

WELCOME NOTE

During the COVID-19 pandemic I have been overwhelmed by the kindness and hard work of the Building Bridges' partners. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for going above and beyond, thinking outside of the box to best support our clients. Building Bridges can be proud of continuing to bring together and invest in Coventry's communities, even when faced with obstacles. This was apparent during Coventry Welcomes, the city's annual Refugee Week festival. The content produced in line with this truly reflected not only the warmth of Coventry as a whole, but the effort and determination put in by project staff on a day-to-day basis.

- Mandy Sanghera

Manager of the Building Bridges Project



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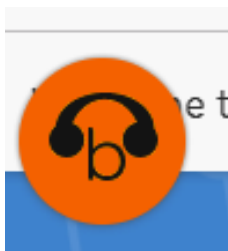
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ADAPTING DURING COVID-19

WELCOME TO COVENTRY: ACCESSIBLE COVID-19 INFORMATION

Since the start of lockdown, the Building Bridges Team have been working with organisations across the city to update its [‘Welcome to Coventry’ web app](#) daily with the latest information including, but not limited to, social distancing regulations, mental health and educational resources. Its [COVID-19 information page](#) has quickly become the App’s most visited, boasting over 900 views since March 25th this year. With people accessing the information in Arabic, Chinese and Spanish – to name only a few – these numbers truly highlight the importance of a central accessible resource in empowering the people of Coventry.

Please note, the App content can be translated by clicking the symbol shown below and choosing from a drop-down selection of languages. Click the words on the page to hear them read aloud.



Exact instructions vary depending on device and browser used, but if you have any questions please email buildingbridgesproject@coventry.gov.uk and the Team will do our best to support you and your clients.

Ramadan, a holy month for Muslims during which families and friends come together to celebrate, fast and participate in prayers, looked very different this year due to social distancing regulations. Welcome to Coventry was [updated with innovative ways](#) to come together and participate in Ramadan, as outlined by the [Muslim Council of Britain](#). Suggestions included digital Iftars and online Halaqa. Building Bridges hopes that these ideas have helped people to participate in Ramadan safely.

PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES AND DELIVERY

This has been a difficult time for Building Bridges partners, whose services are largely based on face-to-face communication, such as interactive classroom tasks, volunteering and social activities. Since lockdown, they have been busy finding alternative ways to deliver. For many, this has required adapting teaching style and materials in a way that allows them to remain as interactive as possible, whilst adhering to social distancing regulations. Partners have used innovative methods such as daily educational videos sent to a

WhatsApp group that connects tutor and students, 1-2-1 feedback via Zoom, quizzes in Facebook groups and Instagram challenges.

As such, staff are having to learn new skills themselves and have been providing more 'private' support than ever before, proving challenging when managing time. Nonetheless, they have done a great job to accommodate our clients' needs, even moving Building Bridges sessions to the afternoon due to students often waking up later whilst in lockdown, particularly during Ramadan. Furthermore, the LAASLOs have continued to support Coventry's Asylum Seekers to safely access essential services and provisions, helping to protect vulnerable groups.

You can see partner timetables [here](#). Please note that with the recent easing of lockdown measures, St Francis Employability do also offer some live sessions. Clients can call 024 7626 6010 and a member of staff will assess which class to enrol them on.

As part of its 5 Doors Down project, St Francis Employability has been able to continue to support the city's most vulnerable communities in new ways, delivering food parcels to 340 families during lockdown! A spokesperson has said, **"Whilst we have had to pause some of our provisions, we have been able to impact in other ways,**

and hope to continue this work after the pandemic!".

Supporting these families means that 534 adults and 526 children have benefited from the hard work of St Francis and Coventry's citizens. In addition, St Francis has provided approximately 158 asylum seekers with food parcels, clothing and toiletries.

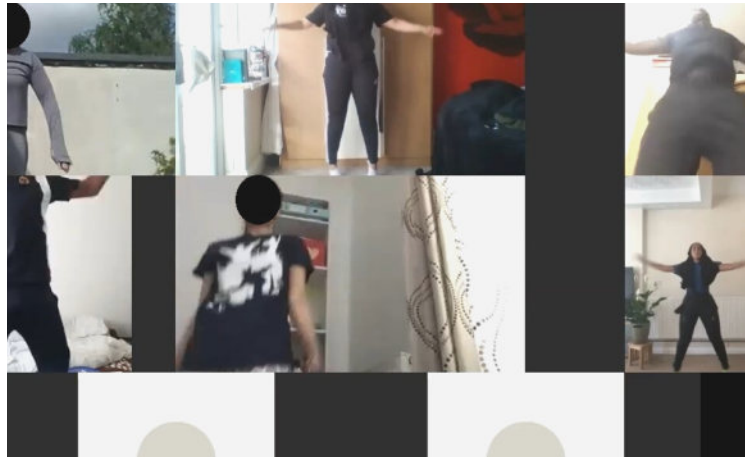
Thank you to all those that volunteered their time and effort!



Building Bridges partner Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) has also set up online exercise sessions for young people, helping them to tackle lockdown lethargy! With the number of attendees still growing, these sessions are aimed at maintaining young people's health and well-being.

One client that attends on a regular basis has spoken to PYF about her desire to pursue a career related to health and exercise. To help her to gain some experience in this field, she has been given the opportunity to deliver some of these sessions. She writes her own workout plans and delivers these via Zoom for people aged 11-20 years old.

She has said, **“Creating and delivering exercise sessions has kept me busy and fit during lockdown. I hope my sessions have helped many young people like myself that have been bored at home.”**



REFUGEE WEEK

It was great to see so many organisations taking part in Coventry Welcomes, the city's annual Refugee Week festival. It really provided an opportunity for our partners to stand in solidarity with and celebrate their clients!

A big well done to Positive Youth Foundation for its resounding Open Mic night success! This event took place on the 20th June via PYF's Instagram, hosted by a Youth Engagement Mentor that has been working on a music programme to support PYF's young people through lockdown.

Bringing them together online, the Open Mic event allowed several young people to showcase their musical talent, as they shared original music and songs that they have worked hard on over the last few months.

Over the course of the live session, 140 people joined to watch and participate. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, one young person sang a song he wrote to honour George Floyd. He said: **“It was a really great opportunity to show how I improved at playing guitar, but also to be able to have a great positive**

conversation... we talked about Coventry and the community here and it was really great... If I would describe it in one word, I would say it was incredible”.

Given the event’s success, PYF hope to continue running these sessions once a month.



Meanwhile, our partner Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC) hosted ‘The Journey of Imagination’, where the public were invited to ‘virtually travel across time’ as they showcased stories from clients sharing their passage of life and hopes for the future. A new story was shared each day, raising awareness of the reality of trying to integrate in the UK. Submissions can be viewed in the media gallery of [CRMC’s Twitter](#) account.

Thank you to all those that shared their stories!

St Francis Employability kicked off Coventry Welcomes by sharing a video called ‘Imagine If’. At such a difficult time for many, the video - in-keeping with Refugee Week’s national theme of ‘imagine’ - reflects upon individuals’ visions and hopes for the future.

By using their imagination, they capture a

glimpse of what life could be like if anything was possible.

The video can be found on St Francis’ new Twitter account [here](#). It has gained over 240 views and fantastic feedback!

“I have just finished watching the short film 'Imagine If', which I found inspiring as well as touching. What a splendid start to the Coventry Welcomes Festival!

St. Francis Employability is to be congratulated on the format, the use of varied voices and the inclusion of people from different ethnic backgrounds and age brackets!”

“It really made my day! It was absolutely inspiring.”

Throughout the week, St Francis went on to release a video series called ‘A taste of Coventry’. These videos feature people from different cultures, living in Coventry, sharing recipes of traditional dishes from their culture.

Including dishes from India, Syria and

Italy, these videos not only represent the diversity in Coventry but encourage people to try to cook new dishes and leave viewers hungry! The full list of videos can be seen below, so why not try following along at home?

- A Taste of Coventry with Manjit Tiwana: Indian Vegetable Pakori
- A Taste of Coventry with Patience Okojie: Italian Margherita Pizza
- A Taste of Coventry with Mohammed Najjar: Syrian Hummus Fatteh
- A Taste of Coventry with Joanna Jackson: English Victoria Sponge

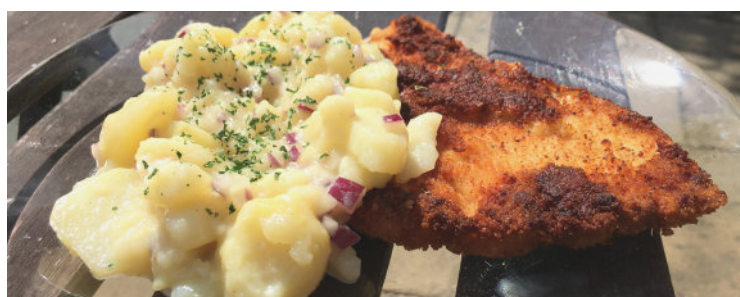


Finally, at Coventry City Council, the Migration Team took part in a 'Virtual Pitch In'. Traditionally, the Migration Team's Pitch Ins occurred in the office every couple of months. They followed a theme such as 'food I share with loved ones at Christmas', encouraging everyone to make a dish and share their story with colleagues.



As food is a universal language, this has proven to be a great way to celebrate diversity and get to know each other on a deeper level, something the Migration Team wanted to share with the public during Refugee Week.

Submissions included Halal pie and chips, onion bhajis and Viennese schnitzel as examples of comfort foods that remind the Team of home.



As part of Refugee Week, World Jewish Relief has documented the case of Building Bridges client 'Mac'! The article focuses on how PYF's Building Bridges' football sessions have helped him to meet new people and integrate here in Coventry. In September, Mac will begin studies in Law at Coventry University. You can read his story [here](#).

A SHAKESPEAREAN ESOL JOURNEY

Each year, the people of Coventry join the thousands of tourists that travel to the region to see where Shakespeare once lived. With the Bard's legacy a huge part of local culture, The Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Coventry University (CU), and The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT), wanted to invite newly arrived communities to share in the joy.

Together they created 'Belonging in Coventry: A Shakespearean ESOL Journey for Refugees and Migrants', providing CRMC with funding to bring this project to life.

Through a variety of workshops, the project aimed to enhance the sense of belonging to the local community for CRMC's ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) learners on the Building

Bridges Project. Exploring the human values in Shakespeare's works and their contribution to the English language, the project links the City of Culture theme 'Being Human' to that of investigating the creation of a sense of community through language learning.

Working together, CU, CRMC and SBT committed to a joint exploration of how a British cultural icon like Shakespeare can be made more accessible to ESOL learners at CRMC. They created tailor-made materials to support English language and culture learning for the CRMC ESOL



learners.

Clients got the opportunity to see where Shakespeare was born, exploring beautiful Stratford-Upon-Avon whilst improving their understanding of language and local culture.

“It was really nice, especially the gardens [that SBT have to explore]. I have seen a new place and created good memories”, one ESOL learner said.

“I learned the history – when he was born, his children, how they lived”.

Nonetheless, in the UK hate crime is used to measure raising community tensions and under-reporting can hugely impact funding allocated to tackle hate crime and leaves the perpetrator free to continue behaving in a negative way.

The following information has been designed to help you encourage and support clients to report acts of hate crime against them, or that they have witnessed.

WHAT IS HATE CRIME?

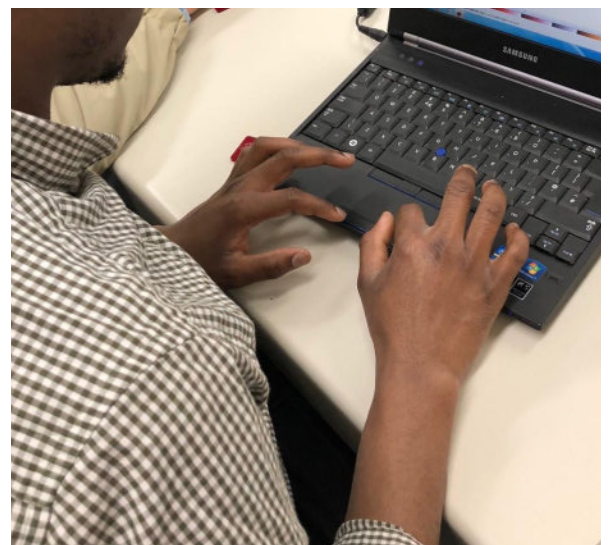
A hate crime occurs when the victim, or a witness, believes an act of crime that occurred was motivated by prejudice towards a person based on sexual orientation, gender identity, race, or religion.

HATE CRIME

Coventry is a beautifully diverse city, something celebrated by [City of Culture 2021](#). As such, the Building Bridges Team want to help promote a culture where everyone feels welcomed and can thrive in our communities. As part of this, we want to make it clear that hate crime is not tolerated in Coventry. We want to help our newly arrived communities to understand what hate crime is and their options if they experience it. In Coventry, hate crime is under-reported due to factors such as reluctance to go to the police, or not recognising the behaviour as particularly problematic.

WHAT CAN I DO?

If a client has been a victim of, or witnessed, a hate crime, we recommend that they Google



search 'Report Hate Crime'. This will come up with a number of resources such as [Stop Hate](#) and [True Vision](#). [Tell MAMA](#) can be used to report specifically anti-Muslim hate crime. These sites allow users to choose not to be contacted, if they so wish. If they choose to be contacted, the crime can be investigated as appropriate.

IGNITE INTEGRATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

In the last Building Bridges newsletter, we introduced the Ignite Integration Programme. This project supports refugees and migrants along their integration journey by offering holistic support identified through the Integrass Assessment Toolkit, be that in gaining confidence in the community, becoming more independent, receiving employability or language training, or securing employment. Since January, the Programme has been successful in gaining employment or education outcomes for several clients, despite the challenge of lockdown. During this time, Ignite Integration has also utilised the Internet to deliver the first of four training webinars to organisations across the city. Going forwards, programme staff are keeping up-to-date with central Government's employment initiatives, allowing them to better source job opportunities for clients as recruitment starts again. Additionally, there are 2 new remote courses for clients, 'SEESI' and 'Hello Job' which have been set up and will run over the next few weeks. If you would like to know more about the Ignite Integration Programme, or would like to refer a client, please email segal.abdi@ach.org.uk.



INTRODUCING: LEAP!

This September will see the launch of six-month long ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) project 'LEAP'. LEAP, funded by the [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) (MHCLG), comprises a partnership between Coventry City Council's Migration Team, [Adult Education](#) department and St Francis Employability.

Aimed at Pre-Entry Level ESOL learners, LEAP wants migrants in Coventry to Learn, Enjoy and Participate! Aiming to build the bridge between language and integration, the project offers wider city engagement through ESOL, informal and social language learning through Conversation Cafes, volunteering, signposting and Information, Advice and Guidance sessions.

Alongside this, there will be a wider holistic package of support available to guide the learner through the course and move them

onto further mainstream ESOL, volunteering and employment support. These provisions will be delivered in community-based settings across the city.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Those who are unemployed or economically inactive, long-established communities and those with little to no English.

For example, parents that have childcare responsibilities, or people that have been in the UK for a while but have limited English

In September, the first cohort will commit to a 12-week programme.

To refer a client or find out more, please call the Adult Education Service on 024 76 97 25 19 or St Francis Employability on 07555 607575.



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