

Welcoming Refugees Report

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Refugee Week is a celebration of events across the World which highlights the positive contributions refugees make to their local communities and promotes the positive work various organisations are doing to support refugees. We held our own event for Refugee Week on 13th July 2016 at The Bond in Digbeth, Birmingham. The aim of our event was to support Refugee Week and promote the great work of other refugee-focused organisations.

This annual event marked the third year ACH Birmingham and we decided to host a conference with a variety of amazing speakers that work with refugees talking about the remarkable work they have been doing. It was a great opportunity to showcase the amazing work of Ashley Community Housing, from our Office in Bristol to our Birmingham Service.

Osman Ishal (Birmingham Regional Manager) gave a brief introduction to ACH in Birmingham, which was followed by a presentation from Richard Thickenpenny (Business Development Manager) who informed the delegates of the resettlement and training provision. Dave Conroy (Business Development Manager) spoke about the future plans for ACH Birmingham training provision that will be coming on board as well as the need for future partnership work in Birmingham. Our keynote speaker Sabir Zazai (Director of Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre) gave an impressive speech about the importance of not only supporting refugees but making them feel WELCOME and discussed his own personal experience as a refugee. Halima (support worker), our star gave a speech on "The Effectiveness of current ESOL courses" with Wahbelbari (previous tenant) of ACH who spoke about "Factors preventing refugees from integration in the UK ". They had both been involved in research with Birmingham University, the Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRIS) and feedback the findings of their work. Dr Monder Ram OBE who is involved in extensive research and consultancy to many small businesses from Birmingham University, Centre for Research in Ethnic Migrant Entrepreneurship (CREME) who also collaborated with ACH with a research project looking at "New Migrant Entrepreneurship in the West Midlands: Beyond the economic dividend".

The Lord Mayor Councillor, Carl Rice, did a grand speech on "Welcoming Refugees" and supported the work of Ashley Community Housing. One of our tenants who will soon be commencing University in Coventry spoke of his experience as a refugee coming from Oromo and thanked ACH Birmingham for the support he received. Andy Burkitt our Chairman summed up the day and thanked everybody who attended.

We also had a discussion panel which also include Joy Warrington CEO from BRAP who leads the organisation to its cutting edge position and are recognised for producing innovative equalities and human rights research and Dave Jepson who has worked in Economic and Employment Development in the UK for more than 25 years.

The day was a great success and put ACH Birmingham on the map with many opportunities to follow up on further partnership work.