



END OF YEAR REPORT

2020



DECEMBER 2020

Shropshire Supports Refugees
Written by Amanda Jones

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1) Introduction

This year took us all by surprise, didn't it? To start with it threw our personal lives out of shape, but for the refugees this was 10-fold.

Even despite all this, and partially because of this, we have spent this year getting in ship shape. We have moved venue, adapted the way we deliver the service, created 2 websites, grown our team, created 1 book and enabled 80 volunteers. We have done 3 clothes distribution drives and spent an unholy amount of time being trained and developing systems behind the scenes that will ensure a smoother few years ahead!

The families we support have done an amazing job of coping with the changes, but in the beginning it was tough.

For many, they did not know what was going on. I heard that some of them said that all the social restrictions and sudden enforcement from the government not to mention the sudden difficulty in accessing resources, reminded them of the beginning of the war in Syria and brought all that back. As if resettlement is not hard enough, suddenly all the support that they had got used to was gone. The bit of independence that they had developed was largely taken away from them.

Not able to go to the mosque, not able to get together, the women were isolated from their female support and the men were not able to get together in the evenings. This was the small part of their culture that they were able to maintain before Covid 19.

Not confident on the phone, they were not able to walk into places and book appointments, not able to have 1:1 face to face therapy, all the groups that we ran to support them in their resettlement was cancelled and home visits from us and volunteers were cancelled. To make things worse, the face-to-face support hub that we had developed with Jacki Cairney our resettlement co-ordinator was stopped and they did not know what was going on.

It was flu season, so people were getting ill and not knowing how to deal with that. Was it Covid, or not?

We did what we could to support them through this time, and Jacki, myself and one of the interpreters found ourselves on our mobile phones for the largest part of the day, trying to address concerns and deal with the usual support with a COVID-19 extra.

It became clear very that phones and what's app were not enough and that this could quite quickly set them back mentally and physically.

(Please below for the full COVID-19 response)

It also became clear that whilst all the groups and face to face activities were cancelled, this was the perfect time to catch up, and get as in shape as possible to safeguard our future and make us a viable option for contracts and bid grants, so we spent this time engaging with HR Dept, accountants, IT specialists and applied for grants until we were blue in the face.

This year we have said goodbye to two of our support workers and Avis, our long standing ESOL teacher who felt it was time to take her retirement seriously, we would like to say a big thank you for everything they have done to help us.

On the upside, we have said a huge "welcome" to Nashwa Harraz, support to Jacki and SSR with interpreting, and Ginny Sales, our new ESOL teacher. Nashwa is from Egypt and knows the strain of resettling in a new country, and Ginny has years of experience working with the local authority and within schools through the Multi-Cultural Centre. We feel lucky to have both onboard.

Although we cannot count how many meetings, collaborations, planned events and groups that were cancelled this year, we have somehow been busier than ever!

A Massive thank you to Robert Douglas who has consistently turned up in the office 2 days a week or more to support me with all the background work and stepped up to be a Director when we invited him to.

We would also like to thank Kariman Yakhoul, our long-standing Support worker/interpreter who has always gone the extra mile for the families.

We have thoroughly enjoyed working closely with Jacki Cairney the resettlement coordinator who has done a fantastic job of sorting out housing issues amongst many other topics!

2) THE CORE SUPPORT TEAM



**AMANDA JONES DIRECTOR AND
FOUNDER**



**KARIMAN YAKHOUL SUPPORT WORKER/
INTERPRETER AND SCHOOL REFUGEE LINK FOR
THE COUNTY**



EMMA HUGHES OFFICE MANAGER



ROBERT DOUGLAS DIRECTOR



**NASHWA HARRAZ SUPPORT
WORKER/INTERPRETER**

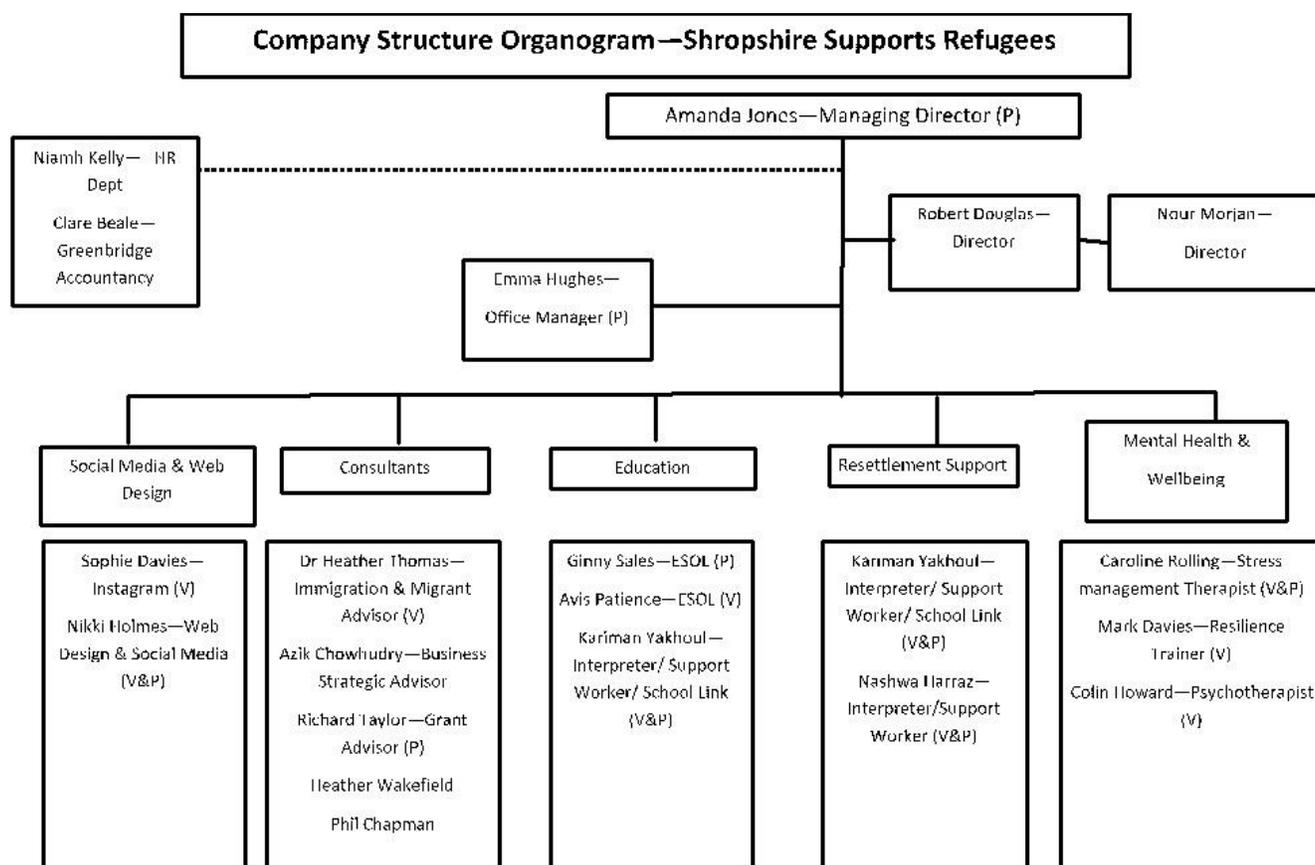


**JACKI CAIRNEY RESETTLEMENT
CO-ORDINATOR FOR THE
COUNTY**

3) COMPANY ORGANIGRAM

We have really valued the people that we work closely with and consult this year, and we are so grateful that they are patient with us and still there for us when needed. Many of them will become trustees when we finally finish the process of becoming a charity!

This is roughly us..... although there are so many others that we have help from and work with that it is impossible to add everyone. Each year the picture changes. Thank you to everyone who is on this diagram and also everyone who is not. If we added everyone who has helped or advised us there would be over 200 people on there!





4) Covid 19 response

Due to the sudden appearance of the coronavirus, we had to swiftly turn to the internet to deliver our support.

- We applied for a grant and sourced 20 laptops for the families to borrow
- We set up the What's App video support group led by Jacki Cairney, Syrian resettlement coordinator, supported by Nashwa Harraz, our new interpreter
- We developed a what's app group with 2 Arabic doctors in there to give advice. This is a space where health and mental health support could be given as well as signposting
- We started a Facebook page with ideas, and links to activities they can do with their children
- Our English teacher wrote to all the families who wanted her to, so they could keep up their written English. She also made phone calls to willing families to help improve their phone confidence and spoken language. We also encouraged the volunteers to do the same
- Delivery of activity parcels for the children and adults- paper, whiteboards, pencils, colours, rubbers rulers etc.
- we also put £50 into all their bank accounts because could not access food for them in bulk. An anonymous donor gave them all £50 as well, for Ramadan towards their festive food bill.
 - we translated social distancing rules, and coronavirus advice
 - We had a food hub collection which we distributed amongst the families.
- We had major documents on health advice translated into Arabic, and sourced others online
- The phone process and online process translated into Arabic so they could get as far as they need to access an interpreter
 - We developed a website dedicated to Refugee week and awareness raising
- We now have a dedicated You Tube channel where we post ESOL, Mental Health support and other information -this is a work in progress
 - We continue to review our Covid 19 response regularly

Thankfully, we were able to open the new venue for ESOL and the support Hub for a few months before the latest lockdown put an end to that!

We now run our ESOL classes online until we are able to meet in person again.

5) Volunteer recruitment

Despite challenges to face-to-face support for the families, many of the volunteers have found ways to stay in touch with them, either by going for walks, phone calls or video calls.

We know it means so much to the families during a time when it is easy to feel isolated and cut off.

We still have people asking to get involved every week, and we try to facilitate everyone's offers.

We have to admit that we have not got new people off to a quick start this year though. A combination of being overloaded with work and having few volunteer opportunities to offer, we are grateful that people have been patient with us and are ready and raring to go in the new year.

We have had volunteers participate in Refugee week, or read stories for children on the YouTube channel, volunteers assisting people to attend driving lessons, dropping things off for the families, helping to sort aid for the aid collections, raising money in creative ways, and just saying a friendly "hi".

We have had.....

11 new volunteers sorting clothes

2 drivers taking aid to other projects

11 volunteers that have been with us for a few years helping to sort aid

14 befrienders regularly visiting families

1 lady called Alice, sorting through all our books

8 new volunteers waiting to get started on the Homework zoom help project

8 volunteers who have helped in random ways from interpreting to software help

12 people contributed to the refugee week website

6 people being trained to work on the youth group with more to come

1 lady called Sophie who does our Instagram for us

13 offers of specialist help that we have not had a chance to take up yet

So that is nearly **80** people who have offered help and we have found a way to enable most of them!

PHEW!

There is at least another **13** professionals and people from different walks of life who have offered help, but we have not had a chance to take them up on their offers yet, but we know they are there for when we need it.

We will do our best to keep up, but hopefully 2021 will bring opportunities for people to actualise their help. We have come to realise how much being able to help in some way can reward the volunteers as much as the families receiving the help!

6) Collections and AID

We cannot thank Storage King enough for providing us with ongoing storage facilities for yet another year. Although we have not resettled any new families this year, donations have kept rolling in and we have been able to help other organisations which support refugees abroad with toiletry collections and tents and winter stuff.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions we were not able to distribute like we would have liked, but we fully intend on emptying the contents of that lock up in early 2021 and ensuring all the stuff goes to people who need it



7) Bikes

I am still proud to be a trustee on the Shropshire Cycle hub who have achieved great things this year- including providing bikes and bike replacements to the refugees who have requested them, not to mention all the Key workers that received bikes and the underpinning campaigns to make Shropshire a safer place to cycle.



8) Media and awareness raising

As always, we do most of our public facing communication through our closed Facebook group, the numbers are now at **1121!**

I am still not sure if fb algorithms do us any favours, but enough see our posts to react to our requests for help, and we get lots of offers of help and goods which we facilitate when possible.

High Sheriff of Shropshire

We were honoured to be invited to meet with the High Sheriff of Shropshire, who turned out to be one formidable woman, and from the back of that meeting, we have begun a partnership with Shropshire Youth Association, an organisation called 'Salute' who we will be working with next year, as well as introducing us to the Domestic Abuse team, and West Mercia's lead in trafficking and slavery who came up to have a meeting with us a few months ago.

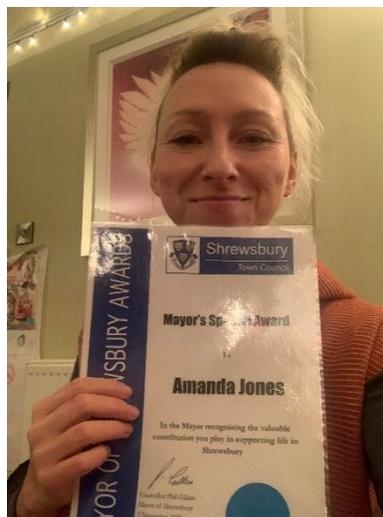


Media

I have been invited to speak on the Radio 3 times this year, as well as appearing on the Shrewsbury biscuit Podcast and Alex's Whitleys's other podcast, USUK

We had our first experience of delivering an online talk- on this occasion to the Shropshire Humanists who then very kindly donated £300 to our group!

I was also very humbled to receive a Mayors Special Award from The Mayor of Shrewsbury, Phil Gillam.



9) Branching out

We have always said that we want to be there for anyone who is from another country that finds themselves needing help and support. As it happens, we have a great couple of social work teams in Shropshire Council who do a great job supporting the Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers who find themselves in the county, but we have had contact with a number of their social workers for different reasons through the year and we always try to rise to the opportunity to help.

We have found ourselves helping Syrians from another county that want to move here, as well as a group of Romanian homeless people that wanted help to start with but then slipped away- we believe they are still in the county, but we have discovered the complex world of migration and possible exploitation and this has led to us calling the first of many meetings to come to ensure that Shropshire has a smooth response to further future issues that will come our way. We are determined to be ready for any negative impacts of Brexit and the impact that Covid 19 has had on the rise in exploitation and trafficking. We will continue to educate ourselves then raise awareness in the Shropshire public, built relationships and links to experts in the field and develop strategy plans alongside Shropshire Safeguarding board and other frontline organisations in the county.



10) Funding

This year we have been as always, grateful for the support and grant that we get from Shropshire Council to support the families in year 2 and 3 of the resettlement program. Of course, we do not refuse to help anyone who comes our way as we understand the complexities that people have to deal with in order to resettle, so there are many families and individuals who benefit from our services.



Thanks to the National Lottery's Covid emergency grant fund, we were able to secure a grant to buy laptops for the families to use during the COVID-19 crisis, enabling online learning, social contact and ensuring staying up to date with government advice and guidelines was made easier.



We are still running our ESOL classes on there, (I believe they turn into a bit of a social afterwards). We ran 3 workshops for the children and developed lots of online help for the families.

We helped facilitate online video appointments with the Robert Jones and Angus Hunt Outreach service and were lucky enough to be invited to attend some of their training.

We also helped facilitate online video therapy sessions for some of the families with the local mental health services- IAPT, providing interpreters for both and coaching the individuals to get online.



Shrewsbury
Town Council



Shropshire
Imagines
Refugee Week 202

Just imagine



Where they have come from, where they left and how they travelled
Where they have come to, the life they lead and how they were received.
Above all, imagine

We were successful in gaining a grant from Shrewsbury Town Council to support our refugee week activities, although the content changed due to Covid, the outcome was the same. We set up a website and populated it with offerings from all around the county. Stories, videos, art, poetry, all around the theme of “imagine”. Helping the public to imagine a better world, imagining ways of making our world a more accepting and welcoming place.

Finally, this year, we received money to pay for some extra support through the Covid crisis. The Barrow and Cadbury trust saw what we do and decided we were worthy of a bit of help, as the workload increased due to supporting people through this, and all the adaptations we have had to make.

There was a lot going on behind the scenes, and Robert and myself were finding it impossible to keep up.

The funding is for a 6-month period, so it ends in April, but it has allowed us to bring on board our new Office queen, Emma, who has turned out to be as versatile as we had hoped for, getting us into order, helping on lots of different projects, and backing us up beautifully.



We do not know how we would manage without the extra members of the team now, so we are enthusiastically searching for funding for the next few years

11) Family support

Although we have missed the face-to-face groups that we were running, we have made sure that we stay in touch with the families online, on What's app, by email and Facebook.

They know they have 24-hour access to help- either from one of our wonderful support interpreters, their befrienders, or from the services out there for the Shropshire public in general.

We found there was a lot of communication in the first 6 months of the year as everyone struggled with the changes and needed help with medical appointments, dentists, and mental health. A number of families have moved to a new house this year which is always a lot of work for everyone involved.

The support was daily, with the resettlement coordinator working closely with us to resolve issues and reassure people.

The Support hub continued either online or face to face at our new venue and will continue into next year.

As time has gone by, and as our main aim is to help the families to become independent, we have been able to reduce the support days to 2 days a week, and now to whenever there is a need, as we move to more online support and signposting for many issues.

On that note, we have worked with housing associations, Enable, Early years, schools and other support systems already out there doing great job.

Arrangements have been made with the CAB to start working closer with the families, The Job Centre, and we have worked with the Colleges, the Gateway, IAPT, the police, To name but a few to ensure the families have good relationships with them and they know where they are if they need them.

We have developed information files for the families with information translated into Arabic, and all the phone numbers they might need in there.

We will continue to focus on independence this year, as well as all the extra stuff that we to ensure a meaningful and lasting integration for the families into Shropshire life.

ESOL

The ESOL has continued, with a number of changes as you can imagine. We have a beautiful venue which could teach 12 people at a time easily in normal circumstances, but this year it has only felt safe to teach 6 at one time, and even that was hard once the winter kicked in and windows had to be open, so we have for now, retreated to online. We are grateful to have Ginny Sales running these for us, always adapting to the students needs.



12) Social groups and family activity days

Family activities had to be stopped because we have always taken the stance that if we do something for one, we do it for all, and of course it has been impossible to bring large groups of people together this year.

Instead, we offered to pay for the families to go out for the day to a venue of their choice, and some of them took us up and went to places such as Park hall farm for the day.

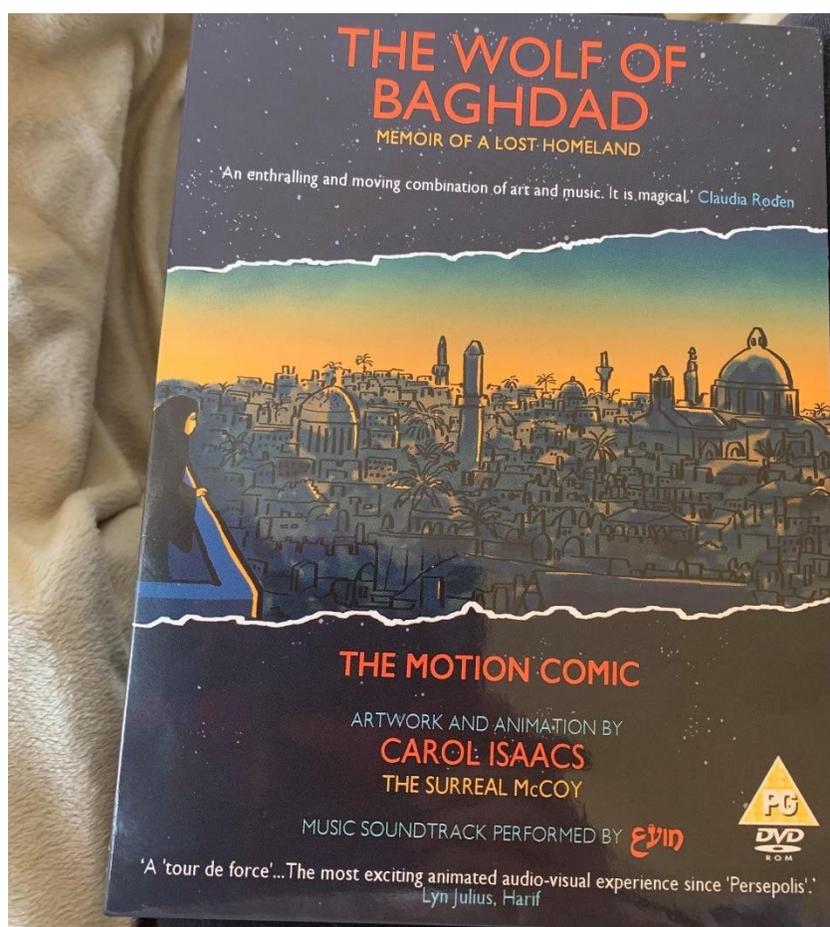
We facilitated an online workshop with the Hive which some of the children loved, as well as a project that Jamila Walker ran involving shadows of the children turning into Superhero's. Jane Beasley sold some of her paintings and paid for a clown to entertain the children one afternoon, lots of them attended that online bit of fun.



13) Refugee week

We were extremely lucky to get funding for refugee week this year from Shrewsbury Town Council.

We had Carol Issacs, run an online introduction to her beautiful film "The Wolf of Baghdad"



We are looking forward to being able to screen the full film next year with hopefully a personal appearance from Carol

All our best laid plans for Refugee Week went out the window, but thankfully Niki Holmes came along and saved the day.

She created a wonderful website which is still there for all to see, and we will continue to add to it year by year.

15 artists created pieces of work for the week, one of our families created a moving video of their journey.

12 poets, 6 of them illustrated for the book we produced

10 people made videos of themselves reading children's books about refugees and the crisis

2 of our Syrian ladies created videos about cooking- one went on to create her own YouTube channel and the other went on to make food for takeaways and dinner parties!

10 musicians made videos of their music, written especially for refugee week, and two of them were Syrian refugees

We had **17** Actors

1 Dancer

5 Organisations promoted

And **8** resettled refugees took part

Last time we checked, the website had had

777 views

17.5 hours of watch time

And **15** subscribers

We are immensely proud of the work and the reach we attained in such a short space of time and will build on this over the years.

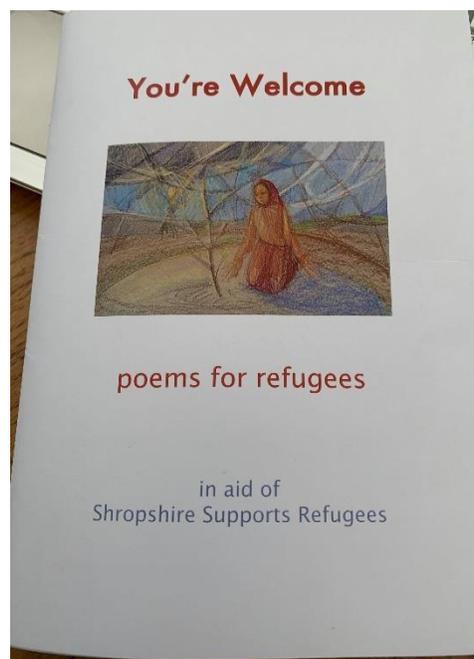
Well done Niki and everyone who got involved. Please do check it out and spread the word.

<https://www.shropshirerefugeeweek.org.uk/>

We liked the website so much that we asked Niki Holmes to revamp our company website, and although not finished, we are incredibly happy with this one too!

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

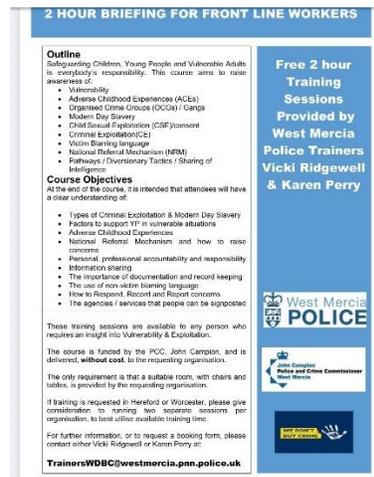
Paul Francis compiled a stunning book of poetry that contains the works of the poets that contributed to 2019's refugee week. This is on sale and will be promoted and sold at events through 2021. It was quite a work of art!



14) Learning, Growth development and online courses

This year the team have taken up any opportunity for training that has been possible. We have attended training delivered by everyone from the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, International organization for Migration, National working Group for exploitation, to UNHCR, NATCLA (ESOL), and a whole lot more on topics such as Exploitation during Covid, Domestic Abuse, Modern day Slavery, Resettlement, Risk assessing, and Mental Health to name just a few.

Two of our mental health consultants, Mark Davies and Colin Howard attended the annual Mental Health and wellbeing for refugee's conference and came away feeling up to date and connected to what the latest developments were.



We have presented opportunities to train with the West Mercia Police on raising awareness on exploitation twice this year and will continue to promote this informative course throughout next year too.

Concord College invited our young people to engage with their online course this year, and next year we are hoping it will be on their campus again. The children get so much out of that experience!

Unfortunately, one of our very successful groups- the Homework club with Shrewsbury School also had to stop due to the Covid Crisis, but we are going to be starting it up again as soon as possible and, in the meantime, developing our Zoom support online for any children who need it.

15) Networking

We have made sure we have kept in the loop and attended conferences, national and local meetings and social gatherings online including regular updates from the WMSMP, Sietar virtual café and training sessions, Refugee week, City of Sanctuary, Group Leaders Network, Rural City of Sanctuary meet ups, NWG, the list goes on and on.....

We look forward to having these meetings in person again in 2021

We intend to partner up with other organisations who have reached out to us, charities such as Purple Leaf and that Branch Project, little bags of kindness, Little Stars Baby Bank, Salute, SYA and continue to work with the likes of the Shrewsbury Food Hub, the various church groups in the county, community groups and local authority departments. We will continue to meet regularly with the likes of IAPT and various therapists, creating a safety net for the families and keeping all interested parties informed and up to date.

On a personal note, I continue to sit on the Marches Anti-Slavery Partnership board, I am still a trustee on the Shropshire Cycle Hub, I sit in the Age UK sounding board and I am looking forward to joining the Shropshire Police Independent Advisory Group as an advisor on their BAME and LGBTQ activities in the new year.

We are also actively encouraging and helping to develop a networked approach in the town and county to oversee any exploitation and trafficking, and potential slavery activity on the streets of Shropshire along with The Shropshire Safeguarding Board. I look forward to being part of that team when it is developed.

16) Planning ahead

In order to truly decide what we focus on next year; we are developing a thorough questionnaire for the families and we hope for active feedback that will inform our direction. We will focus on the families who still need a lot of help.

Funding from the council stops in 2022 unless the county starts resettling families again, so this year much of our focus will be on finding other sources just in case.

We hope to continue all the projects and support that we offer normally as well as some new developments!

We want to still be here when Shropshire starts resettling new families, and feel the awareness raising, networking and aid collections that we do are valuable to this county. We also know that the families will still need some support in the years to come as becoming not just fully independent, but also literate in English, and recovery from trauma takes many more than just 5 years. Not to mention the support they may need regarding the stability of their resettled status.

17) Youth work



The big news for next year is the launch of our youth group 'Fit and Fun' in collaboration with Shropshire Youth Association. This club will start out being just for the refugee children but will grow to encompass any other children who wish to join.

Funded by Sport England, we hope this will take off and be a success.

We will also be launching our new Homework help on Zoom, with a focus on helping children with their schoolwork or just listening to them read. Something many of the Syrian parents struggle with due to their own language level.

We look forward to bringing the ESOL back in house and also the Support Hub.

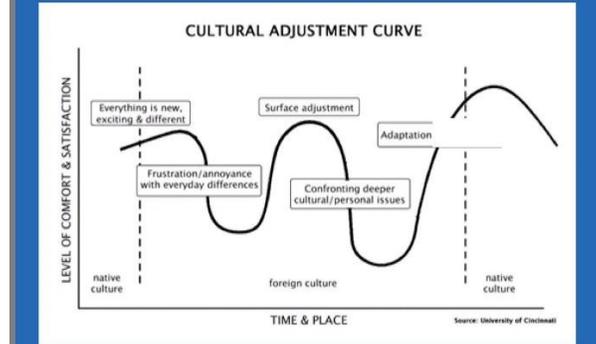
18) Mental Health and Well being

Personally, I have spent much of the past year nurturing relationships with experts in the mental health and wellbeing sector and attending online training on the topic of trauma recovery.

The stress of resettlement cannot be underestimated. Our families have done amazingly considering all the challenges they have faced and continue to face every day but helping many of them access appointments both medical and mental health has made us realise just how many are still struggling and what is holding some of them back from fully realizing their potential.

Learning as much as I can about the effects of extreme trauma and putting my life's experiences and lessons together, I have decided to do my best to find some way to help those who still feel blocked.

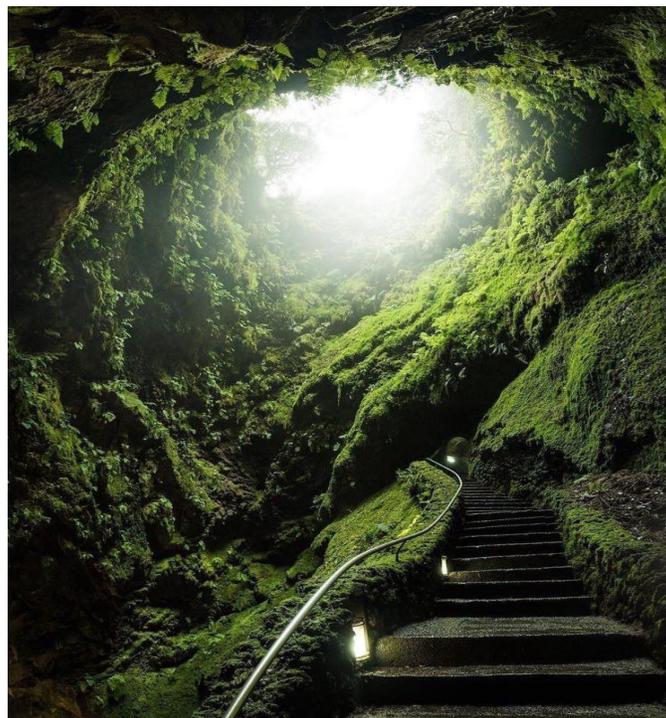
The Stages of Cultural Adjustment



My hope for 2021 is that I can make some holistic whole-body mind and spirit approaches to healing financially accessible for these guys.... if they wish it.

It will require some 'out of the box thinking', but that is what I do best. It will require collaborations and generous spirited practitioners, but there are many of you out there as I get offers all the time. The goal will be to enable them to access some of the many proven pathways to recovery that is normally reserved for people who can afford to pay privately for treatments, but it is my aim to find a way of making these things accessible to all.

It will involve mental health grants and good will .Fingers crossed!



19) Parties and fun

We hope to be able to help host parties and celebrations again this year, in particular EID which means so much to our families, put on training courses for the families, organise family activities again and try to nurture relationships with other organisations and groups who love to embrace Multi-Culturalism in Shropshire.

20) Raising awareness, training, and talks

We encourage anyone to get in touch if you would like to know more about the local, national, and international response to the migration Crisis. There are over 70 million displaced people living on the planet now. Global climate changes and ongoing wars will ensure this only gets worse. These are people just like us and we need to keep talking about it, trying to help, and ultimately preventing as much suffering as possible.

Shropshire Humanists
present 19th November 2020

**“SHROPSHIRE SUPPORTS REFUGEES:
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE”**

Amanda Jones, Founder and Director

Shropshire Supports Refugees

Ever fluid: Always caring.
We ensure Refugees are welcomed in
Shropshire

21) Thank you

Many thanks to all our Volunteers, funders, and supporters for staying interested, supporting our work, and reading this gigantic report.

Please do get in touch if you would like further details or would like to be involved in some way.

22) Contact

Shropshire Supports Refugees

Not for profit CIC

Company reg no: 10895491

17a Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY4 3QW

Tel:

amanda.jones@shropshiresupportsrefugees.co.uk

www.shropshiresupportsrefugees.co.uk

www.shropshirerefugeeweek.org

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ShropshireSupportsRefugees>

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