



Welcome to issue five of the Walsall for All newsletter. We hope you will continue to support us throughout 2020 and get involved in the programme and our projects.

In this issue, read about the work and impact of:

- Places of Welcome
- Walsall BME Advice Centre
- Community Dialogue
- English classes in Walsall

You can also read about:

- Mariam's story of being a Hate Crime Ambassador
- Events and activities in Walsall
- Environmental Champions

Places of Welcome

By Su Parker (Places of Welcome Facilitator – Transforming Communities Together)

A Place of Welcome is a place where anybody can go, where they know they will be warmly welcomed, receive free refreshments and a guarantee of being made to feel valued and included.

“It’s the best thing I have done since losing my husband”, is how Margaret described the new Place of Welcome at Holy Ascension, Bloxwich. I can easily believe her whilst hearing the chatter and laughter of 50 people. If I wasn’t working full time, supporting Places of Welcome, I would join her every Wednesday between 9.30 and 11.30. I would then fill the rest of my time going to the other Places of Welcome that meet weekly in Walsall. What an amazing week that would be.

Shirley (another attendee) was so pleased that after she visited Holy Ascension for the first time, she went home and cried. Despite living opposite, it took her a while before she decided to go along. She said, “It changed my life”.

When Susan Walters started the Wednesday Club five years ago, it was only a dream that it would grow so big. Like many Places of Welcome coordinators, Susan set it up, so that people could meet and chat. She also recently joined the network of Places of Welcome.

Any group can host a Place of Welcome, as long as it meets weekly in an accessible building, with free refreshments, and lets people know what’s happening locally. A place where it’s easy to contribute and run by volunteers.

I have the pleasure of finding new organisations that could become a Place of Welcome, encouraging those that are already running and raising awareness



Holy Ascension, Bloxwich recently joined the Places of Welcome network.

about the network. Since taking up the role, three groups have joined: Holy Ascension (Wednesdays from 9.30am to 11.30am), Caldmore Community Garden (Thursdays from 10am to 1pm) and Linking Lives in Aldridge (Mondays from 10am to 12pm).

Its stories like Margaret’s, Shirley’s and Susan’s that make me want to tell everyone about Places of Welcome. There are lots of safe places for everyone to connect, belong and contribute in Walsall. Each week, new conversations and friendships are created that can change lives. If you are reading this and fancy making a new friend or two, look out for the symbol, pluck up your courage and open the door.

There are around 20 Places of Welcome across Walsall. For details of up-to-date Places of Welcome, please go to www.walsallforall.co.uk/places-of-welcome

Contact **Su Parker** (Places of Welcome Facilitator) - su.parker@tctogether.org.uk or for more information, go to www.placesofwelcome.org.uk

Walsall BME Advice Centre

Walsall BME Advice Centre was set up in July 2016 by local volunteers to provide a dedicated service to individuals from disadvantaged communities, which include black minority ethnic groups (BME), new migrants, the homeless and vulnerable individuals.

The organisation runs three projects:

'Our World' Women's Support Group (funded by Walsall for All) brings women together from different cultural and faith backgrounds to socialise, learn how to live independently, take part in physical exercise and co-exist with each other peacefully. So far, 11 sessions have taken place on Thursday afternoons at Accord's Community Engagement Centre in Pleck.

Community Kitchen Homeless Outreach aims to raise awareness about homelessness and its related issues among the community. Volunteers from different cultural and faith backgrounds run the outreach every Wednesday evening. They prepare and deliver hot meals, essentials, provide a free haircut and signpost individuals to sources of help. So far, over 460 individuals have accessed this service, with up to 80 individuals attending each week.

A **Community Advice and Support Service** is also offered throughout the week. This involves helping people fill out forms, offering tailored advice (such as housing, welfare benefits and employability and life skills) and signposting to services within and outside the organisation.

"Through our platform, we have successfully brought people together to socialise. Some have become friends, which has helped with understanding each other's cultures and befriending."
- Sadat Hussain, representative of Walsall BME Advice Centre

On Thursday 19th December 2019, over 60 people representing different community groups, attended the **Christmas Celebration** in Pleck. The programme was opened by two individuals who had learning disabilities and they were supported to facilitate the programme. In addition, Hillary Primary School attended to sing Christmas carols and there were several speakers and performers. The celebration enabled individuals to share their experiences of how they celebrate Christmas within their culture.



Communities came together for a Christmas Celebration and to share their experiences of how they celebrate the season.

Stay up to date with Walsall BME Advice Centre by going to www.facebook.com/walsallbmeadvice or contact **Sadat Hussain** on **07852 167 793**. There are opportunities to participate in the projects as an attendee or volunteer.

Community Dialogue

The Faith and Belief Forum

Community dialogue events aim to create safe spaces for local people to engage in conversations about the things that are important to them. The programme aims to bring together the voices of local people to discuss identity, diversity and living together. The programme also seeks to give local people the opportunity to have their voices and stories heard and to connect with others across Walsall.

The project is split into three phases:

Phase 1 – Local Dialogue

Between 13 and 20 local people will meet for three initial sessions. They will have the opportunity to talk about what is important to them in a safe space and share their experiences.

Phase 2 – Linked Dialogue

Following the three initial sessions, two groups will be linked together to take part in three further sessions. This is an opportunity to share conversations, develop relationships and trust through sharing experiences and working together.

Phase 3 – Final Conference

This phase will give participants an opportunity to share their experiences and stories to a wider network of people across Walsall.

The project is currently being piloted with one women's group in south Walsall and another in north Walsall. In December 2019, at Gio's Italian (Ryecroft Hub), the north Walsall women's group made seasonal wreaths and used art to share their stories with one another. The session was jointly led by Walsall Creative Factory and The Faith and Belief Forum.

Here are some quotes from the women who took part:

"Lovely to meet new people and find out about new skills."

"It's a really good integration project, it's nice to talk with different people, to get to know each other better and to do different activities."

"Good project, great ideas, exceptional communicator, ideal for getting to know people and make friends. The activities of the project are very interesting and there's a pleasant atmosphere."



Community dialogue brings together local people to have their voices and stories heard.

Learning English in Walsall

Update from ESOL Team in Walsall for All

One area of work in the Walsall for All programme is providing opportunities for residents to learn English for free. This comes under the third priority “Working and Contributing Together”. To carry out this work, an ESOL team (English Speakers of Other Languages) has been set up in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Learning English improves your skills, gives you the chance to meet others and is vital in connecting communities together. The skills you gain will allow you to access services easier, such as employment, health and further education. These skills also enable you to improve interaction within your community (such as talking to your child’s teacher and booking a doctor’s appointment) and wider society by giving you the ability to communicate with others.



The learners in the EWA ESOL class thoroughly enjoying their session.

Ten new classes have been set up within schools, places of worship and community associations. The team is also supporting 14 existing projects within Walsall.

“The classes have helped me in life, work and relations with people. A big thanks for helping me improve my English.”

– Wlodzimierz, ESOL student



Haliz is one of the ESOL tutors working with EWA.

The team recently visited one project with European Welfare Association (EWA) at Manor Farm Community Association, where they observed one of the English classes taught by Haliz. It was very encouraging to see the enthusiasm and determination the attendees put into learning English. The lesson was fun, engaging and personalised to meet the needs of the students. It was clear that they were showing great signs of improvement.

If you feel there is a demand for ESOL classes in your area or if you know of someone who would benefit from the classes, please get in touch with our ESOL team:

Harjinder Lal (ESOL Coordinator)
harjinder.lal@walsall.gov.uk
01922 658337

Zishaan Mohammed (ESOL Project Officer)
zishaan.mohammed@walsall.gov.uk
01922 655849

Mariam's Story

Hate Crime Ambassador



Photo credit - Caroline Molloy

I am a second year university student, studying International Relations and French. Before becoming a hate crime ambassador, I spent two months in Europe doing various projects. This included spending a month in Hungary, where I was part of a long-term project writing and developing policy proposals around youth education and jobs, as well as working with a local council in a Western Turkish town to assess the links between health and infrastructure.

I am currently a Youth Police and Crime Commissioner for Walsall. I was previously a Member of Youth Parliament for two years.

Getting involved with Black Country Innovate's Hate Crime Ambassador training was an opportunity to develop new skills that could help me with my work. Thankfully, I have never been a victim of a hate crime myself, but I have seen instances of it whilst travelling and even in public; however, I never knew how to intervene. This was partly because of fear, but mainly due to lack of knowledge. Previously, if I was to ever witness a hate crime, I wouldn't know where to turn, who to contact or how to help. However, that's exactly what I learnt on the course, including the rights and laws that protect victims of hate crimes, what defines a hate

crime, the five protected strands of hate crime, as well as how to safely intervene as a bystander.

We were really lucky to have a diverse group of individuals in the first cohort of ambassadors. Everyone brought their own views and opinions forward and it was a safe and encouraging environment, despite the challenging nature of most of the discussions.



Mariam with community members and West Midlands Mayor Andy Street.

This experience has been great for me, not only for personal growth, but knowing that I am now a valued member of the community. Following the course, I was able to safely intervene in a hate crime I witnessed on the bus, offering emotional support to the victim, directing them to the correct services and encouraging them to report the incident to the police. This confidence and clarity could not have been demonstrated by me prior to the training.

Moving forward, I am now working for Black Country Innovate as a Project Support Intern. We are planning to train another cohort of hate crime ambassadors across the four localities in Walsall. It is my aim to see this as a widespread project, increasing the amount and scope of ambassadors across Walsall, in every service and location imaginable. It is then that Walsall will be better equipped to deal with hate crime as a community.

Events and Activities

For details of upcoming events, visit: www.walsallforall.co.uk/upcoming-events



Beyond Bias: For people working with communities in Walsall

Unconscious bias is a developing area of equality and diversity training, which has been developed by brap over the last six years. These free sessions will be taking place throughout January and February and are open to anyone that works with communities in Walsall.

For further details, please go to

www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/united-kingdom--birmingham/brap

Contact: Cheryl Garvey - cherylg@brap.org.uk



Women's Coffee Mornings

DWP Community Connectors run weekly coffee mornings on:

- Wednesdays at Gio's Italian, Ryecroft Community Hub - 9am to 12pm
- Fridays at Caldmore Community Gardens - 9.15am to 11.30am.

These are open to women only in the Walsall area. Support and guidance includes learning, training and employment opportunities, improving self-confidence, making positive lifestyle changes, benefit advice, childcare options and much more.

Contact: walsall.communityconnectors@dwp.gov.uk

Environmental Champions

Nash Dom CIC



Nash Dom CIC has taken on a multi-agency approach to make local areas safe, clean and tidy.

Nash Dom CIC have been involved with several anti-litter partnerships that have been focused on litter, fly tipping and the concerns around environmental factors. These have taken place in Palfrey, Caldmore, Willenhall, Moxley and the town centre. They are working in close partnership with Locality Managers, Walsall Council's Clean and Green service and Housing Standards to ensure there is a proactive follow-up after the activities.

As part of that, they aim to collaborate with 4 schools around the areas mentioned above for the Environmental Champions Project. They aim to deliver the programme to students in infant schools in order to further educate the young minds about our environment, recycling and why it is important.

They also aim to promote recycling and further encourage children to take care of their surroundings and environment. They hope this will strengthen children's knowledge and understanding of the importance of recycling and promote it from a young age, in a simple and fun way, so they can better look after their local areas in the future.

Upon completing the presentation, the children are promoted and encouraged to become Environmental Champions and are given badges, keyrings, re-usable foldable bottles and handouts for reference on their way to caring for the environment.

After completion of the project, Nash Dom will be in contact with schools to gather feedback and comments to find out how it has impacted on the children.

If you would like to find out more about the Environmental Champions project, please contact **Marcin Maciejewski** at m.maciejewski@nashdomcic.org

Don't forget to follow us on social media or get in touch to find out more about Walsall for All.

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