Funding to help refugees learn English to aid resettlement

Thursday 29 September, 2016

Refugees arriving in Sandwell, West Midlands, will be able to improve their English language skills thanks to funding from Awards for All England to pay for the recruitment, training and support of a Volunteer English Language Trainer.

A key part of their role, rather than running English language training themselves, is to develop a volunteer led scheme using local volunteers as language trainers and assistants, developing their skills and experience too. This is will allow much wider impact.

Ashley Community Housing (ACH) provides accommodation and support to meet the resettlement needs of refugees. Many refugees and asylum seekers arrive with little or no experience of the English culture or language. To resettle, avail themselves of opportunities and lead an independent life they require English language skills. Without this they often remain stuck, living on benefits or in low paid often insecure employment.

This year ACH are supporting the resettlement needs of approximately 230 refugees in Sandwell, Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Our aspiration is to develop and deliver a new volunteer-led functional English language programme with Awards for All, which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This new English language project will be a cornerstone in this process.

A focus group of refugees held 5th February 2016 agreed their three key priorities, beyond immediate housing, as being the acquisition of English, gaining employment and integrating within their local community. From our weekly job club activity we also know that 80% of attendees need significant support to complete job applications, 90% need a CV, and 65% need highly personalised support to prepare for and attend interviews. A key challenge in all this work, currently preventing maximum individual impact, is poor English. Our English language programme will address this and enable refugees to better access job opportunities and integrate better within the local community.

Dave Conroy, Business Development Manager said: “Awards for All represents the opportunity to offer a long term investment matched to the needs of the community.”

(Ends)

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