

b.friend update**February 2017**

Our befrienders continue to inspire us with their commitment to those befriendees they have been matched with and their intention to bring something good their way. Several befriendees with refugee status are waiting for their families to come to the UK to join them. For one Somali woman this means her 7 children and husband who she has been without for almost 4 years, leaving when the youngest child was 2 years old. I was delighted this week to see a Syrian woman, who has a befriender, with her children in our local supermarket with her newly arrived husband!

A significant problem to matching those referred to befriendees is location. Increasingly asylum seekers are being accommodated in Kingswood, Hanham and even Avonmouth where the housing is cheaper. This means they are an expensive bus ride from the services created to make life easier and them less isolated. The majority of our current volunteers don't have access to a car, which makes it impossible to provide a befriending service for those in most need of social support. I am making connections with local church leaders in the Kingswood area to discuss recruiting volunteers from their congregations. Having local volunteers with local interest would be fantastic.

The next b.friend training course for volunteers is coming up in April/May. Please do get in touch if you would like to come or have any questions.

The Craft Collective is going from strength to strength. We regularly have 5 women on a Saturday afternoon and they have recently made lovely cotton tunics for themselves. We are exploring a partnership with BirdSong, an online ethical fashion company based in London, but with makers from UK and beyond. The idea would be for the women to be making a garment sold through Birdsong and getting a small wage for this. We hope to meet with Birdsong soon and this feels like an exciting development.

Huge thanks for your valued prayers and giving to b.friend.

Sam Sayer