HOUSING MATTERS

Advice • Support • Advocacy



A Year of Impact

2025-2026

Note from our CEO

A landmark year for Housing Matters

Over the past twelve months, we have supported more people than ever before, working on over 1,200 cases and reaching around 2,500 individuals across Bristol. Behind these numbers are people facing some of the most challenging moments in their lives – from the threat of eviction to challenging serious and unacceptable housing conditions – and it is a privilege to stand alongside them.

This year has also been defined by significant change in the housing landscape. The passing of the Renters' Rights Act in October 2025 marked a major milestone, following years of campaigning across the sector. In the six months leading up to its introduction, Housing Matters played a leading role in preparing both tenants and partner organisations for what this shift would mean in practice. While this reform brings real opportunities for greater security, we know that the transition will take time, and that demand for advice and advocacy remains high.

Alongside this, we have seen a continued rise in housing need. Section 21 notices and the ongoing shortage of affordable housing have contributed to increasing numbers of people facing homelessness or entering temporary accommodation. In response, we have worked hard to meet people where they are – expanding our drop-in services across the city and strengthening our partnerships within local communities.

The opening of our seventh drop-in at the Vassall Centre, in Fishponds, is a powerful example of this approach in action. By increasing our presence across Bristol, we are reaching a broader and more diverse group of residents than ever before. It is particularly exciting to see new members of our team, including our trainee Mol, playing a leading role in making these services a success.

This year also marked our 60th anniversary, providing an opportunity to reflect on Housing Matters' long-standing commitment to fairness, dignity and access to safe housing. Celebrating this milestone with our community reminded us just how far we have come – and how much more there is still to do.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on adapting to change, strengthening our impact, and ensuring that everyone in Bristol has access to the housing advice and support they need.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey.

Alice Tibbert
CEO



May 25

Alice invited to speak on the 'Importance of Home' at **Bristol One City** event.





June 25

Hartcliffe & Shirehampton drop-ins open



Aug 25

Trainee Advisers Nancy and Vicky graduate and remain with Housing Matters as **Housing Advisers**.





Sept 25

Housing Matters celebrates its **60th anniversary**.





Oct 25

Housing Matters invited to speak at the **House of Commons** about workforce development impact. Our newest trainee also joins the team.

Nov 25

The Housing Roundtable and Homeless Forum begin discussions on a collaborative regional response to the **Renters' Rights Act**.





Dec 25

Fishponds drop-in opens at the Vassall Centre.





Jan 26

Research volunteers begin gathering client feedback for the **Working Upstream** project to understand the impact of community-based advice.





March 26

Housing Matters hosts the **WE Rent Campaign** engagement event at Bristol City Hall, attended by more than 250 people.

About us

Six decades of support

We support people facing housing crisis, at risk of homelessness, and those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.

We exist because everyone deserves a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

We help people understand their rights, navigate complex housing systems and take action to improve their circumstances.

When problems cannot be resolved quickly, we stand alongside people for as long as it takes to reach an outcome.

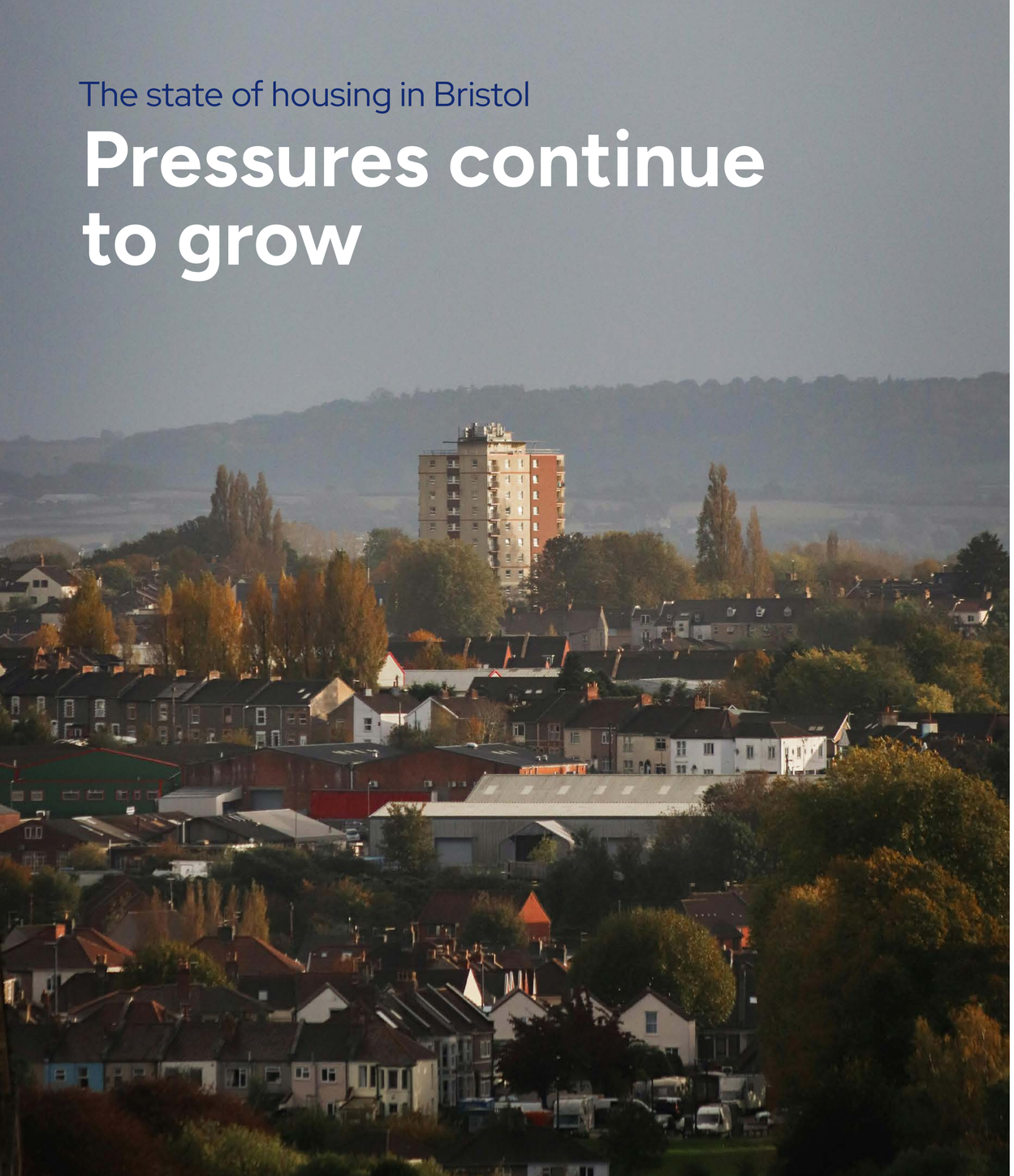


People-first **Dedicated** **Inclusive** **Resourceful** **Informed**

These values continue to guide our work as we enter our seventh decade of supporting people in and around Bristol.

The state of housing in Bristol

Pressures continue to grow



Across Bristol, demand for affordable housing remains far greater than supply. Households across the city face rising living costs, insecure accommodation and increasing barriers to accessing suitable homes.

The waiting list for social housing sits at a staggering 18,000 with a 90% rise in the demand for temporary accommodation over the past four years.

Instances of overcrowding continue to increase and homelessness has surged.

Bristol City Council has set out ambitions to deliver 12,000 affordable homes by 2040, but short and medium-term solutions are failing to address the city's entrenched housing crisis. Rehousing pressures remain particularly acute.

Last year 70% of our clients sought help with rehousing

while more than half approached us because they were homeless or at risk of homelessness. Many were living in overcrowded homes, temporary accommodation or properties that were unsuitable because of disability, ill health or family circumstances.

National policy is having local impacts across the city. This year also marked the introduction of major changes through the Renters' Rights Act and Awaab's Law. These changes have the potential to strengthen protections for tenants and improve standards across the housing sector. However, uncertainty remains for many residents as we wait to understand how the new legislation will affect them.

As housing systems become increasingly complex, the need for independent, specialist advice has never been greater.

Our impact

Responding to growing need

Last year marked one of the busiest and most significant years in Housing Matters' history.

We worked on **1,210 cases** last year, supporting **2,419 people** with their housing situation. We prevented homelessness or secured rehousing for **62% of clients** who approached us homeless or at risk of homelessness. We Improved housing conditions or rehousing prospects for **22%**.

Across all our work:

95% of clients had a better understanding of their options, duties and rights

74% of clients now know where to go to get help

89% of clients were better able to manage their own affairs

60% of clients were empowered to take action themselves

Behind every statistic is a person or family facing housing insecurity. Whether preventing homelessness, securing safer accommodation or helping someone understand their rights, our work continues to create lasting change for people across Bristol.

Malique and Elmira's story

Malique and Elmira were rough sleeping in an underpass in Bristol when they came to us for support. Being on the streets was taking a serious toll on them both. They had been experiencing racist abuse and harassment while rough sleeping, leaving them feeling unsafe and anxious.

Elmira was also suffering from severe migraines, struggling to eat regularly, and both were living with the effects of poor mental health, trauma, and the daily stress of homelessness.
Before coming to us, they had approached the council for homelessness assistance. However, they had been assessed as non-priority need and were told they were not entitled to temporary accommodation. They found it difficult to explain the full extent of their health conditions, experiences of abuse, and traumatic history during the assessment process, meaning important information had not been considered.

After several conversations with Malique and Elmira, we gained a much clearer understanding of the challenges they were facing and the impact these were having on their wellbeing. We presented this information to the council's homelessness team but were told that the council had already made its decision and would not be offering accommodation.

Today, they feel settled and hopeful about the future.

Recognising the seriousness of the situation, we supported the couple to obtain medical evidence from their GP and submitted this to the council as part of a new homelessness application.
The council accepted that there was significant new information to reassess their case. As a result, Malique and Elmira were offered emergency accommodation.

We connected them with local support services, including Aid Box Community, who provided essential household items to help them settle in. Unfortunately, they continued to face difficulties after moving in. They experienced threats of violence and harassment in the accommodation and were later informed that they would be evicted because the council had decided they were not vulnerable.

On hearing this new decision, we urgently challenged it, providing further evidence about their trauma, health needs, history of rough sleeping, and Malique's background as a care leaver.



Mental health professionals also assessed them as highly vulnerable to harm. Following this, the council overturned its decision and accepted that they were in priority need.

With additional support from us, their local councillor and victim support services, Malique and Elmira were moved into self-contained temporary accommodation where they finally felt safe. Today, they feel settled and hopeful about the future. Malique told us that they would not be where they are today without the support of Housing Matters.

Who we work with

Last year, Housing Matters worked on 1,210 cases

Many of the people we work with face huge challenges that make accessing and sustaining suitable housing particularly difficult.

For many, specialist housing advice is essential. Our client base reflects the inequalities that exist across Bristol's housing system. Housing insecurity rarely exists in isolation, and we see how often it's linked to poverty, ill health, discrimination, caring responsibilities and barriers to accessing services.

By providing specialist advice that is free, independent and accessible, we help people overcome these challenges and move towards safer, more secure housing.

90%

were in receipt of benefits, either partially or fully

62%

had a physical disability or physical health condition

73%

were from global majority communities

46%

had dependent children

80%

lived with one or more health conditions

59%

had a mental health condition

41%

spoke English as a second language

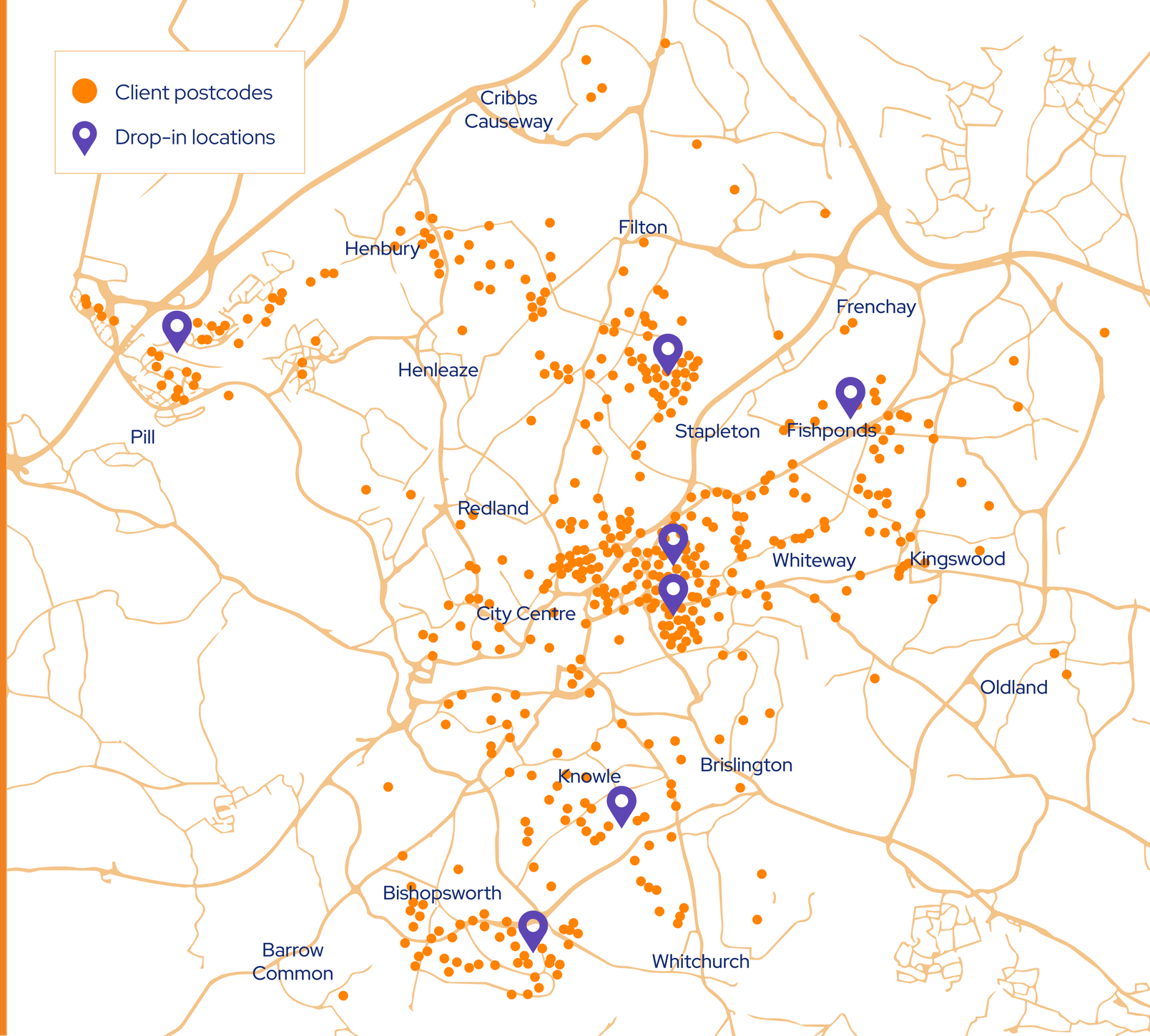
Reaching more communities than ever before

This year our ‘Working Upstream’ project expanded from four locations to seven, with new regular advice drop-ins opening in Shirehampton, Hartcliffe and Fishponds.

Outreach remains central to our strategy. By delivering housing advice within communities, we can identify problems earlier, help prevent homelessness and support people before issues reach crisis point.

This year, **73% of our clients came from postcodes surrounding our outreach locations**. We now provide services across all four corners of Bristol, extending our reach into neighbourhoods where housing advice is needed most.

Over the past year, we opened **581 cases through outreach**, compared to 311 cases in the previous year. These cases accounted for around **half of all cases opened** during the year, demonstrating the vital role outreach plays in helping us reach those most in need.



Working upstream in Fishponds

As part of our continued investment in early intervention, we launched a new housing advice drop-in at the Vassall Centre in Fishponds, extending our presence into another key Bristol community.

Located close to Fishponds High Street, the Vassall Centre is a well-established community hub that brings together charities, social enterprises and local services under one roof. The welcoming and familiar setting enables residents to access support close to home, alongside other sources of help.

We run two drop-in sessions each month, offering free housing advice without the need for an appointment.

The response since launch has highlighted significant demand for accessible housing advice in Fishponds and reinforced the importance of providing support within community settings, before problems reach crisis point.



The impact of community-based delivery is clear. Among clients attending our newer outreach locations, including the Vassall Centre, 90% told us they would not have accessed housing advice if support had not been available in their local area. By meeting people where they are, we can reach those who might otherwise go unsupported and help resolve problems long before they reach crisis point.

> The Housing Matters drop-in service has been a vital source of support for local residents in Fishponds. **We have developed a strong and genuine partnership** with their team, which means our residents receive holistic, compassionate support and are always made to feel valued and cared for—something that is especially important in the current climate.
>
> Our team knows that whenever we refer someone to the Housing Matters drop-in, they will receive a wealth of advice, guidance, and practical support. Most importantly, **people leave feeling heard, understood, and supported** in finding solutions to the challenges they face.
>
> This is such an important service, particularly given the significant housing pressures affecting many residents across Bristol. **Housing Matters provides an invaluable lifeline**, helping people navigate complex situations with dignity, expertise, and kindness. Their commitment to supporting local people makes a real and lasting difference to our community.
>
> **Charity Wallis**
> Director of Development at Bristol Charities

The power of early advice

Malcolm came to our trainee adviser Mol during a drop-in session last year. Now in his sixties, he had just been released from prison to discover that the home he had lived in for over forty years was no longer his. While serving his sentence, Malcolm's ex-partner had ended their joint tenancy without his knowledge.

The council allowed him to remain in the property temporarily under a use and occupation agreement, but with no formal tenancy, his housing situation was precarious, and meant he was at risk of eviction.

Malcolm's case had fallen through administrative gaps — his housing officer had left their post and no one had picked up his case. He was eventually told he would need to leave the property, and with mobility issues making many housing options unsuitable, Malcolm was reluctant to bid for the council properties such as flats in high-rise blocks. He felt stuck and uncertain about his future.

Mol learned about a housing complex specifically for people aged sixty and over and contacted the housing officer directly to secure a bid on Malcolm's behalf. In just four months, he had moved into his new home and the immediate housing crisis was resolved.

In just four months, he had moved into his new home and the immediate housing crisis was resolved.

However, new problems soon emerged. The bathroom began flooding, black mold appeared, and the locks on his front door were broken, leaving Malcolm exposed and concerned for his health. Mol wrote to Bristol City Council on his behalf to request that they swiftly undertake the necessary repairs, and due to Mol's persistence, the repairs were carried out in a reasonable timeframe.

Recognising that Malcolm needed more than just a roof over his head, Mol helped him apply for grants to furnish his new home, connected him with local support services and secured a Discretionary Housing Payment to help him manage his rent amid all the uncertainty.

Malcolm is now on a starter tenancy. While he was initially anxious about the one-year term, he is in a far more secure position than when he first came to us — settled, supported, and able to look ahead with greater confidence.



Mol, Trainee Housing Adviser

Bringing the region together for impact



On 27 October 2025, the Renters' Rights Act received Royal Assent, marking a **once-in-a-generation shift** in the private rented sector.

The legislation introduced significant **new protections** for renters and stronger regulation of landlords, including the abolition of **Section 21** 'no fault' evictions, the end of fixed-term tenancies, restrictions on rental bidding wars, and limits on rent increases.

Across our networks, there were **immediate concerns** about how the sector would adapt to these **major changes.**

In response, Housing Matters—working in partnership with the advice and housing sectors, the West of England Combined Authority, and all four local authorities—led a coordinated, three-pronged approach under the **WE Rent Campaign** banner.

› Train

Equipping advice specialists with the knowledge, skills and practical tools they need to provide accurate, timely and effective support, ensuring people receive the right advice when they need it most.

› Teach

Empowering community, health and education organisations to understand and navigate changes with confidence, enabling them to identify concerns early, have informed conversations, and connect people to support before issues escalate.

› Tell

Recognising that these changes affect hundreds of thousands of people across the region, we delivered a bold, far-reaching communications campaign to raise awareness, increase understanding, and help renters and landlords access trusted information and support.

Behind the WE Rent campaign

Raising awareness, building partnerships and empowering communities.

WE Rent was a region-wide campaign that helped renters, landlords and communities understand the changes introduced by the Renters' Rights Act.

Bringing together trusted partners and clear communications, it raised awareness across the West of England and supported people to access reliable information.

Find out more about the WE Rent campaign impact across the region, here.









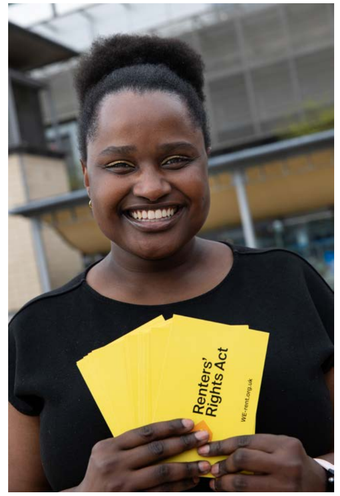




















Looking forward

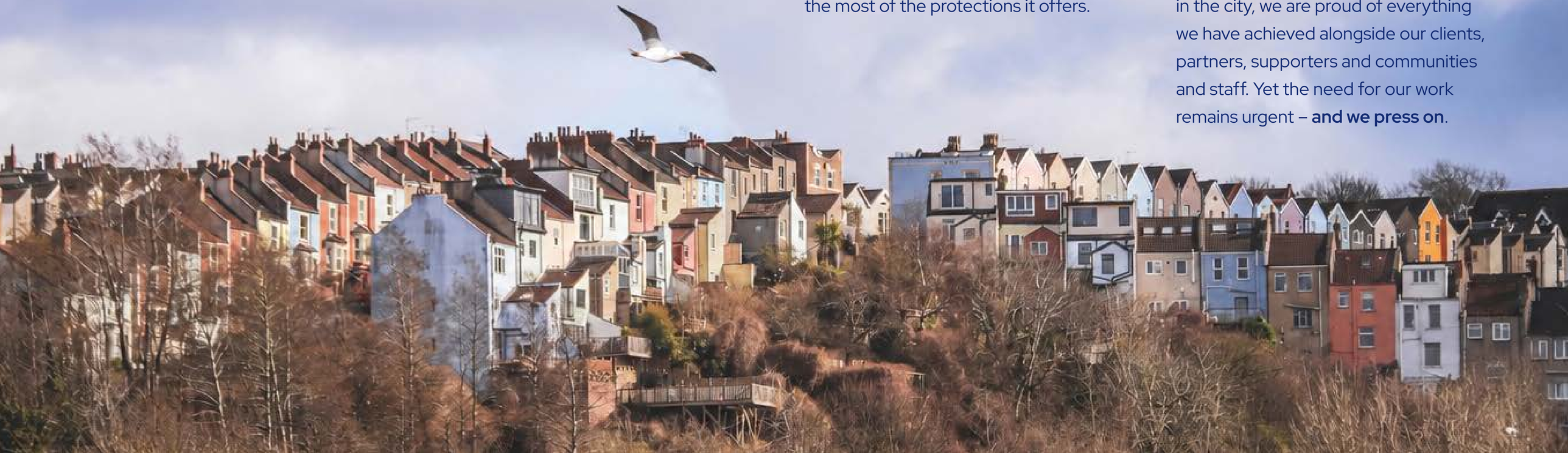
As we move into this new financial year, Housing Matters remains committed **to preventing homelessness**, **improving housing outcomes** and ensuring people can **access the advice** they need.

The introduction of the Renters' Rights Act presents significant opportunities for positive change. We will continue **supporting residents, community organisations and partners** to understand the new legislation and make the most of the protections it offers.

We will build on the success of our outreach programme, strengthening our presence within local communities and ensuring **specialist housing advice reaches people** as early as possible.

Our **award-winning** Trainee Adviser Scheme will continue to develop the next generation of housing advisers, helping strengthen both Housing Matters and the wider sector.

As we reflect on **60 years** of delivery in the city, we are proud of everything we have achieved alongside our clients, partners, supporters and communities and staff. Yet the need for our work remains urgent – **and we press on**.



HOUSING MATTERS

We're deeply grateful to our funders and supporters for standing with us over the past year. Your backing made it possible for us to support people through some of the most challenging moments of their lives.

We're also thankful to our Advisory Board for your thoughtful guidance, which continues to strengthen our work with those experiencing housing stress.

To our partners – thank you for your invaluable collaboration and expertise. And finally, to our incredible clients – thank you for your trust, resilience, and ongoing faith in us.

Please note: all client names have been changed. Unless otherwise specified, the photographs are not of our clients.

ACFA The Advice Network

Homeless Link Member

advice quality standard

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