



MEP NEWSLETTER: ISSUE 10 – JANUARY 2025

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

**Wishing a very Happy New Year to all MEP students
and volunteers !**

Thank

You

At MEP we rely on funding and donations to run our activities, ranging from the rental of the hall, to teas and coffees, travel expenses, teaching and sewing materials, and summer excursions. We are incredibly grateful to all organisations and individuals who have supported us financially, and also of course to the many volunteers who give their time so generously.

We especially want to thank the following for donations in recent months:

- **Awards for All**
- **The Allen Lane Foundation**
- **Brighton and Hove Bus Company**
- **Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation**

We also receive donations from the **Local Giving** section on our website, so thank you to everyone who donated that way.

Thanks also to the organisations we have worked with, including

- **Plot 22**
- **Hearts and Flowers**
- **Music for Connection**
- **Brighton Community Kitchen**



Thanks to these organisations we have been able to arrange a variety of summer events for our students, and we look forward to working with them again.

Thank you to everyone who has worked to develop our beautiful **Community Garden**. It is now better than ever, and we look forward to more planting, produce and visits there in 2025.

A special mention for the wonderful **Cooking Team**, who every week prepare a delicious meal for everyone in the hall, and also to volunteers in our other areas – the **Welcome Team**, **Childcare** volunteers and the **Sewing Group**. Thanks also to the volunteers who don't normally come to Exeter Street Hall, but who support MEP in other ways, like Ben who manages the website, and Mireille who is our treasurer.

Thanks to everyone who has kindly donated fabrics, other supplies and even sewing machines to the Sewing Group.

A special mention to **Rose Dykins**, who in November took part in the Brighton 10K run to raise money for MEP. She raised the amazing total of £675.

Thanks also to the management team at **Exeter Street Hall**, who have been very supportive and who last year donated the takings from a fundraising meal to MEP.

Above all **thank you** to all of our dedicated volunteers, and our students, who together make up our MEP family.

MEP Winter Celebration



In December we held a Winter Celebration. We celebrated with live music, food and dancing. The hall was filled with many volunteers and teachers, including some who no longer come to MEP. It was wonderful to see everyone smiling on such a happy occasion.

Many of the students brought food to share, to add to the food prepared by the MEP cookery team.



Laila brought an amazing cake, which she had made specially.

We also enjoyed a wonderful performance of live music. Jamal and Alaa, musicians from Syria, played traditional Syrian and Arabic folk songs on the oud and tabla, and they were joined by singer Leyla, from Uzbekistan. We were delighted to watch an amazing dance performance by Jamal's 11 year-old grandson, Abdulfattah. It was a real privilege to see this special live performance.



You can find out more about Jamal and Alaa here:
www.bestfootmusic.net/projects/jamal-%26-alaa

The live music inspired everyone in the hall, and many people joined in with the dancing.

Thanks to everyone who came and enjoyed this truly uplifting day, which brought warmth to us all in the middle of winter.



English Teaching at MEP

It's great to hear about all the areas where MEP is active, but our core activity is of course providing English lessons. English teacher **Joe** wrote this about his first impressions: *I started working for MEP last year as a support teacher because I wanted to help people improve their English. From the moment I started I could feel the warmth and compassion from everyone who takes part in the project, in their own unique way. Whilst the English lessons provide learners with necessary skills and confidence in written and spoken English, the project provides so much more. Exeter Street Hall is a safe space where people from all backgrounds can come together to give and receive support. It is a meeting place where people can be themselves without being judged. There is a place for everybody, and I am grateful to be part of such a caring and compassionate project.*

Anne writes: *Access to the English language and education is key to making a new life for asylum seekers or refugees. At MEP we teach beginner classes, but we also help people find places in Brighton colleges after they have been here six months. Sometimes this means long bus journeys or evening travel. On a weekly allowance of £8.86 it's impossible for asylum hotel residents to manage bus fares for weekly lessons or medical appointments. We are grateful for the donations that support this, and we will be launching our new crowdfunder soon.*



News from the MEP Community Garden

In exciting news, the MEP Community Garden has received funding from the Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation, Brighton and Hove City Council and the National Lottery to help with improving the site. The money will be spent on creating a new seating area for MEP students and volunteers to enjoy and to buy some new gardening equipment. It's a great time to get involved in the community garden as we plan for the year ahead. What would you like us to grow in our redesigned space?

Kirat is at MEP on Mondays, teaching and helping. If you would like to help us in the garden, please have a chat with her. We have collected student ideas from last year but we would like to hear from you and new students about what you would like us to grow. Soon, we will be planting some trees. The activities after that will be organised when the weather improves.

Who likes Cake?



Our former student Laila is very busy. Even though she is at university, training to become a physiotherapist, she still makes time for other projects. She is very good at making cakes – she has often brought amazing cakes to our MEP parties. Now she has set up a website where people can order cakes from her for special occasions. Take a look at her website, Lelecake.co.uk, where there are many beautiful examples and more information about how to order.

Good luck Emily!

Our volunteer Emily, seen here in the photo with Teresa, is leaving us as she has been offered a job in Japan. Emily studied Japanese at university and has been teaching it online.

At MEP she was a big help with the childcare and always offered to help with the washing up. Thanks for all your help, and keep in touch!



Sewing Group News



Once again we have been very busy in Sewing Group. We made some great clothes, and were lucky to be given some lovely fabrics and other supplies by kind donors.



Our students this term included Sherin, Rabab, Maliha, Amal, Silvana and Sharifa. Our teachers were Sarah, Barbara, Jillie, Charlotte and Susan – with George stepping in to help out when we were extra busy.

In December we were so busy that we had to set up an overflow table in the main hall, as the Community Room where we normally work was too full.

We don't just make clothes. Amal made a very useful storage bag to use in the bathroom at home, and Sharifa made an apron. We are always

happy to try new ideas, and we also sometimes are able to help other students with repairs and alterations.



Maliha, Sherin and Silvana all made beautiful dresses.

If you are interested to join the Sewing Group this, please let us know. We have a waiting list, but we can add your name.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. This is the 10th edition of our newsletter. Do you have ideas for future editions, or would you like to write something? If you are interested to get involved in putting together the next edition, after Easter, please contact Susan, at the Sewing Group. We especially love to include anything written by our students.