



BORDERLANDS
from exclusion to
BELONGING

NEWSLETTER

April 2021

The past year has been really challenging for all of us specially for those in need and with health issues. As a Charity we have had to deal with different obstacles to keep our members as united and provided for as possible throughout lockdown.

During 2020, we have seen more than 464 people between the Drop-in, the food collection and the Solidarity Fund payments. We know that many of these people are supporting family members at home, and we have also delivered food to another 41 households representing 98 individuals. Volunteers in the food distribution packed more than 4,738 bags of food and delivery drivers made 972 deliveries! We have also set up a remote English provision which has been a challenge, but a success, with 6 months of weekly lessons taught in this way through a combination of one-to-one lessons over the phone, worksheets and zoom classes.

However, we are still in a worldwide pandemic and although numbers of people infected with covid have decreased in England in the past weeks and the Government has announced a plan to ease lock down in the upcoming months, we have the responsibility of trying to deliver the best possible service to our members. In many cases, our members are suffering the consequences of isolation, poor access to information, health deterioration (mental and physical) and of course a delay in response to their asylum applications.

HOW IS BORDERLANDS RESPONDING TO THE CURRENT CRISIS?

In response to this crisis Borderlands never closed its doors and continues to deliver the same services that were provided in the previous years and more, albeit in different formats!

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

We continue to provide food every Tuesday for more than a hundred people including deliveries. In addition, we provide a delicious hot meal for those who come and collect the food themselves and by deliveries too! This is only possible by the generous donations of food by private donors, other food banks like Clevedon Food bank, 91 Ways social enterprise and the consistent work of our volunteers.





BORDERLANDS INTERNET CAFE

In 2021, we are pleased to announce that we have installed 8 new computers as part of an Internet cafe project in our building which will hopefully help to tackle isolation and will allow our members to continue with their studies and keep them informed as well as develop their IT Skills. Computers can be accessed three days a week on a Monday, Wednesday or Thursday with Wednesdays reserved only for women!

ENGLISH CLASSES

Our teaching volunteers have done a great job during lockdown and in 2021 we are continuing to provide English lessons on Zoom. We are hoping to get back to classes face to face as soon as possible.

MENTORING PROJECT

As the first lockdown started, in April 2020 we decided to provide weekly phone check-ins with vulnerable and isolated members. Our committed team of Solidarity Callers provided emotional support to our members as well as signposting resources about relevant agencies (eg. food bank/baby bank), and kept our members up to date with the Government restrictions.

The Mentoring project has kept going throughout these very uncertain and difficult times, with 35 active mentoring partnerships. Depending on the Government's restrictions, meetings have taken place either face to face or remotely - on Whatsapp calls/videos, Zoom or Skype. Some mentors have been visiting their mentees outside their mentee's houses and some have done walking mentoring sessions.

In September 2020 our Mentoring Manager Susanna came back from maternity leave and since then 29 new mentors were trained as the demand for mentors' support kept increasing. In such wobbly times, mentors have and keep providing important emotional support, a listening ear and a reliable point of contact.

Moreover, in April 2021 in collaboration with the Traumatic Stress Service and Herbalists without Borders, we will trial 3 support sessions around sleep for members who experience trouble sleeping. We will talk about sleep hygiene and will provide a sleep pack including earplugs, eye masks, night light, stress ball, lavender balm and calming tea (provided by the wonderful Herbalists Without Borders). We will run separate sessions targeted at young people, women and men.



BORDERLANDS PARTNERSHIPS

- We have maintained some of our partnerships as for instance the Gloucestershire cricket club or the Clevedon Food Bank with which we will continue to work together during this year.

- In February 2021 we established a new partnership with 91 Ways to Build a Global City social enterprise which is providing us excellent quality of food products which are used to cook and are also delivered on every Tuesday as part of our food distribution project.

- In April 2021 we have organised a gardening and maintenance course in partnership with the Windmill Hill City Farm with which we have been working for three years. This is a great opportunity for our members to get some practice outdoors in nature. The Windmill Hill City Farm has also provided Borderlands with organic fresh vegetables and will continue to do so during 2021!



BORDERLANDS VOLUNTEERS

We are also really proud to say that our food volunteer team is now almost completely made up of Borderlands members. It is really important to us that members have ownership of the Drop-in – it is their space – so having plenty of opportunities for developing skills, feeding into changes we might be making and benefitting from all the other really aspects of volunteering is hugely important.



New members and volunteers continue to approach Borderlands to help or be helped. This synergy and the generous donations are the engine that helps us move on. We are very conscious about our work and want to deliver the best service we possibly can. We believe that together we can have hope even in this difficult time.

We would like to share in words of one of our members her experience in Borderlands:

“My experience with Borderlands has been nothing less than wonderful. Borderlands has been a light at the end of the tunnel for my husband and I. We have made wonderful friends and learned about cultures and nationalities that we hadn't heard about. In these uncertain circumstances for our personal lives and for the world, finding a place like Borderlands has been a priceless hope. Thanks to Steve, Francisco and Susanna for always being concerned for those who need help and for promoting an environment of acceptance, dignity and respect. We will always be grateful”

Borderlands has never given up hope, always tried to keep up with the changing environment due to Covid and respond to the needs of our members. In line with this way of work Father Richard McKay chair of trustees at Borderlands said:

“As Chair of Borderlands, it is my joy to greet you all in the name of Borderlands Trustees, the whole community of our Borderlands family and our close partners, the people of St Nick's Church. It has certainly been a challenging year for all of us, but I am very proud and humbled by the generosity of our Borderlands community.

Thank you all for everything you have done to ensure that, during the hard year we have all endured, we together continue to be a place of welcome and affirmation, a place of warmth and care, a place of respect and dignity that has remained open and serving. And not only have we remained open, but we have refused to stand still as we develop new opportunities for our members (e.g. internet café) and plan new projects into the future (women's group and outreach work).

The Covid pandemic has shown up terrible inequalities in the UK and globally: we must build something better as we emerge from Covid restrictions, not going back to the old 'normal' (even if that were possible!) but shape a more equal and humane society. It is a huge task, but we must and can succeed if we work together as sisters and brothers with a shared vision - the vision of 'from exclusion to BELONGING'

Thank you everyone - our members with your courage and endurance; our volunteers without whom Borderlands could do nothing; our staff who guide, serve and care; for all our hidden supporters who donate food and money and add their voice to calls for justice;

and our Borderlands Trustees who give so much time and energy to oversee the growth of our Charity. Together we are one family and will go on to achieve so much more in the coming year.'

Richard McKay - Chair of Borderlands

Thank you all for your support and care. With Warmth, Sharing, Dignity and Respect for everyone...

