

News from SHARES

Sherborne Area Refugee Support has now been going for almost two years. We started out as a group who were deeply concerned about the refugee situation in Europe and wanted to help in some way.

Our first aim was to get Dorset to take in families. When we had doors closed in our face we went to Calais to see what the situation first hand. We took a van load of donations and volunteers. We returned after a week of cooking, building, distributing and teaching. We returned more determined than ever that Dorset should take Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Finally, about this time in 2017, Dorset took in their first families. They came to stay in Portland. There are now 14 families living all over the county – Four are living in the Sherborne Area, two in Shaftesbury and one in Gillingham

It has been very exciting for all of us who help. We work in all sorts of different ways. One of the original team is extremely knowledgeable on all things to do with refugees and their rights. She does an enormous amount of research and has recently started working full time with an NGO called Safe Passage. Others on the team befriend families; teach English; speak at schools; offer transport to appointments; foster young people seeing asylum and work to raise awareness of the plight of people's fleeing war torn countries. We also collect donations of clothes, blankets etc for distribution to refugee camps around the world

It is amazing the friends that we have made.? We weren't prepared for how close we would become to the families we support. We have learned a great deal about the Syrian culture and the Islam faith. Everyday seems to bring a new insight.

Surprises come in all shapes. And the most heart-warming thing has been the kindness of people in our community. We started out collecting blankets and hats to take to the camps in Calais. Since that time in 2016 we have collected HUNDREDS of car loads of clothes, blankets, food and medicines to send to the camps in Europe. We have found an amazing place in Taunton called RAFT who take collections and send them out. (They waste nothing and will also help with Food Bank and local homeless)

Our donations are collected in Cheap Street Church and have received the support of the church. We are so grateful to the many who have given so generously with their time as well as their gifts. One member of the church even offered an outbuilding to store donations waiting to go to Taunton.

Last year a church member offered her beautiful house to be used by a Syrian family. She watches over them like they were her own family.

So, unfortunately, the need continues and our work goes on. We are in need of people who think they could have a young asylum seeker living with them. This is done through the fostering department. We are also in need of houses. If you know of anyone who could offer a family a home to rent for 5 years please contact us . (All houses for resettled families have to be sourced privately.)

Thank you for your wonderful support over the past year or two.

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