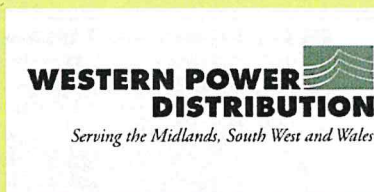


We are very grateful to the Centeno Lino family for designing and making this magnificent banner for Brushstrokes. The family received weekly food deliveries over lock down and wished to express their thanks in this lasting way. The banner now resides in our reception area for all to see. Special thanks to the following organisations for making it possible for us to purchase food and resources for isolated and vulnerable people since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic:

The National Lottery Community Fund
The Albert Gubay Charitable Foundation
The Heart of England Charitable Foundation
Western Power Distribution
Tesco Bags of Help
Housing Options West Midlands Ltd.



**Housing Options
West Midlands Limited**

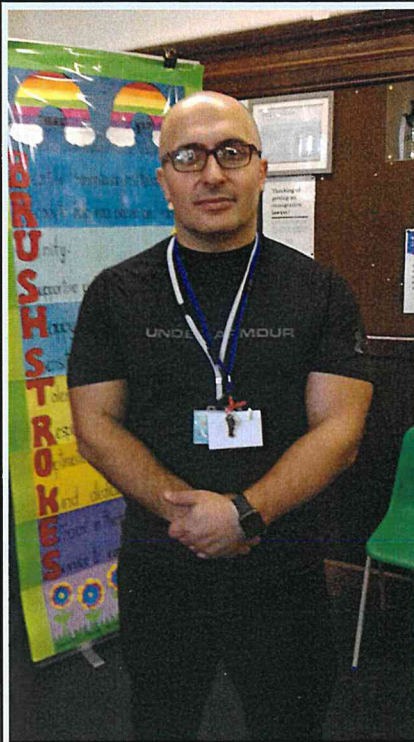


Gratitude

Brushstrokes would like to remember, with affection, Ms Alen Harrison who lived in Herefordshire, and who sadly passed away in early September. Although we never met Alen, she was a friend of one of our lovely volunteers, Jen, and demonstrated extreme consideration in sending us a financial contribution towards our resources in April this year. Further to this, her nephew organised a monetary collection to be made at Alen's funeral which will be donated to our work. Although there are no words that can ease the pain of Alen's passing the memory of her generosity towards people whom she never met is a lasting testimony to a character and a life of kindness. Thank you Alen.

Photograph reproduced with kind permission





A warm Brushstrokes welcome to Sam who is assisting us for a couple of months by working in the reception area welcoming people as they arrive for appointments. As a precaution against the Corona virus Sam ensures that all visitors are safely prepared to enter the building. This includes the compulsory use of hand sanitiser gel, donning of masks and gloves and a temperature check. He also signs people in and out and is doing a great job at keeping everyone safe. We are happy he is here.



We wish ESOL Administrator, Claire, a speedy recovery after she recently broke her foot. Despite her mishap Claire was determined to remain at work and help guide the ESOL department through the start to a new term at Brushstrokes.

THRIVE TOGETHER BIRMINGHAM⁺
CHANGING LIVES AND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER



We are immensely grateful to #feedbirmingham, which is a Thrive Together initiative, for collecting monetary donations from the very generous people of Birmingham between May and August. This money is being donated to Brushstrokes to cover our

Fareshare costs for six months (September 2020 to February 2021) so that we can purchase food for vulnerable people. #feedbirmingham was established by Thrive Together as a direct response to Covid 19 as food banks and other food-distributing charities were experiencing shortages. Thrive Together works in partnership with Edgbaston Foundation and West Midlands Police. Many thanks to our friend and colleague Louise White, Community Development Worker for Thrive Together Birmingham, for consistently and thoughtfully supporting our work.

It has been one year since I joined Brushstrokes' team as an EUSS Adviser. During this time I gained lots of experience by helping over 100 EU citizens and their family members to apply for their settled and pre-settled status. I enjoyed meeting them and discovering their life stories. It gave me a lot of satisfaction when I could share good news from the Home Office with individuals or families, especially when their cases were not easy and required more commitment and patience. Now it's time for a new adventure! At the beginning of September I became a Senior Adviser. I will continue working with my team, but my new role brings much more responsibilities and opportunities. I can support EU nationals who are working or living in Sandwell in a more holistic way: not only by securing their immigration status, but also provide advice about welfare benefits, housing and healthcare. Working together with three Navigators from Citizens Advice Sandwell and other partners we will be raising awareness of the EU settlement scheme, and enable EU citizens to understand and exercise their rights and entitlements. On 31st January 2020 Brexit became a fact. Very soon, when the transition period ends, EU citizens will face a challenging time of changes. That's why I'm here to help — to share my knowledge and experience.

Karolina Borkiewicz-Singh



Local MP Jess Phillips will be speaking at an online Zoom meeting network, jointly organised with Migrant Voice Polish Expats Association and RUDA on Wednesday 14th October at 4-6pm. We will be discussing the concerns of EU nationals in the UK at this moment and post-Brexit. Contact Salman@migrantvoice.org to reserve your space.

<https://www.migrantvoice.org/whats-on/west-midlands-network-meeting-150920111542>



Introducing Hawar Amin

We are very fortunate at Brushstrokes to have in place a staff colleague who has 'risen through the ranks' to become a first class adviser.

Hawar Amin first attended ESOL classes here after arriving in the UK from Iraq in 2005. She generously offered her services as our Reception Volunteer in 2014 and became involved in organising social and support groups for Kurdish women at Brushstrokes.

Hawar's welcoming and helpful demeanour quickly established her as a popular member of the team and, following relevant training, in October 2018 she became a part time paid member of staff helping clients with information and guidance.

Today, Hawar is an Advice Worker supporting people with benefit and housing issues, liaising with the Home Office and Migrant Help on behalf of asylum seekers, interpreting for Kurdish service users and carrying out vital funding-led research.

Hawar says: *'I used to come to Brushstrokes for ESOL classes in 2005. Ever since then I would only ever come here for every thing if I needed help because it was the only place I could trust and I was sure they would give*

me proper advice and recommendations. Personally I can't count the favours Brushstrokes did for me so that is why I felt I owe a great deal to them so I became a volunteer to be able to pay them back. I wanted to help those people who were like me and were strangers when they came to this country. Once more I have been supported and trained in different roles to get enough experience until I gained a qualification to how to be able to give advice and guidance to people which made me rebuild my confidence after all. So the generosity of the staff and their kindness gave me a chance to become a paid member of staff now and I have got my first job in the UK. What a fabulous thing that happened to me! Thanks for everything.'

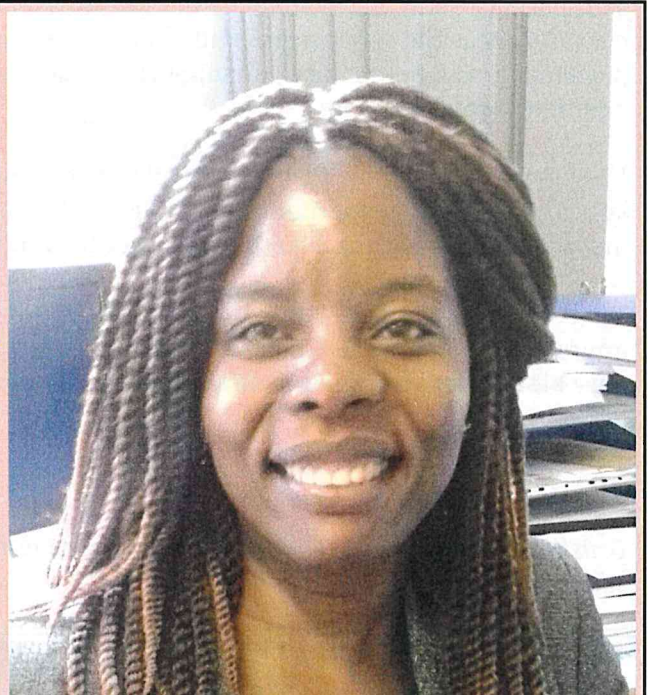
We remain grateful for Hawar's contribution to our work and admiring of her determination and passion to succeed.



New Journey



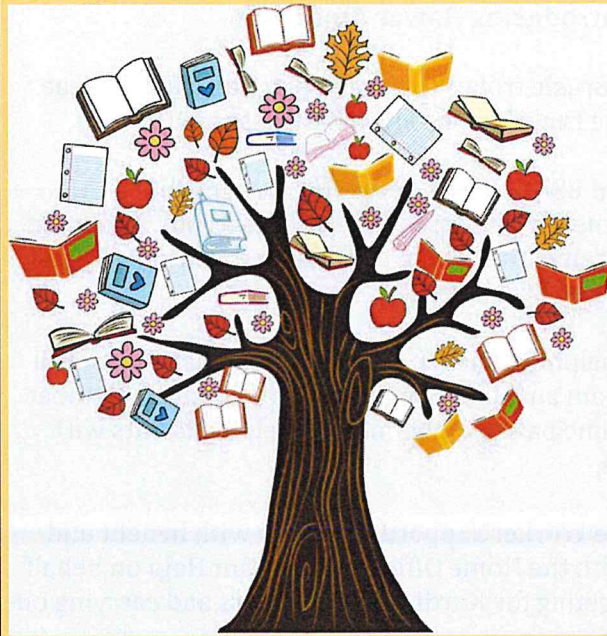
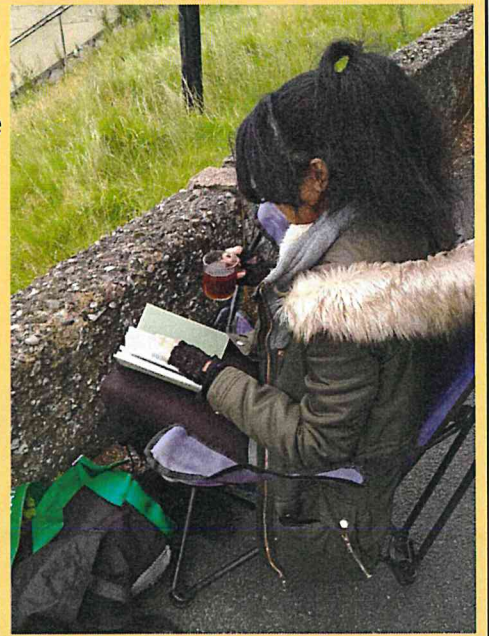
We are very sad to report that Harriet Thuambe, Senior Advice and Outreach Worker, has completed her term at Brushstrokes Community Project and has now left us. Harriet encouraged us every day with her humour, respect and friendliness to all. She will be greatly missed here, not only by staff and volunteer colleagues but also by her clients, for whom she worked tirelessly. We wish Harriet well, wherever life takes her.



Good Luck on your New Journey

My Love of Reading By Alina Stennett-Mirza

Ever since I was young, I have had the pleasure of reading. For me, it was a form of escapism as it allowed my mind to explore elsewhere. During the current situation we are in, I believe it to be most enjoyable and perhaps advantageous to pick up a book and read. Whether it is non-fiction or fiction, you have the ability to learn from it. There is much more depth in a book and much more imagination involved than video entertainment which



seems to be lacking in quality in these modern times. *Alina often helps Brushstrokes organise its resources to give out to people and we are very thankful for her kind assistance.*

**Brushstrokes Volunteer Coordinator, Martin,
received this lovely email from
Sister Therese Browne
of St Mary's College, Oscott, Birmingham.**

Dear Martin,

I hope this finds you and all at Brushstrokes well in these strange and challenging times for all. In normal circumstances I would be getting in touch with you at this point about pastoral placements for our seminarians; sadly this will not be the case this term. In the current circumstances the seminarians will not be taking up any external placements and neither are our supporters, such as yourselves in any position to receive them.

I just want you to know that you are all in our thoughts and prayers as you continue your great mission at Brushstrokes as best you can. It was just so good to see from Nigel's Newsletter how much is still going on to support those in desperate need.

We do look forward to getting in touch with you at a later date, whenever that may be, to continue our much appreciated working relationship with you. In the meantime I pray that you all keep safe and well and I wish you a very blessed and fruitful time in the months ahead.

God bless all.
Sr Therese Browne

Brushstrokes remains strengthened by the relationship with St Mary's College and we are very grateful for its ongoing support.



Many thanks to Jennifer Hall and other members of the 'Not So Serious Book Club' who meet across Handsworth/Handsworth Wood for your extremely kind donation of £90. This money will be used by Brushstrokes to purchase nappies and other essential baby items for families in our community.



Throughout August we contacted several people who had been recently assisted or supported by Brushstrokes in some way. We specifically wanted to know whether, as a result of our services, people felt more confident and welcome in the community than before. Here is a selection of responses.

Nigel Chandra

We have literally just received a food parcel from Brushstrokes and it makes us feel that we are not forgotten about. We miss coming to the café [closed due to the lock down] because it was our only opportunity to speak to other people. We don't have good health and I am a carer for my wife. She forgets things and we have mobility problems. The Brushstrokes café was a chance to mix with other people and it was a blessing to us to have company. Without other people life can be as 'miserable as sin' if I can put it like that. When we see you or when you phone us it 'bucks us up' for the whole day. When you go through difficult times then you know who your friends really are. ***We feel a part of the community because you remember us.*** KW

I had only arrived in the UK for about 3 weeks, and needed help with my asylum application and needed to find a legal representative to help me. I had been told Brushstrokes could help me with it. ***The staff were so nice to me and welcomed me a lot in a way that made me feel so special while I was feeling so lonely because I was only person who survived in my entire family.*** The most beautiful thing about Brushstrokes which I can't forget is they offered me coffee and gave me a Christmas present. Oh my God this made me so happy!!! So then after I was granted leave to remain in the UK again they helped me to get settled and get benefits as well. I studied Mechanical Engineering at Sandwell College and now I have been offered a place to study Mechanics at the University of Coventry in September. And also I have got a partner. We are expecting our baby on September 7th 2020. I wish good luck for all Brushstrokes' staff for their great efforts. They are amazing. Thanks for everything. DA

All staff from Brushstrokes are really very nice especially Miss Karolina — she is a very helpful woman. She made a lot of efforts for me for my pre-settled status and after for my BRP card even. I am very thankful that I met her to help me out with my visa application and all staff over there was very kind every time when I went there. ***Whenever I need any kind of help for sure I would love to visit again!*** Thank you for your support. Best wishes to all of you. GS

I would like to thank all Brushstrokes staff for all the assistance they provided to me in the past; even now if I need some thing ***apart from Brushstrokes there is nowhere else to go!*** That is why I usually recommend people to go there to get help. I knew about Brushstrokes as I came for ESOL classes at first but then I had housing issues and got advice about it. I used to take part at Brushstrokes activities and got benefit from it such as learning how to prepare traditional food, walking down the canal and some workshops about different subjects: all was useful. Later on I came to their IT course and also their IELTS course which helped me a lot to find a job. The staff gave me references and now I have a job. Without their help and references there was no one else to give me a good reference as it's my first job in the UK and I didn't have work experience here. SA

My husband and I feel very welcome only because of you all here. We know no one else but your activities for asylum seekers were really supportive — you do a great job. You work very hard and are a blessing from God. ***You serve all people no matter what caste, colour or religion. Your service is beyond anything. Especially during the three months of the pandemic, you were superb.*** You didn't see your own families, you served us. Lucy and Fatmire are so sweet and so patient and Lukano is a man of God. I give you 100 out of 100! AH

You help me feel I am important and belong in the community because every week you give me food and support when I need it. When my [financial] support stopped because I was refused, Lukano and Salman worked for me to get me a refund. You also helped me stay in my home and gave me proper guidance concerning a solicitor. Now you continue to support me and I love you all so much. ***The people here at the food service are so kind — not just to me but to others — I watch you very closely and I notice that it is not just food: you give food with compassion. You treat everyone the same and to me you are like angels. I believe God honours your work.*** JP

Since I first came to Brushstrokes you were all kind to me, especially Nigel and Lukano. ***You helped me with my application for housing and when I was worried about living somewhere you took charge*** and then helped me to do it on my own. I have studied IELTS with Jane and that gave me a lot of confidence. Then I volunteered with you as an Asylum Guide to help other people too. I am a Pharmacist and feel I belong in the community and have a lot to offer. As soon as my baby is born and older I will return to looking for a medical job. AS

When I first arrived in this area I was extremely nervous and anxious. ***My health visitor brought me to Brushstrokes last year because I was very scared and living all alone with my baby. I was not seeing anyone but you have helped me in many ways.*** You provided food and toys for my baby and became friends with me. I came to the café alone for the first time and felt welcome. Now I go to the shops by myself and feel more confident. I speak to neighbours now and people in shops. You have helped me so much and I appreciate everything you have done for me. MN

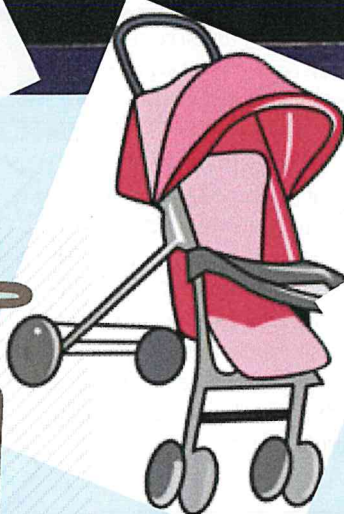
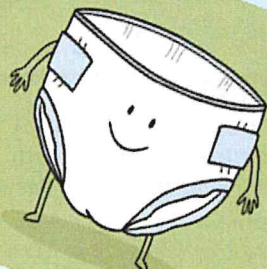
Dear Friends, our Resource Department is in desperate need of the following items to give out to families in need. We would be most grateful for any donations:

Pushchairs in good condition

Infant Formula Milk (1)

Larger sized nappies (4, 5, 6)

Can you help?



Contact us:

Brushstrokes Community Project
253 High Street,
Smethwick,
B66 3NJ

Phone: 0121 565 2234

E-mail: info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Website: www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Brushstrokes receives support from:



Charity no. 512992

Parish of St Philip Neri



INFANT
JESUS
SISTERS



Charity
no.
234216



Sisters of
the Good
Shepherd



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