
Brushstrokes Community Project

MESSENGER

AUGUST 2022



BRUSHSTROKES FOOTBALL

Brushstrokes made its footballing debut this month with a friendly match against a team representing Benson Community Project. The footballing arena was Hadley Stadium in Smethwick, and a highly enjoyable time was had by our keen and multi-cultural team. The Brushstrokes squad had representation from various corners of the world including El Salvador, Sudan, Eritrea, Honduras, Iran, Bangladesh and the UK, and this was reflected in our eclectic footballing-style. We look forward to arranging more football in the future, by then our achy muscles should have just about recovered! On the subject of the beautiful game, if anyone amongst the wider Brushstrokes community has any football shoes suitable for astro turf available for donation, we have footballing feet that would be very appreciative!

THIS MONTH AT BRUSHSTROKES

- A Brushstrokes footballing debut
- An Afghan celebration to remember
- We were able to feed 30 families with child-centred cooking activities through funding received from Western Power Distribution Community Matters Fund
- NHS information sessions and NHS interpreter focus groups were delivered
- An update on our Friday community cafe

Pictured Left and Below: the Brushstrokes squad at Hadley Stadium in Smethwick.



AFGHANISTAN VISITS BRUSHSTROKES

The local Afghan community came to Brushstrokes and helped Nas and Bryan make a Saturday afternoon to remember.

The food and friendship was plentiful. The event was a one year on welcome for our new community. Local Smethwick resident Gurmej Badsha said, "It was lovely to meet some really nice people behind the headlines, Smethwick has a long tradition of migrants living here and long may it continue, we are all better for it."



Pictured left: preparing a traditional Afghan meal outdoors and right: some of the mosaics created on the day.

Below are a few words from Shafiq, a service user from Afghanistan who has been supported by Brushstrokes over the past year through the ARAP (Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) scheme. Shafiq is reflecting on the celebration event that we hosted at Brushstrokes for all the Afghan families supported by Brushstrokes; those living in hotels as well as those who've received housing in the local area. The intention of this event was to give families the opportunity to come together and prepare a traditional Afghan meal, something that they've been missing whilst being in the UK. Many are still living in hotel accommodation and have no cooking facilities, so this was a perfect opportunity for them to express their culinary skills. A great time was had by the families and alongside the delectable food there was a mosaic workshop run by our volunteer, Irene, who got the creative juices flowing.

'A year has passed since we came to the UK, so the event was like an anniversary. Lots of Afghans still live in a hotel so we gathered all the families together. Men and women cooked and shared the work. There was cultural music with drums, children watched movies and played in the yard. Everyone talked together. Those who have received the homes also joined. Everyone was happy and it made a difference as everyone was together. The children wore new clothes and some families went shopping to get new clothes for the party.'



Need some bikes for these 2
Please get in touch ❤️

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

BIKES BIKES BIKES!

The gamezone is picking up during the summer and we are seeing a growing interest in women wanting to enjoy the joys of riding a bike, if anyone has an old women's bike they don't want, please contact us!

Members of Brushstrokes' Men's & Women's Groups had a memorable trip to Perry Barr locks courtesy of our collaboration with the Canal & River Trust. At their Information Hub, we learnt about the great work that the CRT is doing across the Midlands and received valuable safety advice when using the canal network. It's not just the protective Canada Geese you have to be wary of! Encouraging our service users to explore their surroundings is something that we always want to do at Brushstrokes, and we know the canals are a great way to do this in this area of the Midlands. We followed the canal down to the Alexander Stadium where the Commonwealth Games were taking place, met locals who were out enjoying the good weather and learnt about the importance of the canals in supporting local wildlife. We then headed back towards Brushstrokes, stopping by a local Smethwick chippy for fish 'n' chips all round. This typically British delicacy was new to some taste buds and was a tasty denouement to a great day out.

TRIP TO PERRY BARR LOCKS



**Canal &
 River Trust**
 Making life better by water

Pictured above: Brushstrokes' Men's and Women's groups joined forces for a trip to the Perry Barr locks organised by the Canal & River Trust.

NHS INFORMATION SESSION:

A lot of those who we support at Brushstrokes are unfortunately unaware of how to receive the health care support to which they are entitled in the UK. The stresses and strains of living within the asylum system can certainly take a toll on people's mental and physical health, so it is vital that they can access suitable and timely health care. Due to this, Brushstrokes has been delivering Introduction to the NHS sessions to ensure that service users know what NHS services are available and when they should be contacted. We look forward to running more of these in the future.



Pictured above: service users at the NHS information session in the Brushstrokes' training room.

"AWARDS FOR ALL"

We are grateful to the National Lottery for the recent 'Awards for All' grant. This support will enable us to continue the delivery of our resources support to those in need in the community. Through this grant we are able to increase the amount of advice that will be given to those accessing our weekly food distribution, creating the opportunity for people to access additional employment, esol, digital skills support and benefits they may be entitled to.



NHS INTERPRETER FOCUS GROUP SESSION

This month at Brushstrokes we ran a very insightful focus group with our service users regarding their experiences of using interpreters when engaging with the NHS. Also discussed during the session were ways how our service users would like to receive digital information from the NHS when attending appointments and other health services. Given the diversity of languages spoken by our service users, considerable valuable feedback was garnered from this two-hour session which will be relayed to the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.



Pictured left: service users at the NHS interpreter focus group session in the Brushstrokes' training room.

FRIDAY CAFE



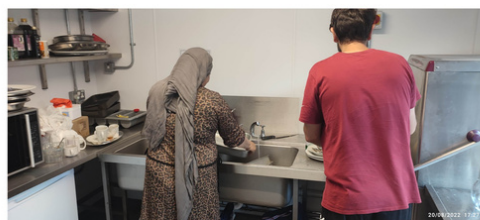
Pictured: Back Row : Mikhail and Eamonn with the Café team of volunteers. Left to right : Funke, Costacia, Alwina, Asha, Sophia, Franck, Makbule and Mojgan

The Friday café run by our volunteers continues to go from strength to strength. People who ordinarily wouldn't meet together find friendships over delicious food. Some of our volunteers are now leaving us but have enjoyed helping others. " This August we have said a fond farewell to our two Jesuit Novices, Mikhail Ahmad NSJ and Eamonn Walls NSJ, who have been coming every Friday for the past year. Mikhail and Eamonn are Novices from the Jesuit community and have completed their pastoral placement with us. They have been of great assistance to our Friday Community Café serving food and cleaning dishes and will be missed. They will be taking their "First Vows" on 3rd September and we wish them every blessing on their journey."

Many of the people who access our services spend years apart from their families, it is a pain they bear every day. Obtaining refugee status often means the pain is lessened when they finally get to reunite with loved ones. For us at brushstrokes we try to be part of their new family in their journey to security and safety.

REFUGEES WELCOME HERE!

Brushstrokes community



IELTS & OET STUDENTS SUMMER SOCIAL



It was great to welcome many of our IELTS and OET students and their families to a summer social in August. It was a wonderful opportunity for all to say a further thank you to Jane for all her hard work in coordination and delivery of these courses over the past 4 ½ years and to introduce Dominic, our new OET and IELTS coordinator. There were some amazing cakes baked by several of our health professional, the pick of them was an amazing one which immortalised Jane in cake form by Rawdeh a dentist by profession.



FAREWELL

We'd like to wish Julia, our Office and Admin coordinator, all the best as she leaves us at the beginning of September to pursue further studies. In the short time she has been with us she's become a vital part of the team, helping develop our office, admin, coms and building use as we've moved out of the COVID restrictions. We will really miss you, thanks for all you have done.

We'd also like to thank Jade, our Social Media and Admin apprentice, for her contributions to the communications side of Brushstrokes. We wish her all the best in her next steps!

...AND WELCOME!

This month, we welcome Dominic Simmonds to the Brushstrokes team as our new OET and IELTS coordinator on Mondays and Fridays. Dominic started as an ESOL volunteer and progressed onto become a sessional OET teacher before joining us on staff. Welcome on board, Dominic!



BRUSHSTROKES BY NAME, BRUSHSTROKES BY NATURE

There was no damping of the creative energy at Brushstrokes despite the late-August rain. Here's a photo of two of our committed service users (kids in-tow) painting welcome signs for our garden area. We decamped from the outside rain into our training room to get to work on these signs made from reclaimed pallets.



HATE CRIME AWARENESS

SESSION



Asylum seekers and refugees who are part of our service user group have often spoken to us about the distressing experience of suffering from hate crime whilst living in the UK. Owing to this, we felt it important to run an awareness session alongside Sandwell Council's Community Safety Team and West Midlands Police. During the session, we covered lots of materials, including different forms of hate crime, how to access support and we looked at what is being done to tackle hate crime on a national and local level. It was similarly a valuable opportunity for our service users to discuss their experiences and the reasons why some had not previously felt sufficiently empowered to report incidents of hate crime that they'd experienced.

SUMMER COOKING ACTIVITIES

We received funding of £2500 from Western Power Distribution Community Matters Fund

Aim to tackle holiday hunger and food poverty during the summer holidays

Used the funding to provide up to 30 families with child-centred cooking activities

Cooked a mixture of savoury and sweet dishes that used ingredients we regularly give out during foodbank

including: wrap-bread pizzas, chickpea curry, carrot cupcakes

Staff and volunteers ran the sessions and families were asked to sign up. Children must bring their grown up to supervise, but the majority of the preparation and cooking was completed by the children themselves

Also purchased additional foods to support families with breakfast and lunchtimes, as well as healthy snacks.

Each week we provided: cereal, milk, bread, wraps, crisps, cheese, healthy snack bars and a toast topping, as well as other items such as pasta sauce, yoghurts, squash and juice

Over 100 packs have been distributed over the 5 weeks of August.

The original agreement was that all spending should be done by December 2022, so we will be able to run similar activities during the October half term as well.



"The class was great, and the cupcakes are very delicious. Thank you"

"Our children have really enjoyed the cookery classes. They have started asking to help at home now too. We would love to come if you do these again. Thank you."



LEARN TO RIDE A BICYCLE AT BRUSHSTROKES



**Brushstrokes
Community Project**



**SESSIONS TAKING PLACE IN
SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER**

OPEN TO EVERYONE!

**CONTACT BRYAN ON
07827 258 680 FOR MORE
INFORMATION & TO REGISTER**

Brushstrokes

Community Project

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



Are you interested in helping asylum seekers? Would you like to learn more about what can be done to help them? Then you may be the ideal person to become an [Asylum Guide](#) volunteer!

Why not come along to the Asylum Guide induction on [Thursday 30th June](#) and [Thurs 6th July](#) between [10am-2pm](#)

(Refreshments will be provided) where we can explain how you can play a part in helping those that need some guidance?



**Asylum
Guides**

For more information and to attend please contact
abqa@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk
or phone 07570346848.

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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:

Brushstrokes Community Project
253a High Street
Smethwick
B66 3NJ

0121 565 2234

info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

www.brushstrokessandwell.org.uk



Brushstrokes is supported by:

