



MEP NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2022

STUDENT VERSION

Hope and Solidarity at MEP

Cath Senker, Amy Clarke and Ben Rogaly have written a report about Migrant English Project (MEP). They talked to students and volunteers about how they feel about living in Brighton and coming to MEP.

The report also looked at how MEP has had to change because of Covid-19. We moved to Exeter Street Hall and started to teach people online.

Cath, Amy and Ben asked, ‘How can we make MEP better? Students said they would like more help when they first come to the UK, more English lessons and help with computers.

The report shows that MEP is a safe space to study. Students and volunteers can meet people from many countries, and everyone feels they learn a lot from coming to MEP.

When we open MEP again, you can get the report at the Hall. Or you can read the report at this website address. It is in easy English: <https://cathsenker.co.uk/hope-and-solidarity-at-migrant-english-project/>

Travel to MEP



Migrant English Project helps people to pay for travel to the hall and other costs.

- Students and volunteers can show their bus ticket or parking payment and get their money back.
- We pay people back if they buy food or other things for MEP.
- We give volunteers their money back for getting a DBS certificate, when they start volunteering.
- If there is a special reason for someone to get a taxi, MEP can pay them back up to £15 each way.

The volunteers at the welcome table give people their travel money.

MEP and COVID

We are being very careful because of Covid-19.

We can only have 20 people in the main hall and 5 people in the little room. So students need to tell us if they are coming to MEP.

- We clean all the tables and have hand sanitiser.
- We open the windows for fresh air – even in the winter! So please wear warm clothes.
- Everyone should wear a mask or visor.
- Everyone should keep 2 metres from other people. Only move around the hall when you need to.

Please have the Covid vaccine if you can. All adults can have their third jab – the booster. If you want to find out about the vaccine, ask a volunteer.

My Home Town, Takestan

Thanks to Maryam, who wrote this article with her teacher, Dorothy.

I was born in Takestan on 21st September 1984. I came to England to join my husband who was here for three years before I was able to come. My daughter is 18 and is a student at BHASVIC. She hopes to study dentistry at university. I have two brothers and one sister, all younger than me. My sister has two daughters, one aged 15 and one aged 3 years old. My elder brother works in the car industry and my younger brother, who is 22 years old, is in the army. He still lives with my parents.

Takestan is a small city in Qazvin Province in the north of Iran. It is about the same size as Brighton. It has a population of about 120,000. It takes about 3 hours to drive from Takestan to the capital of Iran, Tehran. The coast (of the Caspian Sea) is about four hours away.



Takestan is famous for growing grapes and there are many vineyards. There are also many farms growing fruit, nuts and vegetables such as peaches, water melons, cucumbers, tomatoes, almonds and walnuts. At the end of summer, the people of Takestan gather their products. The raisins of Takestan are special. People make grape

juice and it is very strong. They make food such as pickles and tomato paste with their products. They use them at the end of winter. In the summer it is hot, but in the winter it can be cold and we often have snow. Iran is a very beautiful country.



Genet's Story

Huge thanks to Genet for this wonderful article and to Rob, who interviewed her.

I was born in a village near Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. My parents ran a farm with cows, sheep, goats and chickens. They also grew vegetables and a cereal called teff. They ran the village store too. I am part Oromo and part Amharic and I was brought up Christian. At school I loved maths but I had to finish my education when I was 18.

At 20, I married a doctor but in 2003 he was arrested by the government and I never saw him again. I can only assume the worst. I was scared something bad would happen to me next, so I paid an 'agent' to help me cross the border to Kenya. It was a rough journey in a bus which was also carrying goats, sheep and cows. Luckily, I got across OK and went to Nairobi, the capital.

In Nairobi, I found help from other Ethiopian people and made my way to a UN refugee camp, where I stayed for four years. Living in the camp was very hot and dusty. It was a mixed experience. I had a tent and food but life could be dangerous for a young woman on her own. I got married to a man who I hoped would protect me. But he didn't. Thankfully, I am now free of him.

For my first 18 months in the camp, I worked as a cook in a café. I saved money and used it to set up my own café. Soon, I had three people working for me. It was hard because I had to pay bribes to the local gangs, but I managed. I saw there were lots of kind people in Kenya but also lots of corruption.

In 2006, I was able to come to the UK through the UN, and I came to Brighton. I have found much warmth, kindness and support here. There are many good people, like my dear friend Ros. I had no English when I arrived but I worked hard to learn, at the same time working as a cleaner in the NHS, banks and other places.

In 2011 I was greatly blessed by the birth of my lovely daughter, Maba. She is doing very well at school and speaks English, Oromo and Amharic. For the last six years I have been a health-care worker, caring for clients in their homes. It is challenging work but I really love it. For the most part there is a lot of warmth in the hearts of both client and carer. There are some clients who can be racist but I do not let it affect me. It is their problem, not mine.

I have always loved cooking. A few years ago I shared with Ros my dream of having my own restaurant. With her support, I started as a guest chef, cooking Ethiopian dinners at a cafe in Hanover, Brighton from time to time. I also cook at the Feature Kitchen in Lewes. I would so much love to have my own restaurant some day!

Early in 2020, I went with Maba to Ethiopia, for the first time in nearly twenty years. Thankfully, my parents and brothers and sisters are well. The village had changed so much that I barely recognised it.

In December 2020 I got Covid and had to spend a day in hospital. I am happy and grateful that I fully recovered though it was not an easy journey. But then life, while amazing, is never an easy journey.

*If you would like to try Genet's delicious cooking, during January she is a guest cook at **The Feature Kitchen**. You can order a takeaway at www.thefeaturekitchen.co.uk*

Maude Tells us About the Jollof Cafe

At Jollof Café, you can eat tasty food and meet great people. All are welcome!



Jollof Café is run by Sussex Refugees and Migrants Self Support Group. It's a space where people come together to talk and support each another. It is run by refugees.

Jollof Cafe is on Wednesdays from 1–3pm at West Hill Community Hall, Compton Avenue – between Brighton station and Seven Dials. The 7 bus stops there, one stop up from the station. They serve lunch from 1–2.30pm. Teas and coffees are also served, with delicious Egyptian cakes.

You can enjoy tasty food from Syria, Libya, Bangladesh, West Africa, Sudan or Yemen. People give £5 for lunch if they can – all the money goes to help refugees and migrants. In mild weather, you can eat at tables outside. It is safe to eat indoors too. The doors and windows are open, and the hall has lots of space.

At Jollof, there are refugees who have been here for many years, new arrivals stuck in hotels in Hove, as well as friends, neighbours and supporters. All gather to chat, share news and help each other. People share information about health, housing and legal problems. Jollof Cafe feels like a family, where you can share and feel less alone.

The MEP Sewing Group last Term

During the autumn term our Sewing Group students worked on different projects including bags, face masks, and clothes such as Teresa's dress, Muna's trousers and Manar's top.



We hope you like this newsletter. If you have ideas for the next newsletter or want to write something, please tell Susan, at the Sewing Group.