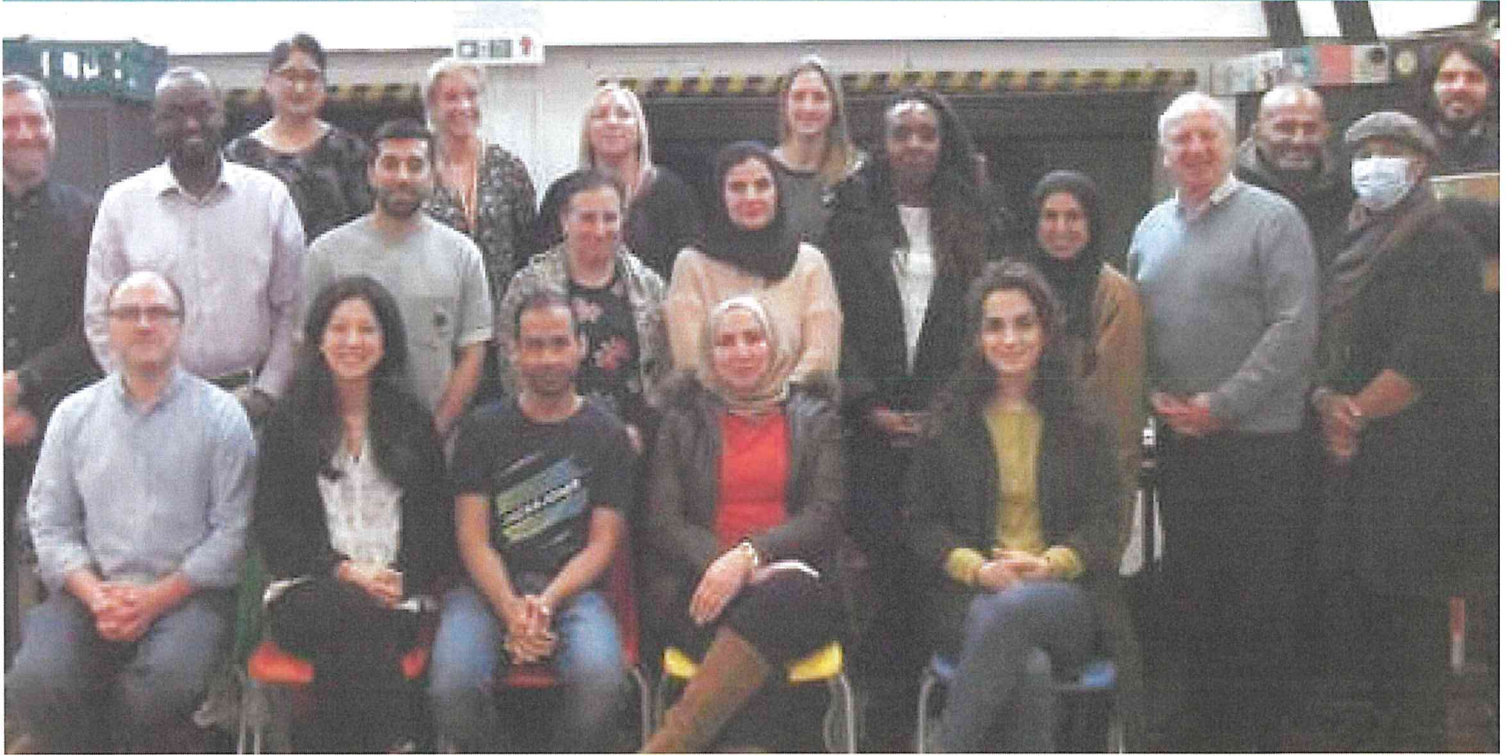


Brushstrokes Messenger

This month at Brushstrokes!



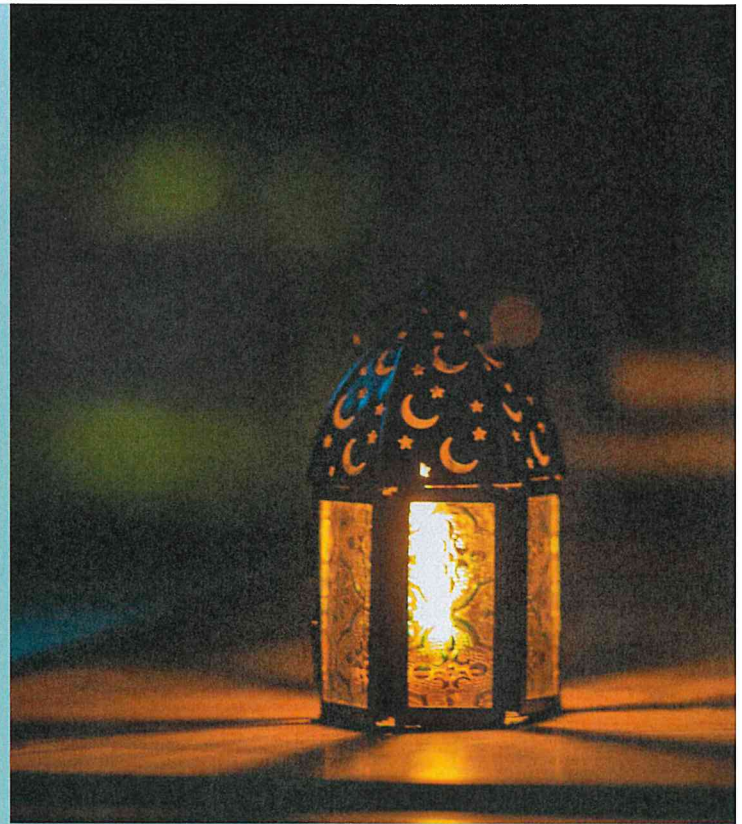
Find out what has happened this month at Brushstrokes Community project for the month of April! This month was the month of Ramadan, needless to say we had activities going on to celebrate with everyone. there were a lot of other great activities too, like the great Albion sleep out, Iftar meals, the celebration of Vaisakhi, the list goes on!

Ramadan

Happy Ramadan to all who celebrate!

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim year, in which strict fasting is practised from dusk till dawn. Many Muslim's will also try to practise healthy lifestyle habits, such as: giving up bad habits, praying and doing good deeds. Those who celebrate also try to spend more time with family and friends.

The act of fasting is also something that is practised during the month of Ramadan, this is done to remind Muslim people of their dependence on Allah for sustenance, as well as to remind them of those less fortunate than themselves.



Vaisakhi

Happy Baisakhi to all who celebrate!

Vaisakhi is a festival celebrating the founding of Sikhism in 1699, and is celebrated each year on either the 13th or 14th of April. The story goes that the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, asked anyone prepared to give their life for their religion to come forward, after getting 5 volunteers, he took them all into a tent, coming out with blood on his sword, the people who gathered from around the Punjab who watched this feared they had been killed, but they all came out of the tent after him with turbans. These five men became known as the Panj Piare, meaning Beloved Five.

Vaisakhi is celebrated with a Gurdwara service in the morning, followed by a procession in the streets, known as the Nagar Kirtan, with music and chanting, ended by a special meal with family and friends.

Iftar Meal's

During the holy month of Ramadan, Brushstrokes brought our diverse Muslim community together through our own Iftah meal. It was a busy day, with our volunteer, Parv, starting early to create delicious food for us to enjoy once the sun had set and prayers were said. The Brushstrokes team really pulled together to make this a memorable occasion; Abdi led the prayer, Shahla provided a homemade soup, Genna organised other delectable delights, while Lucy, Neil, Anna, Sal & Chra fulfilled the unglamorous washing up duties. This wouldn't have been possible without Parv's efforts and we showed our appreciation with a few well-deserved gifts. Our friends from the Abrahamic Foundation were also with us and they provided a very illuminating talk about the importance of Ramadan to the Muslim community – we hope it was an event that fed our minds and bellies. We were delighted with the turnout by service users and we look forward to offering future events to bring our community together.



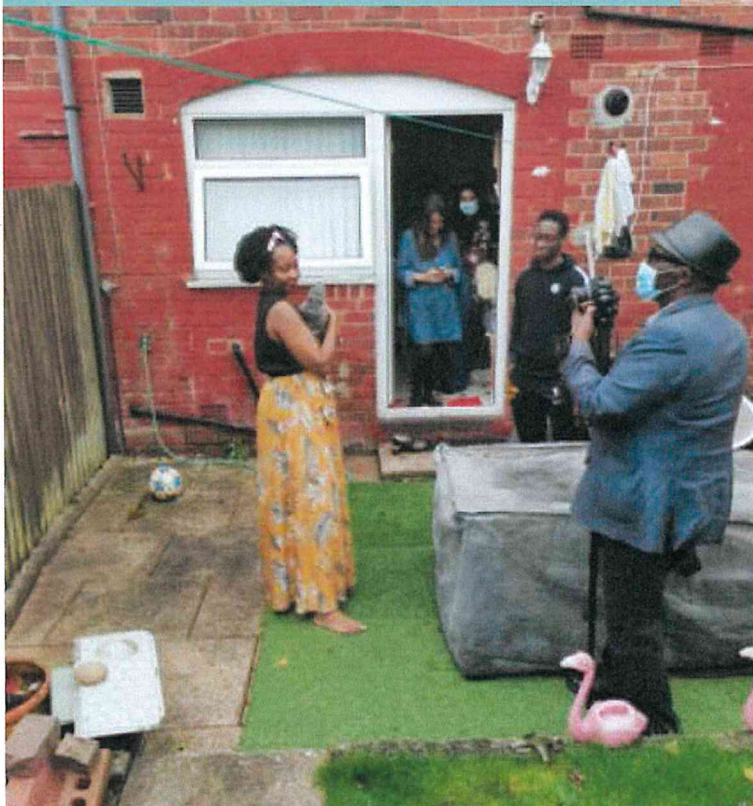
Brushstrokes staff enjoyed an Iftar meal with one of our neighbours, the Abrahamic Foundation. It was a great opportunity to spend time at their centre, which is just a hop, skip and a jump from Brushstrokes on Smethwich high street. We met a wide range of members from the wider community, and following the prayer and the traditional breaking of the fast, we enjoyed the Iftah meal which was something to behold.



Ikon - A Gift to Birmingham, was an art exhibit created to showcase photographic documentation of various migrant communities in Birmingham.

This exhibition displayed seventeen unique portraits of Migrant Voice, which is a migrant-led organisation situated in Birmingham. For Vanley Burke, it was vital he portrayed participants in their preferred environments, such as: homes, cities, community centres or parks. Each portrait depicts a story of migration, either long past or recent. When viewed as a whole, the idea is to show Birmingham as a place of diversity, with many residents arriving from a wide variety of places and cultures.

Burke sought out 10 Birmingham residents for this display, he asked each individual or group to bring "a gift to Birmingham" meaning something that sums up the experiences they had with migration. Participants shared aspects of their cultural heritage from countries such as: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Poland and Pakistan.



Vanley Burke, a Gift to Birmingham

Walsall FC visit

Saturday was Community Day at Walsall FC, and our Afghan families were delighted to be treated to a footballing feast! First up were football matches on the astro-turf pitches behind the Banks's Stadium with other migrant families from across the West Midlands. Then it was into the Community Room to catch a breather and some refreshments. Following this came more football action, this time to watch Walsall FC conquer Sutton United FC 1-0 courtesy of a first-half penalty. One of our families had the extra special treatment and watched the game in an executive box with a three course meal to boot. A big thanks to Walsall FC and Care4Calais who made this possible! We can't wait to get more of our families involved with the beautiful game and other sports.



Easter!
Happy Easter everyone!



Happy Easter! We hope that the hope and joy of the Easter message brought you peace and life this year.

Easter is a time where Christians remember the death and resurrection of Jesus, and God's redemptive plan of salvation for all humanity.

We want to give a massive thank you to Lin Clarke and her family for some amazing Easter treats that were given out to families who visited the centre on the week of Easter. "My son in law and daughter contributed, my sister Sally tied every bow and Lightwoods Craft Group did all the knitting!" Thank you to all, we recieved many smiles in return!



Café Volunteers

As you may know we run a weekly community cafe! These are on a Friday at 12-2pm. These are always successful and we try to welcome as many as we can. We would love to see you here, so please come and enjoy our lovely food!



"I enjoy volunteering at the Cafe because it plays a vital role in our community.

Free lunches help those who are financially challenged. It also provides opportunities to meet new people across a wide variety of ages, genders, race cultures or otherwise. At my time at

Brushstrokes I have improved my decision making skills and my ability to work under pressure as it does get very busy at times."- Tobi, a volunteer since November 2021.

"The Brushstrokes Community Cafe teaches us a lot of skills, and allows us to empathise with people who might be less fortunate than us. I have a language barrier which means I try to use my body language to welcome people." - Violeta, a volunteer since January 2022.

All of our volunteers are deeply valued. If you are interested please contact Martin at Martin@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk or 0121 565 2234.

Sandwell Council Recognition

Brushstrokes was delighted to receive a Certificate of Appreciation from Sandwell Borough Council and Healthy Sandwell for our response to the Covid 19 pandemic. As covered in previous newsletters, our staff and volunteers did such a vast amount of valuable work to support our community, which includes some of the most vulnerable members of our society. The certificate was provided to us at the Holy Trinity Church in Smethwick where a number of other community and faith groups also received their well-earned certificates.



Brushstrokes was delighted to launch our Men's Group. This is another weekly event on the busy Brushstrokes calendar. The first sessions are dedicated to our Garden Project and this is being run by Brushstrokes staff alongside Tof from the Canal & River Trust. The Garden Project has already proved to be a great way to bring together male asylum seekers who enjoyed working together as part of a team. In the first session, we created a sturdy planter using discarded wooden pallets. The planter, as well as other items that we'll be making, will adorn the Brushstrokes car park area which will benefit from a green touch.



We have recently begun a Women's group! it's a group for women of all backgrounds and ages to come together and the sessions focus on issues of wellbeing and health.

Sessions have been held every other Monday between 10 to 12. So far, we have had three sessions.

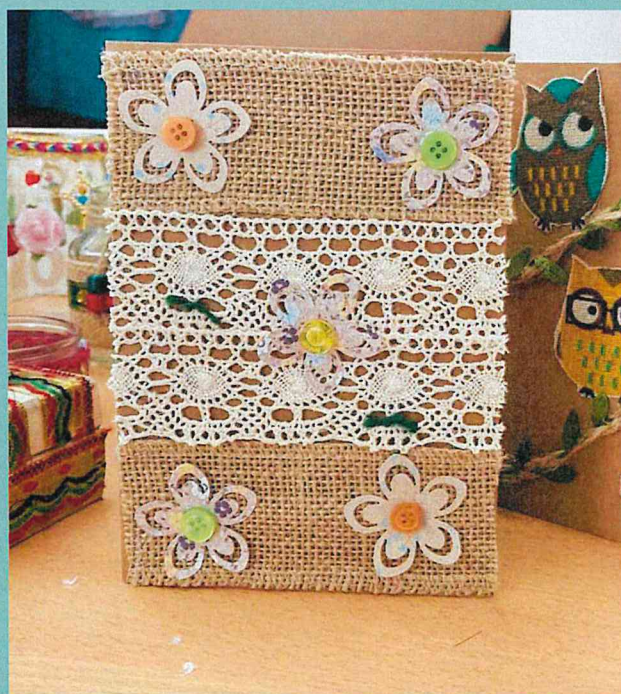
The first session was an introductory session focusing on crafts. The 12 participants created Mother's Day cards and Easter cards as well as decorating their own candle holders.

The second session revolved around a discussion around maternity care and the women's experiences both shared and personal. It included a discussion of how easy it was to access maternity care, what kind of support they received, their health during pregnancy, their birth experience and then experience of post-natal care.

Men's Group



Women's Group



Games Zone



"Brushstrokes has been very helpful for me, they have helped me with many things. The staff are very helpful, friendly and supportive to everyone from all backgrounds of life. Keep up the good work Brushstrokes. We also have activity games for the community on a Wednesday so we get to meet new faces all the time and make good friends." - one of our service users Cecil

Games Zone is fostering a warm, convivial and community feel on our weekly Wednesday sessions 5-7pm. Table Tennis, chess and bike repair have all been popular over recent weeks and it was really heartening to see all the new faces! Don't forget to spread the word about Games Zone, and if you fancied supporting us as a volunteer during this session, Martin is the person to be in touch with – martin@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk

Focus Group

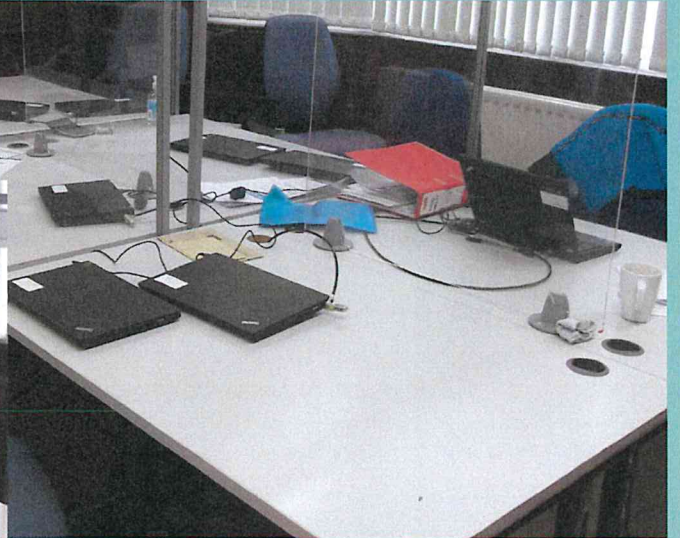
Brushstrokes welcomed Migration Policy & Practice Birmingham & Black Country to our centre this month to carry out a focus group session with some of our service users. Facilitated by Andy and Emily from Migration Policy & Practice, and supported by Brushstrokes staff, very useful and frank discussions took place in the areas of rights, health, opportunities and community. A healthy cross-section of service users were involved, mirroring the eclectic mix that we have at Brushstrokes. Migration Policy & Practice will be running similar sessions with other organisations that support migrants and we look forward to reading what emanates from this research



Thank you!



We want to say a massive thank you to Black Country Click Start- who recently donated us some laptops to use in our IT Suite. These laptops will be used by clients and service users to complete a wide variety of tasks, such as: accessing emails, completing and submitting forms, accessing the internet, receiving digital skills help and looking for work. We hope our service users and clients appreciate these laptops as much as we do!



Support for EU nationals still needing to apply to the EU settlement Scheme:

Brushstrokes and EWAcic have received further funding from the Home Office to provide support for vulnerable EU nationals who need to apply to the EU settlement scheme. We are please that this support has been extended until September 2022.

We are operating on an appointment only basis and if you need information or advice on the EU settlement scheme, need to apply for settled status now you have been in the Uk for almost 5 years or have children who have not yet applied to the scheme please contact the team via

info@brushstrokessandwell.org.uk or 0121 565 2234.

From 4th May we are also providing a fortnightly outreach clinic at Christ Church in Lye (High Street DY9 8LF)

End of the EU settlement scheme

CHECK IF YOU NEED TO MAKE A LATE APPLICATION TO THE EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME FOR YOUR CHILDREN EVEN IF YOU HAVE APPLIED YOURSELF





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: