
Brushstrokes Community Project

MESSENGER

MAY 2022



THANK YOU, SANDWELL!

The Café Volunteer Team were honoured by a visit from Dr Ann Jaron, former Mayoress of Sandwell. While Mayor, she nominated Brushstrokes and Sandwell Young Carers as her chosen charities. Brushstrokes presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation for the £10,763.91 raised for the project through the generosity of the people of Sandwell while she was in office. She praised the volunteers for all their time and effort in offering a FREE hot meal to the local community.

THIS MONTH AT BRUSHSTROKES

We were honoured to be visited by the former Mayor, we ran various Men's and Women's groups, some of us slept out with the Albion Foundation, and we were nominated for the National Diversity Award!



Project manager David presenting Dr Ann Jaron with a Certificate of Appreciation for funds raised to support the project.



ALBION SLEEPOUT

On the 2nd of May, George, our Refugee Projects coordinator, Lucy, our Resources coordinator and Claire our finance officer - went for a sleepout with the Albion Foundation to raise money in support of raising money for homeless people.



To date we have raised over £800; smashing our £300 target! Thank you to everyone who donated, supported and wished us well.

We look forward to working with The Albion Foundation in the coming months to see how we can continue to help those who find themselves with nowhere to go but the streets and tackling homelessness by preventing destitution through advice, support and community.

"It is very exciting to be a part of something that identifies the need for early, and life changing support for our local families. Hopefully all the agencies identified can come together to prevent families falling into crisis.

We were extremely proud to be asked to present as it shows how valued we are as a service and recognises the difference that we make to the people who come to us for help."

- Lucy, our resources coordinator



Nomination for National Diversity award

As a project we feel honoured to receive this nomination as recognition of the work we do to champion equality and improve access to services for refugees, asylum seekers and new communities and the partnership work with other organizations and service users, to help make Sandwell a place of welcome for all."

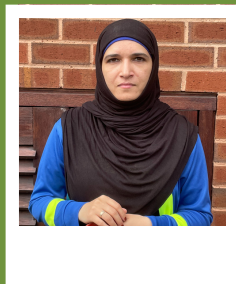
NEW STARTERS

Welcome

Recently at Brushstrokes we have had some new people join us! Abqa, our new Asylum Guide Coordinator, Qurrat, our new Digital Skills Advisor, Hajar who is our new Refugee advice worker and Negar, a former volunteer, who will be helping the Afghan Project.



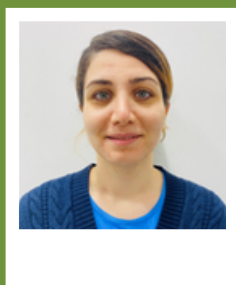
"My name is Abqa Khan. I am the Asylum Guides Coordinator at Brushstrokes. My role is to recruit and train volunteers so that they can help those seeking asylum in this country. The Asylum Guides will assist in helping people understand the key stages of the asylum process so that they can better navigate their own application and provide them with any relevant information they may need."



"My name is Qurrat-Ul-Ain Muhammad Bilal. I am the new Digital Skills Advisor at Brushstrokes. My role is to support and train people to develop their digital skills and enable them to be able to effectively job search and make progress into employment, education, and training. As well as help to make them comfortable in using online platforms to access the local services".



"My Name is Hajar Nejad, and I am a Refugee Advice worker at Brushstrokes. I support new refugees in accessing universal services, applying for housing and benefits, support them while acquiring resources like food and clothing, as well assisting with integration plans. This is all done as part of Refugee Transitions Outcomes fund project (RTOF)."



"My name is Negar West and I will be joining the Afghan Project as an advisor to support the work we have been doing over the last 8 months., I will help to engage with families, and will complement the approach of the team and wider Brushstrokes services. Including: ESOL, provisions, family support, employment, benefits and housing advice."

WOMEN'S GROUP

In April Brushstrokes started work on the Sandwell Health Inequalities programme (SHIP). This programme is coordinated by Sandwell Consortium and funded by Public Health. It aims to address health inequalities within ethnic minority communities in Sandwell, prioritising mental health and wellbeing and the prevention of long-term conditions. In addition to awareness raising sessions on mental health and wellbeing and maternity and women's health we are focusing on increasing service users understanding of the NHS and how and where to access appropriate support.

Our new men's and women's groups are providing opportunities for individuals to learn new skills, make social connections, identify those health conditions which are important to them and their community and improve their understanding of how to maintain good physical and mental health.

Our women's group meets every Monday from 10 to 12. The group is gathering various aspects of women's life. The focus is on the wellbeing of our female service users. It is a safe and friendly space for socialising and sharing stories and cultural experience. The Migration Journey session was about how we as women arrived in Birmingham. We drew a map of our life journeys compared to our experiences and what being a part of the community meant to us. The session was very interactive and engaging.

MEN'S GROUP

Men's Group also has a session on Monday 23rd, 1-3pm, with Spectra's horticulturalists and artists coming to town. They'll be teaching weaving techniques to make bamboo supports for the growing of plants and peas. There'll also be doing something artistic that'll be taken away and become part of an art installation called Abundance on the site of City Hospital. - for more information: wearespectra.co.uk



"We've started off with a gardening project, which is allowing participants to share their skills as well as develop new ones. Alongside our contact from the Canal & River Trust, Tof, we've been busy making planters to bring a bit of colour to the Brushstrokes car park and seating area. The planters have been made from salvaged pallets and we hope to add more features going forwards. A big thank you to Rosemary from Warley Baptist Church for the donations which have helped give our project a leg up."

- Bryan, Community Development Worker



LITTLE QUEEN'S PROJECT

Brushstrokes was buzzing with creative energy on Saturday as part of the exciting Little Queens project, a celebration of an ancient Czech tradition honouring nature and the role of women. Members of the Brushstrokes community were displaying existing, or learning new embroidery skills by contributing to the creation of the canopy that will form the centrepiece of next Sunday's procession through the centre of West Bromwich. Accompanying those who were busy embroidering, were the sweet musical tones of a violinist and a Polish singer, and we were even treated to some tasty edible Czech goodies. A big thanks to all those who participated.



LITTLE QUEENS



Supported using public funding by
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ENGLAND

REFUGEE WEEK SCREENING

During Refugee week Brushstrokes will be screening the first episode of Amend, where there will be an after screening discussion.

The series is a roller coaster of emotions, painful to watch but also incredibly inspiring. It puts people's narratives who fought for rights at the centre. One of the most impressive performances is in the very first episode, where acclaimed actor and Oscar-winner Mahershala Ali delivers a potent recitation of American abolitionist Frederick Douglass' 'Fourth of July' speech" . "Why am I called upon to speak here today?", says Ali, echoing Douglass' words. "What have I, or those who I represent, to do with your national independence? The Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn." This quote resonated with me as, when we celebrate everything British, many of us here feel excluded. But, like those who have resisted in the past, we both mourn and organise. Amara David is a single parent of 3 children who are entitled to British citizenship but are struggling with the costs. She lives in Birmingham. Amara is also support worker for young people.



CELEBRATING SUCCESSSES

Earlier this month, Nas of the Afghan team and Lucy, our resources coordinator, delivered this play house to a family in Cradley Heath. The family were so overjoyed with the house and couldn't thank Nas or Lucy enough! They also told us how much their child loved the play house.



Recently Abdikarim, one of our advice workers, was able to help a client achieve work! This client who wished to remain anonymous, came to the UK with their spouse and two children in the summer of 2021 as part of the government's program for Afghans (ARAP). They have completed a bachelor's degree in Public Administration and Diploma in IT. The client has worked with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in Kabul as an IT Support Engineer responsible for installation, setup and structured cabling. Abdikarim was able to get the client to enrol on a training course spanning 13 weeks. Starting the training course was a milestone in the client's journey to find their desired job. This was a major motivating factor that increased their confidence. The client's self-confidence and motivation increased more as they were invited to job interviews. The client has now got an IT job with Commonwealth Games 2022. This is a profiled job, which will also increase their future career opportunities.

"A BIG THANK YOU!"



"...to all those who have donated bikes to Brushstrokes! We still have requests for men's bikes, so any donations are warmly welcomed, or pop down to our games zone on a Wednesday between 5 and 7 and we can fix up your old bike to get you back on the road for summer!"

We are also encouraging people to visit another bike project called New Roots who we are working closely with!"

- Salman Mirza, of Migrant Voice.

REFUGEE WEEK: 20th - 26th June

Brushstrokes is joining with a wide variety of other organizations around the country celebrating Refugee week this year. We have organized several events, with our service users, to ensure that the week focuses on the theme of 'Healing', culminating in a screening of 'Amend' and discussion afterwards, at Brushstrokes on the 25/06/22. All the events are free, and you can find further information regarding Refugee Week here at: refugeeweek.org.uk

Brushstrokes Refugee Week events schedule:



**Come share a dish or
recipe with us!
Monday 20th
11-2pm**



**Walk with us!
Tuesday 21st
1pm-3:30pm**



**Perform an Act of
Kindness and come
Plant a Seed with us
Wednesday 22nd
1-3pm**



**Come read a Book with us
at Smethwick Library!
Thursday 11am**



**Come have a Chat at our
Community Café
Friday 12-2pm**



**Time TBC - Film hosted by
Salman with a Post Film
Discussion
Saturday 4:30-7pm**

**...As well as our very own Vanley
Burke exhibit at Brushstrokes all week!**



 **Refugee
Week
2022**

BECOME AN ASYLUM GUIDE VOLUNTEER

WHAT IS THE ROLE?

You will volunteer as part of a team of Asylum Guides and learn about the role. Asylum Guide Volunteers provide an effective way of ensuring asylum seekers are fully informed as they begin their asylum journey in the UK.

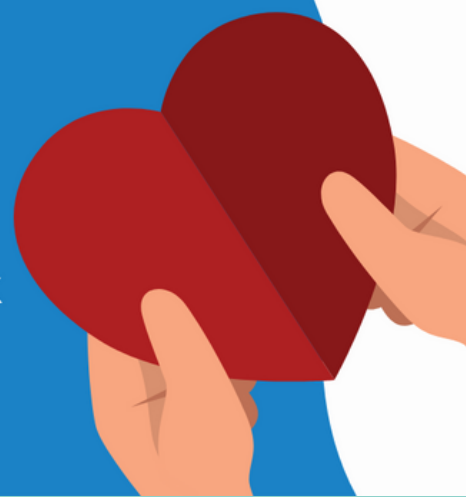


HOW DOES IT WORK?

We match up Asylum Guide volunteers with people and families claiming asylum, meeting at key stages of the asylum process, you will offer guidance and information.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION
OR TO APPLY

visit brushstrokessandwell.org.uk
or email at
abqa@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk



Brushstrokes Community Project

*Strengthening and supporting refugees and migrants
across Sandwell, West Birmingham and beyond*

DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

Improving your digital skills will allow you to effectively job search, learn how to read and respond to emails, how to browse the internet for information, check your online banking and more!

WHERE WE ARE

253 High Street
Smethwick
B66 3NJ



FOR MORE INFORMATION

please call us at
0121 565 2234 or email us at
Qurrat@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk



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Contact us:

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253a High Street
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Brushstrokes is supported by:

