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Newsletter #1

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Investing in People & Culture (IPC) was set up in 2015 by Bini Araia and Sirak Hagos.

Bini and Sirak fled their homeland of Eritrea to seek refuge in the UK sixteen years ago. The charity is headquartered in Middlesbrough and works to promote the economic and social inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and other minority communities, providing links to vital services as well as opportunities for education, training and rewarding recreational activities.

Our news

IPC receive award from Duke of York

On April 3rd, IPC received a Duke of York Community Initiative award at Catterick barracks. Bini had a pleasant surprise when he was presented with another award for outstanding leadership, in recognition of his personal dedication and achievements. Two of our volunteers were able to accompany Bini and our Chair Karen to receive the awards and it was a great experience for everyone.



IPC community awards celebration

At the end of March we hosted our first Refugee Community Awards celebration in Newcastle. This was to recognise the hard work of our volunteers and associated community groups which we have supported and partnered throughout the last year.



Daniel Tewdros receiving 'Volunteer of the year' from our charity patron Dr. Hari Shukla.

Project focus Lottery funding

This lottery fund is concerned with the causes and impact of loneliness in all aspects of society, and as such we are part of a large research programme, with our anonymised data contributing to the big picture.

Most refugees confront similar challenges which can lead to loneliness, including language barriers and cultural differences, the loss of a support system of old friends and family as well as facing stigma and discrimination in their new communities.

Our work related to loneliness involves removing the barriers to integration and building the social connections to support people.

We offer community drop-in sessions for refugees and vulnerable migrants, where they can receive help and support with issues related to employment, language, housing, health, legal issues, and education. The support is provided primarily through our core workers with help from our partner interpreting service, and other specialist organisations such as CAB.

Addressing these issues is a vital precursor to developing new social pathways but also serves as a means of building trust with individuals and informally assessing their needs.

When it is clear that clients have limited social connections, we are able to connect them with a Refugee Community Organisations (RCO) serving their home community, or introduce them to one of our activity sessions where they can make connections in an informal and fun environment.



IPC volunteer Mehari Estefanos helps a user with an immigration issue.

People focus

Case study 1

Mr. J is a 35-year-old from Iran who was dispersed to Hemlington in Middlesbrough. His house is 7 miles away from the town centre, where most of the services for refugee communities exist. Mr. J received just £35 per week as an asylum seeker. He cannot afford to use the bus to access services. We paid for his one-week bus pass ticket and placed him in our cycle recycle program where he attended 4 days training and secured a bicycle, helmet and D-lock. Mr. J now uses his bicycle to travel to and from his house to central Middlesbrough.

Case study 2

Mr. S is over 60 years old and is an asylum seeker from Afghanistan. He has complex physical health issues and does not speak English. Due to him waiting a long time for his immigration status, his poor physical health and language barriers, he suffers from serious depression, anxiety and loneliness. Mr. S loves our group trips, he joined the group that we took to Lastingham. Mr. S told me (in his broken English) “no GO to Middlesbrough, me stay everyday here with sheep and chicken. Me like these people” (referring to the wonderful reception we had by Lastingham community).