

# People & the DALES

Diversity Access Learning Environment Sustainability

5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> October 2018



## Malhamdale City of Sanctuary Hosting Weekend

On the weekend of the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> October 2018 the small community of Malhamdale, in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales, hosted a weekend away for the Maternity Stream of Leeds City of Sanctuary. Families in Malhamdale opened their homes to families of refugee and asylum seeking women and children for a really great weekend.

In its fourth year, the Malhamdale Weekend has become the annual highlight of a relationship that has evolved and developed between the Yorkshire Dales and the Leeds Maternity Stream. Spent walking, crafting, and catching up on long-distance friendships, the Malhamdale Weekend 2018 was a huge success in celebrating People and the Dales.



### Project Background

The idea of a hosting weekend grew out of previous day visits made by women and children from the City of Sanctuary's Maternity Stream from Leeds to the Yorkshire Dale organised as part of the outreach project 'People and the DALES' run by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust. Participants enjoyed these visits so much that they wanted to return and stay longer. The first hosting weekend took place in July 2015 when four families were hosted in private homes whilst others stayed at Malham Tarn Field Centre. It was such a huge success that the initiative was repeated in 2016 and again in 2017 when seven families opened their homes to welcome visitors enabling a larger group to experience fantastic Dale's hospitality.

### People and the DALES (PaD)

People and the DALES is a community outreach project which enables disadvantaged groups from urban areas to the south of the Yorkshire Dales to take part in a wide range of fun, active and

thought provoking activities in the countryside: with the aim of providing people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to return independently and improve health and well-being.

Since 2005 over 10,000 people have had life changing opportunities to get out and about in the Dales and one of the groups benefiting has been the City of Sanctuary Maternity Stream from Leeds.

### **Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary**

In 2011 the Maternity Stream of the City of Sanctuary was started by a group of asylum seeking and refugee women who volunteered as Health Befrienders for the Refugee Council in Leeds.

Asylum-seeking and refugee (AS&R) women living in the UK often have complex health and social care needs, with poor underlying mental and physical health and an increased risk of negative pregnancy outcomes. Despite this, AS&R



women are less likely to attend for timely maternity care and when they do, care may be poor, with



staff not understanding their specific needs and displaying poor attitudes.

They “didn’t want other mums to suffer as we had suffered”, said one of the first women so they teamed up to form the Maternity Stream of Sanctuary. They are now a national and rapidly expanding network of people and groups including asylum seeking and refugee service users, representatives from refugee organisations and other charities, midwives and midwifery

students, commissioners, educators and researchers.

### **Hosting weekend 2018**

As well as being at risk themselves, volunteer AS&R women are central to running the activities of the Maternity Stream and this is why the weekend away, with its focus on community, friendship, support, and relaxation, is so vital.

Nearly forty refugee and asylum seeking women and children participated in Malhamdale’s fourth hosting weekend. Amongst the group were families from Eritrea, Iran, Pakistan, India, Sudan and Bolivia.





The weekend began on Friday evening with a delicious meal at St Michaels in Kirkby Malham before people were collected and taken home by their hosts or to the Quaker meeting house in Airton or Malham Tarn Field Studies Centre. Saturday saw the majority of the group walk from Malham Tarn through the Watloes and Malham Cove into the village of Malham. It was both a chance to chat to one another and to relax in the glory of nature. Diako

initially from Zimbabwe, described her experience: "Walking was so great, seeing the Dales makes us think of life. It made us feel loved, my spirit was so lifted. Meeting other people we haven't seen in ages made us appreciate the purpose of life."

Those who didn't go on the walk stayed at the Malham Tarn to do felt making. Younger children took part in a range of craft and outdoor activities, including nature based art and plastic bottle rocket launching.

Participants returned to their hosts to prepare for the evenings' entertainment which included a ceilidh, singing, dancing and frivolity by hosts and visitors alike. On the Sunday morning all were invited to join the church service at St Michaels in Kirkby Malham where women talked about their experiences as asylum seekers and shared in the service. The weekend concluded with a final meal at Airton Quaker Meeting House and lots of goodbyes.



## Thanks



This hosting weekend could not have taken place without the hard work and support of lots of people but a particular thanks goes to the congregation of St Michaels in Kirkby Malham for all the hard work in organising accommodation and providing meals, to Simon Watkins and Airton Quakers for providing the Sunday lunch, Jim Wright from Malham Tarn Field Centre for providing accommodation, lunch and the fabulous rocket making activity,

to all the hosts for taking our visitors into their homes and hearts and Batty Moss ceilidh band for playing at the party. And finally a big thanks also to the People's Postcode Lottery for putting funding towards this and other such initiatives.



The most important aspect of the weekend is the hosting both from the point of view of the host and the visitors who thoroughly enjoyed Dales hospitality.

Linda and Reem were able to talk about how villages are the same all over the world: "Reem said it might look different here and be colder but the way people come together and help each other was like being in her home village."

Rose, who coordinates the group in Leeds said: "Words can't explain. It is one of my favourite weekends of the year. I go on plenty of holidays but this weekend makes me feel *inside* the best. I love to see the difference it makes in the lives of the women I support and really helps build a sense of community with the people in Leeds and with those from the Dales."

**"Taking part in this weekend has made me feel special knowing that I have a community here."**

(Ijeoma)

**"It felt like coming home for Christmas."** (Diana, aged 8)



Rosie described the event: "as my first residential in my new job as Trainee Outreach Worker for the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust, it was an incredible privilege to see what becoming part of the Yorkshire Dales really means. It was a reminder that the Dales isn't just for those who own a pair of good walking boots, or who know all the different types of wild flowers – but for everyone, and it has been great to see how the lives of refugee and asylum seeking women have become part of the Yorkshire Dales landscape."

#### **To find out more contact:**

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