

## PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

Loneliness is a well-known problem for asylum seekers and refugees, adding to already very difficult situations. Establishing relationships when life is incredibly unstable and English is often not spoken, and in a totally alien world, is more than daunting.

The Shared Health Foundation have been working with the NHS Welcome Project to help GP practices welcome their asylum seekers and refugees, and support them navigate the healthcare system in the UK. We have found that facilitating fun, interactive and enjoyable peer group sessions within GP practices has enabled new relationships to be made, experiences to be shared, and lives to be enriched.

If you are a GP practice and are interested in starting a peer support group for your asylum seekers and refugees, here are some handy tips that will help:

- ✓ On your New Patient Registration Form, include a tick box for 'asylum seeker or refugee'
- ✓ Use a read code for asylum seekers and refugees on your practice computer system, and then do regular searches so you are aware of who you have
- ✓ Invite those you have identified as asylum seekers and refugees to a peer group – send both texts and letters, in simple language, or even their own language where able
- ✓ Advertise using different mediums – social media, your practice website, notices in the waiting room, word of mouth
- ✓ Facilitate a meeting – try to make the session fun and engaging, with an awareness that there may be multiple languages, cultures and nationalities represented

Some examples of what you could facilitate in a peer group would be:

- Bring and share of national meals
- Going for a walk together
- Creating some artwork together to be put up in the surgery
- Playing or singing music together

The activities don't need to be expensive, but should be lots of fun!

We would love to support you in forming peer groups for your asylum seekers and refugees. If this would interest you, and you are working in Greater Manchester, please contact [contact@sharedhealth.org.uk](mailto:contact@sharedhealth.org.uk).

