

# EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report is a brief evaluation of a pilot walking project for Syrian families in Greenwich. The project was instigated by Laura Love-Petschl, Founder of Between Humans, bringing together her experience with refugees, being a parent, and volunteering for a parent and baby walking group, Blaze Trails CIC. Laura had a vision to bring the joys and benefits that come with walking with your children to the Syrian families in Greenwich.

Four walks took place over eight weeks, between July and September 2022, in the parks and open spaces of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, aimed at Syrian refugee families with babies/pre-school aged children, who have been resettled in the borough through the Greenwich Sanctuary Project (GSP). In order to encourage participation in the walks, the families' support (befriender/ESOL) volunteers (with or without young children) were also invited. This pilot project was delivered collaboratively by Between Humans, Blaze Trails CIC and Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP).

## BACKGROUND

Syrian refugee communities are at high risk of social exclusion, poor health, and mental illness. This is due to the traumatic experiences leading to their resettlement, separation from friends and family, income poverty, loss of identity and feeling separated from their new communities. Many of the families identify as feeling isolated, and loneliness has been described as the biggest challenge facing refugee communities in London.

Language barriers and lack of confidence often prevent refugees from accessing local services including parks, community spaces, and mental and physical health services.

Loneliness can particularly affect refugee women with children aged 0-5 (preschool) who have limited opportunities for social interaction. This can have a negative knock-on effect for

children who have reduced opportunities for socialisation.

There is very little evidence of what works when reducing loneliness in refugee communities, though evaluations of interventions that deliver intercultural group activities where people have a shared purpose have promising evidence.

## ABOUT BETWEEN HUMANS

Between Humans was founded in 2021 by Laura Love-Petschl, a qualified transformational coach who has worked with community groups and projects since 2015. Between Humans partners with grassroots and community organisations to design and deliver projects that support parent and community wellbeing and challenge social isolation and social inequalities through coaching, creativity and connection. Laura is a mother-of-two who has lived in the Royal Borough of Greenwich since 2011. She set up Plumstead Blaze Trails with the support of Blaze Trails CIC in 2021 to encourage parents in her local community to get walking with their babies and has so far organised 24 walks in the local area. She has been a volunteer befriender with Greenwich Sanctuary Project since 2019 and speaks conversational Arabic.

## ABOUT BLAZE TRAILS CIC

Blaze Trails CIC is the UK's parent and baby walking community and wants every parent in the UK to feel empowered and able to get outdoors walking with their baby. Blaze Trails CIC was founded by Katy (Caitlin) O'Neill Gutierrez and runs a growing national network of 40+ local parent and baby walking groups led by parents. Blaze Trails CIC supports new parents by providing practical tips and advice, connecting them with the outdoors, and with a supportive peer network in their local area.

## ABOUT GREENWICH SANCTUARY PROJECT & GREENWICH INCLUSION PROJECT

Greenwich Sanctuary Project (GSP) is a collaboration between Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP – a community charity challenging race inequalities), Royal Borough

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

of Greenwich and Greenwich Islamic Centre to provide support for Syrian refugee families resettled in the Royal Borough of Greenwich through the UNHCR vulnerable persons programme. GriP is responsible for connecting the families with the local community through volunteering projects; the Volunteer Manager is Fatima Jama.

- trial methods of measuring impact of participating in walks on wellbeing, confidence, social connection.

### EVALUATION METHODS

It was important to design an evaluation that was appropriate for the Syrian families, most of whom were not confident speaking English.

The evaluation questions were:

- What were the outputs of the project (who attended the walks, how many people attended and what activities occurred)?
- What were the outcomes for the beneficiaries?
- Were there any barriers for project success?
- What did we learn from the project (for GriP, Between Humans and Blaze Trails CIC)

The methods we used included:

- Interviews with those involved with organising and promoting the walks, Fatima (GriP) and Laura (Between Humans).
- Interview with one refugee who attended all the walks to develop a case study.
- We asked participants to take photos on every walk of things that they noticed.
- A creative zine making exercise<sup>1</sup> on the last walk at Eltham Palace where participants were asked to write or draw their responses to a set of feedback questions.

### AIMS OF THE PROJECT

*For Participants & GriP:*

- To improve the wellbeing of participants through outdoor walks that facilitate social connection, gentle exercise and the benefits of being in nature.
- To increase participants' confidence to access and explore local parks and green spaces in their local borough with their babies and young children, including where they may need to travel a short distance to reach them.
- To inform participants about regular Blaze Trails walks in the area.
- To build capacity within Greenwich Inclusion Project for organising walks for Syrian parents & families as part of the volunteering programme, should the families want to continue the walks after the project is completed.

*For Blaze Trails CIC & Between Humans:*

- To trial a pilot community walking project in connection with a community organisation that supports marginalised communities in order to:
  - explore & evaluate how effective this is as a model for expanding social impact and increasing diversity of participation in Blaze Trails walks;
  - explore possibilities for building capacity in other community organisations/groups to design and deliver their own walking projects;

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<sup>1</sup> A zine (pronounced 'zeen') is simply a small home-made magazine. The most popular kind is an 8-page mini-zine made from a single sheet of A4 paper, folded and cut as shown in the diagram below. All the pages are on the same side of the

paper, so you can make them out of any spare handouts or the backs of letters.

# EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

## DETAILS OF THE WALKS

The four walks were arranged in Greenwich Park, Charlton Park/Maryon Wilson Animal Park, Avery Hill Park and Eltham Palace. This ensured that at least one walk was easily accessible for each family as they live in Eltham, New Eltham, Plumstead, Greenwich and Woolwich Dockyard/Charlton; although families were also encouraged to attend walks outside of their immediate area.

The walks were planned to last about an hour, be pushchair friendly and be spread over the eight weeks between July and September.

The walks were organised and facilitated on the day by Laura Love-Petschl from Between Humans, with the support of GrIP staff and volunteers.

## HOW THE WALKS WERE ADVERTISED

Posters were designed by Laura and refined with feedback from all partners and some Syrian families. These were then distributed to the Syrian Family's WhatsApp Group via GrIP. All materials were produced in English and translated into Arabic.

Laura also made videos in outdoor spaces to attract attention and videos and voice notes were added to the WhatsApp Group.

Laura always chose a recognisable place, near a landmark, coffee shop or play area, and shared the exact google location so the participants could find the start of the walk.

After the first walk, a specific walking project WhatsApp Group was created where those interested could receive information just about the walks.

*'It was very well advertised in the groups, everyone heard about it, the poster was very clear, and the timing, we gave reminders, sent it out very early, making it accessible, putting in voice recordings about it, and we created a WhatsApp group which was useful after the first walk'* [GrIP employee]



The following pages showcase some photos of the walks and some feedback sent by the organiser, Laura Love-Petschl after the walks.

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### WALK 1 – GREENWICH PARK

*'In our first walk, we had a lovely stroll and spent a lot of time noticing the huge variety of trees in the park, many of which I had never spotted before!'* [Laura, Between Humans]

Three Syrian mums met Laura and set off walking. The Syrians pointed out the different trees, such as hazelnut, pear, mulberry, and apple. They knew all the trees as they were from farming communities. Later, they were joined by another family and a volunteer. It was at this walk that the Syrians suggested bringing a picnic on the future walks. After the walk, they all went to the play area, which helped to motivate the older children to finish the walk.



### WALK 2 – AVERY HILL PARK

It was really hot and there was a forty minute wait for everyone to arrive before the walk could start, but people waited next to a play area so the children could play. There was a 20 minute walk in the heat, and then a picnic for about two hours. The children played in the play area whilst the adults sat and chatted.

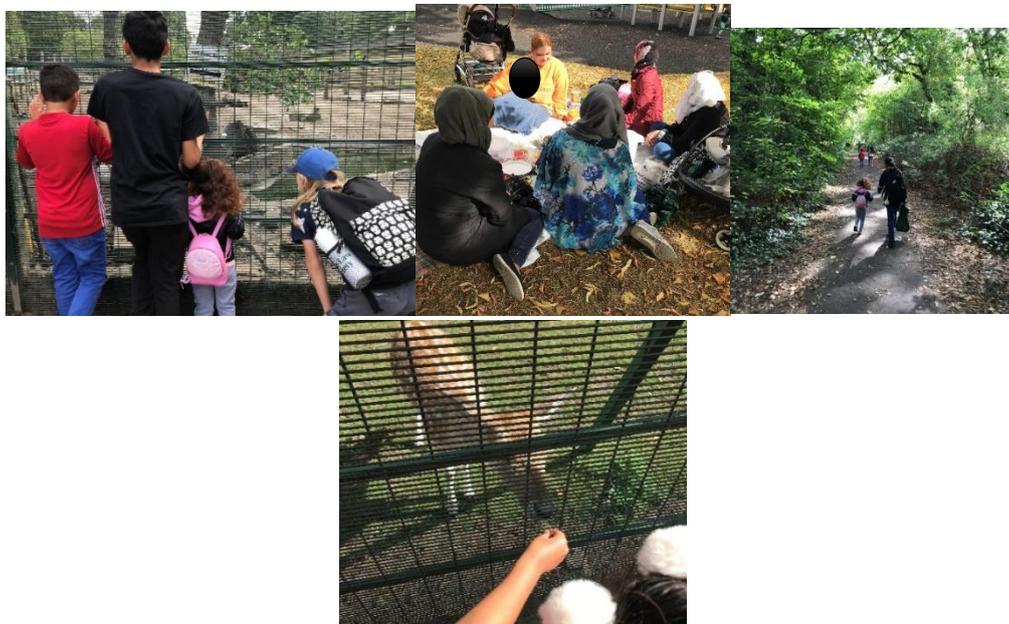
*'Today's walk and picnic were absolutely lovely, we had 7 mums, a grandma and one of the older men come, plus 12 babies and young children and two other volunteers. The Syrians were all very enthusiastic for the next walk in 2 weeks. Also, despite four of them living in Eltham, they hadn't visited that park before (which was one of the aims of the project!)*' [Laura, Between Humans]



## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### WALK 3- CHALTON MARYON PARK

The walk was well attended by four Syrian adults, eight children and a volunteer. They went to a park in Charlton that has animals including horses, ducks and chickens. Laura explained that the children were immediately all over the animals! They then went to Charlton Park and stopped next to the play area for a picnic which lasted an hour and a half. The adults chatted and someone asked Laura, '*can we do this every week?*'.



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### WALK 4- ELTHAM PARK

Arranged in collaboration with English Heritage, this walk was in the impressive grounds of Eltham Palace and included a tour of the house. Laura explained '*the parents on the walk absolutely loved walking around the house and the gardens, I could tell from the number of photographs they took*'.



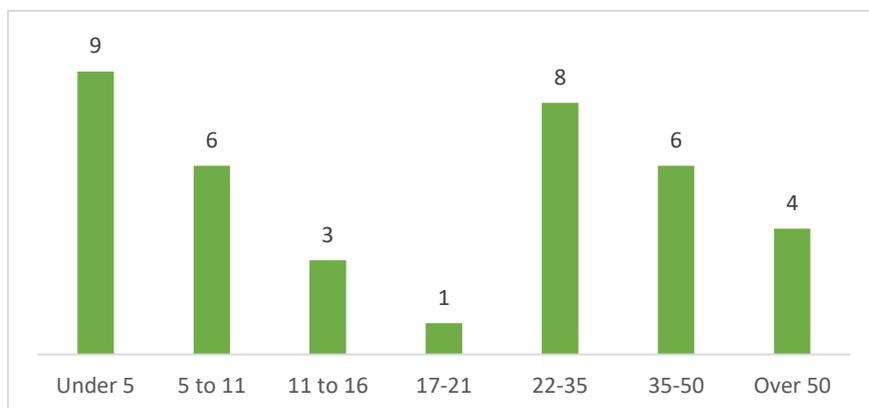
The walk concluded with tea and cake (as the rain prevented the planned picnic), and some of the participants took part in the zine making activity for the research.

# EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

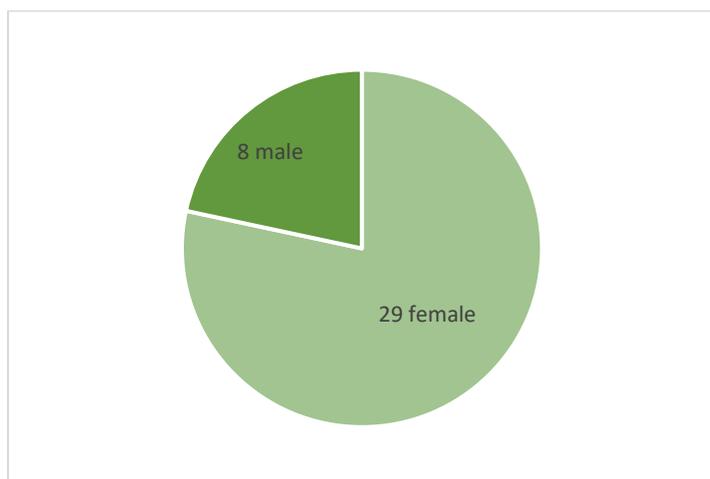
## PARTICIPANTS

The four walks were attended by members of 12 Syrian families and volunteers and included a total of 37 people, of whom 18 were children. Seven had special educational needs. The vast majority identified as Muslim (32).

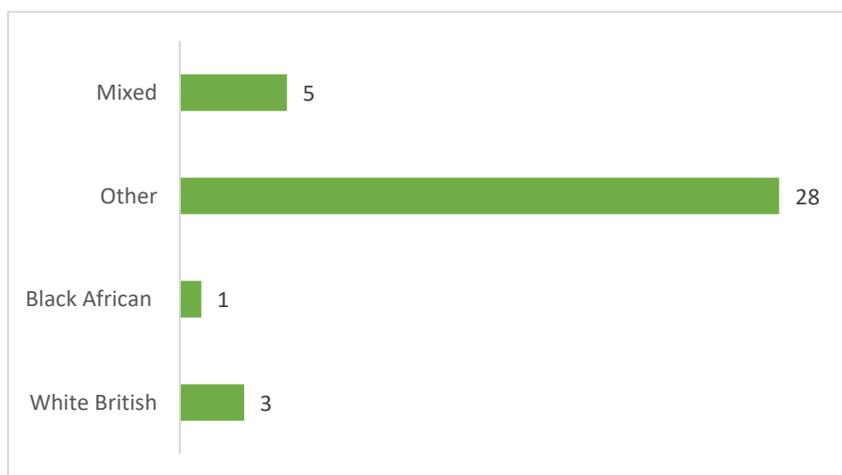
**Figure 1. Number of people per age group who attended the walks at least once**



**Figure 2. Number of females and males who attended the walks at least once**



**Figure 3. Number of people per ethnic group that attended the walk at least once**



## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### OUTCOMES

There were several outcomes for beneficiaries identified from the zine making exercise, the in-depth case study, the photographs the Syrians took during the walks, and from speaking with project organisers. The headline is that the walks gave the families opportunities to get out where they might previously stay inside. By getting out, the families experienced a range of other related benefits which are briefly presented below.

*'[The walks] widened my horizons, opened things up for me, I learned a few English words and it inspired me because there is a lot out there to do. I am just thinking about going out there, because there is so much to learn out there, like learning English by visiting parks with the children.'*

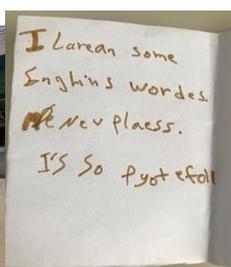
*(Participant in all four walks)*

Volunteer manager at GriP Fatima explained: *'The families, they don't get out that much, other than for school or college, so they are especially isolated in the summer, what do you do really, there is still that gap? One woman, Eltham Palace is ten minutes from her house, but she didn't know about it, she doesn't go out at all, she said. She has disabled children, quite a lot of them have disabled children, so leaving home becomes difficult because of the transport and the medical needs.'*

All of the photos below are taken by the Syrian families. There are also photos from the zine making activity.

### SEEING NEW PLACES

Despite living locally, many of the Syrians had not been to the parks before. One participant said *'I got to know new places and it was very wonderful!'*

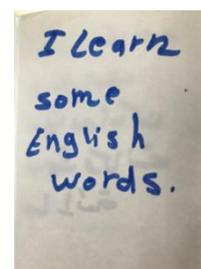


### IMPROVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Many of the Syrians reported learning new English words on the walks. This is an important outcome as not knowing or feeling confident using English raises the risk of isolation and loneliness.

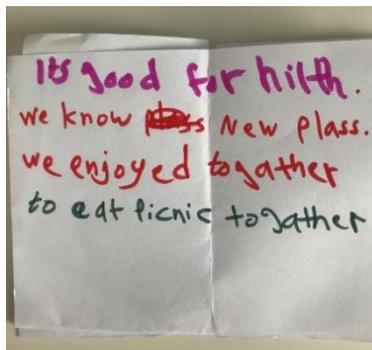
*'I learned some about the history of the old places like Eltham Palace and Greenwich Park, the name of some old trees and new English words.'*

[Participant 1]



## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

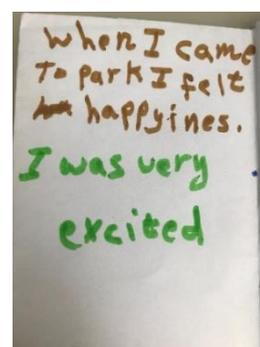
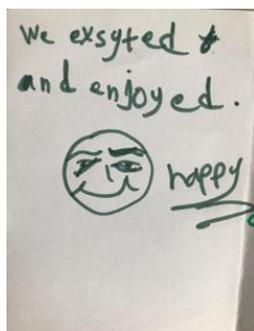
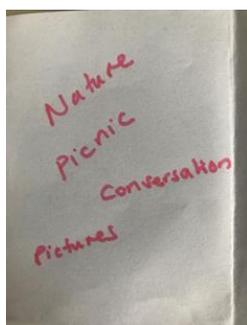


Several participants discussed the impact on their health. Before the walks began, several of the women were trying to find free women only exercise classes as they wanted to improve their health. However, there were very few opportunities for these. Walking provided an opportunity to get exercise for free outside.

*'The walk was quite up and down hill – one mum said this is a good walk today Laura, you are making us do this a lot, you know, up and down. We had a conversation around, this is good for the body, good for the mind, to do exercise. I don't know if I convinced her that it is! But we had that conversation'* [Laura, Between Humans]

*'It's good for health.'* [Participant 2]

### WELL-BEING



The walks were happy occasions that the Syrian families enjoyed. Considering that some explained that they never left the house, opportunities for the families to attend events they were excited about were very important. Refugees are known to be at risk for mental illness, and the enjoyment they gained from the walks may help improve well-being.

### TIME IN NATURE

The walks provided opportunities for the families to spend time in nature. Many of the photos taken by Syrians on the walks, or the drawings they made in the zine making activity, were of trees and flowers. During the walks, many of the Syrians spent a long time studying the trees and wildlife and shared their expansive knowledge. The children enjoyed feeding the animals in the park. Previous research has shown that spending time in nature is one way refugee communities improve their well-being, and so opportunities to appreciate nature are very important.

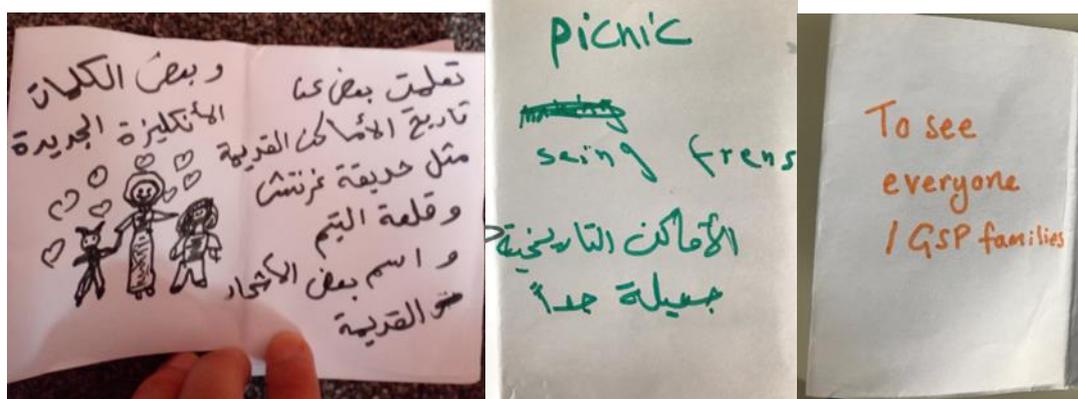
*'When we went to Eltham Palace it was amazing, I loved it... The gardens, the lake, it was so beautiful'* (participant in all four walks)

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH



### QUALITY TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

It is evident that some Syrian families do not get many opportunities to meet and spend time with other Syrian families. The walks provided these opportunities to connect with their community and others. Furthermore, Laura explained that the conversations that started on the walk often continued in the WhatsApp Group.



'We saw friends and shared delicious food.'

'These walks make me happy, because I see my friends and family in Syria, the children play together and enjoy the times together'

'Nature. Picnic. Conversation. Pictures.'

'I love to see everyone/ GSP families' [Participant 3]

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### SHARING FOOD

Food became a key feature of all the walks, and recipes were often shared after the walks in the walking WhatsApp group. Having picnics together is a common feature of Blaze Trails walks and allows for time after the walk to socialise. Sharing home cooked food is important to the Syrian families and they put great effort into cooking food for everyone.



*The walks have been fun, the picnics have been even more fun. The picnics have been what it has been all about. I do feel it is 50% food and 50% walking. It is a good thing, because sharing food is a really nice way of chatting and talking and stuff' [Laura, Between Humans]*

### BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

The parents enjoyed the walks, but the children also had fun playing with other children outside. Fatima explained that the Syrians look to GrIP to help them organise summer activities for their children and these walks couldn't have come at a better time. The walks provided some excellent activities for the children, especially during the heat wave.

The walks were in parks where there were play parks where the children could play together whilst the adults chatted.



*'The children love to play together and go on walks and go the park'*

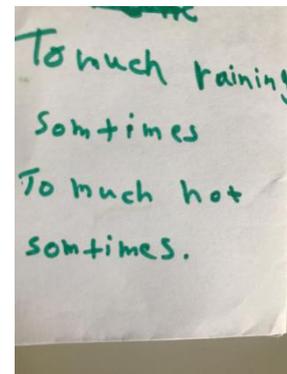
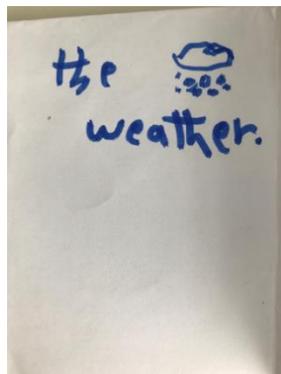
## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### BARRIERS

#### THE WEATHER

All four participants in the zine exercise identified that the weather was something they didn't like about the walks.

On one of the walks where it rained, the children were not wearing wellies and did not have the right clothing. This makes cold weather and winter walking difficult. One Syrian also had a perception that the cold and rain might make you ill.



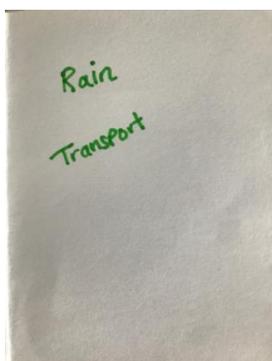
*'Winter will be difficult for walking. If it just me, that is fine but with the small children it will be difficult. Because cold, and rain, but if the walk is inside, and not in the park, to visit museums, indoor spaces'*

*'Getting on the bus is difficult, the pushchair in the rain, pushing the pushchair in the rain and the cold is hard. It is exhausting, and you can get unwell from the rain and the cold weather, being out there.'*

Hot weather was also a barrier for the Syrians, and the layers of clothing some of them wore meant that heat was a problem along with rain or cold. Laura explained:

*'The range of temperature that they will be comfortable walking in will be less than mums who can come in active wear, like most Blaze Trails Walks, and strip off layers.'* [Laura, *Between Humans*]

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT & MOBILITY



*'I didn't like travelling by bus.'* (Participant 1)

Two participants in the zine exercise explained they found it hard using public transport. Getting on public transport with a baby to go walking can be very hard.

Fatima explained that Syrians with larger families do not have access to cars. Many of the families who joined these walks were larger families, and Fatima thought this was because other families with fewer children find it easier to go to the beach or exploring.

Some of the older members of the Syrian community had mobility issues and found it harder to walk, so this prevented them from participating.

#### BEING BUSY OR HAVING OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Some families explained that they might not come as they are busy with other responsibilities. One Syrian explained that they did not come because:

*'She said it was because she had her (school-aged) children at home and they don't like walking, plus it was the holidays, so they were either busy or resting.'*

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### LEARNING AND REFLECTION

#### CAN THE WALKS BE LED BY THE SYRIAN FAMILIES IN THE FUTURE?

One of the aims of the project was that volunteers and Syrian families might start to lead the walks themselves. This has not happened yet but there is learning for the future.

*'The families thought, this is something we organise for them.'* (GrIP worker)

*'If someone doesn't organise it for us, all the families are busy, it is not going to happen. Nobody knows the places where we can go. The Syrian families don't know much about places to walk in the area.'* (Walk participant)

The feedback from one participant was that it may be hard for the Syrian families to lead the walks. Interviews with staff and participants show:

- Many of the families had disabled children which makes organising walks challenging as the families already find it hard to leave the house.
- Families with multiple children feel too busy to organise walks.
- They felt they didn't know the local parks and gardens well enough.
- They did not feel confident to lead the walks.
- Did not want to lead the walks.

#### WHAT DID THE SYRIAN FAMILIES WANT?

The Syrian families had some ideas about what they might want to do in the future:

- Visit more old places like museums.
- Visit farms.
- Visit more places that are famous and well-known in this country.
- They would like to travel further and even go outside of London.
- More walks in parks in the summer.
- The walks to be organised for them.

#### IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS PROJECT

- The project could introduce Syrian families to different places such as parks, farms and museums, and take trips outside of London.
- There could be walks where older members of the community can rest in a cafe whilst other members go for a walk.
- They could partner with other Blaze Trails groups around London or just outside.
- The Syrian families may not have been aware the long term aim was for them to run walks. There could be a longer term project supporting Syrian-led walks OR an integration with the local Blaze Trails group where there will be more opportunities to learn English and integrate into the community.
- Fatima explained GrIP had access to coaches for transport. These could be used to help make people's journeys easier, especially in winter.
- A women only walking group may be popular.
- If the Syrians are not ready to lead walks, the walks could be more service user led in different ways. For example, asking somebody to lead the walk or involve them in planning the route. Involve the families in planning the walks without a responsibility.
- Link with a sling surgery and library to provide an alternative to using pushchairs in bad weather.

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### LEARNING FOR GRIP

- Walks were a very popular activity and more exercise options could be too. Organisers reported that they did not have to 'convince' Syrian families to attend walks in the same way that they had to encourage them to attend indoor activities.
- GrIP don't have many activities that form a series of events, or are in the same place or time, or are women only. The Syrian's seemed to like this regularity.
- Women only activities are very normal for Islamic communities and may be preferred.
- People with multiple children are perhaps more excluded generally due to having less money to access activities and less time available, and and may need more support.
- WhatsApp groups can be helpful to bring together people with common interests in specific projects.

*'I think a lot of the families want this to be something that continues' [GrIP worker]*

*'It is expensive finding something to do with a big family' [GrIP worker]*

### LEARNING FOR FUTURE BLAZE TRAILS PROJECTS WITH MARGINALISED OR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

#### **This was a successful model and relied on some key factors:**

- Laura's passion, motivation and time.
- Laura's experience and connections with the community.
- Laura was a trusted person, known to the refugees.
- Advertising was excellent.

#### **Ideas to take forward in future projects:**

- It takes a long time to deliver these projects, leave a lot of time for it, especially as the weather can delay the walks.
- Ask the communities how they want their walking project to look prior to starting the project.
- WhatsApp groups specific to the project can be really helpful to communicate updates and share photos and other information. If someone then takes over the project there is already a ready made group.
- Develop a Standard Operating Policy to guide decisions such as how to deal with advertising, safeguarding, weather, cancelled walks and relationships with organisations.
- Consider cultural factors such as creating women only walks.
- Link with sling surgeries and libraries to overcome barriers of pushchairs.
- Consider grants for equipment for people who cannot afford it.
- Develop a booklet on tips for walking with your baby.
- Some great practical tips for organising and advertising accessible walks.
- Consider that marginalised groups may not have time or confidence to organise walks themselves, or may not want to, and may need ongoing additional support to participate in walking groups.
- It helps if a trusted person runs these activities.
- A handbook for organising groups for marginalised communities would be useful.
- The energy and resources required for organising walks with marginalised families suggests there needs to be an initial funding period but also longer term support to embed the project in an organisation over time.
- More research is needed to explore how to partner Blaze Trails walks with external organisations, but it is a very promising approach.

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### CONCLUSION

This was an innovative pilot project to support Syrian families to participate in walks with their children with the objectives to improve social inclusion and well-being. Refugee communities are some of the most isolated in London and are at high risk of mental and physical health problems. Though a small project, the evidence that these four walks had a positive impact for the families is strong. 30 Syrians from 12 different families participated in at least one walk, and some participated in all of the walks. The families learnt new English words, visited new places, had the opportunity for exercise, socialised, shared food and enjoyed nature. Considering that some of the families explained that they never left the house, these opportunities were extremely valuable. Looking to the future, these walks provided the space for much needed learning to support similar projects to engage marginalised communities in connecting with outdoor spaces, group walks and their related benefits in the future.

**With thanks to the Syrian refugee families who took part in the walks and the research and to GriP, Between Humans, Blaze Trails CIC and Chalton Athletic Community Trust for making it happen.**



### FURTHER READING

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**EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH**

**Appendix 1. Total number of attendees and demographic breakdown**

Category		Number of attendees
<b>Attendees</b>	Total	37
<b>Gender</b>	Female	29
	Male	8
<b>Age</b>	Under 5	9
	5-11	6
	11-16	3
	17-21	1
	22-35	8
	35-50	6
	Over 50	4
<b>Disability</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	7
	No SEND	
<b>Faith</b>	Buddhism	
	Christianity	
	Hinduism	
	Islam	32
	Judaism	
	No religious affiliation or belief	2
	Sikhism	

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### Appendix 2. Feedback from zine making exercise

Question 1: Why did you go on the walks?	
Participant 1:	"We entertain ourselves and our children enjoying quiet and beautiful places."
Participant 2:	"It's good for health. We know new places. We enjoyed together to eat picnic together."
Participant 3:	"To see everyone / GSP families."
Participant 4:	"I came to enjoy new places."
Question 2: How did you feel before the first walk you came on?	
Participant 1:	"I was very excited and loved the idea."
Participant 2:	"We excited and enjoyed. Happy."
Participant 3:	"Happy. Excited."
Participant 4:	"When I came to the park I felt happiness. I was very excited."
Question 3: What is something you liked about the walks?	
Participant 1:	"We saw friends and shared delicious food."
Participant 2:	"Picnic, seeing friends, the historical places and very beautiful."
Participant 3:	"Nature. Picnic. Conversation. Pictures."
Participant 4:	"I loved the beautiful landscape of trees, flowers, small lakes and new historical places."
Question 4: What is something you didn't like about the walks?	

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

Participant 1:	"I didn't like travelling by bus and the changing weather."
Participant 2:	"Too much raining sometimes. Too much hot sometimes."
Participant 3:	"Rain. Transport."
Participant 4:	"The weather."
<b>Question 5: What is something you learnt about on the walks?</b>	
Participant 1:	"I learned some about the history of the old places like Eltham Palace and Greenwich Park, the name of some old trees and new English words."
Participant 2:	"I learn some English words. New places. It's so beautiful."
Participant 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No answer given</li> </ul>
Participant 4:	"I learned some English words. I learned the place and history of the house. We got to know new places and it was very wonderful."

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### Appendix 3: Did the project meet its objectives?

Participants and GrIP	Objective	Objective met?
To improve the wellbeing of participants through outdoor walks that facilitate social connection, gentle exercise and the benefits of being in nature.	The outcomes of the walk included increased opportunities for social connection, exercise and being in nature. Participants reported that the walks made them feel happy and excited.	Fully
To inform participants about regular Blaze Trails walks in the area.		
To build capacity within Greenwich Inclusion Project for organising walks for Syrian parents & families as part of the volunteering programme, should the families want to continue the walks after the project is completed.	GrIP have expressed interest in continuing the project next year but may need additional resources and support. The project was very popular with the families.	Ongoing – next step is to explore how Blaze Trails can best direct capacity building training and support within GrIP.
To increase participants' confidence to access and explore local parks and green spaces in their local borough with their babies and young children, including where they may need to travel a short distance to reach them.	We could not answer this question from the methods used, though one participant did talk about broadening horizons. To achieve this goal, it may take a more sustained piece of work supporting the families to overcome barriers that were identified, such as unease on transport, knowing where to go and how to manage coming to the walks with different aged children.	Ongoing – though we now know the challenges and have ideas on how to overcome them.
<i>For Blaze Trails CIC &amp; Between Humans</i>		
To trial a pilot community walking project in connection with a community organisation that supports marginalised communities in order to:	The pilot was successfully implemented	Fully
explore & evaluate how effective this is as a model for expanding social impact and increasing diversity of participation in Blaze Trails walks;	The project was the first of its kind with Blaze Trails CIC and has provided a solid groundwork for similar projects	Fully
explore possibilities for building capacity in other community organisations/groups to design and deliver their own walking projects;	The project was the first of its kind with Blaze Trails CIC and has provided a solid groundwork for similar projects	Fully
Trial methods of measuring impact of participating in walks on wellbeing, confidence, social connection.	Using photos and zine methods was a successful method	Fully

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

### Appendix 4. Case study report

1. General Information	
<b>Name of the Service</b>	<p><b>Pilot Walking Project for Syrian Families in Greenwich</b></p> <p>Between Humans, Blaze Trails CIC and Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP)</p>
<b>Area of Work</b>	<p><b>Between Humans</b> partners with grassroots and community organisations to design and deliver projects that support parent and community wellbeing and challenge social isolation and social inequalities through coaching, creativity and connection. Laura is a mother-of-two who has lived in the Royal Borough of Greenwich since 2011. She set up Plumstead Blaze Trails with the support of Blaze Trails CIC in 2021 to encourage parents in her local community to get walking with their babies and has so far organised 24 walks in the local area. She has been a volunteer befriender with Greenwich Sanctuary Project since 2019 and speaks conversational Arabic.</p> <p><b>Blaze Trails CIC</b> is the UK’s parent and baby walking network which wants every parent in the UK to feel empowered and able to get outdoors walking with their baby, in whatever way suits them. Blaze Trails CIC is a growing national network of local parent and baby walking groups led by parents. Blaze Trails CIC supports new parents by connecting them with the outdoors and with a supportive peer network.</p> <p><b>Greenwich Sanctuary Project</b> is a collaboration between Greenwich Inclusion Project (GrIP – a community charity challenging race inequalities), Royal Borough of Greenwich and Greenwich Islamic Centre to provide support for Syrian refugee families resettled in the Royal Borough of Greenwich through the UNHCR vulnerable persons programme. GrIP is responsible for connecting the families with the local community through volunteering projects.</p>
<b>Outcome Area</b>	Improve social inclusion, wellbeing and physical health of Syrian refugee families
<b>Initials and DoB of service user</b>	HF
<b>Period of engagement</b>	July-September 2022 (the duration of the pilot)

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

<b>Date of completion of case study</b>	26/09/2022
<b>Completed by</b>	Dr Ruth Naughton-Doe, Blaze Trails CIC Evaluation and Impact Lead.

### **2. Introduction – including a brief overview of the service user’s background, detail of how you came in contact with the service user and their issues/needs that need supporting**

HF is a Syrian refugee who has been resettled in Greenwich through the Greenwich Sanctuary Project (GSP) with her 5 children, one aged 18 months, and four at school. For the purposes of the evaluation, it was not required to explore HF’s personal circumstances, but we know that Syrian refugees such as HF are at risk of social exclusion, poor health and well-being.

HF is being supported by GrIP and she heard about the project through a community worker. HF identified that she:

- Did not feel confident going to new places in London
- Often stayed home and did not go anywhere
- Wanted to learn more English
- Wanted to see new places
- Wanted more opportunities to socialise where she could also take her children

### **3. Activities – explaining what has been done in order to address the issues/needs presented, including engagement with and signposting to partners or external organisations to further support the service user and/or their family**

The partnership organised four walks for the project that were attended by 30 Syrians from 12 families. The walks were one hour each, pushchair friendly and accessible via public transport. Each walk ended with a picnic. Each walk was organised by Laura Love-Petschl from Between Humans, and Fatima, the Volunteer manager at GrIP. Laura led each walk and Fatima attended two. A number of GrIP volunteers also attended the walks.

The four walks were in:

- Greenwich Park, Avery Hill Park, Charlton Maryon Wilson Animal Park, and Eltham Palace.
- A WhatsApp Group was set up for people interested in the walks
- Each walk was followed by a picnic
- People took photos on the walks to share with their friends and family in Syria

### **4. Outcomes – including the outcomes achieved by the service user through the work and support received from the service to address the issues/needs identified, highlighting any observations or further impact that reinforces the outcome(s) achieved**

HF identified a range of benefits from taking part in the project. In addition to the walks being described as happy and enjoyable times, she:

- Had more opportunities to get out of the house
- Discovered different places in her local area
- Had more opportunities to socialise with other people
- Learnt the names for English native trees and plants

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

- Had more opportunities to exercise
- Discovered there was more in London to explore
- Opportunities to meet with other Syrian families and friends.

In addition, the children enjoyed the walks and had opportunities to play and socialise with other families.

### 5. Quotes – including direct quotes from the service user and a family member or friend (where possible)

Before the walks HF explained *'I always stay at home'*

HF said of the walks:

*'It was a great idea, it made us very happy, me and the children, during the hot weather it gave us something to do'*

*'It widened my horizon, opened things up for me, I learned a few English words and it inspired me because there is a lot out there to do. I am just thinking about going out there, because there is so much to learn out there, like learning English by visiting parks with the children.'*

*'These walks make me happy, because I see my friends and family in Syria, the children play together and enjoy the times together'*

*'The children love to play together and go on walks and go the park'*

*'When we went to Eltham Palace it was amazing, I loved it... I was amazed by thre trees, the lake, the gardens, it was so beautiful'*

*'We enjoyed the picnic, everytime we go, we had a picnic, it was great'*

*'I love the trees and the flowers, I love to walk and to see the pretty places, with the green all around, and the beautiful flowers'*

### 6. Comments – including comments from staff working with the service user and/or from an external organisation(s) the service user was signposted to or received support from

*'I notice HF had an interest in the flowers, different plants, she was asking what the lavender was, she has an interest in that'* Fatima

### 7. Reflective practice – including a reflection on the case and what the practitioners have learnt/taken from it, highlighting any identified areas for improvement

It was evident that HF enjoyed the walks.

GriP learnt:

- Walks were very popular with this group and organisers did not have to 'convince' Syrian families to attend in the same way that they had to encourage them to attend indoor activities

## EVALUATION OF A PILOT WALKING PROJECT FOR SYRIAN FAMILIES IN GREENWICH

- Whatsapp groups were a useful way of communicating the activities
- Food sharing was an important part of activities

### **The case/project also highlighted a need within the Syrian Refugee community for:**

- Access to suitable outdoor clothing
- Information about dealing with British autumn and winter weather
- Affordable exercise options
- Exercise options suitable for muslim women (women only)
- Information about places to go in London and support to visit them

### **A number of future barriers to continuing walks were identified:**

- The weather – bad weather conditions would prevent HF from going on walks because it was hard on public transport waiting for the bus with 5 children. She did not have the appropriate wet weather equipment.

*‘Winter will be difficult for walking. If it just me, that is fine but with the small children it will be difficult. Because cold, and rain, but if the walk is inside, and not in the park, to visit museums, indoor spaces’*

*‘Getting on the bus is difficult, the pushchair in the rain, pushing the pushchair in the rain and the cold is hard. It is exhausting, and you can get unwell from the rain and the cold weather, being out there’*

- It had been hoped that the walk attendees would take over the running of the walks themselves. However, HF explained the challenges include the families being too busy, not knowing where to go, and lacking confidence to organise walks themselves.

*“if someone doesn’t organise it for us, all the families are busy, it is not going to happen. Nobody knows the places where we can go. The Syrian families don’t know much about places to walk in the area.”*

**This report was written by Dr Ruth Naughton-Doe (Research and Impact Lead at Blaze Trails CIC) with support from Laura Love-Petschl.**

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