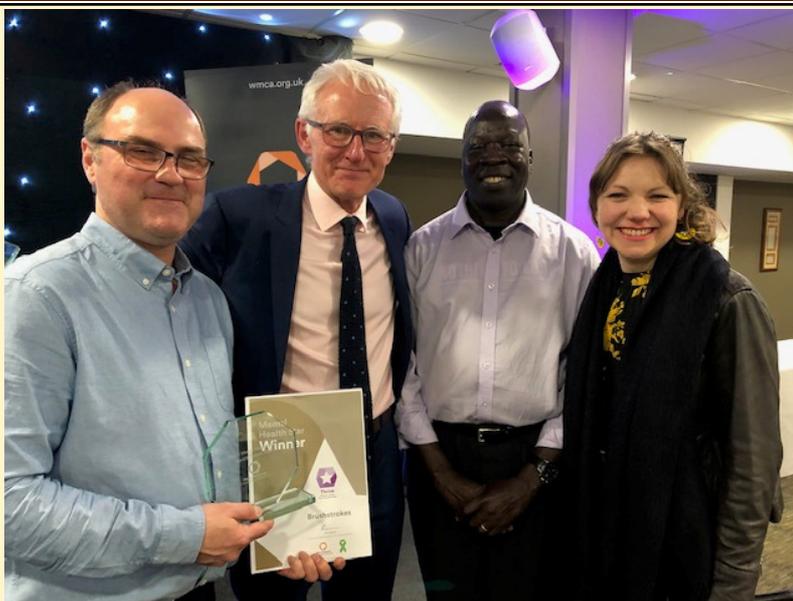
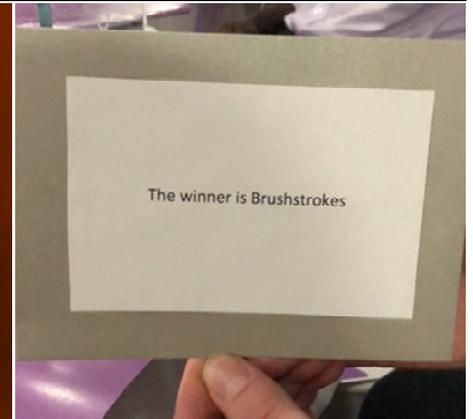


AND THE WINNER IS...



Thank you to all those who nominated Brushstrokes Community Project for the Thrive Mental Health Star Awards 2020. On the 29th January we were selected not only as a finalist for the Black Country team but also, at the end of a wonderful evening at West Bromwich Albion, then chosen as the winner!

Thrive West Midlands is a Combined Authority programme that aims to drive forward improvements in mental health and wellbeing in the West Midlands. It's annual Mental Health Star Awards are a recognition and celebration of individuals and organisations which make a difference to the mental health of people in the West Midlands.

Project Manager, Dave Newall, addressed his

Brushstrokes staff members: 'It is thanks to the dedication, welcome and compassion you and our volunteers show in so many ways to those who come to Brushstrokes, whether for advice, resources, the Community Café, ESOL, to volunteer, or for social activities that reduce people's sense of social isolation and bring hope, that we were nominated by organisations who recognise the difference our service makes to new arrivals. You should all be immensely proud of this award. Well done.'

Pictured above (left to right) are Dave Newall, Sir Norman Lamb, Chair of the Mental Health Commission which led into the Thrive programme for the WMCA, Lukano Omunson (Brushstrokes Early Action Advice worker) and Leonie Hart, Brushstrokes Committee member.

For more information about the Thrive programme see:



[https://
www.wmca.org.uk/
what-we-do/thrive/
thrive-at-work/](https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/thrive/thrive-at-work/)



Eddie and Seema on the BBC's Bargain Hunt!

Here, Brushstrokes' volunteer, Seema, reports on the day her Bargain Hunt dreams came true

By Seema Raymond

Auditions for Bargain Hunt were held in July 2019 at the BBC Mailbox studios in Birmingham. I missed them as I was in India but while my husband Eddie had to pitch in front of a camera my audition was a friendly WhatsApp call instead! Both must have gone well, as we had an email to say we had been selected from over 75 couples!



In August 2019 we all went on a day trip to the market fair at Southwell Racecourse. The antiques shopping was fun-filled and exciting but with just an hour and three items to purchase we were buzzing like bees amongst the stalls. Even the filming crew couldn't keep up!



Eddie, Debbie McGee and Seema

I instinctively albeit unsurely bought a rather cheap, but cute, old-style perfume bottle with a pump. Our expert Tim appeared to agree on it — so perhaps a good choice, I thought. Eddie, with his interests in all electrics and electronics, couldn't help but buy an old YPE radio sitting there all forlorn as though waiting just for him. If he could, he'd have brought it home! Then for our third item we both agreed to go back to, and settled rather quickly for, a set of seven coffee grinders — yes seven — as we were nearly out of time.

Purchases all done, we drove back home, still chatting about our items and wondering if they were good enough or whether we had made complete fools of ourselves, but we concluded that we'd actually had a really good time and it was best to dwell on this instead.

We were at Hansons Auctioneers, Derbyshire in September 2019. It was a beautiful sunny day. The 'Children in Need' special was also being filmed so we were lucky to meet a few celebs like Debbie McGee. We were the first couple to be filmed at the auctions. We were excited but at the same time anxious as it was all live — no retakes! Charles Hanson did his best auctioning in a huge, jam-packed hall. Our items had fared quite well, but were they enough to win? After a long wait the wrap up shoot began. In the last few moments the presenter, Natasha Raskin Sharp, built up the suspense until she finally announced the profits. We, the Red Team, had won! Yahoo!!

I love the programme and had watched so many episodes wishing I could be at those fairs buying cheap and selling for profit. One crazy day, I had simply gone online and applied. I've had two great days out with Eddie with all expenses paid; plus we received the fabulous Bargain Hunt tee-shirts and fleeces, and not forgetting that we're now on BBC film for eternity! Our episode was broadcast on BBC1 on Friday 24th January 2020 but can be seen later on BBC iPlayer.



Eddie and Seema with BH presenters Tim Weeks and Natasha Raskin Sharp



Volunteer Coordinator, Martin McNally, writes:

We were thrilled to welcome the Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Ann Jaron, to our Community Café. She visited unofficially and sat with café diners discussing local issues. The Mayor offered to help prepare tables and serve food and made our volunteers feel appreciated and special. The Mayor sat at different tables and talked with many people. She has nominated our project as one of her two chosen charities for 2020 and was very pleased about the service offered at Brushstrokes to the local community.

Refugee Photography Exhibition

Migrants and community activists in Smethwick joined forces with the campaign group '36,000' to launch a photography exhibition focusing on the plight of thousands of refugees who have perished whilst crossing the Mediterranean Sea in their quest for freedom in Europe. Their concept was to borrow shoes and take pictures which would represent the often tragic cost of human migration.

"As a migrant myself my journey coming to the UK and living here has been fraught with struggle, for no other reason other than I was born somewhere else; that's why I felt so strongly about helping with the 36,000 campaign" said Venecia Qutie Clair Callum, a Migrant Voice volunteer who came to the UK when she was 9 years old and who is still fighting for British citizenship.

Salman Mirza, OISC Adviser



Congratulations to Aresh Ali from Iran, who was recently granted UK refugee status. Aresh was initially refused asylum in 2017 at the immigration courts but following discussions and advice from the Brushstrokes' immigration team, submitted sufficient evidence for a fresh claim based on his political activities in the UK. This was successfully received by the Home Office and Aresh was awarded his leave to remain.

Salman Mirza
OISC Adviser



The Brushstrokes' free immigration drop-in service is held between 0900 and 1100 every Friday.

(Pictured left to right are Salman, Aresh and Mohammed)



Thank you to Brushstrokes volunteer, Priya, who here describes a delicious and nutritious meal for four people for only £2.40.

Creamy Pasta with Mushrooms and Peas

You will need

- 2 x tinned mushrooms, drained (40p each)
- Tinned garden peas, drained (21p)
- Garlic, a few cloves (50p)
- Spaghetti, 500g (20p)
- Soft cheese, about 200g (69p)

Method

1. Put your pasta on to boil.
2. Fry the mushrooms until they're dark and have no extra water coming out. Add some minced garlic and fry for 2-3 minutes.
3. When your pasta is nearly cooked, add the peas and the cream cheese to the mushrooms to warm them through. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Mix your mushroom sauce with the cooked pasta and a few tablespoons of the pasta water.

Serve and enjoy!



A Warm Welcome to Bilal!

Hello! My name is Bilal and I am working at Brushstrokes as a volunteer as part of my university placement year. I study Business Management at Aston University, and as part of my degree I have to undergo a placement as part of my 3rd year. My placement is at Brushstrokes which is where I will be working for the next six months. I volunteer three times a week and I have various jobs to do during the day, working with a number of the Brushstrokes staff members as well as with some of the clients themselves. I am involved with the admin department and the advice department along with some media related tasks that I do on the side. Thank you for reading and I look forward to a wonderful six months working at Brushstrokes!

In a very short time Bilal has more than proved his worth here at the centre. We are extremely grateful for his hard work and cheerful, willing personality. It's great to have you here, Bilal!



We would like to extend our warmest congratulations to Ahmed and Ibrahim for finally receiving their UK refugee residence status! These two young gentlemen calmly bore the years during which they waited for a positive decision from



Ahmed, Lukano and Ibrahim

the Home Office and during that time became firm friends of Brushstrokes, helping us with practical tasks, participating in focus groups and bringing other people to us for us to help. They have always been respectful and polite, remaining quietly hopeful despite seeing other friends being granted Leave to Remain ahead of them.



Salman says: 'Awesome! Such nice guys. They are getting involved in the bike project in Winson Green too! Kudos to Lukano — the hero who never gives up!'

Jane says: 'That's such good news. They are both lovely guys. Well done to Lukano and to everyone else who has supported them. This why we do what we do!'

Nigel says: 'This news has made my day. I couldn't be happier for you both! Well done Lukano, for your consistent hard work on the behalf of your clients.'

Click Start provides New Starts at Brushstrokes

We are very thankful to Claire who visits Brushstrokes every Tuesday at 1pm to run an individually-tailored basic IT session for our clients. Here she writes about her course:

Here at ClickStart we are passionate about bringing education to everyone. We run a free digital skills class aimed at anyone who is 18+ and out of work. We focus on day to day activities you may need to do on the internet, such as job searching, shopping or booking appointments. There are no entry requirements and the course is around 6 weeks. Come and join us on a Tuesday afternoon for a relaxed chat and see what we can do for you.

'Click Start has helped me to do some new things that I could not do before' — Timothee

'I am a mom to two children and looking forward to learning more about the computer and making my English better' — Veerpal

Claire Neale
Project Tutor

(Below left to right) Habtamu, Timothee, Camele and Claire



Thank you to Bearwood Action for Refugees for joining with us to organise a brilliant meeting at Brushstrokes at the end of January in order to draw attention to the Sandwell Borough of Sanctuary bid. We appreciate all who attended, as well as the inspiring speakers. Sandwell as a Borough of Sanctuary would be a welcoming place of safety for all, proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution from around the world.



Thank You

Sincere thanks to the lovely ladies from Cape Hill Primary School, Smethwick, and the Body Shop, Birmingham, who just happened to deliver items for us to give to people in need on the same day and at the same time! They quickly joined forces and cooperated to unload the goods and are pictured here (above left) with Fatmire and Lucy of Brushstrokes' Resource team. We greatly appreciate your kindness and generosity of spirit.



What's on at Brushstrokes 2019

Monday

Advice and Information: 0900 — 1100 drop-in
Resources distribution
ESOL/IELTS classes

Tuesday

Food distribution (1200 — 1500)
Resources distribution
ESOL classes
Beginners IT class (1300 — 1430)

Wednesday

Advice and Information: 0900 — 1100 drop-in
Work Club 1430 — 1630

Resources distribution

ESOL/IELTS/Life in the UK classes

Thursday

Food distribution (1200 — 1500)
ESOL/IELTS classes

Friday

Immigration drop in service (0900 — 1100)
Knit and Natter (10.00 — 12.00)
Community Café (1200 — 1400)
EU Settlement Scheme Clinic (0900 — 1100)

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



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no.
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the Good
Shepherd



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