Thank you for joining the conversation!

Many groups in the City of Sanctuary network have expressed interest in starting and running Befriending initiatives. Befriending aligns with a key principle of the City of Sanctuary network: as our Charter states, we aim to ‘create opportunities for relationships of friendship and solidarity between local people and those seeking sanctuary.

On Tuesday the 24th of November we held a session in our series of online Facilitated Conversations, focusing on Befriending.

You can now watch the video of our 4 presenters and view the full report here: https://cityofsanctuary.org/events/network-facilitated-conversation-befriending-november-24th/

USEFUL RESOURCES:
- City Of Sanctuary Theory of Change
- Restore Programme Overview Video
- Welcome to HostNation
- Befriending Good Practice
- Befrienders Guide Host Nation
- Befrienders Training Manual SWR
- CoS DBS and Safeguarding Training
- Online Safeguarding Training
- CoS Events Page

SPEAKERS CONTACT DETAILS:
- Jeremy Thompson (Restore)
  befriend@restore-uk.org
- Anneke (HostNation)
  anneke@hostnation.org.uk
- Hadil Tamim (RCoS)
  hadil@rrsg.org.uk
- Hannah Sabatia (Welcome to Swansea)
  Hannah_Sabatia@scvs.org.uk
24th Nov 2020 Facilitated Conversations: Befriending

You can find the recording of our befriending session here: (9347) Befriending - YouTube

Befriending and Social Contact Theory - Colleen Molloy CoS
Befriending aligns with a key principle of the City of Sanctuary network: as our Charter states, we aim to ‘create opportunities for relationships of friendship and solidarity between local people and those seeking sanctuary’.

Underpinning our Theory of Change, we regard social contact as a key element to movement building, based on a simple and powerful way of building solidarity that can lead to change. When we meet and befriend someone who is going through the injustices of the asylum system, as opposed to merely reading about them, our understanding of their circumstances becomes fundamentally different. We are then much more likely to take action for change. See our Theory of Change document here.

The suggestion to hold a standalone session on our Theory of Change was met with interest.

Restore’s befriending scheme- Jeremy Thompson: Restore, Birmingham CoS

Restore is a project of Birmingham Churches Together, working in Birmingham, Smethwick and Solihull. Restore’s vision is for a society into which all refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed, valued and integrated. One of the ways Restore works towards that vision is by building relationships and equipping from integration through one-to-one befriending.

We recognise for that to happen, the host communities, the people already living in Birmingham need to take action to come alongside refugees and asylum seekers to offer welcome and help with integration.

Our context in Birmingham is that the we have initial accommodation, contingency hotel accommodation and dispersed accommodation for asylum seekers. On getting refugee status many new refugees decide to stay in Birmingham. We also receive resettled Syrian refugees and Birmingham City Council has also pledged to take refugees as part of the new UK Resettlement scheme.

In normal times, we run a face-to-face and one-to-one befriending scheme, matching trained and DBS checked volunteers with an asylum seeker or refugee. At training we emphasise it is a 3-way relationship between Restore, volunteer and refugee of asylum seeker, so its different from a private friendship. We also share our guidelines and boundaries for befriending.

Whilst every relationship is unique, that relationship often includes
- Welcome and listening
- Help with conversational English
- and Signposting (as we don’t expect volunteers to solve all the problems themselves)

In terms of numbers – each year we hope for 75 people on our training courses and 50 new befriending relationships. Over the last 16 years we’ve made over 800 matches. Some are quite short term; others have become enduring friendships. We currently have 137 ongoing befriending matches.
What outcomes are we hoping for?
- increased friendships and social connections with people from Birmingham
- improved communication skills in English, particularly conversational English;
- increased intercultural competence through greater understanding of and adaptation to life in the UK;
- and reduced loneliness and social isolation.

One of my favourite quotes: “I have found my befriender very supportive, informative, caring and considerate. Restore has enabled me to confidently integrate myself into the community. I found Restore like a shelter for people, like me, who are lost in this world.”

That family have over the years become well integrated: Husband started his own business, wife is volunteering, children excelled at school and they are now proud British citizens.

Biggest challenge – lock down! How could an organisation focused on face-to-face befriending adapt?
I went to a Connection Coalition webinar on Loneliness and heard a really stark statement “the health impact of loneliness has been found to be comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, equal to a 26 per cent increase in the likelihood of mortality”. That underlined the importance of maintaining and building supportive relationships at this time of increased isolation for many.
So, we asked our volunteers to move from face-to-face to remote befriending, where possible contacting their befriended using WhatsApp video calls. Video calls have been a revelation for us. Having that visual connection is amazing and it aids communication particularly with those who have limited English. We also knew other refugees and asylum seekers who were on their own, without any other family members. As they would benefit from a befriender, we started working on a temporary remote befriending scheme – where we would invite existing volunteers to take on an additional refugee or asylum seeker during lockdown and video call them once a week. We reviewed our safeguarding advice and added new guidelines including not having other members of your own family in the room during a call and only speaking to a service user’s child if the parent was also on screen.

We launched the new Temporary Remote befriending scheme on 1 April and since then have made 52 new befriending relationships.

- One beneficiary, who is finding lockdown challenging due to health issues said, “I’m waiting for Tuesday every week! It’s good when I speak with my befriender.”
- An asylum seeker with low level mental health issues said after a call “Even now I feel a lot better because you talked to me, thank you so much!”
- And it’s been great to hear of some of the creative things that are possible via video call. One befriender started to teach the asylum seeker he supports to play chess and then they went on to play mancala as they found it simpler.
- A befriender who discovered that as the video calls were difficult due to the limited English of the refugee, tried cooking via WhatsApp. The refugee is teaching the volunteer to cook
food from her country! In the process, the refugee is also learning words for ingredients and cooking processes in English and growing in confidence.

**Other challenges:** the ongoing challenge of keeping up with changing Covid guidelines and regulations,

- Adapting our training course to Zoom – time consuming but worthwhile – had 60 at our October course,
- getting more male befrienders
- and the ever-present challenge of funding.

**Learning Points**

- Common interests can help the relationship get off the ground – similar working roles, similar hobbies – sewing, cooking, reading or supporting same football team
- One thing we are certain of – a seemingly small thing like a video call can have a positive impact, especially at the moment
- Befriending has positive impact on the volunteer as well as the refugee – one volunteer wrote: “There’s no better way of understanding and engaging with the issues surrounding refugees while making rewarding friendships and being enriched by them.

[www.restore-uk.org](http://www.restore-uk.org)
[https://twitter.com/RestoreBefriend](https://twitter.com/RestoreBefriend)

Jeremy Thompson, Restore Manager befriend@restore-uk.org

Link to short film about our work that includes comments from volunteers and refugees and asylum seekers. Mix of comments re face-to-face and remote befriending:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpnDXpsVTQc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpnDXpsVTQc)

Happy to hear from people who are interested in starting befriending. We’ve previously shared our experience with people from Bristol, Coventry, Hull and Stroud. We also welcome people to our awareness raising and training course for volunteers to see what we do – with no obligation to befriend with us at the end. (easier now its currently on Zoom – but next one won’t be until Spring 2021, dates yet to be fixed)

In terms of training, we cover an overview of global refugee issues, definitions of refugee and asylum seeker, introduction to asylum application process and resettlement scheme, input from a volunteer about their befriending and from a refugee about their experience of the asylum application process, our guidelines and boundaries for befriending, support offered to befrienders by Restore and feedback hoped for from volunteers. Training also includes film clips and interactive elements. It is usually 3 x 2 hour sessions, for Zoom we adapted it down to 3 x 90 minute sessions.
‘Building Skills through Befriending’ - Hadil Tamim, Reading City of Sanctuary

**Programme Overview**

- Informal language practice tailored to building skills and interests
- Building relationships and stability
- Familiarizing newcomers with the local context (local landmarks, events, opportunities)
- Building practical skills (email writing, completing forms, driving test practice etc.)
- Identifying needs and signposting
- Language practice at the center
- 10-week learning journey tailored to needs and interests
- Opportunity to continue beyond the 10 weeks by mutual agreement
- Currently 25 active pairs with a further 15 in the pipeline
- 100+ hrs of interaction a month

**Preparation and Support for Volunteer Befrienders**

- Application from incl. references
- DBS checks
- Online safeguarding training, for example see here: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr1h22g_ZoT7CJCeA2IrT1k_9N9tM8bfc](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr1h22g_ZoT7CJCeA2IrT1k_9N9tM8bfc)
- Intercultural and unconscious bias training at regular intervals
- Introductory ‘matching session’
- Careful matching of pairs (age, gender, relevant skills)
- In-session support for initial sessions (esp. for beginners)
- WhatsApp group for volunteers (sharing relevant resources, events)
- Language training and resources provided by Reading University

**BSB during Covid restrictions**

- Connecting mostly remotely with some in-person meetings during the summer
- Befrienders ensuring clients aware of Covid guidance
- Online working has been mostly beneficial (e.g. parents with caring responsibilities)
- Sessions beneficial for older self-isolating volunteers
- Regular contact has helped identify immediate needs of clients

**BSB challenges**

- Lack of devices, broadband, data and IT skills (for both befrienders and clients)
- Connecting with beginners
- Teething problems with online DBS checks
- Challenges establishing regularity of sessions
- Turnover of volunteers and clients
- High number of volunteers-capacity bottlenecks
‘Welcome to Swansea’ Mentoring - Hannah Sabatia

Overview of the programme:
all these by killing some of the stereotypes along the way.
Better welcome was funded after that – Based in SCVS offices helped the org to learn more about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. By the time that ‘tenancy’ ended, SCVS was confident that they can host the project.
‘A Better Welcome’ was funded after that - This became a partnership with City of Sanctuary and SCVS funded by Big Lottery for 2 years. This is a success story of working together. Now SCVS is my employer and its great working from there. There are so many links to other projects that benefit and support the Mentoring project. E.g. Volunteering center. Over Covid, overall over 1000 volunteers wanted to be useful and responded to an appeal, some of these were happy to volunteer with Better welcome as telephone befrienders. This has been a life saver during Covid.

What have been your group’s two biggest learnings?
1. Welcome is important to people - We all feel strange in a new place, who doesn’t like to see a smile? Even if you have visited a place like a tourist, you still wish someone will smile at you. How more so people forced to leave their own home and countries by various reasons.
2. Mentoring is a valuable asset - Local people crucial and so are refugees and asylum seekers that have been mentored before.
3. Managing volunteers is a valuable resource - SCVS has what it takes to do this and the training (VIT) is well rated and helps vols to feel confident.

What remains your biggest challenge before and in the context of Covid?
1. Commitment and availability on both sides - due to changing circumstances.
2. People granted leave is great but move on and we have Welcome to Swansea - started when Swansea became 2nd COS in 2010. I was part of the research that looked in to Welcome, Integration and access to services. This was introduced by COS. We had not looked at it that way before as more and more people were arriving in the city. The local authority and organizations benefited as well having a systematic way that all this can be coordinated. At this point Challenges were: Getting local people on board, Local organizations had to make pledges so awareness was needed, Media negative articles these sometimes can demoralise but we overcame bad representation in moving forward, although saying that, the management committee has a good representation.
3. Translation - reaching people of all backgrounds especially due to language and translation in relation to data issues.
4. Lack of face to face contact – a lot is missed and people remain ‘new’ for a long time because they still haven’t got to know the city and the usual open services. Everything is still strange. How things work etc.

Tried starting CoS in Camden, but found it hard to connect with refugees in local Borough. This challenge led to setting up Host Nation, digitally, supporting all Boroughs in London. Host Nations works online - modelled on dating sites who connect people who wouldn't ordinarily meet, the digital platform accelerates opportunities to befriend and to benefit from befriending. Host Nations sees their work as a movement - similar to City of Sanctuary, and in fact was borne out of the ethos of CoS. If facilitated well, this can be transformative. After setting up, they quickly had 600 volunteer befriender sign ups across London, and made 300 matches already. There is no shortage of volunteers - people have good will, but find it difficult to connect, which is where a structured befriending platform is critical.

Host Nation is a system that is available to everyone. They just started Host Nation in Middlesbrough and are happy to enter into partnerships with local City of Sanctuary groups and other organisations.

For more info: Welcome to HostNation for CoS .pdf - Google Drive
Detailed guidance on befriending good practice: https://www.hostnation.org.uk/

Breakout sessions
Discussion question: What have been your greatest challenges in establishing and running befriending schemes and how have you overcome them?

Breakout room 1
Karen - Refugees Welcome Lewisham,  Ben Hopkinson - Northumberland County of Sanctuary, Nicola of Swindon City of Sanctuary, AMughal from Blackburn and Darwen CoS, Shelaigh McMurthie - Bfriends and teaches ESOL to Penally camp resident, lives in Scotland, Amy Nasir from Aberdeen - Action for Children (dropped off in initial moments), Jeremy Thompson of Restore
All agreed that the key challenges (during Covid) were access to tech, lack of data and confidence and skills with online to keep befriending activities going. AMughal describes how tech can inhibit people from getting involved, and that using new tech is cumbersome - gave an example of their speakers programme.

Additionally, the group discussed how some groups have managed to find funding, but often donors don’t want to fund laptops, more phones or tablets even though so much learning is moving online and phones are not really conducive to that. Nicola from Swindon approached Intel (company) nearby and received 5 laptops and are creating a tech “library”. Recommended asking local businesses for ideas/donations of old equipment. Youth Action was mentioned as a good charity which had provided funding to Darwen.

Shelaigh shared how she is supporting an asylum seeker being housed in barracks in Penally even though she lives in Scotland and online engagement allows for so many people to get involved, cross-border.

The challenge of keeping volunteers engaged and committed was discussed (high amount of turnover) - this is an increasing challenge in the age of Covid when jobs/mental health have been so badly impacted by pandemic. Lack of face to face connections also mean people don’t feel as connected to the volunteering organisation. Lack of male befrienders was another challenge identified in the group, and wondering how to identify and engage male volunteers. Maybe looking
in new locations (allotments, sports facilities). Lack of connection between volunteers was a challenge. Desire for a possible FC session on how to celebrate and support volunteers.

**Breakout room 2**
We looked at the major challenge of digital exclusion and 3 members described the solutions that their local groups had found.
In Nottingham a physical centre with donated laptops has been made available where those seeking sanctuary can use the equipment in their own time to connect with befrienders or zoom sessions with others. Social distancing, hygiene of the keyboards and mask wearing have been necessary to keep the facility open during lockdown.
In Flint a call-out to the community produced an overload of used, (pre-loved!), laptops and a person seeking sanctuary has been reconditioning many of these where necessary. This has increased his personal sense of dignity and value as well as widening the uptake of online befriending opportunities among others seeking sanctuary in the town.
On Teesside, the Red Cross has been very generous in providing mobile phones and other IT equipment and it was confirmed that the Red Cross is willing to do likewise in other parts of the country.
We then looked at the challenge of boundary setting in befriending. There is a range of responses that might need to be considered when a very human process takes place within an organisation that has overall responsibility for safeguarding. It was generally felt that some level of training, selection and supervision was desirable but that the organic nature of a truly meaningful one-to-one relationship must be respected and allowed to grow without too much outside interference.

**Breakout room 3**
**Dianne- Action for children Aberdeen**: support 29 families. They do not have befriending programme, but it is worried about isolation and they would like to start a project away from action. Here to get ideas.
**Rosarie- Rippon**: A volunteer supporting people in learning english. She is hoping to start befriending and is keen to learn training sessions.
**Sarah, Swindon CoS**: run a remote befriending service. It hasn’t been successful. Data was an issue, it is difficult to establish relationships.
**Maggie RCoS**: shared a little bit about the Befriending Initiative which has been running in Reading for the past couple of years. She spoke about the importance of equipping and supporting volunteers with regular training and catch ups. Also the increasing focus on matching volunteers and clients according to interests and skills. The digital divide has caused issue but RCoS have managed to secure Lottery funding to help with bridge the gap.
**Katy-Beacon @ Bradford**: no befriending as yet but would really like to start and need a time line, job spec for volunteer managers.
**Dave Greater Lincolnshire**: currently a befriender to two sanctuary seekers. With one they attend football matches for their son. With the other they attended a dad’s group. The sanctuary seekers had little language so google translate was used a lot. Connecting via sport has been helpful. Dave managed to help with a bike.
**Nancy, Bingley**: works with Survivor Alliance. Wishes to set up a befriending programme to help survivors of modern slavery.
Delyth, Wales - working towards a place of sanctuary. They have engaged with their sanctuary seekers via food and music events which facilitate friendships. During govid they have engaged via walks and online.

Breakout room 4
Katja Jewell - Flintshire, Wales. Registered charity. There are only a small number of families in the area. It's primarily an English speaking Welsh area. Friendly and welcoming, but limited experience of people from other cultures. Before COVID the group held an event with a local theatre on International Women’s Day bringing together women from Syria and local businesswomen so that conversations could start and connections built.

Hannah Sabatia from Swansea - run and coordinate the welcoming project with Charlotte (see presentation earlier).

Charlotte - just started with Hannah and is being mentored by her. Feel lucky that in Swansea there is a big appetite for this work.

Sarah Tolley in Edinburgh, volunteering with Refugee Survival Trust and Re-Act, and runs the Community Garden in the Meadows - interested in Gardens of Sanctuary.

Ruth Alexander - Set up Pitlochry Welcomes Refugees and work at ESOL Perth, which is in the process of applying for a Sanctuary Award. As well as teaching ESOL, group provides social activities and support.

Kirsty Whitely - works with Aberdeen City Council, supporting 12-25 year old members of the 28 resettled families within Aberdeen.

Delivering Youth Achievement Awards with young people in schools, eventually introducing them to local community centres. A challenge is that young people and their parents are at different stages of integration. Can befriending for parents help bridge that gap?

Zena - North West London. Providing welfare and housing advice, ESOL classes, school uniforms, backpacks, GP registration, Christmas and Eid events. Hoping to start a befriending service.

A wide-ranging discussion, resulting in the following points to feed back to the main group:

- Many of the projects delivered by groups have a flavour of befriending, even if that was not the original stated intention. Useful now to retrospectively consult guidance around befriending structures, boundaries and safeguarding. The Host Nation presentation was of particular interest.

- Importance of involving people seeking sanctuary in our projects, which can be transformative - modelling in our groups what we would like society at large to look like. Projects also become far more effective if they are informed by direct experience.

- Can befriending projects help reduce the integration gap between parents and their children, who typically integrate and ‘feel at home’ much faster?

Breakout room 5

- One of the biggest challenges was around how to form new relationships or partnerships for the first time. Zoom is difficult to meet and build rapport with new contacts.
• Two of the group had experiences of befriending social distancing one-to-one outdoors and found that very useful for language support, using walking around places (around city parks, along the river, for example) very useful for talking points to support people in their language learning.

• Language was brought up as an issue - difficulty in supporting people seeking sanctuary where languages barriers have prevented people being able to explain how to join a Zoom call.

• Two of the group expressed challenges around knowing which topics of conversations to have with people seeking sanctuary. Shams very helpfully suggested ‘open questions’ - “What would you like to talk about?” “What do you enjoy doing?” “What have you been doing this week” “What do you need to make you feel better this week” (my examples) to help open up the conversation.

• The group expressed the need for further support with training volunteers up in safeguarding and practical support around coordinating online activities.

Breakout room 6
Faye from Stafford - training for befrienders takes a lot of time but then have drop outs or circumstances change - trying to reduce the amount of upfront training and do more as volunteers go along.

Netta from Stafford - would like information about whether teenagers can volunteer

Hadil from Reading - benefit of already knowing clients when lockdown began. Have had issues with data and devices. Homework club given as an example. Hadil also mentioned Zoom instructions available in other languages which have been helpful.

Satti from Tees Valley - Not having face to face contact is an issue. Have had success in getting devices but need to train users

Gisela from Glasgow - From Quaker Meeting who are looking for opportunities for befriending

Farah and Ross from Aberdeen - No service for refugees and asylum seekers in Aberdeen. It is difficult to get immigration advice and LA is reluctant to take responsibility for a befriending scheme. Digital skills are more of an issue than devices.

Breakout room 7
• The group discussed TimePeace and how they communicate via Slack and run speed friending events.

• We heard from East Meets West who run a project matching people seeking sanctuary with older people in the local community, which is funded by the council and headed by a person with lived experience. The pairings are supported by additional English speakers where needed. The lead uses instinct to match people taking into account common shared interests.

• Refugee Support Network runs services for 14-25 year olds who match local volunteers with young people to provide supporting, focusing on education. They have struggled with engagement during lockdown, especially when activities are not running.

• Preston City of Sanctuary have lots of volunteers and they try to match people to those who need support. They want to run a project with children.
● GREC have concerns about the wellbeing of people living in hotel accommodation, particularly around lack of connection and lack of integration. They refer to the people they work with as “new Scots” as opposed to any title relating to their immigration status. Digital exclusion has been a big challenge this year, as has high demand on services. It was fed back that the initial contact and early relationship building is hardest in lockdown.

● One participant explained she was a one to one befriender, working with a family as part of Stafford Welcomes Refugees. They have had to use Google translate over the phone and it has been challenging due to the family having no experience of zoom.

● It was discussed that the biggest challenges at present are running opportunities remotely and digital exclusion.

● It was also discussed that whilst not ideal, befriending via WhatsApp, google translate or in less ideal locations has helped keep people supported in 2020 and gives something to build from.

Befriending and wellbeing
Follow up session on Tuesday 8th - our next Facilitated Conversation will discuss how Arts and Sports can enhance mental health and well-being during COVID
Register here: https://data.cityofsanctuary.org/civicrm/event/info?id=51&reset=1
Boundaries of befriending may be discussed at that session.

Further Befriending Resources:

Zoom ‘Chat’, includes helpful links to resources and ideas

Colleen Molloy : Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us. Have a great session.
Sara Trewhitt from COS UK : Hello All! How marvellous to have so many of you on this call. Welcome!
Nikki CoS: Welcome everyone. I am Nikki, the Regional Coordinator for South and South West England. Nice to see so many people here.
Gün Orgun : Good morning all - I am Gün, Scotland Coordinator for City of Sanctuary
Ruth Alexander : Morning all! Ruth from Esolperth and Pitlochry Refugee Support here :) 
Nikki : Charter: https://cityofsanctuary.org/about/
Ross (GREC) [He/Him/They/Them] [Aberdeen, Scotland] : I'd be really interested in a session about theory of change :)
Hilary Hopwood : I would also be interested in a session on the theory of change
Swindon City of Sanctuary : As would I :
Colleen Molloy : Conversational English is so important and we are looking to provide a forum for volunteers who are trying to do this one to one via telephone. Isolation in lockdown has made befriending much more difficult and even more important
Molly McCall GREC Outreach : Our colleagues at GREC run conversational English sessions twice a week via Zoom which I believe have been going very well!
Jen Rankin: Hi all - Jen here from Preston City of Sanctuary. Shout out to Aftab at from Blackburn with Darwen and Shams, from Tees Valley Sanctuary who both run GREAT PROJECTS!

Molly McCall GREC Outreach: Thanks Gun! If you're in/around Aberdeen/NE Scotland you can find out more about our English language projects here: [https://www.facebook.com/LearnEnglishAberdeen](https://www.facebook.com/LearnEnglishAberdeen)

Alexandra (TimePeace): Sure! Quick intro: TimePeace run an online Slack community where refugees, asylums and locals can meet, chat and join or host activities together. Everyone is welcome - you can signup here: bit.ly/tpjoinslack. Feel free to email me if you would like to know more - alexandra@timepeaceapp.org

Sara Trewhitt from COS UK: This point about how befrienders are enriched also by the experience of volunteering is so important. We ALL benefit by creating new friendships - -and this makes our communities more cohesive and safe.

Gün Orgun: Please have a look at the events page of the CoS website where you can find presentation slides and recordings of past facilitated conversations, as well as events we have coming up. [https://cityofsanctuary.org/get-involved/latest-cos-uk-events/](https://cityofsanctuary.org/get-involved/latest-cos-uk-events/)

Nicola David: In Ripon (small Dales town), we only have 3 refugee families. But we have lots of keen people wanting to help! Given the way the world runs on Zoom now, being local doesn't matter? Can we advertise for befrienders on behalf of other groups, if anyone needs more befrienders?

Sam Sayer: In Bristol we have found that it's useful if befrienders have local knowledge and also that they can meet up once lockdown is over. @Sam, b.friend

Sam Sayer: I have struggled to match people virtually. It is hard to begin a partnership on video phone especially if language is poor and buying credit is an option.

Netta Cartwright: Can teenagers be befrienders? If so in what way?

Shams Samsoudini: we organise Fun Friday, a platform where all are welcome and unwind by the end of the week. Great place to make friends, share culture, quizzes, games, singing, music, origami, acting, stand up, improv...anything to relax and unwind.

Jen, Preston CoS: Right on, Hannah! A SMILE goes a LONG way....!!

Swindon City of Sanctuary: Would any of the speakers be happy to share their befriending training with us, agenda/points covered?

Shams Samsoudini: Funday Friday will be on at 4pm today! If you would like to bring a game or a quiz along, please do! Online via Zoom at 4 - 5pm (1 hour)
Every Friday To Join
Join Zoom Meeting
[https://zoom.us/j/2969132528?pwd=hKEdRtzLIUJF64SQRlul9D7fNCFyM](https://zoom.us/j/2969132528?pwd=hKEdRtzLIUJF64SQRlul9D7fNCFyM)
Meeting ID: 296 913 2528 Passcode: 15243

Netta Cartwright: Stafford has it’s own training course

Becca (Refugee Roots, Nottingham): yes we'd be happy to share our training agenda and I'd be keen to hear from and learn about what others include, to see if there's anything we should add

Ross (GREC) [He/Him/They/Them] {Aberdeen, Scotland}: [https://www.hostnation.org.uk/](https://www.hostnation.org.uk/)

Ben: The big problem we face is providing asylum seekers with suitable technology for zoom etc, and ensuring they have enough data. The cost is a real problem.
Sara Trewhitt from COS UK: Thanks Ben for highlighting this issue - the challenge of accessing data/tech is a major problem. What have people done to address this? Ideas?

Sam Slatcher: Good point Ben - something we have definitely been challenged by. A good topic to explore in the breakout groups.

Ross (GREC) [He/Him/They/Them] {Aberdeen, Scotland}: Digital skills has been the biggest barrier locally for Syrian New Scots - there is funding for devices and even data, but if you don't know how to use the device...

Kate Scott - Northampton Town of Sanctuary: @Ben -yes, even with data purchased, a phone is not really adequate for (eg) learning activities.

Molly McCall GREC Outreach: The Connecting Scotland scheme trains up “digital champions” to help folk provided with devices learn how to use them.

Kate Scott - Northampton Town of Sanctuary: Similar problem - I'm investigating on-line learning for one young man, but even libraries are closed again - no free wifi access at present with screen.

Sheilagh Guthrie: Anneka do you cover Stockton?

Sam Sayer: In Bristol the befrienderes are referred because they are vulnerable and unlikely to access the other organisations/ welcome centres etc. They are less likely to cope with digital befriending.

Nicola David: I need an Arabic-speaker to befriend a house-bound (disabled) lady in Middlesbrough/Redcar :-(

Sarah Connell: In Wakefield we would be glad to talk to you re partnership

Jen, Preston CoS: Brilliant work, Anneke. Will share your website with Preston CoS.

Jen, Preston CoS: Q: How do we most effectively deal with befriending during Lockdown

Ross (GREC) [He/Him/They/Them] {Aberdeen, Scotland}: COVID-19 is bringing existing digital/device exclusion/divide/poverty problems into focus. It's about action now. The issues are clear. No more (authority) excuses. Promote universal internet access and connectivity, and increase and improve digital skills training and education opportunities - better provision, better promotion, such that people know about it and are receptive to it and want to take part.

Swindon City of Sanctuary: Would be very interested in discussing possibly working together Anneke :)
Colleen Molloy: Links to potential funders for Covid responses
https://covid19.cityofsanctuary.org/covid-19-funding

Sam Slatcher: Next Facilitated Conversation: Sports & Arts: Tuesday 8th 11 - 12:30