



# WYCOMBE REFUGEE PARTNERSHIP

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2020

## REFUGEE FAMILY NEWS

### One family moves on...

On 14 March we moved our 20th family into their new long-term home. A fantastic team of volunteers organised furniture and furnishings for the house and transported the family and luggage. There were big smiles all round!

### ...another moves in

On 17 March we settled our 21st family into Mellor House, at 24 hours' notice. They were hugely relieved because they had nowhere to sleep from that night. A magnificent team of volunteers came together to get the house ready in the little time allowed – cleaning, making beds, putting out flowers and biscuits, cleaning out the gutters and getting initial shopping in, despite shortages.

Volunteers welcomed them to the house, provided an orientation around High Wycombe and supported the family to register with the GP and library. In the current crisis, we have managed to keep in regular contact with the family remotely to check that they are settling in. The wife is receiving four English lessons a week online. We have given support with universal credit and other administrative issues. Thanks to kind donors, we have been able to give the family money for food, a bicycle for going shopping, two iPads – invaluable during lockdown – and a laptop.

### Refugee doctors on the front line

Both parents of the family now in Mellor House were doctors in their home country and have applied to work as medical assistants in the fight against Covid-19.

Wafaa, another of our refugees, was a senior anaesthetist in her home country. She has studied hard and passed both her clinical and her English exams and is now working in an Intensive Care Unit in a West London hospital, caring for Covid-19 patients.

All three have our gratitude and our esteem.

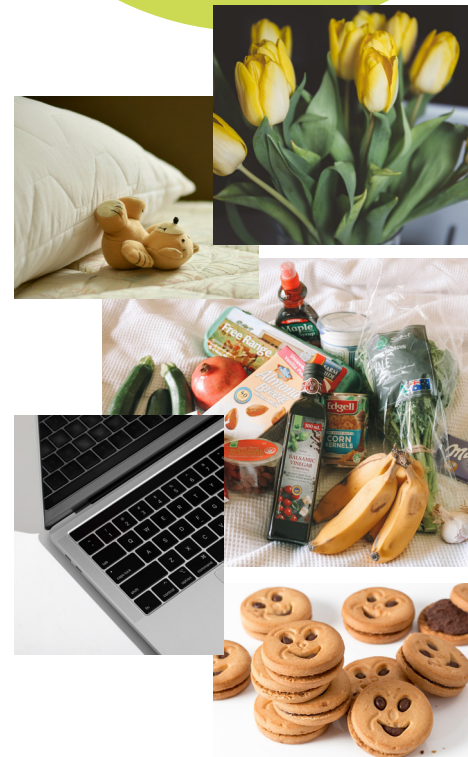
### Support for 22nd family

The father of our 22nd family has been found temporary accommodation while he waits for his family to join him. On 23 March, a volunteer collected him and took him to the property along with numerous bags of groceries, kitchenware and a welcome card. Two volunteers have been offering befriending and English language sessions remotely, while another has supported his Universal Credit application by phone and email.

We welcome a new family to Wycombe

Refugee doctors join the fight against the coronavirus crisis

Continuing our support during lockdown



Wafaa at work

## FUNDING

# A new project

Heart of Bucks has given us a grant, enabling us to set up a project separate from WRP's normal work with families who have refugee status. This is in light of extra requests that we have been receiving owing to Covid-19. Through this new project we are helping both refugees and asylum seekers.

In two cases, a London council has placed people in High Wycombe with no food, no money, no kitchenware and no cooking facilities, meaning they can't cook most of the foodstuffs they receive in the food parcels we have arranged for them. Depending on individual needs, we have bought food, kitchenware and, in one case, a hotplate, given phone support in English and Arabic, provided Wi-Fi and some essential items of furniture – for instance a lamp for someone placed in a room where the main light doesn't work. Another recipient of help is an asylum-seeking family who have lived in Wycombe for years waiting for a decision from the Home Office.

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

# A warm welcome



WRP volunteer  
Alex Smeed

My experiences volunteering with WRP have been so positive. After contacting WRP to explain that I could offer teaching support (I am a primary school teacher), I met with Liz, WRP's School Admissions Lead, who gave me an invaluable briefing about how best to support the child and family to whom I had been assigned. Liz also came with me to introduce me to them, which really helped us break the ice and establish a friendly and trusting relationship.


My volunteering consisted of meeting the son at his family home for about an hour each week and supporting him in his school learning. I was able to meet with his class teacher at a 'Meet the teacher' session at the school, and this was useful in understanding in which areas he would most benefit from extra help. The son I work with is a joy and each time we meet, the time flies by. His family are so welcoming and I am always generously spoilt with tea, cakes and fruit. Sometimes, the mother has asked for guidance or support on other matters which I am happy to give – trying to work out the instructions for the thermostat (a fail!), arranging a doctor's appointment (a win!). Unfortunately, for now, we cannot meet due to the lock-down but I am really looking forward to seeing them all again when this is all over. The warm welcome I receive when I arrive at the door would gladden any teacher's heart!


## Event cancellation


We cancelled Imad's Falafel Evening, to avoid the risk of passing on coronavirus. Imad conscientiously cancelled his catering engagements before we went into lockdown, out of concern for everyone's health. Instead he has set up a free service to go shopping for vulnerable people in the community who are afraid to go out and risk infection.

## What are we doing to support our families through the Covid-19 crisis?

- We have given a key contact to every family to keep in touch with them and be first point of call for any needs. These volunteers have been calling and supporting the families.
- The education team have been in contact with all the families we currently support to see how they are getting on in lockdown and checking that the children are accessing schoolwork. They have given suggestions for free educational apps.
- One of our English Language volunteers has been doing a regular group lesson via video chat for the families we support.
- We have signposted food delivery services to the families we support, such as One Can Trust food bank who are delivering food parcels directly. We have also organised a rota of volunteers to do food shopping for one family who are shielding their child because of medical issues.

 [www.wycombe-refugees.org](http://www.wycombe-refugees.org)

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 Refugees Welcome in Wycombe

