



Brushstrokes

Community Project

September 2022



Brushstrokes Sandwell Project Manager Dave Newall has been awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for services to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Dave, said: "I didn't think anything like this would ever happen and the work has always been to help asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and influence policy and migrant health. "Its wonderful, but its a recognition of what the wider team has done at Brushstrokes."

The BEM or the British Empire Medal is a medal awarded for meritorious (meaning 'deserving reward or praise') civil or military service worthy of recognition by the Crown. The current honour was created in 1922 to replace the original medal which had been established in 1917 as part of the Order of the British Empire. Recipients of the BEM are entitled to use the post-nominal letters 'BEM' after their names.

The BEM is very often awarded for 'hands-on' service to the local community. This could be long-term charitable or voluntary activity, or innovative work of a relatively short duration (3 to 4 years) that has made a significant difference.



Queen Elizabeth II | 1926 – 2022



Volunteer Family Summer Barbecue

To celebrate and thank our wonderful family of volunteers for all their support, the staff got together to have a party for our volunteers. So that our volunteers could enjoy the day the staff prepared all the food, set up tables, decorated the hall and car park and cooked the food. The day was attended by over 40 volunteers and guests included the Rev. Father Simon Bishop SJ, Novice Director North West Europe Novitiate and "The Worshipful the Mayor of Sandwell, Councillor Richard Jones" who assisted with presenting volunteers with certificates of Appreciation and Long Service. We were pleased that the sun was shining and a great day was had by all.

(Martin McNally Volunteer Coordinator)



Volunteer Family Summer Barbecue





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On the 14 September our employment team promoted Brushstrokes and our employment services in the local Job Centre in Smethwick. The event was organised by the Job Centre in order to introduce local charity organisations and services to new work coaches.

There is a great demand in employment support over the country now and work coaches are looking for new ways to help their clients find a job and get involved in local life in the area. Brushstrokes takes referrals of clients, providing advice and help with different needs including employment support, and the event aimed to provide work coaches with the information about organisations which can assist the people to help them find employment.

Abdi and Kate presented all of the services available at Brushstrokes, giving more detailed information about employment advice. The work coaches had an opportunity to ask all the questions they were interested in.

There were other organisations presenting their services, including 'Thrive into Work', 'The Kaleidoscopet Group' etc. The feedback received from the participants was very positive and it was a good networking opportunity for all those who attended.



George's leaving breakfast! George has been a very valuable team member and has been a joy to work with. He is dedicated, with excellent work ethic and it is truly a loss to Brushstrokes to see him go. Thank you, George, for making our time working with you at the council house more enjoyable and all the best in your new ventures!

BRUSHSTROKES COUNCIL HOUSE TEAM!!!

Ukrainian event!



As we all know, many Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homeland and several have made Sandwell and the Birmingham area their new home. Brushstrokes has been supporting a number of families, couples and individuals, and as part of this we threw a well-attended get-together for Ukrainians. Some host families were also in attendance, which was great to see. Everyone was treated to a craft workshop, an entertainer, a bouncy castle, a range of tasty food, important advice about housing issues, and the opportunity to socialise amongst friends. We look forward to seeing more of the Ukrainian families at our centre.

Shilps Ahoy on the Smethwick Canals

As part of our valuable partnership with the Canal & River Trust, our Men's and Women's were treated to a bell boating adventure on the local Smethwick canals. Not quite the Amazon, the Nile or even the River Severn, but we're more than happy with our local water course! A great time was had by all despite the pesky precipitation at the conclusion of our paddling adventure. The samosas and satsumas also managed to distract us from our slightly damp clothing! We were taught different paddling technique, saw lots of flora and even had time to do some litter picking. For many of our service users, this was the first time they had ever been on the water, so it's great to see we are giving people the chance to try their hand at new activities, learn new skills and explore their local surroundings. Nas, one of the participants, commented: 'It was a great adventure, it felt like being in a Jurassic world, we saw lots of nice scenery, bridges, trees, and it was good to do some rowing and learning from some great professional instructors.'



Women's group activity- Maternity care services



One of September's Women's Group sessions explored the experiences of women on the maternity ward and how they were treated during their labour. A lady called Affrah Muflihi, from the Sandwell NHS trust, visited the group and encouraged participants to share their thoughts and feelings.

One of the participants explained that she was only provided with one meal a day, she was not told any information about her baby, and that she felt isolated due to her race as others were being favoured over her on the ward. She only carried cash but the café was card only so she could not access any resources and also that she had to carry all her bags after having a 'c' section. She explained how she was scared to speak up and was not sure who to turn to about this issue, but she was glad she has opened up about how she feels.

The women completed feedback sheets and they said that they thought the session was "useful", and that they would recommend Brushstrokes to other people. They proposed some topics they would like to cover in future such as fertility problems, employment, mental health, health issues, and tips on isolation as some feel alone. Some also said they would benefit from speaking to a gynaecologist to learn more about women's health and that they wish to have more sessions with the midwife sector.

Affrah explained that the maternity voices partnership is there to support women and wish to hear their voices, so they were encouraged to reach out and speak up. She also gave advice such as not covering their pram with a blanket as this can be very harmful to a baby. One of the women expressed that immediately after giving birth, the baby was placed on her chest and the midwives did not explain to the mother anything about the baby's health. They were not explaining each step of labour very clearly, so this lady was left confused. Affrah explained that midwives enforce a 1-hour skin on skin period but agreed that they should have been more professional and explained what they were doing especially as many moms cannot speak English. According to Affrah, 83% of women are from a non-white background at Birmingham city midwife ward. She was therefore keen to hear what the women at Brushstrokes have experienced.

Orientation Session



September saw another well-attended Orientation session. Principally aimed at newly arrived asylum seekers to the area, it has also proved very useful to our wide-ranging service users how have been in the UK for a longer period of time. National and local agencies and organisations are invited to provide a summary of the ways how they support asylum seekers, refugees and other newly arrived people. September's iteration included speakers from the Police, Migrant Help, Code Your Future, Canal & River Trust, Friends & Neighbours, Bearwood Baptist Church, and Sandwell Adult and Family Learning Service who promoted their British Culture course. This session also gives Brushstrokes staff the opportunity to talk about the different forms of support that is offered at our centre. The next session is due mid-November, so keep your eyes peeled and spread the word.



MEN'S GROUP & THEIR GREEN FINGERS

There might be a bit more chill in the air now that we've said 'adios' to summer, but there's still considerable eagerness amongst the men's group to spend time in our garden area. We've been building and painting more planters out of salvaged pallets, introduced new autumnal plants and kept on top of the weeding. Many visitors to the centre have commented how the presence of our garden area brightens up the car park area, where those who attend food bank queue up. Also on the agenda are welcome signs to brighten up the resident and stark-looking container in the car park, so keep an eye out for those!!



GAME ZONE

What's the best thing about Wednesdays? For those of a political persuasion it might be the verbal jousting of Prime Minister's Question Time. For those keen on football, perhaps it's a midweek Champions League were the football leviathans go head-to head! However, for many amongst the Brushstrokes community, we just can't wait for 5 o'clock to tick around for the weekly Wednesday Games Zone. The relaxed ambience is great for people to have a warm drink, nibble on a biscuit and have a chat with friendly folk. Others are more active and enjoy going bat to bat on the table tennis table or tapping into their inner Ruben Neves or Erling Haaland with table football. For those wanting to get their grey cells going we have an avid brood of chess players and there's always those eager to do some bike repair. Plus, for those who have other games that they wish to play, we'll always do our best to accommodate. So come along and join the Games Zone community.



Three Cheers to Josh!

Many thanks to Josh Evans for his support as a volunteer and his recent donations to the Brushspokes bike project. Avid cyclist and table tennis player, Josh has been a regular face at Wednesday's Game Zone, mingling and joining in with our various exciting activities. It is with a heavy heart that we say goodbye to Josh as he moves away from the area. However, I'm sure we'll be welcoming him back to Brushstrokes as a guest player at Games Zone when he ventures back to the Midlands. Josh brought in a cake to share with those at Games Zone before he headed off! Bon voyage Josh!



BRUSHSPOKES CYCLE CLASSES GET OFF TO A FLYING START



The arrival of September also brought in the beginning of our Learn to Ride classes at Brushstrokes. Courtesy of funding from Cycling UK, Brushstrokes is offering twelve learn to cycle sessions and four led rides in the local area. Conversations with our service users over previous months highlighted the gap in women's and girls' ability to cycle, so we particularly want to use these classes, which take place on the Brushstrokes car park, to fill this void. The classes have got off to a great start, with many of the participants who weren't able to cycle, now confidently cycling under their own steam. Cycle instructor, Dave Palmer, has significant experience of providing cycle classes to schools across the area and through the Active Wellbeing Society, and he's been delighted with the eagerness of our service users. The led rides will take place in October and it'll be great to have those who have learnt how to cycle, amongst our peloton of cyclists.

Shani, one of the cyclists had this to say: 'Cycling definitely improves peoples' lives. The tutor (Dave Palmer) has been extremely patient and helpful, despite the weather and irrespective of the age of the people learning to cycle. He's very good at getting people from the community together and this helps to build our communication skills. Cycling helps me to relax and before this class I had not cycled for many years. It is very enjoyable and it builds people's confidence, so I recommend you to get down here to take advantage and learn a new skill.'

BRUSHSPOKES

The Brushspokes Bike Project continues to redistribute second hand bikes to our service user community. Here are a few snaps of those who've benefitted recently from a new set of wheels. Accessing transport is a massive challenge for our service users so getting their hands on a bicycle allows them easier access to legal visits, medical appointments and their studies. Plus, it's great for their physical and mental health, alongside the environmental benefits. As well as distribution of bikes, we do our best to repair bikes that need some attention. For anyone who has an unused bike, you can always donate it to Brushstrokes and we'll find it a new home!



**From Afghanistan to Ukraine
This represents Brushstrokes
and Sandwell**



Here's a nice tale, one of our first Afghanistan neighbors gave back the bike we donated to him and it is now with our new neighbor from Ukraine
We didn't ask him anything about the bike, he just thought it was the right thing to do

LEARN TO RIDE A BICYCLE AT BRUSHSTROKES



SESSIONS TAKING PLACE IN SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

OPEN TO EVERYONE!

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

Brushstrokes Community Project

COME & STUDY WITH US!

safi

BRITISH CULTURE COURSE



Increase your knowledge & understanding of British Culture including the UK's geography, government, places of interest, roles and responsibilities of British Citizens.

Improve your English language skills.

Excellent preparation for the Life in the UK qualification.

A great way to feel more at home and connected to British culture.

DATES OF CLASSES:

- TUESDAY 4TH OCTOBER
- TUESDAY 11TH OCTOBER
- TUESDAY 18TH OCTOBER
- TUESDAY 1ST NOVEMBER
- TUESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER

CLASS TIME: 12:45 - 2:45

CLASSES TO TAKE PLACE AT **RON DAVIS CENTRE**
B66 3HH - 5 MINUTE WALK FROM BRUSHSTROKES

5 WEEK COURSE

FREE OF CHARGE



COME TO REGISTER FOR THE COURSE AT BRUSHSTROKES ON TUESDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 12:45 - 2:45

ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT BRYAN - 07827 258680



Everyone is invited to join us to watch:

Brushstrokes Community Project



BLACK COUNTRY TOURING

Friday 7th October
6pm at Brushstrokes,
Smethwick, B66 3NJ

Audio in Spanish | Subtitles in English

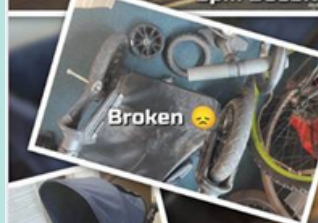
Snacks available from 5pm

Feel free to bring any snacks to share with others if you wish!

Event is free of charge!

See you soon!

GameZone Wednesdays from 5pm B663N



If it goes round We will attempt to fix it Brushstrokes we don't do lists But what we do do is crisps (sometimes)



Brushstrokes Community Project

Immigration & Asylum Drop In Advice
Mondays 9.30 till 12.30
Benson Hub Benson Road
B18 5TD



Contact us:

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Smethwick,

B66 3NJ

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Brushstrokes receives support from:

