

The Inspire Project

September 2022 -
March 2024

About Inspire

The Inspire Project was developed by The Welcoming Association and ProjectScotland to meet the clear need of supporting young New Scots refugee's and asylum seekers, to overcome the barriers faced with relocating and living in a new city (Edinburgh and Dundee), helping New Scots to thrive and play an active role in their new communities.

New Scots arriving in Scotland can often face multiple barriers to further education, employment, training and a whole host of other opportunities. The Inspire Project was set up to tackle these challenges, drawing on the unique skills and expertise of The Welcoming and ProjectScotland.

Throughout this project, we have provided tailored and bespoke support to young New Scots, helping them to build skills, confidence, explore career options, plan for the future, integrate into their communities and to ultimately move forward in life. We have empowered participants to volunteer in their communities and have facilitated the opportunity for each young person to benefit from a positive, trusting mentoring relationship as a wrap-around support.

This report details the part played by ProjectScotland through this partnership.

ProjectScotland have worked with over 80 New Scots with the help of 35 dedicated Volunteer Mentors. In this report you'll read about some of their stories and the vital volunteering opportunities they have taken part in. It has been a joy to meet and support all involved in this project. New Scots young people have endured trauma, hardship and discrimination but have responded with resilience, determination and a strength of spirit, seeing their accomplishments has been truly Inspiring.

Sincere thanks to the various partners who have been involved over the last 18 months, with a particular mention to our funders, The Scottish Refugee Council and the National Lottery Community Fund, for resourcing this valuable work.

**The Inspire Team at
The Welcoming and
ProjectScotland**



ProjectScotland

Since 2005, ProjectScotland has supported young people across the country to develop their confidence and skills to get on in life and achieve their goals.

We provide a personal support plan for each young person, including the option of a volunteering placement with a local charity, one-to-one mentoring, and ongoing support from one of our team.

The Welcoming

The Welcoming is a Scottish charity dedicated to supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Edinburgh.

They welcome New Scots to Edinburgh, build community and learn together. They do this through supporting New Scots to learn English, find jobs and access local services, offering opportunities for friendship, sustainable living, creativity, health and well-being. And by connecting locals and New Scots through social and cultural exchange, collaborating with others to share knowledge and influence positive change



Our Amazing Mentors

Through our equitable volunteer recruitment strategy, we have attracted Volunteer Mentors from many backgrounds and walks of life.

This includes Mentors of all ages including students, retired people and working professionals looking for a career change or an opportunity to give back to the local community.

We have welcomed Mentors from various cultural backgrounds who have lived experience of relocating, as well as people who speak additional languages other than English. Volunteers who can speak Arabic and Persian have supported us to reach beneficiaries with little to no English and successfully tailor our support to them.



New Scots in Dundee and Edinburgh

Over an 18 month period from September 2022 until March 2024, we have provided tailored support to 80+ New Scots aged 16-35.

These young people are a diverse group, made up of 19 different nationalities. This includes young people from Afghanistan, Vietnam, Ukraine, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Syria and Eritrea to name just a few.

These young people have each had individual goals and ambitions, from trying to secure employment, to accessing college, taking part in new interests and hobbies, improving their wellbeing, developing language skills and more.

For other young people, they simply wanted to feel part of their new community, and have the opportunity to take part in society through volunteering.



Inspire in Dundee

The Inspire Project in Dundee focused on supporting those young people who had fallen through the gaps of other local services. We were able to offer a flexible and bespoke support to New Scots arriving in the city, particularly newly arrived asylum seekers.

In 2023, Dundee welcomed for the first time a considerable number of asylum seekers. The infrastructure and network of services to provide to the needs of these people did not exist prior to their arrival. We have had the opportunity to be involved in the development of these services, and play an important part in significantly improving many lives.



Our Numbers - Dundee

Mentoring and Volunteering

54

New Scots
young people
supported

16

Volunteer
Mentors

13

young people
took part in
volunteering

13

Mentoring
Relationships

6 young people are still actively volunteering and intend to continue beyond our current funding period. 2 young people are volunteering for more than one charity.

Mentors and Mentees have engaged in a number of activities including visits to V&A Museum, McManus, Discovery, DCA, Botanic Gardens, Dundee Observatory.

Our Numbers - Dundee

Wrap Around Support

10

young people supported
with accessing college
education

30

young people supported with
accessing other forms of education
(Princes Trust, Digital Skills
courses, English support groups,
library resources)

11

young people
supported with
obtaining a free
travel pass

11

pairs of
football boots
provided

3

young people supported
with engaging with
mental health services

2

major engagement
events organised

Our Referral Partners in Dundee

Dundee City Council showed prompt interest and support to the Inspire Project. Numerous referrals for young people to be supported came from the Humanitarian Protection Team, the Employability Team and the ESOL Team.



Action for Children referred many young people engaging in their services, to the Inspire Project

MEARS entrusted the Inspire Project to engage with and support some of the newly arrived asylum seekers in Dundee, who they were providing housing support to.

The logo for Mears is a red square with a white rectangular box in the center. Inside the white box, the word 'MEARS' is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

MEARS

Volunteer Placement Partners in Dundee

Dundee Libraries

Dundee Libraries provided volunteering opportunities to 5 of our young people. Three of them now teach IT skills to fellow refugees and asylum seekers as part of their volunteering experience. We are most grateful to Dundee Libraries for providing all of our service user with spaces to learn and connect with the local community. Click on the video for more!



The Maxwell Centre

The Maxwell Centre has welcomed 2 of our young people, one of which has been a volunteer in their garden, the other with their children's groups. Click on the video to learn more about the Maxwell Centre!



NHS Tayside

The volunteer hub at Ninewells Hospital have given the opportunity to one of our Ukrainian refugees to volunteer, and make use of their medical qualification and experience.

Boomerang Community Centre

One of our young people can now gain experience in childcare at Boomerang's toddlers group after obtaining a qualification from the Dundee International Women Centre.

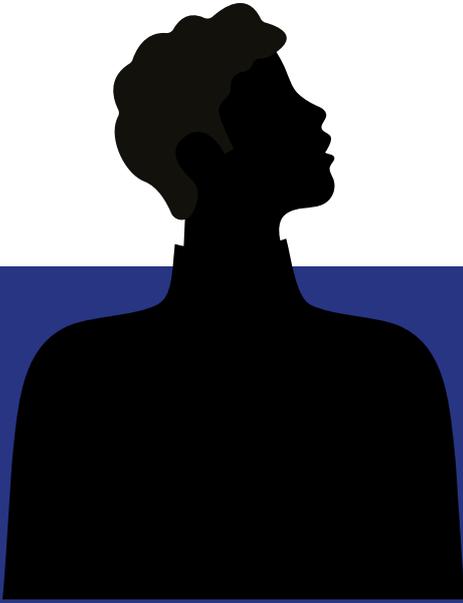
Fare Share

We are most grateful to Fare Share for supporting one of our volunteers into employment after their volunteering experience. Fare Share offers an internal mentoring programme and volunteers even have access to free food, following their volunteering shift!

Braw Tea

Braw Tea is a recently established social enterprise, which has welcomed two of our young people who wanted to gain experience in a cafe.

Feedback from Young People in Dundee



“

Before joining this project I was afraid to speak with anyone in English because and I didn't have anyone outside the Syrian community to talk to.

After meeting Shanti and Alice, my confidence built up and now I have friends at college and I'm not afraid to speak over the phone either!

”

“

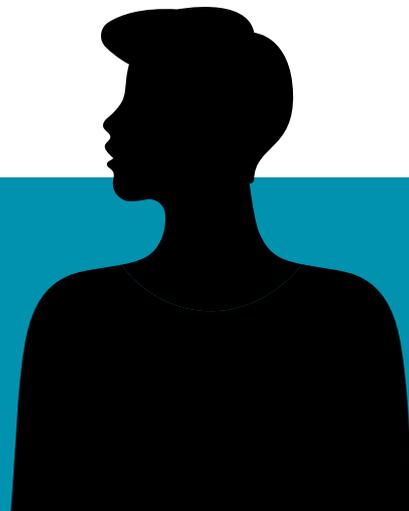
One day I will have best and happy life in this country, because of you and Neil!

”

“

Our conversations made me feel alive. Thank you so much for all of your support, I'm very grateful

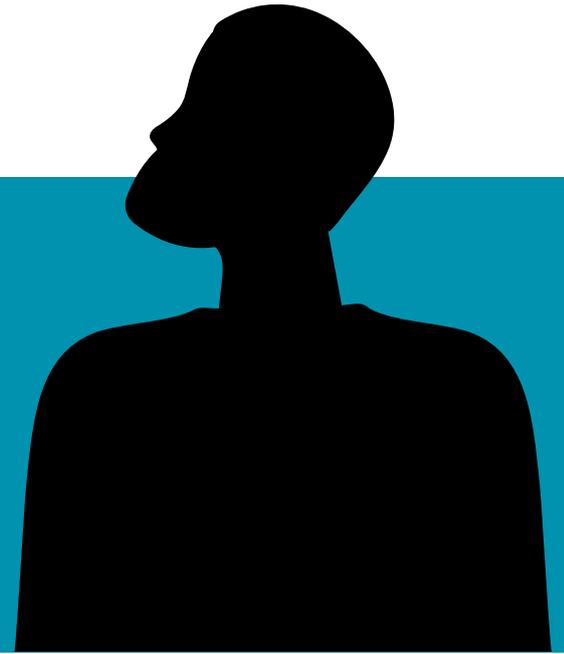
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“

It was great. We went into the city (of Dundee) together. We had a camera with us. The colours of the year were green and red. We took pictures of everything that was red and green. Then we went and drank coffee together. We had a great time. It was really great. Thank you very much for providing me with this golden time.

”



-Young person on experience with Art Angel



-Young person on visit to Princes Trust

“

I was pleased to see you ... and translating was nothing when you compare it with what you are doing for us, especially today going to that place will make a difference in our lives, so thanks a lot.

”

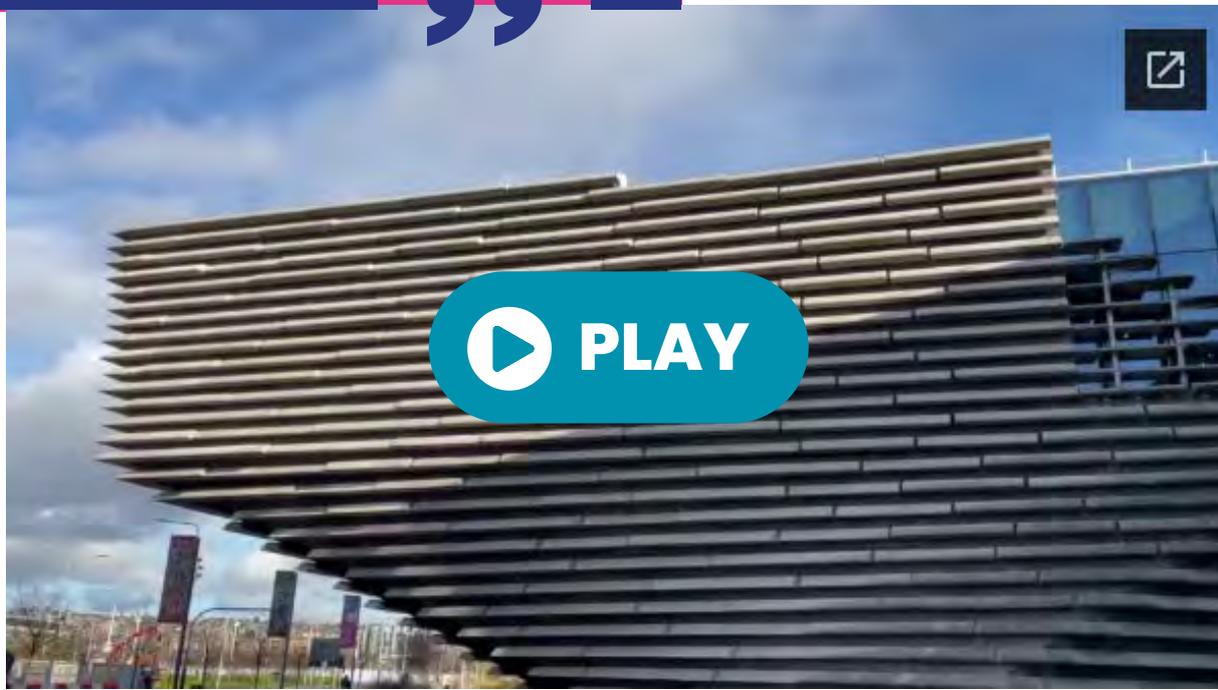
Feedback from Mentors in Dundee

“

I've been volunteering with ProjectScotland since June of this year (2023) and I've found it a very positive experience. I love to see the young persons enthusiasm for new experiences. We have been on various visits and it's very encouraging to see his interest in different activities. For example visits to the Botanic Gardens and the Discovery Centre. I think he finds something from these experiences that he then shares with me and it helps my understanding of his culture too. I would definitely recommend becoming a volunteer, I feel I've learnt a lot about myself, both strengths and weaknesses, through this process. I feel it's very rewarding to see young people develop and grow.

”

V&A in Dundee Click on the video for more!





“

I began my role as a Volunteer Mentor in February 2023. So far, I've supported two New Scots.

Already I have seen the genuine difference it has made to individuals, and this will only have a positive effect on the community too. My first mentee is now at college and gaining further skills to increase his options. This is positive for him as an individual and for the community. It is such a change from when we first met as he would hardly speak in front of people he did not know. Over time his confidence improved significantly, and he attended social events and chat with people he had just met.

”

Feedback from Partners in Dundee

“
Thank you for all your hard work that you've done supporting the learners this year to get into volunteering, it's such a brilliant way of integrating and making connections, and of course practising English!! We'll keep referring learners to you.
”

*-Aneta McNally, ESOL,
Dundee City Council*

“
****'s English has really come along and its amazing how much he's improved since moving into the project!
”

*-Chloe Williams, Action
for Children*

“
It's been very positive. (...) I'm confident from what I have heard and witnessed and monitored that the person has a lot of support. In particular, I think your project helps people to become more familiar with the community in a very soft way and I think the 1:1 approach is essential for people to feel more nurtured and have a safe space to talk. I think the people that I have referred have gained a lot and that can be a springboard for them to look forward to being in Scotland and achieve what they want to do. I think it's a very important project which we need because it's unique here in Dundee.
”

*-Alessandro Insalaco, Social Worker,
Dundee City Council*

Experiences in Dundee



“What an amazing afternoon – you gave so many people so much happiness today!”

Sonja Goodwin, Associate Practitioner, Health Inclusion Nursing Team, Kings Cross Hospital



T's case study

“

People at the Maxwell Centre are nice and friendly. I'm learning about gardening. I have been weeding and planting some new plants!

”



T was referred to the Inspire Project by Action for Children in June 2023, to support with their English skills and community integration.

T arrived in Scotland early in the year and their understanding of English and their communication skills were very limited. T seemed to limit their contact to the outside world to a minimum.

After a few weeks spent with the Inspire Project Volunteer Coordinator, T agreed to be matched with a mentor and start a volunteering experience. T particularly loves nature and is curious about types of plants and trees and how to grow them. T was supported to sign up to a volunteering opportunity with the Maxwell Centre, which runs a community garden at walking distance from their accommodation. The Maxwell Centre offers a very inclusive environment, with a majority of international volunteers and staff.

In occasion of their first visit to the Maxwell Centre, T and the Volunteer Coordinator were joined by Janice, who then officially became T's mentor.

Janice and T share a love of gardening and plants and they later visited the Botanic Gardens in Dundee together. Janice dedication and support really helped T with their English skills, but also find the confidence to explore new places and take on new opportunities.

T's English has now majorly improved and also their schedule has become busier, with a second volunteering experience starting in January 2024, supporting asylum seekers with their digital skills.

T has now accumulated a massive amount of volunteering hours and is much more connected with the surrounding community.





Ali and Shanti

Ali was referred to ProjectScotland in February 2023. Originally passed on by DWP to Enable to help him find a job, he was then referred to the Inspire Project because his English wasn't considered good enough to find a job.

When Ali started with the Inspire Project, he was struggling to complete a sentence in English and would find it very difficult to understand the language, written and spoken. In his initial assessment Ali declared he also felt isolated in his local community, and would spend most of his time alone in his flat. Ali has been a refugee for 10 years but only arrived in Dundee in 2021.

Ali was matched with Shanti, who initially focused on supporting his English. Shanti consistently arranged meetings with Ali every week, they went together to the local library to read English books and they together joined a conversation cafe. As Ali's English gradually improved, Shanti then started to focus on exploring the city with him and finding groups and activities he may like. They have been together to different locations including the local museum and have recently discovered Ali's passion for gardening and harvesting. In occasion of the Scottish Refugee Festival, they went together to the Open Community Gardens event and Ali tried different gardening activities. Now, they are planning on going to Ali's local community garden together regularly until Ali feels confident going by himself.

In the meantime, Ali's confidence has also improved. He managed to secure a place to study English full time at the Dundee and Angus College. He has also obtained a taxi license!



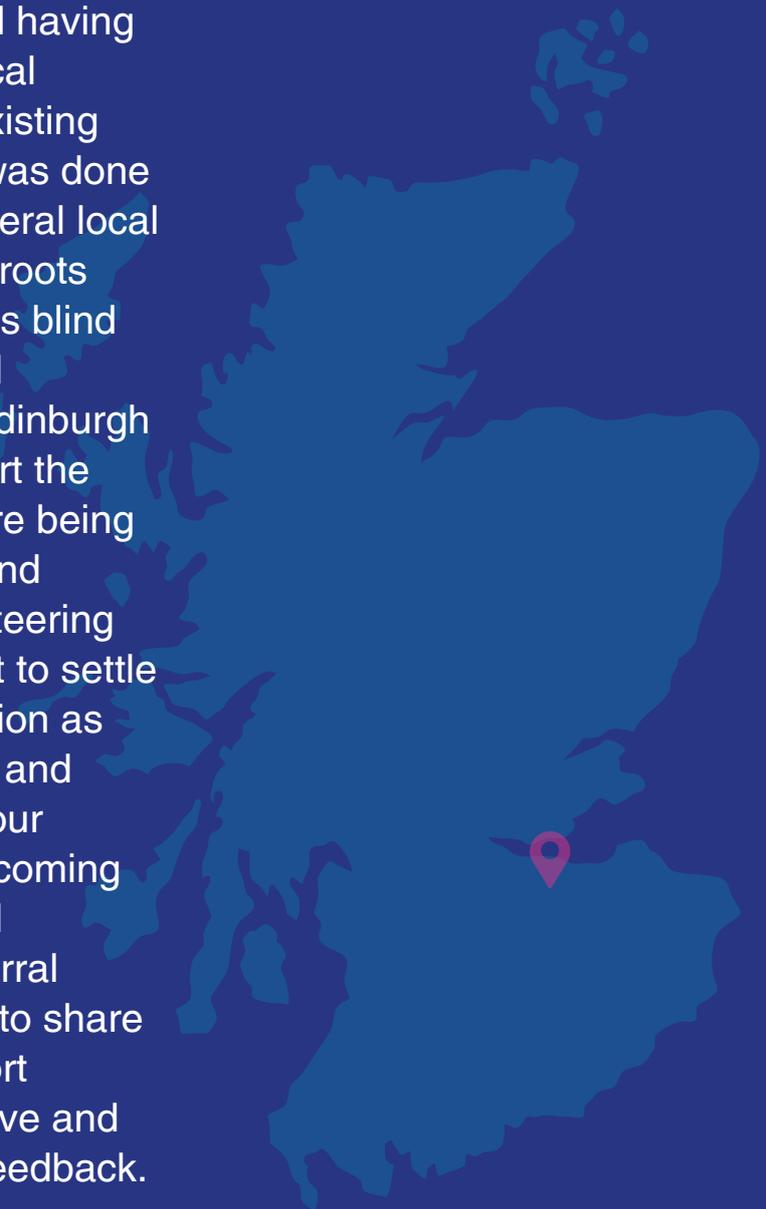


Inspire in Edinburgh

The Inspire Project in Edinburgh was set up to be responsive to the needs of young New Scot refugees and asylum seekers, as well as those belonging to marginalised communities such as migrant and black minority ethnic groups.

The priorities of this project included having its services embedded within the local community and complimentary to existing support networks in the area. This was done through close collaboration with several local third sector organisations and grassroots groups in order to effectively address blind spots in support provision and avoid duplication. The Inspire Project in Edinburgh was also able to successfully support the influx of Ukrainian refugees that were being housed on the MS Victoria in Leith, and provide many individuals with volunteering opportunities and mentoring support to settle into the city and reduce social isolation as well as struggles with mental health and trauma. Additionally, in Edinburgh, our wonderful partnership with The Welcoming Association has been cultivated and strengthened to create a strong referral pathway. We also often collaborate to share knowledge and best practice, support beneficiaries and consistently improve and develop the programme based on feedback.

This service provided individualised support and took a tailored and trauma-informed approach to working 1-to-1 with beneficiaries. The aim was to meet every service user where they were, and create bespoke action plans to help them reach their goals and potential while promoting successful social integration and a positive future within their new community.



Our Numbers in Edinburgh

Mentoring and Volunteering

28

New Scots
young people
supported

19

Volunteer
Mentors
recruited

10

young people
took part in
volunteering

10

Mentoring
Relationships

5 young people are still actively volunteering and intend to continue long-term.

2 young people are currently doing training courses to support their future career plans.

Mentors and Mentees have engaged in a number of activities including joining running clubs, attending festivals, visiting galleries, creating artwork together and having English classes.

Our Numbers in Edinburgh

11

young people signposted and supported to access local services, sports clubs and community groups

13

young people supported to access further education or vocational training (Princes Trust, Access to Industry, ESOL classes, College)

16

young people supported with interview preparation and job / volunteering applications

4

events to support young people's creativity (art exhibitions, food festivals, dances, coffee mornings)



Azim's story

Azim a young Afghani man who joined the Inspire Project in 2023. He had travelled to Scotland from Greece after spending some time in camps where he ran several charity programmes providing vital support services to other refugees. Azim also has a Bachelor's Degree in Physics and experience as an English teacher and was highly motivated to put the breadth of his skills to good use to make a fulfilling life here and contribute to his new community. He also wanted to explore opportunities to pursue writing and publishing his short stories, which were helping him to process some of his difficult experiences as well as feelings of isolation from family. Together we decided that a mentor would be greatly beneficial to help him, to work toward his goals and help him feel more connected. Azim was matched with Wilma, a passionate, empathetic volunteer, a semi-retired professional with experience as a career coach and who had also faced some similar difficulties in life such as loss and sudden change. They have developed an excellent foundation of trust and rapport which has provided Azim with both vital emotional support and a productive place to work through practical issues too. Azim is now planning a move to Glasgow and will soon begin working at the Scottish Refugee Council.

“

Mentoring is such a positive thing. It really helped me to understand my potential and I became more confident. I realised that sometimes everyone struggles in life, and life is full of ups and downs but the point is to realise that it is temporary and does not last forever. I am really glad to have you here, Wilma, as someone who is supporting me and wherever I need you, you are here to guide me.

”



Maryna's story

Maryna joined the Inspire Project in March 2023 and was living on the boat in Leith after only being in Edinburgh for a few months. She was referred to us through the Ukranian Coordinator at Volunteer Edinburgh. Maryna was very keen to improve her English, make new connections and explore options for part time work that she could fit around her English classes and volunteering.

Maryna was introduced to Niall, a mentor who had experience as an ESOL teacher and had also lived in many new places. Maryna was keen to have a mentor who was supportive, friendly and who would correct her mistakes! Niall has been supporting Maryna with English learning, job applications and navigating local services. They meet up weekly, sometimes this takes the form of interactive English lessons or even homework!

“

Niall has been very helpful. My English is improving because of him. It was very hard to find English classes and now in college there are strikes, but I can still practice with Niall which is very important to me. I have found a job in a restaurant, and I feel more confident in my English and that is because of him. It is still a hard situation, but after I meet with Niall my mood is always better.

”



Alina's story



I like Becky and appreciate the support. I am so happy to also be a mentor to another person, so this was a very rewarding experience for me on both sides. Thank you for connecting me with Becky and helping me to volunteer at Talbot Rice Gallery, it's a wonderful experience for my CV. It's great that through volunteering, I've found another type of work that I enjoy. I also found a friend who helps me with study and work advice.

Alina is a young woman from Ukraine and was our first beneficiary on the Inspire Project. Back home, she worked in the visual arts industry and wanted to find opportunities to do similar work. She is a very talented and passionate painter and wanted to develop her skills in this area and make the most of its positive effects on her mental health. Together we made a plan to find an art orientated volunteer placement and a mentor to help her settle into life in Edinburgh.



Through our partnership with the Talbot Rice Gallery, Alina was offered a volunteering role as a Gallery Assistant. This allowed Alina to meet like-minded art students, learn about the industry in Scotland, practice her English and build confidence. The Gallery said of Alina “she really has been an amazing asset to our team! Not only has she been dedicated and timely, but she is well informed and willing to help and has really involved herself in the gallery. We have enjoyed welcoming her as part of our team.”

Additionally Alina was paired with Becky, a local mentor of similar age who helped her plan for the future, prioritise goals and helped her manage expectations. Alina found the mentor support she received so helpful that she decided she would like to provide similar support to others, now that she felt more settled and confident.

She successfully received a role as a befriender for other Ukrainian refugees who were newly arrived. Through this, Alina discovered a new passion for providing 1-to-1 support to others and together we found her a vocational training course in social work, through which she met new friends and developed new employability skills.



Our Referral Partners in Edinburgh

We have developed a lasting and strong relationship with our lead partner 'The Welcoming' through delivering the Inspire Project. As a result of working closely on the delivery of this scheme, we have created strong referral pathways and have learned a great deal from one another on supporting New Scots communities in Edinburgh.



Volunteer Edinburgh is a charity helping people to find local volunteering opportunities. Their Ukrainian Coordinator was a critical referral partner of the Inspire Project and helped signpost 7 young people to us. Additionally, they invited us along for peer support and training sessions around managing volunteers.

The Prince's Trust help vulnerable young people get their lives on track. They deliver a range of training programmes, providing practical and financial support to build young people's confidence and motivation. They have signposted young people to the Inspire Project, and have offered places on some of their courses to our beneficiaries.



Prince's Trust

Other Partnerships and Collaborations in Edinburgh

Other referral partnerships included:

- Cyrenians
- Refugee and Migration Team (Edinburgh Council)



We also had several partnerships with organisations who offered a range of volunteering opportunities to our young people!

- St Columba's Hospice
- Talbot Rice Gallery
- Re-Union Canal Boat Project
- NHS Lothian
- LinkNet Mentoring
- Grassmarket Community Project
- Bikes4Refugees
- Craigmillar Now
- Edinburgh Tool Library
- The Chaplaincy
- The Remakery



Experiences in Edinburgh



Rob from the Re-union Canal Boat Project took our young people Maryna and Zhanna aboard the Lochrin Belle for a cruise! On board, Maryna and Zhanna had a go of steering the boat and sharing stories from Ukraine with some Edinburgh locals while 'Tartan Heather' sang a few traditional Scottish folk songs.



VOLUNTEERING MATTERS



ProjectScotland is part of the national charity,
Volunteering Matters.

Volunteering Matters is a registered charity in England
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