

Case Study: Didcot Churches Refugee Welcome Group

Different churches work together to support Afghan refugees in temporary hotel accommodation

Why and how the group began

The Didcot Churches Refugee Welcome group was formed in response to the arrival in Oxfordshire in August / September 2021 of people being resettled by the UK Government from Afghanistan. Members of a number of churches (Kings, Didcot Baptist, Grace, and St Matthew's Harwell) wanted to do something to help and got together. A simple Google group was created, and a voluntary coordinator appointed. Several of the members attended Welcome Churches' helpful online Afghan Welcomer training. The group met via Zoom and communicated via email to discuss what they could offer.

Working in partnership

The group pooled their knowledge and contacts and got in touch with the senior Oxfordshire County Council officer responsible for Afghan resettlement, to offer support. They learned that the Council was housing a number of Afghan families in temporary hotel accommodation, while they waited for longer term housing around the country, and that Oxfordshire refugee charity Asylum Welcome had been contracted to provide support. Two representatives of Didcot Churches Refugee Welcome group met with Council and Asylum Welcome staff at the hotel to discuss what the Afghan families needed and ways the group might be able to help.

Meeting needs

Asylum Welcome has been able to identify specific needs that people in the hotel community have and to share these with the Welcome Group. Members of the group and others in their churches have then been able to donate goods, including sewing machines, sewing and knitting materials, and some items needed for new babies.

Cooking and Conversation



As part of activities aimed at helping the Afghans to learn more about the UK and to begin to settle here an open invitation to the Grace Church community café was extended and a group of women attended, accompanied by an Asylum Welcome volunteer.

Another member of the Welcome Group began helping with a women's cooking project. Small groups of women go with an interpreter during the week to buy ingredients; the Welcome Group member then accompanies them on a Saturday morning to a local school kitchen, where they are able to cook a meal and take it back to the hotel to eat with their families and share with others.

Two men from the group have begun conversation sessions for Afghan men at the hotel. Topics of conversation relate to life in the UK and are guided by the Afghans' interests. A similar group for women may be started, if there is interest.

Find out more

To find out more, please watch the [short video](#) (to be released in Refugee Week) and contact Joanna Schüder on joanna@ccow.org.uk, who would be very happy to talk with you.