



<http://www.malvernwelcomes.org>

Registered Charity 1174004

Malvern Welcomes Newsletter

Welcome to our second newsletter of 2021

Issue 012

We started in 2014 as a group campaigning for our council to take some Syrian families who were fleeing from the horrors of conflict. We are currently supporting families from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. The need to help people from war-torn regions is greater than ever as has been illustrated by the crisis which has developed following the UK and US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Families in Malvern

There are now six resettled families in Malvern. They all speak of how happy they are living in Malvern and are increasingly independent, with most of the men in employment. All of the children were really happy to return to school after the long months away due to the Covid pandemic and the summer break. They all tell us that they LOVE their schools, which have made them feel very welcome.

Welcoming a Third Community Sponsorship to Malvern

We are pleased to say that our application to resettle another vulnerable family under the Community Sponsorship scheme has been accepted by the Home Office. The application is, understandably, an exacting process involving much form-filling and gathering of information. This will be the third family to be resettled by Malvern Welcomes through the Community Sponsorship scheme. Under this we are required to take full responsibility for all aspects of their resettlement including providing accommodation, GP and medical services registration, school registration and orientation.

We have a dedicated team of volunteers who are preparing the house and who will welcome and support the family shortly.

**COMMUNITY
SPONSORSHIP**

Communities for refugees

Resettlement by Worcestershire County Council (WCC)

We have been delighted to hear that Worcestershire County Council has committed to welcoming more families to Worcestershire, a small number of which will be placed in Malvern. This tends to happen at very short notice, which can be challenging. Although these families are the responsibility, primarily, of WCC, Malvern Welcomes is working closely with the Council staff to ensure that anyone being resettled in our town will be warmly welcomed.

WCC is currently resettling families under three separate schemes, each of which involves different requirements.

- UK Resettlement Programme (UKRS)
- Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

Some, but not all, of the Afghani arrivals may have one family member who speaks some English. However, English tuition will be required for these families.

In addition, the families who have been resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Resettlement Programme (SVPR) since 2016, although increasingly independent, sometimes require support to access and negotiate services. There have been many successes countywide, with almost all of the men now in employment, many people having passed their driving test, which is a challenge for people who arrived in the UK with little or no English. Some young people have gained university places.

Supporting families

We have been participating in research being carried out by the University of Birmingham into Community Sponsorship. [Supporting refugees and volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic \(PDF\)](#).

It has been most reassuring to hear from the writer of the report, Marisol Reyes Soto, who works with Professor Jenny Phillimore, that they strongly commend the way in which we are working and see Malvern Welcomes as a very successful Welcome Group.

English Programme

Malvern Welcomes' ESOL Programme comprises excellent tutors and remarkably motivated learners. As the families become increasingly active members of their and our local communities, their language needs change, and the ESOL programme responds accordingly. It is important that Malvern Welcomes continues to deliver lessons customised to the level of each learner and to address any specific language requirements they have in their daily lives, and which now includes English for employment.



In welcoming up to three new families, there will undoubtedly be some fundamental changes to the ESOL programme, but we are really looking forward to welcoming and working with new learners so that they too become active members of our community.

Volunteers

Some volunteers were not able to continue during the lockdown period and with new arrivals expected we have recruited a number of new volunteers. All volunteers are interviewed, after which they have a DBS check and provide references. They are then asked to read and agree to following Malvern Welcomes policies and Code of Conduct.

We endeavour to ensure that we are working well and appropriately as a team by requiring volunteers to attend regular training sessions and meetings.

The recent Pre-Arrival Training was well-attended. A member of the team from RESET, a Community Sponsorship learning hub, came to Malvern to run the training.

<https://resetuk.org/about/about-reset>

Malvern Welcomes -educational visits to schools and groups.

This is a very important aspect of our work and we are pleased that, with the easing of Covid restrictions, it is possible for this to resume.

One of our volunteers has been writing to schools to offer to talk about refugees and refugee related issues. She has linked up with Active Peace Education, in association with the Quakers, and been visiting primary schools.

We also plan to resume the talks to secondary schools and community groups.

Donations



The Worcestershire C.C. resettlement scheme now have a hub for donations, which is being coordinated by Eva Fisher. Her contact details are publicly available:

donationhubmartley@gmail.com

Anybody wishing to donate items (furniture, curtains, toiletries, kitchen equipment, bathroom items), should contact Eva via the hub email. Anything being donated should be new or in as new condition. Eva can also advise as to what things are currently needed.

Malvern Welcomes is happy to accept monetary donations and will use the money to buy new items as required. Cheques, made payable to *Malvern Welcomes*, can be sent to Sue Wolfendale, 15 The Moorlands, Malvern Wells Worcs WR14 4PS or cheques/cash handed in to Books for Amnesty, 3 Edith Walk, Great Malvern WR14 4QH (in an envelope marked FAO Sue Wolfendale). Any donations made to Malvern Welcomes will be used for refugee families in Worcestershire, not exclusively those coming from Afghanistan.

Ruth Forecast and Sue Wolfendale, Volunteer Coordinators
Sharon Baker, ESOL Coordinator

Funding Malvern Welcomes

Over the past three years, the following Charity Trusts have contributed £14,000 pounds towards the cost of resettling six families in the Malvern area:

William Cadbury Trust

Hilden Trust

CB and HH Taylor Trust

Eveson Trust

D.F.M. Ellis Trust

With the exception of the London-based Hilden Trust, all are based in the West Midlands. This funding has given us a firm base on which to build and we are extremely grateful for their contribution. Details of these Trusts can be found on their websites and make for interesting reading.

Even so, well over 50% of our funding still comes from the generosity of our own members and local faith groups. Our recent £10K appeal (to raise money to bring the third Community Sponsorship family to Malvern) yielded around £8000 from our own members, one of whom, Lyn Goswell deserves a special mention. In her determination to raise funds and recruit new members, to celebrate her 84th birthday, she walked twice a week from the Wyche cutting to the top of the Worcestershire Beacon, telling everyone she met about our work and urging them to donate or join. Her solo efforts raised over £800.

We should mention too, the generosity of Karen Argent and her husband, Terry, of Letterpress, who donated a large part of their book collection, the sale of which, augmented by the books donated by many members, raised over £1000 in our Big book Bonanza Book on August Bank Holiday weekend.

How do we spend your money?

We divide our expenditure into nine categories. The table shows the distribution of funds between categories:

FY19/20 Expenditure	£
ESOL and Translation	£2,494.00
Travel	£2,550.00
IT	£1,960.67
Equipment	£4,548.49
Health	£2,250.00
Activities	£3,800.00
Outreach and Education	£584.00
Admin	£285.00

Not unexpectedly, the largest expense is in furnishing and equipping residential accommodation when a new family arrives.

A close second comes expenditure on fees for joining activities in Malvern which are beneficial for health and well-being but also essential if families are to become part of our local community. ESOL expenditure is next with major items being books and other teaching aids. The income support category covers grants and loans made to families to cover the six week period between arrival and the first payment of Universal Credit. The health category covers reimbursement of volunteers' travel expenses for transport of family members to medical facilities outside the Malvern and Worcester district and the provision of health-related items not covered by prescriptions. Although a relatively small amount, the £584 spent on Outreach and Education covers a vital element in our activities – expenses incurred in producing educational talks and literature for schools and community groups. Administration expenses lie mainly in DBS checks, indemnity insurance, and hire of meeting rooms.

Richard King, treasurer, and I are always happy to answer your questions on financial matters – and, of course to receive donations of money, ideas and time and effort in suggesting and running fund-raising events.

Tony Vere (Funding Co-ordinator)

Picnic in the Park

I have been on the edge of Malvern Welcomes for some time thanks to the pleasure of one of the family members coming to our home for music sessions with my partner. Lockdown caused sessions to move to Zoom for some months but they are now back in person – a small celebration of the joy and harmony of live world music.

Being asked if I might consider becoming a volunteer coincided with reducing my working hours to semi-retirement and wondering what to do in my extra time that would be both useful for others and enjoyable for me. Having travelled widely when I was young, including to Iran and Afghanistan, where I was treated with kindness and curiosity, and nowadays watching the horrible plight of refugees on TV, Malvern Welcomes felt just right on both counts. Everything became real on August 1st when I was invited to join a group of families and volunteers in West Malvern Park for a shared picnic. Families, food, football and fun were a very fine introduction to the people at the heart of the organisation!



I'm excited now to be part of a team preparing to welcome another family and hope in time they come to feel safe, secure and a valued part of the Malvern community.

This is my first go at collating the newsletter – I'd welcome any feedback. Thank you.

Alison Brough, volunteer

The Big Bargain Book Bonanza in Malvern



As a result of lots of excellent teamwork from Malvern Welcomes volunteers, we were able to go ahead with the postponed (due to Covid restrictions) Big Bargain Book Bonanza on Saturday 28th August. After lots of heavy lifting moving boxes of books from storage on Friday afternoon, we were able to fill five big tables heaving with books of every description.

In the morning we added another table outside and then waited with some trepidation to see if anyone would arrive to buy anything. We needn't have worried because people started to arrive at least twenty minutes before opening time and continued to browse and buy throughout the day.

Part of the success of the event was due to the busy central location of the hall which was kindly provided for free by Lyttleton Well Christian Outreach Centre. Afterwards Matthew Jordan (Business Manager) remarked: 'It was very well organized, and it was great to see the families involved in the sale also. The atmosphere was very cheerful and brought something extra, new and enjoyable to the town on Saturday'.

Many people seemed surprised at the quality of the books on offer at very low prices. Most of them were from our much loved personal collection which we had decided to sort out and reorganise as part of a lockdown project. As we also run The Letterpress Project, a not for profit organisation that promotes the importance of accessible books for people of all ages, it was great to see them being bought by people who were so excited. A few customers went away with several bags full, including a very happy man who had spent some of his birthday with us – Malvern is definitely a town of book lovers!

By the end of the day we were exhausted but very satisfied at the success of the day. And despite raising well over £1,000 for Malvern Welcomes, we still seem to have an awful lot of boxes of books to return to storage. Perhaps we need to think about organising another event sometime in the near future?

Karen Argent and Terry Potter

The Letterpress Project

www.letterpressproject.co.uk



I had the pleasure of working on the Malvern Welcomes bookstore. It was a great day in the good weather and when we were selling books we talked to a lot of wonderful people and some people were paying some money without buying any of the books. That was a great thing from them. I wish I could do anything I can for charities because their goal is very clear to help others. It's great to feel and help others as much as possible, I thank everyone who contributed to this great work.

Abdullah

We would like to extend our thanks to Karen and to Malvern Welcomes for giving us an opportunity to participate in the charity Booksale. It was totally a new experience for us. We enjoyed it a lot because we got to meet new people and learn new things about life and management. It changed our life and the way we think about it, it built up our confidence and we weren't shy to start conversations with people. We learned how to manage a business and it will definitely benefit us in the future. In conclusion it was an incredible experience that we would like to try again one day in upcoming years.

Matti & Marvin

Beacon Climbs for Malvern Welcomes

This year I had rather a wonderful heart-warming experience. Let me tell you about it. It began the first week of February in the depth of winter. It was snowing. Do you remember? My husband had just had his ninetieth birthday and we were still sheltering in the lock down. We had a Malvern Welcomes meeting on zoom. It was great to see people again, but made me realise how frustrated I felt not being able to do anything to help, just at a time when it was particularly needed.



After the zoom I got to thinking what I could do within the constraints of the lock-down. A friend and her little girl were just starting a sponsored walk for the Heart Foundation near Oxford. "That's it!" I thought. I could do a sponsored walk perhaps, which would maybe raise a bit for Malvern Welcomes, but also be an opportunity to tell people about the charity and make them more aware of the situation that refugees, families just like yours and mine, are experiencing in so many parts of the world. I decided to make my goal to climb the Worcestershire Beacon twice a week till my 84th birthday, which was conveniently about seventeen weeks ahead, though I later extended it a bit when I discovered that Refugee Week was just about ten days later.

Though I hadn't thought of it at the time, it turned out to be an excellent idea to be climbing the Beacon rather than walking along the road somewhere. This is because the people you would normally meet (or rather pass) when walking in the street are generally going somewhere with a purpose in mind. They are not stopping to chat and they are busy. On the hill, however, people are generally taking their time (apart from the runners and cyclists). They may be stopped to see the view, or to get their breath back, or to take photos of each other at the top.



They might be families flying kites, people hang-gliding, or geologists peering at bits of rock. There was almost always someone at or near the summit when I arrived or soon after. They are generally feeling relaxed and friendly too. Because I wanted a photo at the top each time, as evidence I had actually completed each climb, I would ask them if they minded taking it for me, and this was the ideal chance to explain why I wanted it, and to tell them about Malvern Welcomes. I met such a lot of lovely people, and often their response was surprising.

Once, quite early on, as I walked up the hill, I was joined by a young man. After we had been walking side by side together for a while he told me he was an intensive care nurse! Well you can't walk further than a metre away from someone on that path, but we were both wearing masks in spite of being in the open air, so I trusted it would be OK. I began to tell him about Malvern Welcomes, but as it turned out I found he had much he wanted to tell me about his experience of incomers to this country.

"In the hospital where I work there are a lot of people who are new to this country, or their families are, in recent generations. They may not be refugees from war, but have come for other reasons. They realise that they are far more at risk from Covid than we are, yet they have come into the hospital each day not only as doctors and nurses, but as the porters and cleaners that we also depend on."

"I have lost twenty two colleagues in the hospital during the pandemic" he added gravely "and only three of them were white Caucasian." He paused.

"I don't have any money on me here" he went on "But I want to donate to Malvern Welcomes. Do you have a website?" I gave him one of our bookmarks with the details.



Another time, as I was approaching the summit I heard the sound of singing – gospel singing, and there at the top was the choir - a whole bunch of girls, sitting on those steps around the beacon itself, smiling and laughing and belting out their songs. I sat down and joined them in "Don't need no ticket, just get on board!" They told me they were from Africa and doing a retreat at the Elim Centre. They saw the sign I was carrying and asked me about Malvern Welcomes, so I told them. Suddenly one, who seemed to be a leader, said "We would like to bless you and the work you are doing! Can we do that?"

"Yes please!" I said, and so she did. It was quite a formal ceremony. She stood up tall, raised her arms up high and addressed Jehovah aloud. She reminded Him of my virtues (Ha! that was a surprise!) and the good work we were doing for Him here in Malvern. By the time she had finished He certainly knew more about it than I did. It was an amazingly energetic experience, and I came down the hill again later feeling full of joy, and definitely very blessed to have met them.

On the way back one day I was coming down the hill and approaching a couple of quite young teenagers who were sitting on a bench. One was absorbed on her cellphone. The other looked up as

I passed and asked "'Scuse me, do you know how far is it to the top please?" I stopped, we started to chat, and soon, of course, I was telling her about Malvern Welcomes and the plight of refugees. I was really just thinking that it was good for local children to be made aware of the situation. Nothing more in my mind. Suddenly she interrupted me

"Are you collecting money for them?" she demanded.

For a moment I felt a bit embarrassed. That had been far from my intention actually, and certainly I was not expecting a donation from children. Was that how I was coming across?

"No, no!" I began awkwardly, but she was already rummaging in her purse and brought out £3. "I'm sorry, that's all I've got at the minute" she said.

"No really..." I said.

"Please" she went on "I want to help. It must be so awful for them!"

"Are you sure you are not going to need that yourself?"

"No, honestly it's fine" she said, and smiled.

"Well thank you" I said "That's wonderful!"

And it surely was! Wasn't it?



Lyn Goswell. Volunteer

Preparation for a new family and Arabic

Over the summer, a group of us have been preparing a house for a new family due to arrive under the Community Sponsorship scheme. The process started in earnest on 3 August, when several members of Malvern Welcomes met in the garden of the new house to record a video to be sent to the Home Office (and from them to prospective families).

This was to introduce members of the welcoming team, who would be supporting the family, explain the roles we had and give a video tour of the house. We were very lucky to have Noorah, who had recently joined the team, who translated what we said into Arabic. Some of the current resettled families had already recorded clips showing aspects of Malvern, such as the train station and Morrisons supermarket, so that the new family could see what kind of place they would be coming to.

We have also set up a What's App group for the team supporting the family, which is invaluable in helping us coordinate activities between us. For example, we've exchanged photos of items of furniture that one or more of us has spotted in a local charity shop, and in that way, have efficiently acquired a good deal of the furniture needed. We've also had some excellent furniture donated by members and friends of Malvern Welcomes, so that within a few weeks we had a fully furnished

home with comfortable sofas, beds, a dining and TV tables. We have also had kitchen utensils and equipment donated by Morrisons, so there has been no end of support.

We are now trying to ensure that all the equipment a family may need is ready and waiting for them. We already have a washing machine plumbed in, and now have to purchase a vacuum cleaner, get a washing line setup, and get the kitchen stocked and ready. Together with another volunteer, I have been involved in small DIY jobs, such as putting up shelving. None of this could have been achieved without such a great team of volunteers, and it's lovely that we all seem to get on.

While MW will be employing an interpreter, to support the family, Cherry and I are also trying to learn some Arabic we can use when the family arrive, so they are not completely dependent on English or having an interpreter. Our Arabic course is taught online by Palestinian Arabic teachers in Jerusalem, but hopefully this Arabic is not too far removed from the Arabic the new family may speak. I've found there seems to be a huge variation in both pronunciation and vocabulary in different versions of Arabic.



So far we've done a 20 hour immersive beginners Arabic course, spread over 8 days, in which we were expected to learn key vocabulary and phrases, talk about family and the weather, as well as learning most of the alphabet and Arabic script, which is more detailed and complex than any other language I have encountered. Quite a challenge! It helps a little that Cherry and I speak Hebrew and are familiar with writing right to left, but despite some similar vocabulary and grammar, Arabic is a very different language. We will be continuing with a once a week class from October to

December. At least we can say hello, ask the family where they came from, and talk about family members.

We look forward to working more closely as a team to support the family in the coming weeks. It is a blessing that we are now able to meet together physically, at least on some occasions.

Julian Brown, volunteer

September 2021

COFFEE AND PUPPETS

Perhaps Dragons don't make the obvious welcoming committee - but they seem to have done the job well...

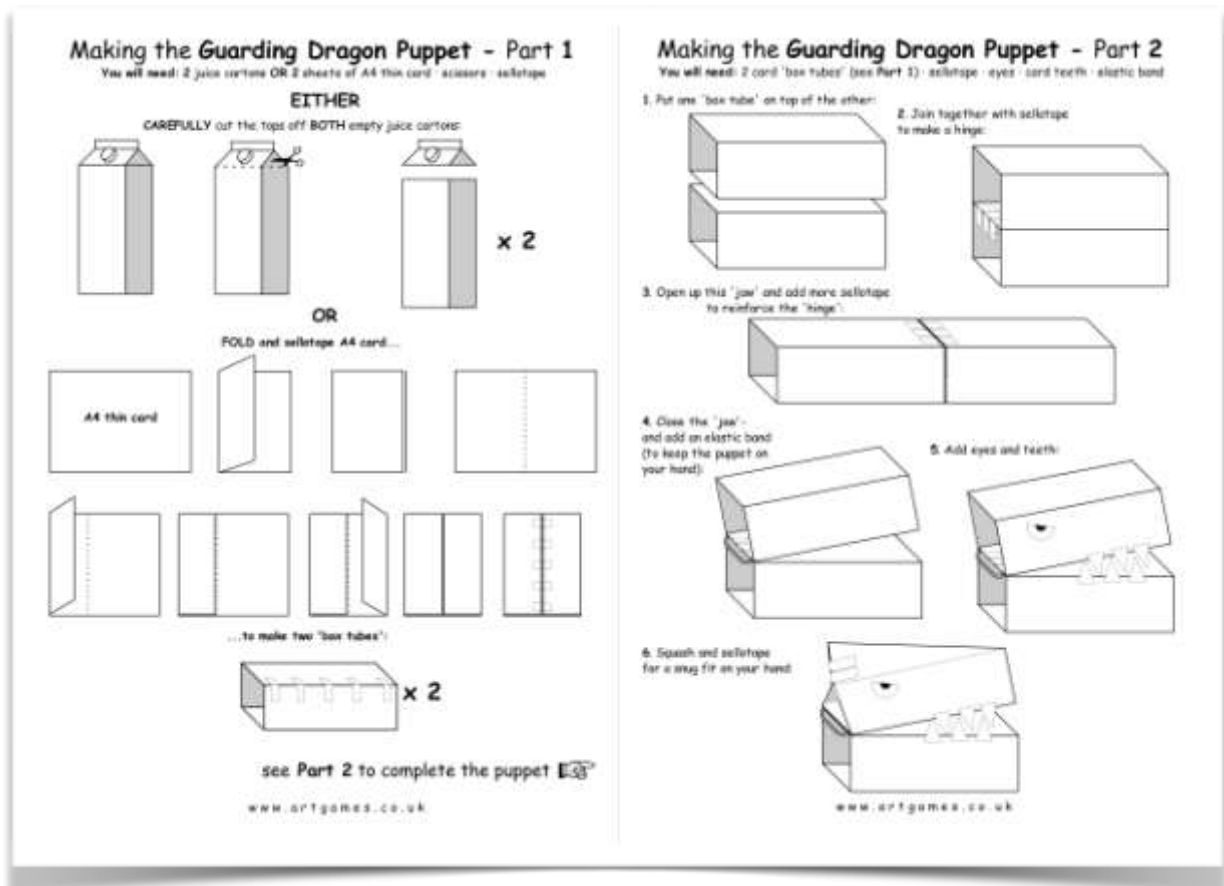
Malvern Welcomes' "Coffee and Puppet-Making Morning" at Lansdowne Church Hall on August 16th was well-attended, with youngsters (and the young at heart) accepting the invitation to make their own Dragon Puppet. The Puppet was straightforward to make, following my step-by-step printed instructions, and clearly made a good excuse for families and friends to get together.



While the young puppet-makers were busy, then parents and family-friends could relax with a chat and a coffee. Having made the basic puppet, the puppet-makers were able to customise their own Dragon, giving it scales, teeth - and fire! The addition of an elastic band and a moving jaw, turned the silent puppets into a talkative characters...

'Well Done' to all the Puppet-makers - and thanks to the coffee-makers!

The step-by-step instructions for how to make the Dragon Puppet can be found below and online at: <https://flic.kr/p/dVND54>



Finding a way through lockdown - a new volunteer's perspective

I am perhaps one of the 'newest' volunteers on the Malvern Welcomes team, but already feel very much at home. After a long career in the NHS, I was keen to try something new in retirement, and had completed a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) course, with a view to volunteering abroad in South America and Africa. Whilst awaiting a suitable placement, I set about exploring the opportunity to use my new skills more locally; and the possibility of volunteering with Malvern Welcomes seemed ideal. A date was set for an interview with Ruth and Sharon, but we were thwarted - first by floods, and then the global pandemic, which threatened to bring a halt to all my aspirations. However, several months later as we emerged from the first lockdown, Sharon contacted me again – and I was thrilled to be taken on as an English Language tutor within the Malvern Welcomes team.



I have to admit that I was daunted by the prospect of on-line tutoring, having really prepared more for a classroom environment. Over the past 18 months, we have all become more technically competent with Zoom and other on-line platforms for communication and learning, but I found it all a very steep learning curve. However, Sharon could not have been more supportive, and with her help I took on my first assignment – supporting a boy's

primary school curriculum home tuition. I could not have wished for a more responsive, fun student; and I just hope he enjoyed it all as much as I did! We learnt about space, animal kingdoms, photosynthesis and so many other things that I had almost forgotten from my own schooling – and the spelling abilities of this age group would shame many adults. I feel full of respect for our schoolteachers who have had to grapple with supporting children through the pandemic – it has been a difficult time for so many.

I missed my young pupil enormously when schools returned to normal, but I soon had another assignment – this time to help adults with the language and vocabularies for specific workplaces. Learning a language is difficult in itself, but the challenges of learning very specific occupational vocabularies, or understanding employment legislation, takes determination and hard work. Again, my students were exemplary, and it was a delight to see confidence growing in their language skills, and ultimately to succeed in the workplace. Having developed relationships remotely on-line, it was wonderful to eventually meet face to face at the Malvern Welcomes summer picnic.

I have always loved languages, and appreciate how language acquisition gives people the tools to effectively communicate and truly become part of their communities. Within my relatively short time with Malvern Welcomes, I have come to realise the commitment of the team as they support refugee families displaced from their homes. Language tuition is important, but it is only a part of what is offered; I feel really privileged to be part of that, and have recently taken on the role as family lead for one of our new families. It must be so hard to find oneself in a foreign land, faced with the numerous daily challenges of settling into a new culture and way of life. If we can help

through practical support, advice, tuition, or just being there for the families, then it is all worthwhile.

Jane Stockley, volunteer

A Bridge between Two Cultures

It was an absolute pleasure to be an English to Arabic interpreter for Malvern Welcomes when the team put together a video for future refugees to decide if they would like to live in the Malvern area. Although the skill of interpreting was a challenge, I enjoyed switching between the two languages. The approach I used was to identify very quickly what the key pieces of information were in the sentence in English and then find an Arabic equivalent. It is my second language, but I am confident I got most of the message across – let's hope other Arabic speakers agree!

I also attended a training session which was arranged for volunteers and which was extremely useful. Training keeps the team aware of what we need to be mindful of when refugees come to Malvern and help us to consider how to prepare for their arrival. Being an active member of two cultures - British and Egyptian - one of the attributes which I love bringing to the table the most is identifying and vocalising different perspectives on social norms and societal expectations. Although not every country in the Middle East works in the same way, there are many commonalities across them all. Therefore, I see myself as a bridge of communication between the two cultures (British and Middle Eastern), with my ability to translate from one culture to the next, explain any misunderstandings and suggest ways in which the cultures can share and compromise between each of their traditions and customs.



Lastly, I love being a volunteer for Malvern Welcomes because we are getting together to help those in need. It doesn't matter how similar or different any perspectives are to or from each other because at the end of the day we are all human beings taking care of each other.

Noorah El-Bay, Volunteer

The Walk.

One little girl. **One BIG hope.**

Representing all displaced children, many separated from their families, Little Amal, a 3.5 metre high puppet created by the Handspring Puppet Company, is travelling over 8,000km from the Syria-Turkey border to the UK, embodying the urgent message “Don’t forget about us”.

At this time of unprecedented global change, *The Walk* is an extraordinary artistic response: a cultural odyssey transcending borders, politics and language to tell a new story of shared humanity – and to ensure the world doesn’t forget the millions of displaced children, each with their own story, who are more vulnerable than ever during the global pandemic.

Little Amal represents the thousands of children who, just like her, have fled war and persecution and need access to education and essential support to rebuild their lives.

Events to welcome Amal are being held all along the journey. She will be nearest to Malvern on 28 October, when she will be welcomed to Birmingham by the diverse communities of Erdington, who explore the High Street and Market Square with her. Games, music and a giant friendship bracelet woven by the local children are waiting to celebrate Amal and send her on her way with hope.

Warm Hands Cold Day – Games in the Market

Date: 28 Oct 2021 **Start time:** 3pm **Location:** Erdington High Street

<https://www.walkwithamal.org/>



Email: malvernsanctuary@gmail.com



Facebook: @MalvernWelcomes

<http://www.malvernwelcomes.org>

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