**Newsletter Autumn 2021**

**Introduction**

Xxxxxxxxxx – use annual report info for summary?

**Welcome Centre update: Re-opening after covid-19**

We have been meeting in the Garden at ECFC over the summer 2021 since the Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. It's been great reconnecting with members and volunteers and we have enjoyed lovely Samosas and having our cafe open. We've even had some hand sewing and other activities, although limited by the garden space.

Because of the need to be careful with Covid-19 infections still high, we are not opening up to all asylum seekers and refugees yet and have decided for the foreseeable future to focus our Welcome Centre on our BHN hosted members and members on the waiting list for housing, continuing to have our Welcome Centre indoors at ECFC over the winter. We cannot yet welcome all the Welcome Centre attendees from before the pandemic and instead work together with the rest of the refugee sector to provide services to those most in need. We encourage enquiries about volunteering from former members, asylum seekers and refugees and hope to have a diverse team at our BHN welcome centre.

We need more volunteers of all backgrounds as we re-open indoors with hot food etc so please get in touch with Helen Kidan (helen@bhn.org.uk) if you'd like to volunteer. Volunteering shifts are Mondays from 11-3pm with free lunch, full training provided.

**Story from our Hosting Network**

Claire registered as a host in April 2021 following a stint in 2018 volunteering with BHN, she is a public health doctor and lives in a house on theEast side of Bristol close to Troopers Hill Nature Reserve. Claire previously worked for Doctors of the World and has a particular passion for advocating for asylum seekers and refugees to have access to healthcare.

BHN matched Claire with a guest V from Uganda who had been made destitute by the UK's hostile environment towards asylum seekers. V moved into Claire's home in May and he has settled in really well. He tells us that he enjoys the peace of an attic room and was delighted that there was a garden. He immediately got stuck into the veg patch in Claire's garden growing beans, kale and tomatoes. He's even planted a few pineapples and mangos which are growing amazingly well so far!

V has been very focused on learning English and loves to practice conversation at home with Claire. He passed his exam in August and was delighted.

Claire has supported V with accessing medical appointments and with managing communications with BHN and deciphering emails from college. Claire says "It has been so lovely to have V's company at home. V has introduced me to Ugandan cooking and comedy and we often have really thought-provoking chats about cultural differences and growing up in rural Uganda." When I mention Claire's name, V's face breaks into a big smile and he simply says 'very happy'. V also says 'All BHN members are very friendly, and Laura cares about me so much and always wants to know if I am ok.'

**Elinor’s article – current situation/Afghanistan**

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**Helen article? - TBC**

**Big Give**

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**and appeal for regular donations?**

**Notice of AGM**

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**Volunteer induction / Vol advert - TBC**

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