

## Activity Report – Sept 19 to Sept 20

### The Families and language club

3 more families arrived in autumn 2019 bringing the total of families in West Berkshire to 9. An additional 2 families, with recently arrived members from overseas, are supported at the language club. Befrienders and language club supporters increased in number to offer support. By Christmas 2019 the language club had 5 volunteers supporting their work: Mary, Marion B, Joyce, Eleanor & Helen

Christmas 2019 was celebrated with our biggest party yet at the Riverside Centre, with over 35 present. One of the dads lead activities and games in the large hall. Traditional party games took place with the mums, girls and younger children in the smaller hall. Presents donated by Reading Refugee Support Group were handed out. A very busy meal was shared with everyone: helpers and families.

The New Year started well with old and new arrivals coming to the Riverside language classes. 2 additional volunteers joined to help with the language classes: Helen & Trish. The classes were switched to zoom sessions in March as COVID 19 arrived.

During the periods of Lockdown we made regular distributions to each family with younger children. In Spring we took bags of story books, and in early summer, bags of graded reading books, donated by a friend clearing her KS1 Library. We also took bunches of home-grown parsley and vine leaves for cooking. This enabled us to chat briefly on the doorsteps and maintain contact with families, including Thatcham family. The Theale family was included by asking relatives in Newbury to pass on the bags. Some permitted meetings in the Park took place with volunteers and their families.

Helpers were supported in their work with individual families via zoom meetings and, when groups of 6 were allowed in a garden, with a lunch at Joyce's home.

In September Fiona, an experienced teacher, joined the group and now shares leading with Joyce and Marion. Trish's sister Nita also became a volunteer over the summer.

The Riverside classes started again in September 2020. An emphasis was placed on getting those who were not comfortable with zoom up to speed so that communication could continue even if the classes stopped again. Following new risk assessments PPE, anti-virus spray and additional equipment of whiteboards and pens were bought to ensure that classes could continue safely and transport could be offered.

### Homework support

Regular homework support has been offered during the year but it has been via Zoom and WhatsApp due to COVID19. As school classes moved online 2 laptops were bought to support the children in secondary schools as learning had moved on-line. Thanks to Trish the laptops were successfully handed over to the families.

### Other family news

Youssef, family 4, who had been a cause for concern is reported to be studying English at Newbury College and is socialising well with one of the newer families. Marion B continues to support Amani and the children (family 4). Eleanor has been supporting Family 6. Trish with the help of Nita has been supporting family 9. Rachael, a local secondary school student, was supporting Shahed (F5)

until lockdown in March. Helen is supporting Family 8 and Mary is supporting Hazha (one of the additional families).

WBAR became aware in 2019 that an independent befriender (Marion G) was supporting Khiria and Shahed. Claire met with the befriender and offered support. Unfortunately contact between Khiria and the befriender ceased due to COVID 19 and despite Marion G's efforts this contact has not resumed. Shahed (F5) moved to Newbury College at the end of the summer and is studying health and social care. (post Sept 20 note: She seems to have settled in well and is very happy).

#### Admin

DBS checking continues to be offered by West Berkshire Council although the process is slow, in part due to COVID 19 and Council staff working from home.

Govt regs for meetings indoors led by volunteers, volunteers working and lift sharing were read along with the risk assessment from the Riverside Centre.

WBAR risk assessments for offering transport and meeting indoors were prepared based on govt regs and shared with volunteers. The risk assessments have been kept under review as Govt regs have changed.

WBAR registered with the Information Commission.

#### Other Groups

Joyce and Trish have liaised with Samera from Reading Refugee Support Group (RRSG) over support of the families during the year.

The Committee record their thanks to Joyce, Marion B and Fiona who have led the language club through this difficult time.

West Berkshire Action for Refugees

Treasurer's Report for Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019 to Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020

|            |                          | Expenses | Income | Bank balance |
|------------|--------------------------|----------|--------|--------------|
| 23/9/19    | Balance brought forward  |          |        | 10,774.74    |
| 09/11/2019 | agm expenses             | 27.20    |        |              |
| 27/01/2020 | Language class expenses  | 64.32    |        |              |
| 27/01/2020 | Language class expenses  | 219.33   |        |              |
| 06/04/2020 | Language class expenses  | 66.87    |        |              |
| 06/04/2020 | Xmas party & gifts       | 121.08   |        |              |
| 06/06/2020 | 2 x laptops and 2x mouse | 585.99   |        |              |
| 06/04/2020 | Family exp               | 18.68    |        |              |
| 22/08/2020 | Insurance                | 316.72   |        |              |
|            | Totals                   | 1,420.19 |        |              |
| 22/9/20    | Balance carried forward  |          |        | 9,354.55     |