

FRIENDS OF THE DROP-IN Newsletter



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F.O.D.I. officially began on 30/11/2011 when its constitution was signed. It was the vision of a group of people who had supported the drop-in for many years and wished to expand on the work already done there by opening new funding opportunities which would allow more activities to take place. These activities would be chosen by the membership (attendees of the drop in). We hope this newsletter will show a little of what has been achieved in a relatively short time.

F.O.D.I. Mission Statement:

To improve the mental health and well-being of the asylum-seeking and refugee community of Sunderland, lessening their social isolation and promoting their integration into the wider community, by supporting and extending the activities of the drop-in currently run on Wednesday afternoons.

Objectives:

1. To provide opportunities for the clients of the drop-in to participate in wider societal activities of a suitable nature.
2. To fund-raise for this aim.
3. To foster closer links into the wider community, providing opportunities for clients to link into this.
4. To work in partnership with other local organisations/groups to further this aim.

Although all activities were well received I would say the highlights of the day included a rendition by our drama group and children's school choir which rounded off the day.

There were 265 recorded (there were probably many more that went unrecorded) attendees from Sunderland and surrounding areas. The feedback received was almost all positive; in fact the only real negative was that the venue was too small. Given the short time we had to organise the event F.O.D.I. can be justifiably proud of the outcome. Our thanks go to all the people who made it possible for the event to go ahead and who made the day the success it undoubtedly was.

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Refugee Week

In June this year F.O.D.I. organised an event to celebrate Refugee Week. Funding was obtained from Gentoo, from donations and some money from fundraising events.

The event was opened by the deputy mayor and included various activities, awareness raising sessions and tables manned by our partner organisations. Refreshments were paid for out of funding obtained from Gentoo and were provided by The Winter Gardens and the British Kurdish Association.



Opening ceremony



Awareness raising information

F.O.D.I. Creative Activities: Writing, Talking, Performing, Reflecting.

The F.O.D.I. Writing and Drama Group was formed in April 2011 from self-selected clients of the Drop-in. The aim was to create something for International Refugee Week, to be presented at Sunderland's Winter Gardens. The focus of the writing was therefore concerned with identifying the feelings and issues of concern to asylum seekers and refugees.

Eight people attended the inaugural session, upstairs in St Mary's Parish Hall, dropping to a more regular attendance of four-six participants over the ten week project - the majority of participants, on this occasion were from countries in Africa.

The group started with a large blank sheet of paper and some prompts for individual writing. This resulted in a list of things the writers wanted others to know and understand. For example: ' People don't know who we are; I want people to know... , People don't know how we feel. After each period of writing there was sharing of work which led to further personal sharing and comment.

In the third session, Maggie, the facilitator introduced an extract from a script performed by 'Ice and Fire' - a professional theatre group that focuses on human rights issues. The group read this script aloud and responded enthusiastically with comments like:

'It's a powerful way of transmitting a message in a broad sense'

' It is good doing it in a group because no one person is pinpointed. It is a group view.'

' It is another way to let authorities know what is happening.'

This session gave the group an indication of the kind of thing that they could collectively create for Refugee Week. The group continued writing and extending the script, which had several drafts - structured and typed up by Maggie for further feedback and agreement. The eighth session, was the first full read through of the script that emerged, entitled "Let Go - Be Human" - a line that came out of an individual's

piece of writing. It was agreed that it was a collective script allowing each individual to remain anonymous.

Some members of the writing group did not feel confident to read aloud at the event, so it was decided to recruit other people from the Drop-in, to take part as actors. Weeks nine and ten were rehearsal sessions when parts were allocated, readers' homework was to practise and become familiar with their lines, and the tutor helped with team building, pronunciation, communication and confidence in front of an audience.

The performance on Saturday 23 rd June at The Winter Gardens was the first time any of them had spoken in public. The cast looked good, behaved professionally, and their voices carried in a large hall in which there were comings and goings. Everyone from the writing group was present, and able to listen to the power and emotion of their own words being spoken by others on a public stage.

After the performance audience members commented on the moving nature of what had been presented, and the level of competence of the group. Subsequently, the group were invited to read at The Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle in August, alongside other writers and musicians. In October, the group were invited to read the script at a Memorial Event organised by Amnesty International at Brunswick Methodist Church in Newcastle. On each occasion those who took part were splendid ambassadors for F.O.D.I.

The Writing Group has continued to meet since September on Wednesdays, during the Drop-in, from 1- 2.30 p.m. The group is open to any client who has the confidence to write in English, regardless of spelling or mistakes. This term there has been no specified agenda or focus, rather it has been an opportunity to be creative. The group have experimented with different kinds of written expression, and some interesting pieces of prose and poetry have emerged.

Since September, there has also been a Spoken English Group meeting during the Wednesday Drop-in, from 2.45 - 3.30 p.m. The group is intended for clients

who do not yet feel confident speaking English in front of others and who want to practice in a friendly and familiar environment.

Anyone wishing to participate in either of these groups should let Maggie know or speak to someone on the F.O.D.I. committee.



Creative writing



Drama Group



Drama Group at Lit. & Phil.
Newcastle



Actors at Amnesty Event

Poem From Creative Writing

New World: A Group Poem

Mother of the world,
pregnant, bearing the world in her womb,
carries something very precious and special.
She's surrounded by colours: blue, green, purplish-
pink,
yet closest to her yellow shades to cream - turning
to gold.

She stands tall, is proud and confident
facing the sky and horizon.

Is she black or white?

She is carrying the world:

What's going to happen?

What kind of world will she produce?

Will it be a safe peaceful world that can be fed?

Will there be sufficient water and human basic
needs -

like shelter, especially shelter -

and a safe environment for all, without
catastrophes?

Peace is a word - out worn in the current world;
but A New World with anticipation of new life -
beautiful and safe, everything green,
good clean water, good food, good people
who co-exist and integrate.

Everybody respecting one another:

No fighting, no war

no struggles, no injustice with impunity,

no racial discrimination or prejudice,

no hatred.

A New World

by F.O.D.I. Writing Group (10.10.12)

ART CLASS

F.O.D.I. ran an Art class for 10 weeks from April to June 2012. We were very grateful to receive the money to do this from Sport Relief through the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Sunderland. There were 12 of us who went regularly and enjoyed it very much. None of us had painted before. Our teacher, Sandra Taylor, showed us how to use acrylic paints. We painted many different subjects, including Souter lighthouse and other views. We were proud of our achievements which were displayed at the Refugee Week Event in June. Several of our group are really talented.



Class at work with tutor

Examples of work produced:



BUDDY SYSTEM

Are you worried about attending immigration in North Shields? If you are, please tell a volunteer at the Drop-In on Wednesdays. We are setting up a buddy system which means that someone from the Drop-In will contact you before you visit immigration and then ring you afterwards to make sure you are OK. They can also contact your solicitor and your family or friends if you have any problems at immigration.

F.O.D.I. will need your contact information and that of any solicitor who is actively dealing with your case so that we can help in the event of a problem. There is an application form for this scheme and you will get help from a volunteer if you want to participate. All volunteers are covered by our confidentiality policy and will not give out any information without your consent. If you have concerns you can discuss them with a volunteer at the drop-in.

Reporting is a legal requirement and North Shields will not accept many reasons for non-attendance. The only one that is routinely accepted is due to illness and even this must be proven by a letter or sick note from your doctor. If you do not attend for a while you will be placed on a watch list with the police. Non-attendance can also have an effect on any application for support. We are giving this information to assist you not to frighten you.

It is hoped to extend the buddy system to assist the most vulnerable people who are homeless and have no support by keeping track of them and offering what help we can.

REPORT RACISM

ARCH is working to stop racism in Sunderland.

Together
we can
beat it

YOU CAN REPORT:

- Without giving your name
- Something that has happened to you
- Something you have witnessed

WE CAN HELP BY:

- Referring you to an agency that can support you
- Taking action against the perpetrator
- Believing you and taking you seriously

TO REPORT A RACIST INCIDENT:

Call free on 08000 778 378

- 24 hours a day
- Interpreters available

Or visit any of the organisations involved in the scheme.

A list of organisations can be found at www.sunderlandarch.org.uk



ALL NATIONS MUSIC PROJECT

F.O.D.I. ran a 12 week music project from August to October and this was funded by the Sunderland Partnership. We worked with Fred Phethean, a tutor from CROSSINGS Music project Newcastle and Lee and Stevo, tutors from the Bunker music studio in Sunderland. The project was organised by Jane with help from F.O.D.I. volunteer Etor.

Participants were from a range of countries such as Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Cameroon, Ghana, Kuwait and Ethiopia. The project involved members taking part in both songwriting and learning to play instruments. The sessions usually started off with members introducing themselves and talking a little about themselves or the week gone by. This helped people get to know one another and practice their English skills. After a group warm up, the members worked on their instruments and songwriting. Guitar and keyboards were the main instruments, with the children playing percussion or drums.

The group wrote an original song called "ALL NATIONS", which is about the project itself and how the members feel when they participate. The different nationalities worked very well together and the song promotes cross cultural harmony. Members said that the project made them feel happy and that playing and singing reduced their tension and raised their self-esteem. They also wrote their own lyrics to a popular song called "Don't worry, be happy", which is a light hearted look at immigration issues.

After the project finished, the main ALL NATIONS members gave a short musical performance at the drop-in on 31/10/11, which was enjoyed by everyone. Jane also presented them with attendance certificates for the project.

The Bunker is keen to extend the project after Xmas and Jane is working with Kenny Sanger, the Bunker manager to look at funding it. The Crossings music project was very happy to be involved and cited ALL NATIONS as a good example of partnership working in their Annual Report. Several of the ALL NATIONS participants now attend CROSSINGS.

ALL NATIONS SONG

Chorus:

All nations come together, united in song.
All faces are invited, we all belong. - x 2

Verse 1:

Joy and laughter, satisfy my soul,
lift me up, and make me whole
Tension is relieved when safe and calm.
Raises self esteem when safe from harm.

Verse 2:

Swim the oceans, walk the miles of sand,
from Addis on high, down to chilly Sunderland.
The road to success is always hard,
but when two work together trouble's halved.

Rap:

Spice up my world I'll spice up yours.
Rub my shoulder and I'll rub yours.
Hold my hand, I'll hold yours too.
You need me and I need you

Nkechi solo:

No matter your race,
no matter your tribe,
no matter where you come from
united we stand
singing one song in love



IT Project

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the local authority for granting our application to the community chest to start this project. It has been going for a few months now and is proving increasingly popular. Having access to computers and the Internet allows F.O.D.I. and our members to engage in a great number of useful activities. Members can seek out information which may help with their asylum cases with the assistance of volunteers and can use email and software such as Skype to keep in touch with loved ones. All useful stuff.

Special Thanks

None of the above would be possible without the many people who help us. We would like to thank our funders, the Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust; and our generous supporters from St. Chad's, Streetcare, many individuals, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and our wonderful partners at Hylton College who provide soup, free haircuts, and sports opportunities for the people at the drop-in. Thanks also to the funders of the projects we ran this year. And, of course, the volunteers without whom we cannot even open the doors!

Thank you all very much.

