

How is a Berlin based voluntary organisation attempting to provide integration of refugees through the means of a local meeting place?

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Abstract

How can something as simple as an open access meeting space provide refugees and asylum seekers with positive opportunities?

This project has involved a local NGO based in Berlin that came together when volunteers in a refugee accommodation centre recognised a gap in community-based informal services. Since 2015 the organisation has attempted to provide opportunities for refugees to integrate and be welcomed into their new communities through the use of shared space, encounters, art, music and theatre. The extent of the project has been more far reaching than could have been imagined during the organisation's establishment, and it continues to grow and meet the fluid needs of those within the local community that use its services.

This report will also include how the Coronavirus pandemic has provided a challenge in terms of service provision, and how the service attempts to overcome these challenges.

This report contains observations and informal interviews with those that use, volunteer and work for the project about the impact that the service has had on them. The project has succeeded in providing a huge opportunity for individuals to form strong social networks, improve upon a variety of skills, enjoy and take part in art and drama exhibitions, and has even gone so far as assisting with employment opportunities.