

People & the DALES

Diversity Access Learning Environment Sustainability

Case Study

Refugee & Asylum seeker groups

Rose runs NCT antenatal classes at Choto Moni Children's Centre in Leeds. The group provides support and information to pregnant refugee and asylum seeking women who are a whole mix of nationalities and often single mums. The group was so popular - the women didn't want to leave once their babies were born - so they have also set up a postnatal support group for the women and their babies. Rose now also works for the Refugee Council as a volunteer co-ordinator training volunteer befrienders for pregnant refugees and asylum seekers.



“ *The women involved in these groups are really living at the edge of society. When they come to us they are often very lonely and isolated and are extremely vulnerable. Many are experiencing mental health problems and having to deal with 'on the edge' issues daily, on their own, whilst pregnant. Many are also victims of domestic violence and abuse, sometimes fearing attack from those they are having to share temporary accommodation with. We aim to provide an environment where the women not only get the information they need to have a safe and happy pregnancy and birth, but one where they can trust and feel safe and comfortable to share their hopes and fears.* ”

Rose met People and the DALES community workers at an event for organisations providing support for women asylum seekers.

“ *Finding out about People and the DALES made me so happy, I really wanted to show these women that there was more to England than just urban Leeds, but just didn't have the funding or the capacity to do it.* ”

Choto Moni and the befriending group have had a number of visits to the Yorkshire Dales through People and the DALES. A large group of mums, babies and toddlers from Choto Moni walked to Malham Cove to explore and have a picnic before visiting the home of local artist Katherine Holmes for an exhibition and to have tea and cakes! A few women from the group also attended the People and the DALES celebration event in Bradford.

So what have the visits done for these women?

“ *Where do I begin? They have enabled the women to have fun, to give them hope that life can be better. One woman commented that the day had 'enabled her to forget she was an asylum seeker for a day.'* ”

Experiencing the English countryside for many brought back memories of home and provided a safe and positive way to reflect on home, traditions and to be able to share their stories and experiences with others.

People made friends and through the shared experiences of the day built a sense of 'community' helping the women overcome loneliness and isolation.

All of these aspects helped improve their mental health, their well-being.

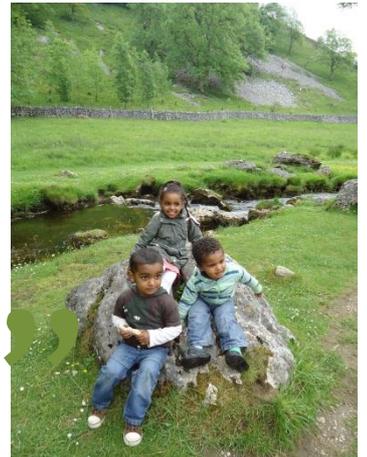
The children had the chance to see something very different, to explore, play and run without having to hold onto the pushchair.

”

One member of the group Sara, an asylum seeker from Ethiopia and a young single mum, came back on a second visit as a volunteer. She was fascinated by the farming in the Dales. She spoke at the People and the DALES celebration event about her experiences.

“ Sara had never spoken in public before and was very nervous about it but she did it and she did it brilliantly. Since then she has gone on to talk about her experiences as a pregnant and young mum asylum seeker at many events including national conferences and events for midwives and health professionals. When I asked her how she does it she said 'I just think about being in the Yorkshire Dales and I'm OK'. It is amazing that such a seemingly simple experience can have such a powerful effect on someone's confidence.

The visits have encouraged the women to go out more and some have been for walks in local parks. This is an area the group plan to develop further through supporting some of the volunteers to attend the People and the DALES group leaders training weekend and producing a guide to places they can go near to them similar to the Taking it Back Home leaflet produced by People and the DALES.



People and the DALES – Diversity, Access, Learning, Environment, Sustainability - is a nationally recognised community outreach project run by YDMT, funded through the Big Lottery's Access to Nature programme. The project works with disadvantaged groups, from urban areas bordering the south of the Yorkshire Dales, who have little or no previous experience of the countryside. Running since 2009 the project has enabled over 4000 people to take part in a wide range of fun, active and thought provoking activities in the countryside.

People & the DALES

Contacts

People and the DALES
Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust,
Old Post Office, Main St,
Clapham, LA2 8DP
015242 51002

Dave Tayler
Project Manager
david.tayler@ydmtd.org

Judy Rogers
Community Worker
judy.rogers@ydmtd.org

Gail Smith
Community Worker
gail.smith@ydmtd.org

www.ydmtd.org

YDMT Charity no: 1061687 Company No: 3236813 Images © YDMT
Supported by Natural England's Access to Nature grant scheme,
funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme.

