

Brushstrokes

Messenger

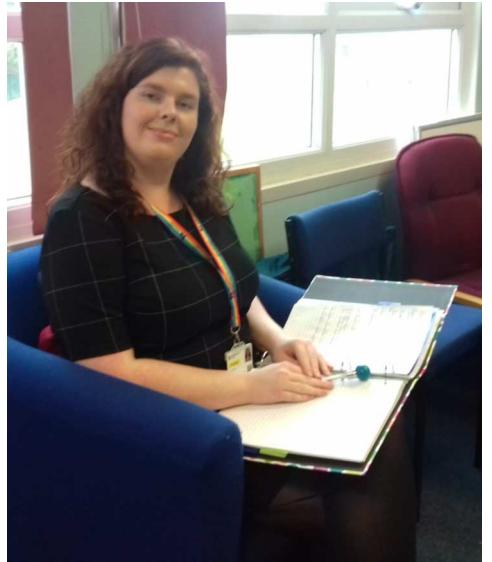
February 2018



Having secured new funding through the USE- IT! project Brushstrokes has now been able to provide Academic IELTS classes each week for health professionals including doctors, nurses, lab technicians, phlebotomists, pharmacists and other individuals with --

Hello all! My name is Jessica and I am a student in my final degree year at Birmingham City University studying children, young people and family services. I am here at Brushstrokes for the next few weeks to learn more about the services they provide and how they support families and parents in the area. I am also undertaking research on Brushstrokes' baby pack scheme to see how it can develop to help more people. Thank you to all for helping me to feel welcome!

Jessica Benton



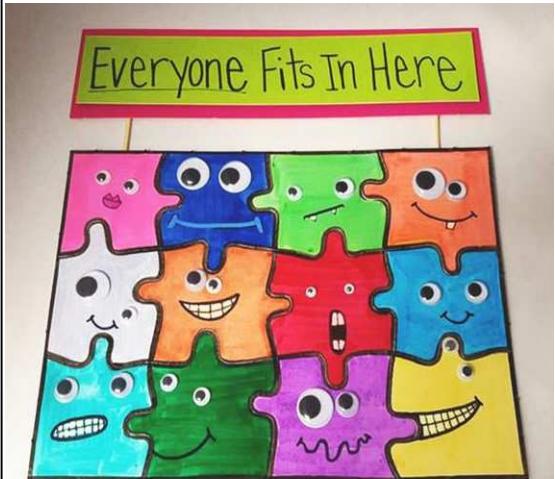
overseas health qualifications.

The course started in January 2018 with 25 learners who we are helping make the journey towards work in the health sector. We are very happy to welcome Dee and Lakshmi as our new lecturers in IELTS and we will be running several courses over the next 12 months. Please contact Brushstrokes ESOL Coordinator, Jane Alsop, with any enquiries about our IELTS courses: 0121 565 2234.



Dee and Lakshmi — Brushstrokes IELTS lecturers

Brushstrokes





It is always wonderful for us to celebrate good news connected to Brushstrokes' service users or volunteers. Here we share the success stories of eight people who have recently found employment and attribute a portion of their achievements directly to their involvement with Brushstrokes Community Project. Well done to all.



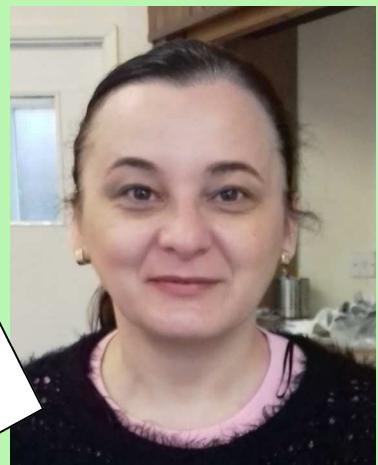
I have been successful in gaining employment and I am grateful to you for giving me the opportunity to volunteer at Brushstrokes which gave me valuable experience in the workplace and in turn gave my confidence a boost to move forward in gaining employment. Since starting at Brushstrokes, the time has flown by very fast indeed! It has been lovely working for Brushstrokes and I will miss you all. I hope to see you all soon and pop in for cuppa. Thanks again.

Sereeta



I have found 25 hours of work as a maintenance and cleaning operative at a major restaurant chain in Birmingham. Brushstrokes helped me a lot and in fact has become my second family. Without your advice and support I couldn't be where I am now. Coming to a new country involves lots of changes and without Brushstrokes I would have stayed at home. Nobody else helped us. Here I have found help and friendship.

Steluta



I was a volunteer at Brushstrokes for about three and a half years, putting food bags together with Resources, sometimes cleaning, and then finally as part of the catering team in the Community Café. I passed my Food Safety course at Brushstrokes and gained a lot of voluntary experience. Jane helped me to build a new CV and the manager wrote me a nice reference. Brushstrokes also helped me to apply for a job in March 2017 and I got it! Now I work for 25 hours a week in a local residential home and I really enjoy it. I work with elderly people and I think I am very good at my job. Volunteering with Brushstrokes gave me valuable work experience and helped me to get my job.



We are extremely pleased to report that **Mohammed**, who was recently a volunteer in the Brushstrokes reception area, has now been offered work at an accountant's office in Birmingham.

Mohammed, who left us in September 2017 to take up a voluntary placement with the firm, also qualified in January 2018 as a qualified Chartered Certified Accountant. He remains a great friend of the centre and it is always lovely to receive a cheerful visit from him. Well done Mohammed!





SUCCESS

The following account of success was submitted by Blanka Stephenson, Brushstrokes' Outreach and Support Coordinator. It refers to a service user on the HPP (Homeless Prevention Pathway) programme.

Iweka from Nigeria secured himself a job at Amazon and he is hoping for his family to join him soon under the Family Reunion Programme. Iweka has been provided with support by our part-time worker Arjana who did an amazing job providing guidance and support, building up his knowledge of various UK systems and his rights and entitlements and in the process developing his self confidence which helped him gain his first job in the UK.

Has Brushstrokes Community Project helped you in any way?

Would you be happy to tell your 'story' and let us know how we have helped?

We would greatly benefit from hearing how our work may have made a difference to your life experience. Any comments — whether positive or negative will help us do our job better. Thank you.

Share your Story with us

How have we helped you?

Please email us on: info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Telephone us on : **0121 565 2234**

Send us a message on Facebook: **Brushstrokes Sandwell**

Congratulations

Congratulations to two IELTS students who successfully achieved Band 7 in December 2017 after studying with Brushstrokes ESOL Coordinator, Jane Alsop. They are both now seeking work experience as dentists.

One of these, Mohammed, has written this tribute to his teacher, Jane, and to his time here at Brushstrokes:

"By the grace of GOD I got my result in my IELTS exam securing band 7 which would not have been possible without the hard work and untiring efforts of my teacher, Jane, at Brushstrokes. She proved to be the best teacher and I always felt very comfortable and motivated at this place. When I came to Brushstrokes I felt that I was in a long dark alley, but now I have got a ray of hope in the form of so many loving and kind people. Now I am preparing for my Overseas Dentists Registration Exam and I am very optimistic about my future in the UK. I am highly obliged to say Brushstrokes seems a second home to me and I am thankful to all those people who encouraged me and helped me in my journey to achieve my goals."

Members of a 2017 Brushstrokes IELTS class.



LOOKING FOR WORK

It has been said that finding a job is a job in itself. Did you know that Brushstrokes now holds two Work Club sessions per week, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays 3pm — 5pm?

If you would like assistance with searching and applying for a job, or building a CV, please telephone to arrange a work club appointment on: 0121 565 2234



EU CITIZENS & REFUGEES HOUSING ADVICE



**Do you want to rent private accommodation?
Do you need help with paying your rent and council tax?
Is your landlord carrying out repairs?
Are you at risk of becoming homeless?
Do you know your rights as a tenant?**

If you need help with any of the above issues please contact:



Megan, Private Rented Sector Support Worker
07464 497 416 / 0121 565 2234
megan@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk



Please note that Megan, alongside Brushstrokes volunteers, and in association with Emconet, runs a housing clinic every Wednesday from 10.00am — 13.00 at Smethwick Council House (room 38 on the ground floor), High Street, Smethwick, B66 3NT. All are welcome.



Brushstrokes volunteer Sara runs craft activities on Thursdays from 10.30am till 12.30pm. If you would like to join her friendly 'Knit and Natter' group please contact Brushstrokes on **0121 565 2234**. Many thanks to Sara for your creative efforts in helping others at Brushstrokes.



THE BENEFITS OF WALKING

by Brushstrokes Outreach Volunteer Lorraine Cruickshank

I started walking in 2016 because I wanted to feel better and look after my overall health. I had noticed that on occasions when I would have to run unexpectedly I was out of breath after only running a short distance. This confirmed that if I did not look after myself health-wise, no one else would!

Initially, I was reluctant to go walking by myself but after my friend consistently made excuses as to why she could not join me I finally recognised that she was saying no, because she did not have the same passion to keep fit as I did. Therefore, either I would never address my need to become healthy or I could challenge myself by going walking alone.

The first time I went walking I wore some trainers that were not brand new but they were comfortable. I had no idea where or how far I would be walking, therefore I made sure that I had not drunk too much fluids the night before or that morning. I wore a colourful rain jacket, two t-shirts, warm jogging bottoms and a baseball cap, because I meant BUSINESS. I also did some light leg stretching exercises to prevent the possibility of getting cramp.

I began my walk early evening when it was still light and there were lots of people around just in case I needed some help from passers-by but it went really well, apart from being exhausted at the end of the walk. When I arrived home I drank a glass of water because by now my body needed to replace the water I has lost through sweating to keep my body temperature cool.

Benefits

Since I have been walking regularly, once a week, my route is now completed in one hour at a brisk pace and the benefits have been great, not only physically but mentally too. Walking can enable you to clear your mind of any challenges or difficulties that you may have been experiencing during the week or on the same day. On several occasions walking has allowed me to gain clarity to problems that I have found difficult resolving in the normal way, such as talking to other people. Walking has led to my fitness increasing where I physically challenge myself to complete my walk at a quicker pace. My walks have enabled me to meet different people on the route whom I did not know before and I now regularly say "Hello" to. In terms of my overall health, I feel healthier, fitter and walking encourages a strong positive mental attitude even in the face of adversity. Finally, walking also encourages me to think differently about the amount of food that is harmful to my body, such as fats and sugars. I do have times when I do eat too much of the wrong food, but it is far less now because walking has been a positive benefit for my life overall. I have gained a greater appreciation of nature and the lovely scenes around me and would recommend walking as a worthwhile leisure pursuit to everyone. Get walking!





Welcome to Rebecca and Charlotte

We are fortunate at Brushstrokes to be hosting Rebecca and Charlotte from the University of Birmingham. Here they introduce the work they are carrying out with us: 'Hi, we are two Geography students from the University of Birmingham currently on a research placement with Brushstrokes. We are investigating the barriers and enablers that EU migrants and refugees face when accessing private sector rented housing. We are working closely with Megan and the housing mentors and looking forward to meeting some of you who may be willing to get involved in our research!'

We are very grateful to have received dozens of Winter Warmer Packs from Sandwell Council via our lovely friends Jose and Nidia of Bearwood Chapel. The packs, each containing a covered hot water bottle, carton of instant soup, fleece blanket, travel mug and thermal hat, scarf, socks and gloves, will be given to people at risk from the cold this winter. Thank you to Sandwell Council for your generosity. Jose and Nidia do much admirable work in support of asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable people across Sandwell and can be contacted on 07752419353.



Pictured are (left to right) Nidia, Fatmire (Resources Assistant), Sally (Resources Coordinator), and Jose.



Contact us:

Brushstrokes Community Project
St Philips Parish Centre
Watt Street (off Messenger Road)
Smethwick, B66 3DA

Phone: 0121 565 2234
E-mail: info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk
Website: www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

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TDS
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