

## New Beginnings Project

April 2021 - Issue 3

Activities of January, February and March

### EDITORIAL TEAM

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**INTRODUCTION:** Blackburn YMCA works with the asylum and refugee communities through the New Beginnings Project in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

The aim of the project is: *Integration through Empowerment.*

### COVID-19 AND THE REFUGEE COMMUNITY

The coronavirus pandemic is a challenge for everyone, but without targeted support and help the refugee community may suffer disproportionately. Throughout the pandemic wave, we have adapted our provision and supported the refugee community in many ways.

The situation related to the coronavirus pandemic during the first quarter of the year was not very clear although the government announced a roadmap of the lockdown in the UK – Road the government’s ‘Covid-19 Response- Spring 2021’.

We have been trying to ensure that the refugee community is informed, and we encourage them to comply with the Government’s instructions.

We encourage people to rely on the mainstream TV networks, as well as local radio stations such as Lancashire BBC Radio. Moreover, we encourage people to visit the Home Office, Blackburn Council and NHS websites for the latest information.

We mainly worked remotely, and regularly maintained contact with the community, via social media, phone, email and text messages.

The YMCA community champions have been keeping in contact with their community members to ensure that people are supported and informed, and no one feels isolated and alone.

### ONLINE EVENTS

We conducted all meetings and events online on Zoom.

### SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

During the lockdown, community members looked after each other, and especially elderly people in different ways.

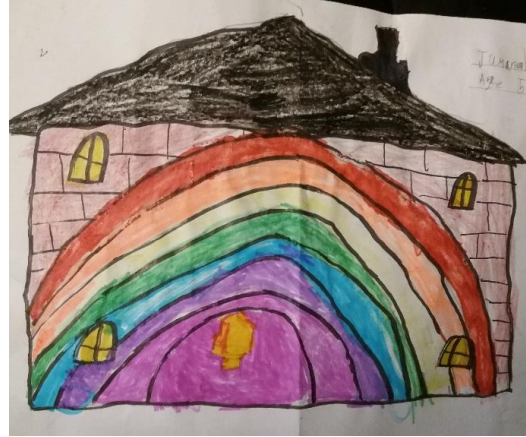
## CHILDREN'S DRAWING COMPETITION

During the month of January and February, YMCA organised two drawing competitions of children's age from 5 to 10 years old and from 11 to 15 years old. The theme was: My Home.

**Winners of phase 1** - First prize: Awabodjie - Second prize: Jumanah - Third prize: Hamid



**Awabodjie**



**Jumanah**



**Hamid**

**Winners of phase 2** - First prize: Haddy Badjee - Second prize: Mourgaan Alsager  
Third prize: Musab Hamid



**Haddy Badjee**



**Mourgaan Alsager**



**Musab Hamid**

## **INFORMATION SHARING**

Regularly, we disseminated information to the asylum and refugee community, which we receive from other organisations, on matters such as;

- Job opportunities
- Free trainings
- Social activities
- Educational opportunities
- Volunteering opportunities
- COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing
- Information from Blackburn Council, Home Office, an Public Health England
- Information which we receive from other organisations

## **JOB SUPPORT GROUP**

The *Job Support Group* is active. There are a few volunteers who are part of the group and are open to assist people in CV writing, job search and searching for volunteering work.

## **ONE TO ONE SUPPORT**

Because of COVID-19, we changed our working practice to help people in their different needs. We provided assistance via email and WhatsApp, or over the phone. We only allowed people to visit the office, and the project coordinator's visit to the community members, if it was essential. However, we made sure that everyone strictly adheres to government guidelines and standard operating procedures, regarding social distancing, PPE and contact with others.

Moreover, we provided support and assistance to the community on the following issues:

- Provided reference letters for jobs, university admissions and immigration cases.
- Provided information on some immigration issues.
- Signposted them to other resources and agencies.

## **ONLINE EVENTS AND MEETINGS**

Since people could not organise or attend events physically, we have provided information of online meetings, training workshops, and events, which various organisations arranged.

As we cannot organise physical meetings, we organised events and meetings online on Zoom.

## **CORE GROUP AND CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS**

During the first quarter of the year, we organised a Core Group and two consultative meetings with active champions and a few community members to plan the future activities.

## **COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS MEETING**

We have 30 male and female Community Champions, from 18 different nationalities and four faith groups: Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Sikh.

It was very encouraging that despite the problems of equipment, digital knowledge, and internet data issues, a good number of people turned up.

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER	PARTICIPANTS
23 January	Community Support	Penelope D'Souza (Stimulus Ltd.)	15
20 February	Financial support to start up a Business,	Dr Ajaz Ahmed Khan (LCC)	17
27 March	Green House Project,	Andy Mather, Myplace Project Officer	19

### **NEW YEAR PARTY**

A New Year Party was organised on 16 January. Two community champions, Mariam and Hardi plan and run the whole activity. A good number of people attended the party.

### **TRAINING WORKSHOPS**

A number of people attended various training workshops, including, Benefits Eligibility for Migrants, Benefits and Social Responsibility, Financial Management Training, Racial Justice and Refugee Solidarity, Speaking to Media and Media Relations Training, and Disinformation and Misinformation Training.

### **NETWORKING AND PARTNERS MEETINGS**

The staff of YMCA attended a couple of networking and partners' meetings and sessions.

### **CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

YMCA celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March. Rev. Daleen Ten Cate, Councillor Saima Afzal MBE and Councillor Julie Gunn were the guest speakers of the event while Chris Seddon facilitated the programme. Many women from different parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire attended the event.

### **A FEW MAJOR FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

- Champions Meetings
- Children and Family's Drawing Competitions
- Eid Party
- Eid Picnic Trips
- Home Gardening
- Iftar Party
- REFUGEE WEEK: Community Party, Cultural Evening, Drawing Exhibition, Interfaith Session
- Women's Meetings
- Youth Day Trip