



# Starting points

## Quotes

When people started arriving in Lancaster we put together individual welcome packs containing new warm clothing, maps, towels and toiletries. There were six teachers willing to offer free English classes once a week in a space in the meeting house, provided free by Lancaster Friends. This year English is being delivered by a local college. Friends initially offered English classes as an act of faith and within a year it is official and it's funded.

Welcoming newcomers who have fled their country, can be like being very intimately involved in the lives of other members of our family. That is how the encounter feels.

*Mo, Lancaster Meeting*

When I heard that our local council was asking for volunteer 'befrienders' to support Syrian families who were to be resettled in our area, I jumped at the chance to be involved.

The family I was 'linked' to was a single mother and two children. I accompanied them, along with an interpreter to the necessary appointments (sharing this with my fellow Quaker friend Clare) to open a bank account, register with a GP and dentist, schools and the DSS.

Although communication was difficult, we tried most of all to show love and concern, this crosses all borders and through all barriers. If we all do something small, it adds up to something big.

*Anne, Edinburgh Meeting*

After hearing another member of Sheffield Meeting talk about the barriers facing asylum seekers in the UK, my wife Ethel and I took a leap of faith and set up a house for destitute women asylum seekers. These are the ones who for various reasons failed their first application for asylum in this country and for the next four, five, six years receive no state assistance. We were able to buy this house from our savings and my Quaker meeting agreed to pay for the running costs.

*Keith, Sheffield Meeting*

We are working towards having two families settled in Llangollen under the Syrian Vulnerable People's Resettlement Scheme. We met with two Denbighshire council representatives to discuss the practicalities of this, and it was agreed that if we can identify suitable rented housing, we will be able to welcome two new families into our community.

Llangollen itself is a small town (population 3,000). If each community this size welcomed just one refugee family, Britain as a whole could be integrating twice the number of people that currently apply for asylum here each year.

*Maria, Llangollen Meeting*

Earlier this year I was the Quaker representative on an ecumenical delegation to Lampedusa in Italy. I didn't go into it naive about what's going on, but sitting across a table hearing the story of a 17 year old girl, her trip from Nigeria through Libya a living hell, kidnap, beating, rape (leaving her now pregnant), forced prostitution, the perilous and often horrendous sea crossing, left me deeply uneasy. There's that passage in QF&P, 23.03, where it says something about being made "ashamed that we are not all out in caring for our fellow-men."

While the vast inequalities between the mega-rich and the have-nots continues, so will this mass migration. What would it take to be all out against the system that allows this injustice to continue?

*Sam, Hull Meeting*