

Notes from LRSg meeting 28th March, 7:30pm, Bell Inn

1. Attendance and Introductions: (Francis has names)
Serena Collins of Cornwall Council in attendance
2. Apologies: Georgi Bellem (unwell), Bill (meeting clash)
3. Treasurer's Report:
Current balance £15,0046.16 after paying £1370 deposit and advance rent for house (the bulk of which will come back from Cornwall Council) and £100 towards costs of Rob's last trip to N.France (we have agreed similar payments towards costs for future trips)
Monthly regular donations: £230 (NB these can be gift aided, simply confirm to Janet (treasurer@lrsg.org.uk) that you are a UK taxpayer)
4. Family Support
 - a) Extensive report from Serena Coliins.
Home Office advised today that we have a potential family match for our house offering. 2 adults, 2 children aged 16 (girl) and 9 (boy).
Subject to confirmation on educational support for the 16yo the target arrival date is 4th June
 - b) House and Equipment Support.
Elspeth reported significant progress on donations of items to meet the previously circulated list of items. A revised list in light of better knowledge about ages of family will be circulated.
Some issues outstanding around the landlord wanting a signed paper copy of agreements – these will be provided – and who and when is taking on electricity contract and council tax. Serena and Francis will deal with these.

3a Interruption as Mayor Margaret entered bearing donations of £300 from the Youth Council to be spent specifically on items for the children, and £222.48 from St.Catherines (?school collection??). These sums to be added to the balance reported above. In response to a question Serena said that it was probable that the younger child would in fact be placed at St.Catherines given location of the house but this would depend on demand for and availability of places at the various schools.

Serena outlined the support items available through the council including new mattresses for beds, curtains and linen as required.
Broadband connection will not be provided by council, but this will be decided upon by the family themselves as part of their budgeting and settling in process.
 - c) Befrienders and Relationship support.
Jain reported that she had a list of 20+ names of people wanting to act as befrienders/helpers.

Serena explained the role of the START (Student Refugee Assistance) team who she contracts for practical support and the relationship support professionals and integrating that with the local team.

There is a possibility of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) providing a 1 day training session before the family arrived for those who may be interacting with the family. They are proposing a date of 8th May if at least 20 attendees are possible. Serena explained that this has been run very successfully before and that there would also be START people and others who may want to attend.

It was agreed to go ahead with that date and Serena will confirm with IOM.

The venue is likely to be Central Methodist Hall (Doug confirmed it is available on that date). It will be a full day session from about 10am to 4pm – full details will be circulated in due course but those wishing to attend might wish to get the date in their diaries now.

If you would like to attend please email info@lrsg.org.uk to say that you would like to attend the IOM one day training on 8th May so that we know numbers and a list will be forwarded to Serena.

FT will ensure that school contacts and GP surgery are aware and send delegates
Joe will provide catering for lunch

d) Other support items

In response to a question Serena explained that trauma counselling needs usually emerged some time after a family has arrived and once they are beginning to feel settled, this is not an immediate issue.

With the family arriving early June there is the opportunity to think about and start to plan fun summer activities/trips that the family can take. Serena has resources from Volunteer Cornwall to draw on and FT will follow up her contacts.

e) ESOL Learning Support

Home Office guidance is for 8 hours/week of qualified ESOL plus conversational support. The ESOL teachers present (Jan and Sylvia) had various technical and organisational questions which Serena was able to respond to, particularly regarding the provision from Adult Ed (2hrs/week plus equipment) which provides a basis.

FT will put Sylvia and Jan directly in contact with Serena

3) 2nd Family

in response to a question Serena said that she felt it would be very advantageous to move forward with a second family as soon as possible for multiple reasons including economies of scale in terms of providing START, Volunteer Cornwall and ESOL support – savings on travel time and costs for example.

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme closes at the end of December, with the last refugees arriving by March 2020, so in effect the housing needs to be in place by November to go through the approvals process. At this stage we should press ahead with getting a second application in.

Serena had been to see the Brewer's house today, there are some outstanding questions on her side which she will seek answers on in the next week. She felt that

the ability to house an extended family there might be a significant advantage, but it was not certain.

Reservations had been expressed from within the group about possible overload, but it seemed that on the one hand we probably already had more than enough for one family and also that under the hybrid scheme we had underestimated the effect of the support provided direct by the council.

On the long term financial commitment the council gets funding from government for 5 years of support on a declining scale, so this goes beyond the two years that a pure community sponsored scheme has to provide

It was agreed that we would continue to actively look for a second house, and await the Council's decision on the Brewer's house.

4) Collections and Direct Aid

Rob, just back from another trip to France, spoke about the continuing dire situation in Northern France with over 350 rough sleepers around Dunkirk, the CRS (French militarised riot police who some of us encountered in the late 60s when longhaired students were their target) physically attacking families around Calais and Sevrex, and boats still attempting to cross the channel. He is now meeting Afghans fleeing a resurgent Taliban there and Iranian Christians fleeing religious persecution in their homeland.

On Lesbos the situation is similarly bad with a continuing flood including Syrians crossing from Turkey – and many drowning in the process as rescue patrols have been stopped.

Rob is returning in May and a revised list of needs will be circulated shortly.

On 6th April from 1pm there is a Welly Matching working party to go through the shipping container of unsorted wellies and put them into pairs.

More hands (and feet!) will make lighter work – all welcome. Trebov Farm, St.Clether, 1pm Saturday 6th April.

5) Outreach

It was decided to go ahead with the two events discussed last time – a screening of the Ai Wiewie film Human Flow for those interested in learning more about refugee crises globally, and a feast for invited attendees to thank them for support so far and launch the new phase with a family arriving.

For the film show Jain reported that the Amnesty group would like to be involved and this was welcomed. Bill is investigating the possibility of using the school as a venue, alternatively Methodist Central church has a good big screen, projector and sound system.

For the Feast Joe will do the catering and check with his helpers to agree a date. The original venue of the Cricket Club will not be available during the season.

Both of these to be scheduled for late April to mid May before the June 4th arrival.

Venues and details will be circulated as soon as they are confirmed.

After some discussion and advice based on experience it was felt unnecessary to do specific targeted outreach as had been suggested. It is important not to make a big issue of things – at the end of the day it is just a new family moving into town.

Market stalls continue but a rota is really needed for sharing out the time rather than have everyone arrive at 10am. For the next market on 13th April please email info@lrsg.org.uk with the time slot (or a choice of two slots) that you would be able to cover – hourly from 9am to 2pm

6) Next meeting: 18th April 7:30pm in the Bell Inn