



Diocese of Hallam



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HOME FROM HOME HALLAM

Refugee Family Welcome – a Community Sponsorship project

NEWSLETTER NO. 6

January 2023

Since the last newsletter about our Syrian refugee family, we have plenty to be thankful for – and some things to reflect on. The family's arrival was celebrated by a meeting with Bishop Ralph in late October. Volunteers organised a party, with refreshments, balloons and activities for the children. The family were keen to meet with the Bishop and it was clear that they appreciated all that had been done for them.

What is going well for them?

First, despite the parents having had very little education, our family turn out to be very good at budgeting. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers, they are in receipt of a range of benefits (Universal Credit, Child Benefit and Disability Living Allowance); but we all know that the cost of living is spiralling out of control, and it is to their credit that they are managing so well. They have managed to get some warm winter clothes, and they have never asked us for money. The father attends the Job Centre regularly, and often now goes on his own.

Secondly, they love their home and are still taking steps to make it their own – putting down a rug, and removing a shelf, and changing around the bedrooms for example.

Much has been achieved in getting health checks and vaccinations for all the family – including opticians' appointments and particularly dental care, which was particularly difficult to find. The middle child has received some custom built aids – a chair, a wheelchair – but has ongoing assessments and appointments – and of course the baby still needs to be weighed regularly.

The father has been attending English classes at FACES twice a week since September. He was always extremely keen to learn, but this is his first experience of formal education. Volunteers who visit the class there regularly so that they can support him are bowled over by the clear and sympathetic teaching, but also feel that beside some of the much better educated beginners, he has a long road in front of him if he is to become literate. He is also keen to attend a conversation class, and a suitable one has been found for him.

The mother, who had some basic education, was not ready to think about learning English before her baby was born, but has benefited tremendously from the efforts of our volunteers who visit the house and repeat lessons with the father; a volunteer English tutor from SAVTE (Sheffield Association for the Voluntary Teaching of English) has just started visiting the house weekly to encourage her, and she is also attending a conversation class once a week.



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The three elder children were all accepted into the local primary school, and have been attending regularly since September. Despite the new baby, the family manage the routine of getting the children up and to school well.

So, what could be going better?

As part of our training, volunteers were told to expect bumps on the road – and there have been some.

Both parents reported that their health had deteriorated since they arrived. The father has chronic back pain, worse since August, and particularly difficult given the disabled child. Back pain is notoriously difficult to treat, and unsurprisingly the pain colours his whole life. And the mother has, of course, just had a baby. Their health is an area that concerns us.

The disabled child has only been offered two hours a day in the local primary school while she waits for a more appropriate placement. This is more than many primary schools might offer, but it does mean that she is not yet accessing the most appropriate education, and that there is the burden of three trips to the school every day. The other two children are experiencing some settling in difficulties that are expected for refugee families.

What next?

In the New Year we look forward to continuing to support the family as they negotiate our climate and culture, while also empowering them by withdrawing some of our support. The family are expected to be fully independent of us by June, 12 months after they arrived.

Your help

Perhaps our most important role is to ensure that they understand our systems and can make informed decisions about their own lives. However, in order to do this, we continue to be very dependent on interpreters, which is an unexpected ongoing expense. We appreciate the efforts of All Saints, who have been fundraising for us - and we would welcome your support too, through our JustGiving page <https://bit.ly/3D8BzKR>

An electronic copy of this newsletter can be found on the [Diocesan website](#)

Anyone who would like to know more about what we are doing, please contact Eva Kaltenthaler (ekaltenthaler@hallam-diocese.com). Please continue to remember us and the family in your prayers as our project develops.