

VOICES IN EXILE



Brighton charity Voices in Exile (VIE) works with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants, who have no access to public funds, across East and West Sussex and Surrey.

Their team helps migrants, who are destitute for all sorts of reasons beyond their control, to access services, get legal advice, obtain small hardship grants, receive provisions through their foodbank and develop their potential through a programme of learning. VIE have used money from our fund to help a wide range of people including a family from Syria, as Director Mel Steel explains:

'The Yabroudi family, a mother and her three adult daughters, arrived in England as part of the Syrian resettlement programme. The family had complex mental and physical health needs with only one sister able to leave the house regularly. Although they were keen to learn English, the family's isolation meant that they struggled to access mainstream services.

'Money from the Refugee Crisis Fund helped us to provide the family with a dedicated caseworker able to assist them with many of their practical and legal needs. As she got to know the family, she felt that it would be beneficial for them to have a volunteer mentor.

'In July 2018 the family were matched with one of our volunteers, a practising psychotherapist with professional experience of using art therapy to help people who have experienced trauma. One of the sisters had previously been a keen artist; through gentle encouragement, small steps and simple

conversations the sisters started to draw. This allowed them to focus on something positive also providing an opportunity to open up, in an unpressured way, about some of the experiences they lived through in Syria.

'Support is ongoing, the family's volunteer mentor has made important progress, managing to encourage the family to venture outside as far as the garden – something they were previously unable to do. Their interest in gardening has developed as a result and their mentor is now working to encourage them to visit a nearby allotment. They have started to make connections with one of their neighbours, who brought them a gift. Their mentor reports that she is learning too and is being taught to cook Syrian food!'

£5

enables a VIE client to travel to and from VIE's office to attend a vital casework meeting, one of their advice sessions or their weekly food bank.

Voices in Exile:

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