



Epsom & Ewell
Refugee Network
part of good company

Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network
Minutes of meeting on Monday 30th October 2023
at 7pm at Ukrainian Hub, Global House, Epsom

Present:

Jo Sherring, Nina Kaye, Jess Brooks, Olha Zyatyk, Mariana Calado, Nicky Marshall
Rachel Steele, Edward Clay, Laurence Impey, Angie Prowse, Barry Reeve, Donna Williams, Geoff Andrew,
Allan Mornement, Audrey and Paul Ardern-Jones, Helen Maguire, Bronwen James Crowther, Fran
Gooding, Janice Baker

The meeting opened with a welcome from Jo.

1. Apologies for Absence

Denise Chandy, Su Kingsley, Evelyn Stanley,

2. Acceptance of the minutes

Minutes of meeting on 13th February 2023 were accepted.

3. Matters arising from minutes

None

4. Meet the new team:

Thanks to our contract with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and the funding we now receive for certain job roles, we have grown from a small group of volunteers to a team of 9 with 6 salaried staff. The roles are :

Jess Brookes : Refugee Network Manager
Nina Kaye : EERN Coordinator
Jo Sherring : EERN Lead

Support Workers : May Aoun, Alyssa Allan, Olha Zyatyk
Host Supervisor : Nicky Marshall
EERN Admin : Mariana Calado
Volunteer Coordinator : Peter Butterworth

Alyssa will be leaving us in December and we are recruiting to replace her but also to provide general refugee support to those not on a government scheme.

5. Update on Ukraine situation

We have around 190 Ukrainian families registered with us. The number of new arrivals has slowed considerably but some are still coming if they can find hosts. The challenges they now face are around housing, jobs and education. We continue to gather feedback to ensure the support we are offering is in line with their support needs and we are always looking for more host families.

6. Update on Afghan situation

We have a total of 6 Afghan families settled in the area who we are officially supporting via Epsom & Ewell Borough Council. Other Afghans in the area are coming to us but are being supported as general refugees.

7. Update on other refugees.

We still support one Syrian family, the first Syrian family to arrive have now been here for 5 years so our official support finishes.

We try and support other refugees in the area and more are being signposted to us. We also support around 60 asylum seekers who are housed in the Epsom & Ewell area.

8. Fundraising

Sadly, we had to cancel our Taste of Ukraine evening. We hope to run this, or something similar, after Christmas to help raise funds. We are discussing plans for Christmas and may launch a fundraising page to support gifts for children.

9. Volunteers update

Our new Volunteer Coordinator Peter Butterworth is working with Mariana Caldo (Admin Assistant) to move all volunteers over to our new volunteer database Assemble. We are aware that due to the level of growth we have experienced and the workload, we have lost the close relationship we had with many of our volunteers. We are trying to implement ways to reestablish those links with the volunteers who give so much of their time to support us.

We recently calculated that the benefit to the charity of the volunteer hours each year was around £150,000 per year.

10. Social Media and website

We have 1003 followers on Facebook and 574 followers on Twitter.

11. Financial position

Due to the nature of the funding we receive from the Council a large portion of our funds are ring fenced for staff salaries going forward. We currently have £96,000 in the bank, £50,000 of this is ring fenced for salaries and a further £8,500 is ring fenced for English classes at the Hub. Our monthly running costs are around £12,000 per month including salaries.

12. Subscribers

We currently have 653 members.

13. AOB

- i. **English strategy** : We have around 75 people who attend two or more classes a week at the hub. We are now offering more intensive English to those who have been attending our English classes for a long time to help them progress and will this week start our Conversation Buddy sessions to encourage people to grow in confidence speaking English.
- ii. **Collaboration to build capacity across Surrey**. We are aware that along with Elmbridge CAN we are the most robust refugee charity in Surrey and in some areas this type of support is not

available. So we are putting together a model to help different communities develop similar volunteer groups to help refugees and asylum seekers in their areas

- iii. **Recent Activities** since last meeting : Farm Trip, Seaside Trip, Bowling and Paintballing for Teenagers, Summer Camp, Cooking Workshop, Wisley Gardens, Musical Event in Ashted.
- iv. **Buddy Club.** City of London Freemans School run a buddy scheme on a Tuesday after school where CLFS students buddy up with young refugee students. This has been very successful for both sets of buddies.
- v. **Ukrainian Music Evening** – There is another concert featuring Ukrainian musicians on Saturday 11th November at 6pm at Epsom Methodist Church in Ashley Road. The evening will start at 6pm with a social, bring and share buffet, followed by a wonderful concert featuring Ukrainian musicians, including singers, violinists, pianist and an opportunity to hear the traditional bandura. This is a free concert and there will be an exit collection in aid of the musicians performing.
- vi. **Maths buddies** – we are hoping to set up maths buddies to help some of the refugees handle accounts and need maths teachers to help them get Maths GCSE

14. Date of next meeting

To be arranged, probably in Spring 2024