomes 25/26

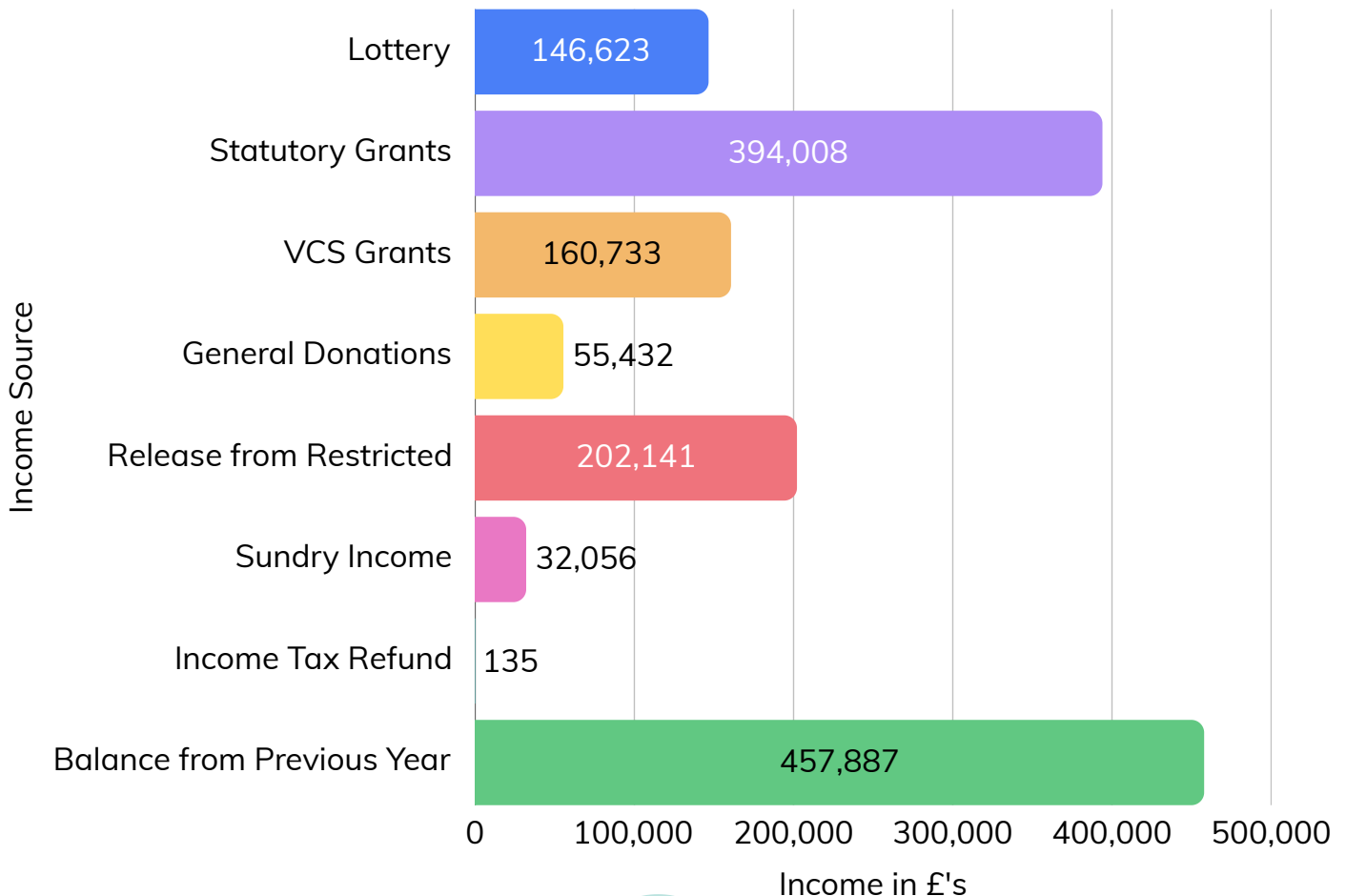
|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>HC2 Certificate Secured<br/>(NHS Support)</b>        | <b>311</b> |
| <b>New Arrival Integration<br/>Advice Session</b>       | <b>202</b> |
| <b>Housing Advice</b>                                   | <b>197</b> |
| <b>CV Created/Improved</b>                              | <b>151</b> |
| <b>Health Information<br/>Session</b>                   | <b>148</b> |
| <b>Employment Application<br/>Completed with Client</b> | <b>116</b> |
| <b>Utility Disconnection<br/>Prevented</b>              | <b>83</b>  |
| <b>Housing Application</b>                              | <b>79</b>  |
| <b>Eviction Prevented</b>                               | <b>71</b>  |
| <b>Homelessness Prevention</b>                          | <b>65</b>  |



# Financial Performance

## 25-26

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Total Income</b>            | <b>£991,130</b>   |
| <b>Balance Carried Forward</b> | <b>£457,887</b>   |
| <b>Total Available Funds</b>   | <b>£1,449,017</b> |

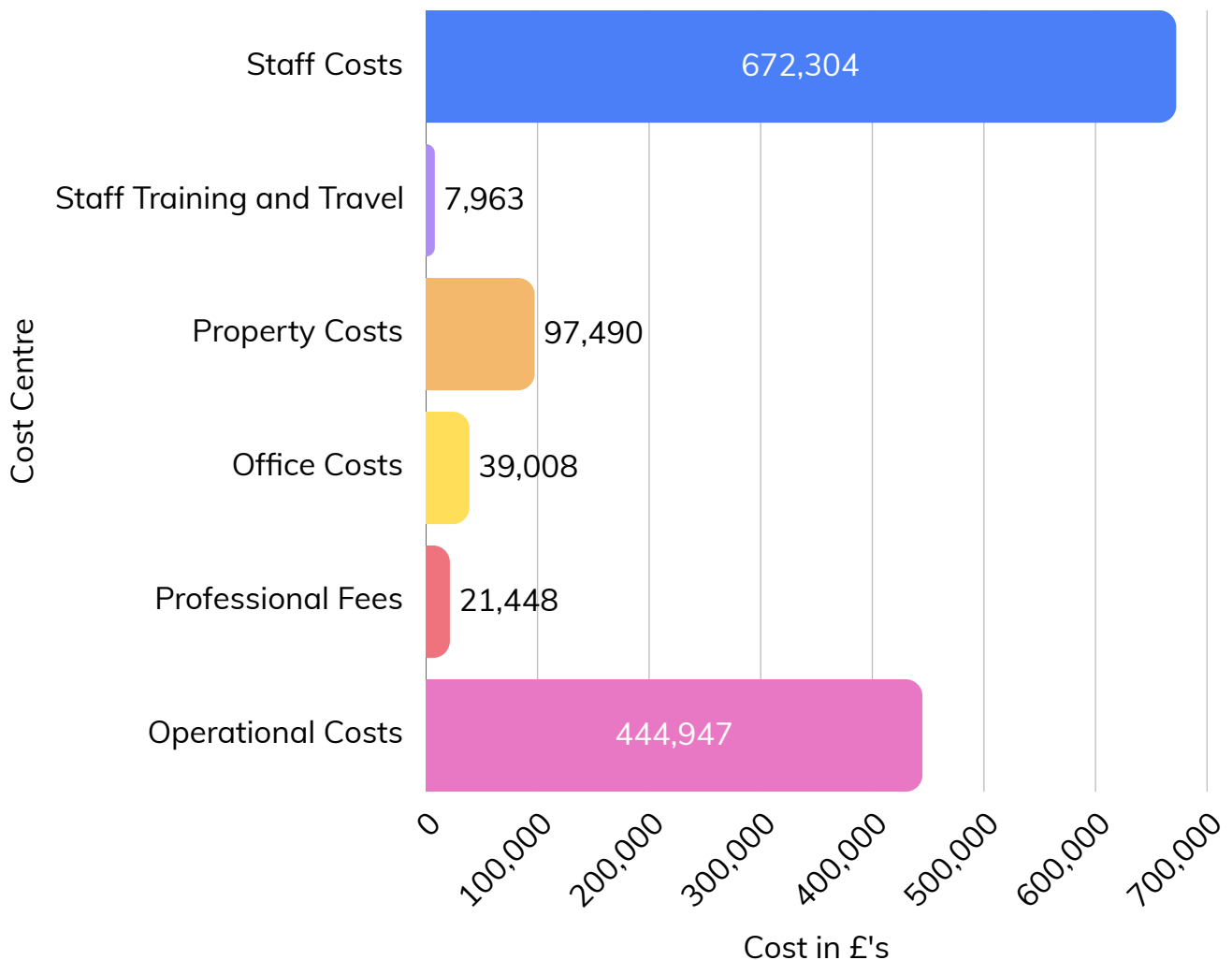




# Financial Performance

## 25-26

**Total Expenditure £1,283,161**



**While our income was down £389,984 compared to the financial year 2024/25, our expenditure was down £573,635 this year. Of that we saved £438,060 on staff costs without allowing that to effect our capacity to see clients. Of this, we are very proud!**

# A huge Thank You to all of our funders, supporters and partners.....



.....and to all of the other wonderful individuals and groups who have contributed to our work in 2025 and 2026.

# Into the Future

Looking ahead, Brushstrokes is committed to deepening its presence across Sandwell, Birmingham and the wider West Midlands, reaching further into communities where support is least accessible. The focus will be on building trusted relationships and removing barriers so that people from all backgrounds can access the advice, opportunities and networks needed to improve their circumstances. By working alongside local partners and communities themselves, Brushstrokes aims to extend its reach in a way that is responsive, inclusive and grounded in lived experience.

Future development will centre on supporting socio-economic mobility for all who come through Brushstrokes' doors, recognising the strengths and potential within every individual and community. This means not only responding to immediate needs, but creating clear pathways into stability, skills, employment and wider participation in community life. Through sustained, holistic support, Brushstrokes will continue to play a key role in helping individuals and families build more secure, confident and connected futures.



*The Brushstrokes Team, June 2026*



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 **Brushstrokes**  
Community Project

Father

**Hudson's**  
 **Caritas**