

Oscar Watkins <oscar@brentactionforrefugees.com>

To:Mike Cantor

Cc:Robin Sharp,David Hodge,David Hodge,Tina Wooderson,Lee Gordon

18 Apr at 21:48

Hi Mike,

Thank you ever so much for being in touch, and I'm sorry for the slow reply.

It was brilliant to have Robin in attendance on the 7th.

Thank you also for the continued support. We hope to keep you updated as the events progress.

I'm pleased to report that the event was a success. The families, who have thus far been hesitant to engage with the wider Brent community, have agreed to continue meeting with us on a regular basis.

We shared some very British food - scones, flapjacks, biscuits and tea - and had an opportunity to spend time speaking to the families about their experiences, and their aspirations now that they have settled in the UK. It was very positive that the families are already very organised, and expressed strong opinions about the community support they need to see success in their careers and elsewhere. We have therefore agreed to explore providing a number of services around the regular 'coffee morning / tea evening' events. Our leading proposal is for some of these to be provided directly where appropriate, and for others to be referred to partner organisations.

As we had set out to achieve, we left the event feeling confident that we had made a start on working towards building community, rather than providing charity. Though perhaps easy to view as a small gesture, it was moving and powerful that the families offered to cater with Syrian food for the next event.

The families needs, and the context in which they currently live, are complicated. It will be a steady and challenging process for them to feel settled in the borough, and in the UK. However, the event left us feeling that we could make a positive impact on this process. It also provided a glimpse of the many wider benefits for Brent that will eventually follow these talented and ambitious people. It was moving, for example, to experience one of the young daughters of our first family fluently translating conversations.

I hope this provides you with what you need. Please don't hesitate to be in touch for anything else.

Oscar Watkins

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