

PRESS RELEASE



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---BEGINS---

On the Move series Launch

The mini series of events given the title of 'On the Move' was launched by the Centre for Equality & Diversity (CfED) on Monday 14th December at the Halesowen United Church in of which over 100 people from different faiths and social groupings attended. The series of events coincides with International Migrants Day on Friday 18th December an initiative started by the United Nations in 2000. The On the Move series is financially supported by the Near Neighbours Programme.

Speakers at the launch event were the Mayor of Dudley Cllr Steve Waltho, the Bishop of Dudley, Rt Revd Graham Usher and Ernest Cruchley, chairperson of the Welcome Group in Halesowen. All three speakers spoke passionately about the current refugee crisis and the part all of us can play.

The Mayor of Dudley Cllr Waltho said:

"We are proud of our history in providing sanctuary to asylum seekers and refugees and have extended a warm welcome to migrants from Eastern Europe seeking employment opportunities and residency in the borough."

He also said that “International Migrants Day represents an opportunity to raise awareness about the state of migrants’ human rights and fundamental freedom and to make known the positive contributions of migrants in the context of unprecedented human mobility.”

The Bishop of Dudley Rt Revd Graham Usher in his reflection on International Migrants Day, said:

“How we relate to refugees is a major challenge for us all particularly when stories of their frequent rich contribution to our common life are too often drowned out by voices of those who say that refugees are a security threat, bring economic problems, or are a social burden.”

“In the coming weeks” said the Bishop “we will remember Mary and Joseph with the new born and vulnerable Jesus crossing to a distant land, fearful of the tyranny of an insecure Herod; Jesus’ first status was a refugee from the land where he had long since been promised.”

Ernest Cruchley, chairman of the Welcome Group spoke passionately about the work of the group and how over the past 8 years, 100’s of asylum seekers and refugees have been supported by volunteers who have worked tirelessly around the clock ensuring that those who are vulnerable are given the help they need to resettle.

There are three more events in the On the Move series:

On Wednesday 16th December a questions time like debate will be held at the Wellington Road Community Centre on the theme ‘Why migrants are welcomed here’. On the panel to answer questions will be Cllr Gaye Partridge, Tony Barnsley and Iwona Twarda from the Polish Expats Association.

Martin Lynch will chair the debate which will start with a lunch at 12.30pm at Swancote Street Dudley.

On Friday 18th there will be two events. First at 8.30am students at Dudley College will host a free breakfast event where migrants studying at the college will share their stories and launch a campaign to save English as a second language (ESOL) courses.

Secondly at 12.30pm in the Reading Room at Dudley Library on St James Road there will be a reflective account of the journey of migrants and Brendan Hawthorne a Black Country Poet will read specially written poems about migration while Ian Austin MP will speak giving a political account of migration.

All these events are open to the public and are free.

Mushtaq Hussain chair of CfED in launching the series of events said,

We join with the United Nations in stating that in our modern technological age, migration is a powerful tool for reducing poverty and enhancing economic opportunities. In the UK many migrants remains largely invisible and unheard in society making them disproportionately vulnerable to extortion, violence, discrimination and marginalisation.”

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---NOTES FOR EDITORS---

(i) For further information and to arrange a photo shoot please contact Kenneth Rodney on 01384 456166 or email Kenneth.rodney@cfed.org.uk

(ii) CfED is a company limited by guarantee (5745005) and a registered charity 1114821)

(iii) An organisation at the heart of the Borough of Dudley and dedicated to:

- (a) Promoting the interest of all Black and Minority Ethnic communities
- (b) Building effective partnerships
- (c) Create an environment in which all people in the Borough support equality and diversity, understand and appreciate the differences between individuals and communities.