



NEWSLETTER 004
October 2017

Registered charity 1174004

Welcome to newsletter number 4, as the nights draw in... see page 1 for an invitation to a special meeting, page 2 for news about Malvern Open Homes and a visit to a kitchen in Calais, and page 3 for how you can help young asylum seekers and care leavers.

We're a charity!

Firstly we are delighted to announce that as from 28th July Malvern Welcomes is a registered charity - as such our trustees are regulated by and answerable to the Charities Commission, and any donations will benefit from Gift Aid. We will be required to account for our actions through an annual report and an AGM. The trustees are as follows:

Dick Stockford, Ruth Forecast, Susan Wolfendale, John Raine, David Kitcat, Dan Herbert, Rosemary Thorp

Invitation to Malvern Welcomes Open Evening – The Malvern Cube
Thursday November 9th at 7.00 pm

Our aim is to support the resettlement of refugees in the Malvern Hills area and to provide practical assistance and advice.

We work to nurture a culture of welcome in which people fleeing violence and the horrors of war can live fulfilled and happy lives as part of the community, free from poverty, discrimination and harassment.

We warmly invite you to attend the first Open Evening of our charity, Malvern Welcomes.

We are currently embarking on a new and exciting project which we want to share with individuals and groups in the Malvern area – so please join us at the **Malvern Welcomes Open Meeting on Thursday November 9th: 7.00pm in The Malvern Cube, Albert Road North, Great Malvern WR14 2YF.**

We want to give you the opportunity to find out more about Malvern Welcomes and to let you know what it is we're planning. If you're going to attend please could you register on Eventbrite (ctrl/click on the link below) - we need to know how many cakes to make!!
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/malvern-welcomes-open-meeting-tickets-38092630082>

To give you some background - Malvern Welcomes, a local organisation formed in October 2014, became a charity in July 2017. We have grown in number and vision since 2014; our original aim was to encourage the council to take refugees under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme but now we are working to nurture a culture of welcome for ALL refugees

who have fled war and violence. In recent months, we have held events attended by refugees now settled in Worcestershire. We have shared joyful times, walking in the Malvern Hills and eating together.

We are delighted that our original aim of encouraging and assisting Worcestershire County Council to accept 12 refugee families has been achieved, but to date no refugee families have come to Malvern. It is testament to the generosity of our community that we have a large number

of supporters who are eager and ready to assist in a variety of ways. We have built an impressive resource from the wealth of expertise and experience among people, who have offered to help on a voluntary basis.

We look forward to welcoming you and/or others of your group.

Malvern Welcomes trustees



Do you have a spare room? Would you like to offer short stay emergency accommodation to a refugee or asylum seeker? We are wanting to increase the number of hosts in the Malvern area.

Malvern Open Homes (MOH) is a scheme being run by Malvern Welcomes, through which members of the public temporarily offer spare rooms in their homes, free of charge, to refugees and asylum seekers who would otherwise end up homeless. Accommodation difficulties often arise when an individual is granted refugee status and they have to leave the asylum hostel. They may also experience income problems, before benefit claims are processed or national insurance numbers issued.

Malvern Open Homes will not only seek to provide accommodation through this scheme, but also to create a support network to help individuals to get back on their feet and get on with their lives.

The scheme works with national charity Refugees at Home, who make referrals to us. We are also working to create links with refugee/asylum seeker support organisations in Birmingham, Coventry, Gloucester and Bristol.

If you would find out more, there is information on our web site <http://www.malvernwelcomes.org> under Malvern Homes as well as on <http://www.refugeesathome.org> We would be very happy to visit you for an informal discussion.

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Calais volunteering

We can all imagine how difficult life is for refugees in Calais, and the value of the work of volunteers.

Three members of Malvern Welcomes are planning to spend a week helping in the kitchen in December.

I'm sure you will all join me in wishing them well; they're honing their knife skills as they're likely to be spending their days chopping vegetables. They will be with an organisation called Refugee Community Kitchen, which has cooked over 570,000 meals since December 2015, providing much needed nourishment every single day.

(<http://refugeecommunitykitchen.com/>)



If you would like to show your support, there is a donation section of the website. They'll be travelling by train, so can't take anything with them - but they, and more importantly the families and individuals trying to survive in dire conditions in the Calais area, would very much appreciate any financial support you can give.

Helping asylum seekers through fostering – and support for care leavers

Asylum seeking children

In common with all local authorities WCC is constantly seeking to recruit new foster carers, and has asked Malvern Welcomes to use our newsletter to promote the need, particularly for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This is a message from the County Council:

As people concerned about the plight of refugees, you might have thought about unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), and what happens to them when they reach this country, probably after a traumatic and difficult journey and some horrific and heart-breaking experiences. For many of them a safe and welcoming foster home is a wonderful place, giving them support and security while they move through the asylum-seeking process and acclimatise to a new culture and environment. At present Worcestershire County Council looks after more than 30 UASC, mostly in foster homes - that's 4-5% of all children 'in care' in the County.

Foster carers who look after asylum seeking children often remark that they are respectful, appreciative and committed to making the most of educational opportunities. They are usually from loving families who have made a difficult choice to send their children to what they hope will be a better environment. Of course there are challenges along the way, to do with language and cultural differences, but most foster carers say the benefits of learning about another culture and helping a child through such a frightening time are real pluses.

A foster carer spoke recently about a young man who had been forced to escape violence and possible death by crossing a big river with friends - he couldn't swim but somehow got through by pushing up to the surface and gulping air before sinking again. He didn't tell anyone about this until he'd learnt to swim. He stayed with his foster carers for some years, becoming close to all the family, and still keeps in touch. She also told me about language difficulties, many of which can be overcome with gestures and a smile - but the biggest help came from the owner of the local chip shop, who happened to be from the same country and helped with interpreting!

It's a big decision and you would need to know a lot more about the whole process before applying. If you think it might be for you there is a great deal of information on this website - <http://www.worcestershirefostering.co.uk/> - including how to get in touch to arrange to talk about your interest.

Care leavers

Many young people leave the security of a foster home at a very young age – 18 years or even younger. At the County Council we are very concerned about these young people and wonder if you could help.

In its recent report [Too Much, Too Young](#), Action for Children identified that vulnerable young people who have been in care are forced to grow up too quickly, with many living in unsafe housing where they feel lonely and scared. They move frequently and experience periods of homelessness. And continuing to deal with the lasting impact of a traumatic childhood means that many can suffer from depression and anxiety. Without the safety and stability of support networks, they can make poor decisions, and are more likely to be homeless or involved with substance misuse or crime.

Worcestershire County Council is always looking for volunteers to support these young people, be they asylum seekers or Worcestershire residents. They are often unable to get to grips with relatively simple tasks such as using a washing machine or budgeting, despite the support they have received from foster carers and in some cases residential staff.

This is the type of help which is needed:

- ◆ Helping young people move house, and shop for furniture
- ◆ Supporting young people to shop for food, and in some cases access the food bank
- ◆ Researching jobs/accommodation
- ◆ Attending activities such as the gym with young people prevent feelings of loneliness and social isolation

If you think you could help – please contact Carol Stewart on CStewart@worcestershire.gov.uk.

