

## **Welsh Public Library Standards 2022-23**

### **Neath Port Talbot Libraries**

#### **Impact Statement**

In May 2022 the Library Service set up the first of its many activities to support Ukrainian refugees who had been relocated to the local area. Library staff worked alongside Local Area Coordinators to devise a programme of sessions and workshops. Whilst support has been provided at all libraries this Impact Statement focusses on work carried out at Neath and Port Talbot Library.

In the first instance Community Coffee Mornings were set up with the aim of giving Ukrainian refugees a meeting place where, not only could they meet with representatives from different local authority departments and get support from our Local Area Coordinators, but they also gave opportunities for a 'befriending' between local residents and Ukrainian families who would give advice on things like shopping locally, or recommend places to go, things to do, invited them to local churches etc. A sharing of cultures developed with people sharing home-made local delicacies, music and stories.

Refugees were invited to take part in library activities and to join our groups. The children have made new friends through these and gained confidence. Many of the mums with young children also started attending the Song & Rhyme in the library on Friday morning before going to the coffee morning and this gave them and their little ones an opportunity to socialise with more people.

#### **Olha Samsonenko**

I am so much appreciate not just what you are doing not just for us Ukrainians but for true dedication to all the people. For your kindness, patience and encouragement. In my country we almost don't have libraries any longer. But as a real bookworm I find myself entirely happy being here. That's my escape from my own reality. I wish I could spend more time there. My best wishes to you and those supporting your library.

#### **Daniel Garnell, Local Area Co-ordinator**

I'm writing to you to praise how Port Talbot Library supported the Ukrainian Refugees who were hosted in Neath Port Talbot.

My role at the time was as one of a team of Local area Coordinators and we were tasked with settling in the refugees in our communities and helping them feel safe and connected with the community.

Port Talbot Library, were supportive from the start, hosting a free coffee morning for the refugees to have an opportunity to meet community members and also other displaced individuals.

It was a great resource that allowed for agencies to link in, identify need and provide locally based solutions.

We had a local gentleman attend to teach the Ukrainians English and to help us converse with them.

He did this with no financial recompense and just did it as it was the right thing to do.

The coffee morning was so important to our guests, that even when a few families were re homed in Cardiff, they still came to the coffee morning to stay connected, and one couple said that despite them living in Cardiff, Port Talbot would always be their Welsh home.

The staff at the library were so kind and attentive in the way they cared for our guests and then encourage the coffee morning to naturally change into a community coffee morning.

I wish to express how grateful, our LAC team was to have this resource and how this event at the library was replicated on other wards in NPT.