



## MEP NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2023

*Welcome to the MEP newsletter – a place for everyone to share news and information.*

**Happy New Year to everyone at the start of the new term!** We look forward to a new year of learning, support and fun.

### TEACHING AT EXETER STREET HALL



MEP is a warm, sociable place on Mondays at Exeter Street Hall. We are rich with students and volunteers from many cultures. Here are some of the languages our members speak: Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Farsi, French, Gaeilge, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Mandarin, Oromo, Saho, Sorani, Spanish, Tigrinya, Turkish, Vietnamese, and a group of South African dialects spoken by Sesotho and Basotho people. Do you know which parts of the world each of these languages are most spoken? You can look in an atlas.

Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Farsi, French, Gaeilge, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Mandarin, Oromo, Saho, Sorani, Spanish, Tigrinya, Turkish, Vietnamese, Sesotho, Basotho

This year our numbers have grown. We have welcomed more people who are asylum seekers and refugees, and in particular students who in the early stage of learning English. We have a waiting list of people who want to come to MEP. Each teacher now works with either one, two or three students. It is good for students to learn together and help each other. We all take turns to help at lunchtime, when the cooks prepare a tasty vegetarian meal for everyone.

When they have more confidence many of our students leave us and move on to college courses. We are pleased for them and know we can see them again at some of our social events.

**Anne**

## SKILL SHARING FOR TEACHERS

At MEP, we have always welcomed teachers with all sorts of backgrounds. Some of us are qualified to teach English, while others are simply good teachers with lots of experience working with refugees and asylum seekers.

All of us are aware of the need to extend our teaching skills. We often learn from each other. So we set up a teaching group of about seven of us and we organise skill-sharing sessions. So far, we have had two lunchtime sessions and one longer session with an outside speaker. The speaker was Katrina Cotton, who used to be head of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at Brighton MET.

Katrina told us that most ESOL students want to learn good enough English to live in this country. Unlike tourists, business people and students, they hope to make this country their home. One point that sticks with me is the importance of recognising that our students might have what Katrina

called ‘spikey’ learning profiles. Some people are better at speaking and listening, others at writing and reading – or any mix of the four skills but all at different levels.

Martyn led the first lunchtime session. He guided us through the official levels of language attainment – beginner, elementary, E1, E2 and so on. A very helpful session. The second session was led by Cath, who encouraged all of us to bring along one teaching tip to share. This was very useful and I think we will repeat the session next year.

If any volunteers or students wish to suggest a skill-sharing activity for our group, please get in touch with a member of the group (Anne, Martyn, Cath, Beatrice, Ellie, Andy or me).



**Dorothy**

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### IHAB'S DIET SUCCESS STORY

In April 2022 I went to have a blood test. In May 2022 my doctor told me I would become diabetic and asked me how much do you weigh and what is your height.

When I answered him, he told me that I have to lose some weight. When he told me that, I started the programme to lose weight. I asked my friends how could I lose weight.

Some of them told me to fast and not eat anything for 14 hours. Another friend told me to stop eating carbohydrates. Another told me about Kito (a no-carb diet).

I prefer to eat on 5 days of the week, 5 times a day and fast on the other 2 days.

This programme has really worked successfully. After 3 months I lost 25 kgs. I called the doctor and told him this. My doctor told me this is better for you.

BEFORE:



AFTER:



## MEP WINTER CELEBRATION

At our last meeting of term in December we held a winter celebration at Exeter Street Hall. We were very pleased to invite former students and volunteers, as well as many new students and their children. There were at least 60 people there, the biggest gathering we have arranged. People brought a wonderful selection of food to share, including dishes from El Salvador, the Middle East and North Africa.

We played some games, and listened to live music performances: piano and singing from Sunny and Tia, and a stunning performance of Puccini opera by Tamar.



Tamar sang beautifully



Eleanor from Sewing Group did some brilliant face painting (the first time she had done it!), which was loved by the kids.

Thanks to everyone who came, who brought food and joined in with the fun. It was a great way to end the term, and underlined the warmth and friendliness of the whole MEP family.

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## LIVING IN BRIGHTON

I have lived in Brighton for seven years. I came here from Sudan in 2015 to join my husband who was here already. He came here in 2006 but he had been living in Portsmouth.

I live in the London Road opposite St Peter's Church. It is very central.

I like living in Brighton. We have one bedroom and a living room, a kitchen and a bathroom. It is near the Level where I meet my friends. The shops are near my house, also we live near the GP.

I like living in Brighton because of the beach. And I like to look at the sea but I don't go swimming. It is too cold and I can't swim. Sometimes I walk in the water when it's not very deep.

What I like best about Brighton is the people.

**By Mariam**



Mariam on the beach near the pier

## FREE ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLASSES

St Mary's church in Kemptown runs free English conversation classes under a programme called 'Kemptown Talks'. The classes are led by experienced ESOL teacher, Ian McLean, who is joined by MEP volunteers Dean and José. The classes offer the opportunity to improve English conversational skills in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. After a pause during Covid, classes reopened in September 2022, and consisted mainly of women from Ukraine, Spain and South America. The class has since expanded and currently includes students from Hong Kong, Thailand, Iraq, Egypt, and France, with an increased number of men.

Some of the students have been resident in the UK for several years. Others are new to the country, while some are here on short-term assignments, either for work or to improve their English in a short immersion course locally. Some students also attend English courses at local language schools.

Classes take place on Wednesday and Friday mornings, and there are two groups, for beginners or for more advanced learners. No need to book – you can just turn up. Tea and coffee is included.

For more information, visit the website: [www.stmaryschurchbrighton.org.uk/regular-activities.html](http://www.stmaryschurchbrighton.org.uk/regular-activities.html).

## SEWING GROUP NEWS



During the autumn term we welcomed new students to the group, who worked on a range of lovely projects. In October we were lucky enough to be given two very modern sewing machines, and several people gave us donations of fabric.

Students this term included Sherin, Halima, Israa, Rabab, Teresa and Maliha. Sherin made some leggings for her mum, and a beautiful dress for herself. Israa and Rabab worked on clothes, while Halima altered several pairs of curtains, and made a dress for herself using a pattern copied from a favourite existing dress. Maliha started with a tote bag, then moved on to pillowcases. Next she will make something to wear.

If you are interested to join the Sewing Group this year, please speak to a member of the group. We do have a waiting list, but we are happy to add your name to the list.



*We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. If you have ideas for future editions, or would like to write something, please contact Susan, at the Sewing Group.*