



MEP NEWSLETTER: ISSUE 12- DECEMBER 2025

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

Dates for your Diary

Term dates: last week of term: **Monday 15th December**. On that day we will not have normal lessons. Instead, we will have a short Annual General Meeting (AGM) – everyone welcome.

After that there will be an end of term party, with music and food, from 11.30 to 2.30.

We reopen on **Monday 5th January**, and will run through to **March 30th**. We will be open as usual during half term – **16th February**.

Thank You

At MEP we rely on donations to run our activities (hall rental, lunches, teas and coffees, travel expenses, teaching and sewing materials, and summer excursions). We are incredibly grateful to all organisations who have supported us financially. In the last 12 months we have received funding from **Asda Foundation, Brighton & Hove City Council**, and

Brighton and Hove Buses.

Thank you to the wonderful **Cooking Team**, who every week prepare a delicious meal for everyone in the hall, and who in recent weeks have coped brilliantly with cooking for much larger numbers. Thanks also to volunteers in our other areas – the **English teachers, Welcome Team, Childcare** volunteers and **Sewing Group**. Thanks to those who don't normally come to Exeter Street Hall, but who support MEP in other ways, like **Ben** who manages the website, **Moir** who often helps by giving people lifts, **Mireille** who is our treasurer and who manages the mailing list, and **Will** who works hard at the Community Garden.

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

Did you know that **everyone at MEP is a volunteer**? We're all part of a team, doing what we can to keep things running smoothly every week. This also includes our students. One way that they can help is by offering to help **wash up** – every Monday after lunch is your chance to do this. The kitchen has a modern restaurant style dishwasher, which certainly makes things easier. Listen out for Rob asking for volunteers to wash up, and put your hand up



New volunteer Joey has written some thoughts about his experience at MEP:



I began teaching English at MEP in September, and have four lovely students from Iran and Afghanistan. While I had studied foreign languages and have taken TEFL courses, I had done very little real teaching before starting at MEP, and I have found the process difficult but fulfilling. I feel that my students do far more of the work than I do - they are the ones who, through their dedication and their endless positivity despite great challenges, are making great progress at the same time as inspiring me. Each lesson I learn new things from them, and leave the lessons with renewed admiration for their resilience and positive attitudes. I am very grateful to them, and would encourage anyone who is interested to pursue a similar activity at MEP or elsewhere. My students' progress is a tribute to their attitude and efforts.

SUMMER EVENTS 2025

Now that winter is here, it's good to look back at the summer when during the school holidays we organised some events for our students.

MEP Picnic 2025

In August we held our traditional Big MEP Picnic in Preston Park. In this summer of heatwaves we somehow chose the first rainy day for weeks! But despite this we had a very good turnout: well over 50 people, both students and volunteers came, as well as some new people from the hotel. It was great to see some former volunteers and students, as well as to welcome some new faces.

We had plenty of food! People generously brought a lot of food to share. For the first time, we held a sponsored walk around the park. A big thank you to **Maria** who organised the walk; the walkers raised just over £250.

Thanks also to Paul, the manager at the Rotunda Café, who once again offered us a discount on refreshments. Eventually, when the rain got worse, we moved inside the café. Despite the weather, a good time was had by all, and now our students can say they have experienced the traditional great British picnic in the rain!



Hearts and Flowers at Stanmer Park

A visit to the beautiful garden of the **Hearts and Flowers** project in Stanmer Park was one of the highlights of our summer break. A group of students and volunteers spent the day relaxing in the tranquil surroundings of the project, which grows organic flowers and helps people access nature.



They were joined this year by artist Gil Mualem-Doron, who led a workshop session painting some of the flowers and talking about living in the UK. There was a delicious lunch and everyone left with a bunch of beautiful flowers. Thanks to Herbie and Rona and the team at Hearts and Flowers, and to Gil for a very inspiring day.



Listening Event with Music for Connection

In September we once again worked with **Music for Connection** to take part in a listening event. This time we met in central Brighton, at a café called Puzzle Bored. The event was led by Bela and Bethan. They explored different types of sound and contrasts (near-far, loud-soft etc). We then went into the Pavilion Garden to listen to sounds and explore what we could hear – from birdsong, to traffic noise, to the music played by a busker in the park.

Afterwards we enjoyed drinks and refreshments in the café.



A Special Summer at the MEP Community Garden



Summer has passed; it has been a special and successful season with many improvements! We harvested courgettes, beans, cucumbers, leafy greens, potatoes, herbs and flowers. The tomatoes did not do so well this year. We now have a wonderful outdoor space for all students and volunteers to enjoy and learn gardening. Ten students and many teachers (Paolo, Rob, Mark, Julie, Susan) visited in July and August. Since then we have more new plants, a rose bush, jasmine, and clematis. This autumn we all enjoyed picking beautiful marigolds and cosmos flowers. The weather was so mild until the middle of November that we were able to tidy up nicely. Our regular students, Nuha, Mo and Amin all visited in the autumn. Nuha made some delicious food from the last vegetables.



Now we want to make plans for next summer. We still have a little of the grant money left to allocate to some more fruit trees, bushes and tools, so your suggestions are always welcome. If you would like to give us your ideas and suggestions, please talk to your teacher or the students who come. We also have a garden Whatsapp group and if you would like to join us you are always welcome. We go between 10.30 and 1.30pm, on different days of the week. Please let Rob know and we



can add you to the group. It's a good way to practice English.

We hope you can come to the MEP Community Garden soon. It is a great place to learn to garden too, or to just feel peaceful and calm in nature.

From Student to Volunteer



Akila is from Algeria and she came to MEP to improve her English. After several months with us, she decided to apply for a place at the MET college and was eventually awarded a place on the ESOL course as well as a short course in computing skills. She is doing really well there and her hard work

has paid off, as last week she was told that she had passed her speaking exam. While at MEP, Akila expressed a love of cooking and she registered to do the Cook/Eat/Learn course to hone her catering skills and improve her English in a working kitchen environment. She is now volunteering for the MEP as a cook and helping out in the kitchen. She says:

I have been volunteering at MEP as assistant cook. I help prepare for cooking and do dishes. I enjoy cooking because I been doing it at very young age with my mother and now I get pleasure to cook for people. Since I started at MEP, I feel happy that I'm helping and being part of MEP.

Thank you Akila for being a valued part of our team.

SAD NEWS

We are very sad to report that our volunteer David died in October, aged 76. David was a kind, gentle man who was very supportive of students, and who felt strongly about injustice. He had a great interest in the art, music and spirituality of diverse cultures, in recent years particularly West African, and was a musician himself. He will be sadly missed by our volunteers and students.





WELCOME FOR EVERYONE



In 2024 our MEP student Sherin set up a new organisation called **Welcome for Everyone**, with some support and advice from the Resource Centre. The group supports women and children from the whole international community: they already have members from Algeria, Syria, Sudan, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq and Morocco. There were some existing support groups for people from one particular country, but this organisation is open to women from any country. Members pay a small fee (£5 per month). They use the money to arrange events and parties for all types of celebration, such as Eid, or birthday parties and baby showers. They also organise sports events and outings – recently they have had a trip to London, to visit Madame Tussauds, as well as ice skating, swimming and cinema trips. Members pay half the cost, and the organisation covers the rest. Another important activity is Arabic lessons for children, especially to help them learn to read and write in Arabic. They are still looking for new members. If you would like to find out more, send an email to welcomeforeveryonegroup@gmail.com.

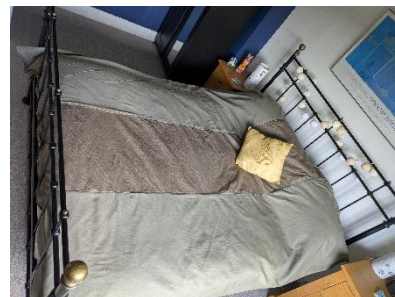
Sewing Group News



Once again we had a very busy term in Sewing Group. We are very pleased to welcome a new volunteer, Ursula. Our students included Sherin, Rabab, Amal, Silvana, Sharifa and Nefisa.



Nefisa made a colourful tote bag as her starter project, and has now moved on to making some trousers for herself. Silvana made several things for her flat, including altering some curtains, making tiebacks, making a draught excluder, and a bed cover.



It's not just sewing: Teresa knitted some very cute baby jumpers, and Jayne also donated some which had been made by her late Mum. We have already given these to some students who

are expecting babies soon.

Other students often ask us to mend or alter clothes for them. We are happy to do this if we have time, but it may not be possible on the same day.



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

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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. All people whose photos appear in this newsletter have given permission for them to be used.