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The Urban Lab of Europe !

MiFriendly Cities project Journal N° 4

Project led by the City of Coventry



**INTEGRATION OF
MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**



The MiFriendly Cities project

The MiFRIENDLY CITIES project aims to facilitate and recognise the positive contribution of refugees and migrants to the city's civic, economic and social fabric. Refugees and migrants are key actors playing an important role in deciding what makes a "migrant friendly city" and driving the change on job creation, social entrepreneurship&innovation, active citizenship and communication.

Through the creation of a Business Leaders' Forum, a toolkit for employers and intensive training in advanced digital manufacturing, the project aims to create the condition for new job opportunities for migrants and refugees and better match their skills with employers.

At the same time it aims to enhance participation and active citizenship by providing a financial scheme, mentoring and support for up to 50 social enterprises and social innovation projects. Strong attention is given to communication and evaluation of the approaches tested. Over 100 refugees and migrants will be trained as Citizen Journalists to engage with the mainstream media, create their own stories and media channels while 30 will be mentored and supported to become Citizen Social Scientists in charge the project's qualitative evaluation.

Partnership:

- Coventry City Council
- Wolverhampton City Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Coventry University
- Interserve - multinational company
- Migrant Voice (MV) - local migration network
- Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC)
- The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC)
- Coventry University Social Enterprises (CUSE)
- Central England Law Centre (CELC) - NGO
- Migration Work (MW) - NGO

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MiFriendly Cities is all about two-way integration between host and migrant communities. This is fostered through a focus on relationships, communicating with neighbours, networking with other structures, and collaboration between three large cities. At this moment in time, most of these ways of doing things are made impossible due to the coronavirus, which has shut down all European countries, as well as many others in the world.

Our isolation in family circles at the best, and in loneliness at the worst, may appear difficult, but it is also a moment for reflection, to think of new ways to unite communities. Some opera singers or jazz musicians or DJs are performing from their

balconies, to the applause of their neighbours, who very often did not even know that this was what that neighbour did.

So, in the area of integration, there must also be some very original innovations going on, which MiFriendly Cities is eager to support and help develop.

Meanwhile, “the show must go on”, so in this fourth journal, we are concentrating on **Share My Language**, which shows exchange and learning on an equal footing, where a lot can be achieved in personal empowerment, self-confidence and language capacity, especially for persons suffering from loneliness, which is the experience of many displaced persons.



This is an after-school programme where we do a variety of activities together to promote English learning, cultural identity and outdoor learning.

Imagine 10 persons from 9 countries, adults and children. How can the welcoming community best facilitate the creation of links between them and with the residents? According to the **Share My Language** organisers, this can happen through ***“informal English learning and culture exchange at the heart”***. John Cotton, the Birmingham elected member responsible for social policy, in an interview for **Share My Language** has talked about: ***“the informal power of language”***. That is to say, language has the power to bring people together and help form cohesive communities, connecting people emotionally and altering people’s view of others.

In this fourth Journal, written at the height of the coronavirus epidemic, we demonstrate how, in normal circumstances the mixing of people coming from different countries and walks of life, can benefit all by exchanging experiences and recognising and celebrating all the different languages and cultures, and indeed adding the English language as something common to all.

At the same time this fourth Journal takes another look at the UIA established challenges and tries to assess how they are being met by the project, especially in the most sensitive areas of its functioning: participation, effects on the resident communities, appreciation by decision makers.



Cllr John Cotton

2. THE GENERAL PROGRESS OF MIFRIENDLY CITIES

The MiFriendly Cities project is producing results in all the areas where there are concrete actions. After the start of the project, when its installation was the priority, the actions are taking over. Such actions as Health Champions, FabLab courses, Media Lab or the furniture workshop show the real participation of migrants and refugees in the local life. The social innovators and the social entrepreneurs are at work. The sensitivity of the employers to employing new arrivals is improving.

The communication capacity of the project has increased enormously, which gives all the activists and all the beneficiaries a sense of participation in a much larger success story.

The question of the legacy of the project is not being driven in a collective way by the three cities, for different reasons, but they are all preparing for the post UIA financing period, trying to see which actions should continue to be financed, especially by using already existing resources, or by identifying post Brexit new British ones.

The coordination between the three cities is, notwithstanding the difficulties, still slowly progressing, with each city taking on the responsibility for part of the organisation of the following meetings.

From the evaluation and monitoring side things have progressed well and the participating partners have a much clearer view of what they are achieving.

Finally, it must be admitted that the corona virus has limited a whole series of activities but efforts are made to replace them for the time being with virtual on-line activities.

Having in mind the general progress, we will focus this journal on the Share My Language action of the project.

3. WHAT IS ‘SHARE MY LANGUAGE’

“It’s interesting to see how people love to share. Astounding! Incredible!” Says Indy Donald, coordinator of **Share My Language** in Coventry. As can be seen on the photo on the left, she gives the example of how to share one’s experiences, thereby showcasing you do not need to be a professional to advocate culture and language exchange. Bringing communities together requires sharing our humanity – what is most private and personal with others, to break down the barriers and make the cement of social capital become real.

This is reinforced by the knowledge that all activities with migrants and refugees join forces to fight loneliness. Whilst research into loneliness is limited, it appears to be a common element for displaced persons, older groups, and even young people. For example, children can be empowered to share their own language and at the same time to learn English. Nonetheless, as Donald

underlines, it is not just about learning English, but also about providing added value that the person came with from their country of origin.



Indy Donald, Coventry coordinator of Share my Language

The equality that **Share My Language** is guiding towards comes from very simple actions:

- sharing hellos and goodbyes in everyone’s language,
- using paintbrushes, as in **Share My Language** art sessions where everyone is an artist and equal, (“Art has no boundaries”)
- co-cooking, where everyone different cuisine traditions and types of cooking
- playing sports, which allows everyone to mix in an informal, supportive environment.



Indy Donald with the Coventry Share My Language Champions

The fight against loneliness, is not just an element of migratory processes, but is something with which we can all become confronted. Such actions as **Share My Language** are vital to breaking down the walls of loneliness and

allowing people to come together and share, among other things language. Below are further examples of “loneliness” as lived through by Spanish migrants to France, a teenager and a retired company director.

Loneliness:

In parallel interviews with two ladies of Spanish origin in Montbeliard (France), one aged 75 and one 14, both spoke of the “wonder” they experienced in coming to a new country, but both underlined in almost the same words: how lost they felt, how they were in a natural way pulled back towards the home they had just left, how much they missed their family, friends and the things they knew.

A 15-year-old adolescent in Gdynia (Poland) took part in a focus group on multigenerational cohabitation in the city. He said at the end of the workshop, that he had never had the chance to talk to an adult person on equal terms: he said his parents “did not have the time” and that he felt that his teachers were always superior to him. What loneliness!

A retired businessman living in the east of France, took part in an interview in which he admitted that he had not spoken to anyone for several years. Before he was an active person, involved in his work and in the village where he worked. Then he lost his wife, retired and became totally secluded. He talked with the person doing the “memory interview” and said that this was a great moment in his life. He felt that he had become alive again! He agreed that his interview could be used in the theatre performance which was being organised and he came to see it in the centre of the village.

The relations between staff and **Share My Language** Champions¹ are based on the co-constructed pledge below:

¹ A champion is someone who is established in the community who partners with Share My Language and volunteers to deliver our pledge and sessions around the ‘exchange’ model.

A Share My Language Pledge

Purpose:

Through informal language learning, look to improve integration and build stronger communities. Enable shared understanding, experiences and cultural exchange.

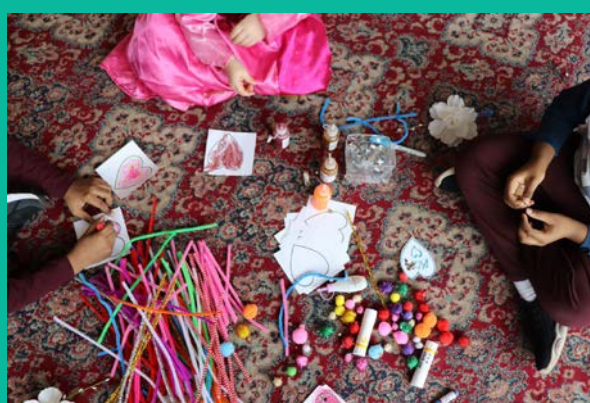
Participants will:

Feel welcome, valued and enjoy inclusive space to share identity and language. Be given opportunities to improve their spoken English, build and develop relationships, knowledge and/or skills.

Organisation will:

Connect with migrant communities to offer unique English language learning opportunities. Provide activities which empower participants and encourage independence. Work with each other to share learning.

In order to best show the added value of Share My Language, the Champions, have shared their experience for the benefit of this Journal.



This is one of the play sessions that supports the conversation cafes. In these conversation cafes, participants speak English and are asked questions in English but are asked about their lives and culture. The participants come from both new and established communities and the play sessions encourage fine and gross motor skills as well as communication skills.

3.1 Share my Language in comparison to English language classes:

“As a part of the **Share my Language** initiative, our workshops are not just a way for asylum seekers to improve their English, but also a space for us to get to know each other and share our experiences. Our workshops tend to start informally as we introduce ourselves and have conversation. As volunteers, we also often ask for translations of English words and phrases in their language to encourage engagement, and so that we can learn from each other. Though helping

asylum seekers improve their English is our focus, we ultimately want to promote inclusion and encourage cultural exchange to help make the transition to a new country easier”.

All this means:

- Non-institutionalized language sharing,
- Calm and relaxed atmosphere, more fitting for the assimilation of a new language in a friendly environment,

- Puts you in real-life situations which allows real-life communication context,
- Increases confidence by allowing people to express themselves in their own language (no fear of language barrier).

3.2 Initial appreciation of Share My Language – the first session

“The first session is where we get to know each other, and gauge the level of English fluency among beneficiaries. After this, we are able to prepare lesson materials for different levels and plan activities for the following sessions”.

Concerning the migrant-friendly open mic events MiFriendly Cities hold in partnership with local organisation Offbeat, the champions share: “Friendly environment – often people came

being nervous, but they were relaxing as the night progressed. Sharing work in their mother tongue helped them open up with other people, they wanted to do more towards the end of the night and sometimes they only got up and did it without needing to translate, which kept them from revealing any information that they didn’t feel comfortable (and also allowed them to make mistakes freely)”.



This is one of the SML champions who holds baking classes, where she often gets her trainees to train the participants. Proof Bakery trains refugee and migrant women to bake bread and certify them in food hygiene certificates (they in turn teach her to bake goodies from their homeland).

3.3 Impact of Share My Language Sessions

“In general, we have been received well by those staying at the hotel. We have received positive feedback from the beneficiaries, who say it is fun and helps them practice their English. We recently started structuring workshops around themes, such as careers, health and transport, which helps people build vocabulary in the most relevant areas”.



Share My Language initiatives use scratch maps. These act as an ice-breaking activity and allow champions to better understand their audience.

The results are:

- Increase in their confidence,
- Fosters their curiosity in the arts,
- Improves their communication skills,
- they gain cultural knowledge,
- Encourages them to seek places where open mindedness is the event's core value.

3.4 Share My Language sustainability

“We are looking into partnering with schools in Coventry where we will conduct conversation cafes of a similar style to the ones we ran with the support of MiFriendly Cities. The details have not yet been confirmed as it still under discussion”.

But also:

- We are diversifying our events to include workshops, talks, etc.
- Chasing further funding opportunities (leading up to City of Culture 2021) so that we can improve the quality of our events and keep them free for minorities and vulnerable communities.

- Establishing Offbeat as an arts and culture company – so we can normalise our delivery of events.
- Working towards becoming a production company that will incorporate mic night performers into productions.



This make-up and nails shot is from our English for Specific Purpose Taster Day course. This was done in conjunction with WP4, CRMC and a local hair salon. The purpose was to create day where no matter what your language was you can come and showcase some of your talent for hair up-dos and hair styling. We then used this day as a springboard for an ESP course, hairdressing. This course involved learning English in the salon environment to prepare participants for a job in the sector.

As the Coventry version of **Share My Language** was developed internally by Coventry City Council (budget 5 000 pounds), it has been very important to produce tools and methodologies, so that other persons and structures could adopt them for their own use. This implies that several tools are available to the wider public in Coventry, but also elsewhere. These include:

1. Map of the world
2. MiFriendly leaflets for signposting
3. Social Media Pack – whiteboard with # and tags – promo SML stickers for windows
4. A welcome pack – agreement, how to... sessions, useful resources.

The most useful tools ([video tutorials](#)) are available on YouTube. They are done in a friendly way and allow new animators, as well as experienced ones, to learn and go deeper into the way in which [Share my Language](#) sessions can be organised and done.

Perhaps one of the most spectacular sharings has been an [Offbeat](#), open mic night in different languages: Arabic, Ancient Chinese, Swahili and others. The participation shows, that the inclusive value of languages, traditions and cultures can and should be shared, that this can be good fun, at the same time giving everybody more self-confidence, allowing them to meet new persons and developing micro-communities of common aims, at least for the duration of the event.

3.5 Birmingham’s Approach



Julie-Anne Wright, the Birmingham Share My Language coordinator

In Birmingham, an ‘open call’ was produced so that a variety of people and organisations from across the larger city, could apply – guaranteeing that Share My Language would be available in as

many areas as possible. The city, through its coordinator **Share My Language**, Julie-Anne Wright, produced the following call:

The approach of Birmingham City Council was to do an open call so that different structures from different parts of this much larger city could apply. The city, through its **Share My Language** Delivery Officer Julie-Anne Wright was keen to use the power of informal language learning to bring communities together. The objective was to encourage applications from small grass roots groups as well as established organisations and to make the application process as simple as possible with support on offer throughout the process. Everyone who responded to the advert was contacted directly to discuss the proposal and those who wished to make applications were provided with more information to help with their submissions; this is set out below.



Small Grants Available - MiFriendly Cities ‘Share My Language’ activity

Through MiFriendly Cities, Birmingham City Council is accepting applications for grants of £2,250 to deliver Share My Language activities over a maximum period of 12 months from community focused organisations. Activities must facilitate informal and community based English language practice through engaging people from different backgrounds who come together with a shared purpose. Activities must embody Share My Language principles: Fun and interesting, useful and purposeful, informal and social, and accessible by migrants and refugees. Share My Language activities can be incorporated into existing provision or you may choose something new!

Birmingham City Council was very pleased with the response of local associations, many of which had never been financed by the local authority. In total, 43 applications were received and 18 were chosen by a selection panel. It is important to underline, that the simplicity of the process is likely to have encouraged non-financed

associations and charities to apply. These structures have shown an incredible level of innovation, taking on board the basic principles of the **Share My Language** ethos with just over 2000 pounds of additional financing. The Share My Language Birmingham ‘family’ is made up of:

Birmingham Asylum and Refugee Association (BARA) Help in navigating the city, developing language skills and peer to peer support from established refugees and migrants.

MiFriendly Cities is committed to unlocking barriers for refugees and migrants and realising the benefits for whole communities. English language is a fundamental piece of the puzzle for people building new lives in the UK. Informal, fun and accessible activities that facilitate language sharing are a great way to learn about each other, build intercultural skills and know-how, and overcome stereotypes. Even using just a couple of words in somebody else’s language shows our willingness to take part in their culture, to learn about them and to share experiences with them.

As a MiFriendly Cities partner, Birmingham City Council is seeking organisations and groups that already do or plan to engage and connect with individuals from refugee and migrant communities with the capacity to effectively deliver **Share My Language** activities. **The activities must facilitate informal and community based English language practice through engaging people from different backgrounds who come together with a shared purpose.** Spending time with people from different backgrounds focused on something that isn’t necessarily language itself allows non-native English speakers to relax, to build relationships and to enjoy intercultural exchanges. It can also help build self-esteem and well-being – and often, improved proficiency in English can be an indirect benefit

Share My Language activities are based on the following principles

Fun and interesting – something that people want to go to;

Useful and purposeful – somewhere people can develop or learn new skills

Informal and social – something that people can participate in in a way which suits them

Accessible – delivered somewhere migrants are comfortable and that is easily accessible.

To ensure these principles are embodied in all **Share My Language** activities, the following considerations will be made in assessing your application:

1. **Does the proposal present opportunities to develop language skills, including informally?**
2. **Does the proposal present opportunities to share skills and experiences, e.g. cooking, DIY, music, digital, arts and crafts, or to discover new places such as town centres or neighbourhoods;**
3. **Is the proposed activity taking place in locations that are already accessed by migrants, and that are informal and welcoming (e.g. cafes, sports venues)?**
4. **Is the planned venue or venues open and accessible to all?**

So long as it meets these criteria, the activity is yours to plan and design. You may choose to incorporate the activity into existing provision or to try something new. All we ask is that the sessions help build our MiFriendly City – one that is culturally inclusive, welcoming and in which all of its residents feel a true sense of belonging. If your proposal is successful, you will be invited to a one-day information and networking session to help you on your way and share ideas. This session will provide an overview of **Share My Language** concepts and approaches, capacity building and networking opportunities. You will have the chance to share and develop techniques with others and to hear top tips from some groups demonstrating good practice in **Share My Language**. Successful projects will also be supported by the Birmingham City Council MiFriendly Cities Delivery Officer.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Birmingham Asylum and Refugee Association (BARA)	Help in navigating the city, developing language skills and peer to peer support from established refugees and migrants.
Ladywood Community Centre (Little Wrigglers)	Parent and toddler group, diverse language activities, visits and a First Aid course to help in emergencies.
The POD – Nechells (Talking Tots)	Parents and toddlers, visits and integration into cultural activities.
The Dorcas Club	Arts, Crafts and Cooking to bring newly arrived and established migrants together to improve conversational English and undertake creative activities.

Norton Hall (The Dolphin Centre)	Established coffee morning and horticultural sessions to increase women's self-confidence and language skills leading to volunteering or vocational qualifications.
The GAP Arts Project	Informal community sessions with a range of fun and friendly activities based on arts and culture.
MotherShip	Mothers and 0-4 year olds with creative sessions (music, visual arts and movement) preceded by half an hour of ESOL preparation.
Handsworth Association of Schools	Language and food with primary school children and parents/carers.
Diamonds CIC	An FSE (fun, skills and English) café, with qualified teachers, persons from the resident community, building a sense of community across cultures, to reduce the feeling of isolation.
Stories of Hope and Home	Storytelling to engage and empower asylum seekers and refugees in order to challenge prejudice and change public perspectives on migration issues.
Karis Neighbour Scheme	More informal language learning through craft led activities in Ladywood.
Restore	Mixing volunteers and migrants in discovering more fun venues in Birmingham, through visits, games, conversations.
SIFA	Work It Out (group activity focused on what is it like to live and work in the UK).
TimeBank	Talking Groups Network. Participants come together to socialise, share stories and enjoy mixing with people from different backgrounds.
St Teresa's Perry Barr English Class	Weekly discussion groups with opportunities to do reading and writing with an added 6 specific workshop, meeting social facilitators, such as a graphic designer, video maker or police officer.
Bosnia House Sports Club	Weekly sports focused activity which will build English language skills, build confidence and tackle isolation and inactivity.
Birmingham Settlement	Extension of established women's programme in language skills.
Craftspace	The opportunities to learn and practice conversational English during the craft sessions will promote confidence and encourage entrepreneurship.

In November 2019, the above organisations/groups were brought together for a SmL 'KickStarter' event. The focus was on sharing ideas resources. It was heartening to see organisations/groups who had never met make links and build relationships. The atmosphere was lively and collaborative. 2 key workshops, 'Getting to Know You' and draw up a 'Share my Language Pledge' were opportunities to interview other organisations and find out in detail about their aims/values. And build a SmL pledge which has been adopted across all MiFriendly cities!



Something special ON WEDNESDAY

Come, make new friends and chat as you "play". It'd be great to meet you—and have a cuppa and a snack too.

Fun, Skills and English Café Share My Language

13th November : Let's Cook Together
 20th November : Games, Jigsaws and Chat
 27th November : Games, Jigsaws and Chat
 4th December : Let's Cook Together
 11th December : Games, Jigsaws and Chat
 18th December : Christmas Crafts and Nibbles

Next Something Special on 11th January 2020
 (Let's Cook Together)

WEDNESDAY from 12.00noon to 2.00pm at The Oak,
 St Michael's Church, 17 Redstone Farm Road, B28 9TH
 Text: 07456 393300 or Call 0121 777 5659 (office)

Or Just Come Along

the OAK
 MiFriendly Cities
 UJA

WANT TO PRACTISE YOUR ENGLISH?

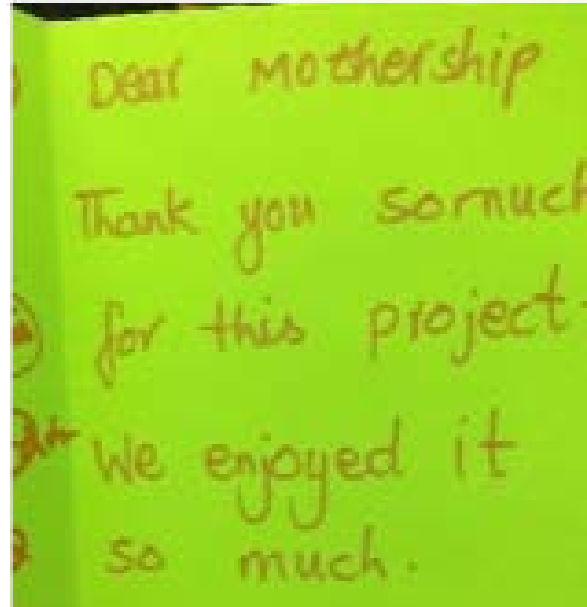
Come along to our regular sessions for **fun and informal language learning activities!**

- FREE, including refreshments
- Games, arts & crafts, conversation and more!
- All abilities & backgrounds welcome!
- If you have any questions, **text** 07761307675

When?
 11am - 12.30pm
 February - 21st
 March - 6th & 20th
 April - 3rd & 17th
 May - 1st, 15th & 29th
 (Fortnightly Fridays)

Where?
 The GAP
 498 Moseley Road
 Balsall Heath
 B12 9AH

the GAP
 MiFriendly Cities



The range of **Share My Language** activities on offer is diverse with cooking, games, music, dancing, gardening, crafts, cultural activities or simply a chat & coffee on offer across the Birmingham area. The age of participants is 0 to 84. The common link is a safe and welcoming place to practice conversational English, build confidence and feel much more connected to a community.

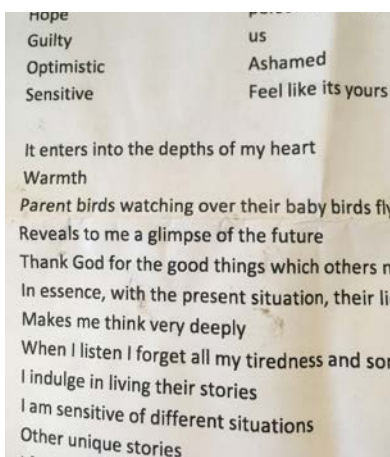
The arrival of Covid-19 has impacted upon us in every way with all citizens of the UK (as of March 2020) undertaking social distancing with no end date in sight. Birmingham City Council is speaking to each Share My Language partner to see if there is any scope for alternative delivery models/

mutual aid. Now more than ever there is a need for connection to one's community and the power of language never more omnipotent. Stories of Hope and Home have already responded to the challenge offering a digital solution to maintain contact and give support.

Mothership Projects deliver in Birmingham schools PLAYgroup a creative befriending project for newly arrived and local mothers and their children aged 0-4. A cross-artform project professional artists design and deliver activities which encourage participants to build relationships through playing creatively together. There is also an ESOL practitioner who works alongside the artists facilitating informal English language learning.

The opportunities to learn and practice English tackle the isolation faced by newly arrived mothers with caring responsibilities who are unable to access formal ESOL provision. There are opportunities to make friendships with local mothers with similar age children.

Stories of Hope and Home is a new initiative developed from a previous arts project called Home. It uses the power of Story Telling to engage and empower asylum seekers and refugees. Stephanie Neville designs and delivers the sessions and her approach to the challenge of Covid-19 is in her own words. 'The group, is continuing. We already had a very active WhatsApp group which has come into its own in this period. It's an important source of social contact. For the first week they reflected / followed on from an incomplete project we had started before this whole situation kicked off; this week we have moved on to something new. In the not-too-distant future I'll try and find ways of sharing some of what is coming out of that. In between times I have had various one-to-one contact with all of them to check in. I know there are lots of practical issues for asylum seekers and refugees at the moment, but it seems to me by far the biggest need in this particular group is social contact and so I'm trying to maintain and support that as much as I can. There are just over 20 "on role" of whom probably fifteen are very actively engaged at the moment' We are also still "meeting" weekly on Wednesday afternoons, via Zoom. After some technical hitches we are adapting and have had two zoom classes so far' Stephanie has utilised some of the Share My Language grant to buy participants data which has been essential to keeping some online and engaged.



Birmingham City Council has postponed Share My Language 'Live' which was due to take place on 19th March 2020 until restrictions on large gatherings is lifted. The event will bring together hundreds of participants to mingle, attend workshops run by Share My Language organisations and be entertained by theatre and

music. The council want to use the event to spread the word about the importance of informal English language learning and it is planned that politicians and funders will attend with a view to influencing strategy and ESOL allocation.



This is a Rhymetime session, which has been a successful pilot. The structure centres around the concept of journeys. We use the map to show where everyone's journey has begun and is a great way to collect data. We use 'hello's' and 'goodbyes' as a way to share language.

Wolverhampton Approach

In Wolverhampton **Share My Language** is just starting, as a hybrid of the Coventry and Birmingham approaches. In the first case the logic of a platform of tools, in the second a public call, to mobilise partners who can really reach the migrants and refugees, where they live.

4. SHARE MY LANGUAGE IN LIBRARIES

All Coventry libraries organise 'Rhymetime' sessions, during which children and their guardians can collectively participate in reading and reciting rhymes. **Share My Language** has added the mixing of languages in this case and has, in many of the city libraries installed complementary work for the librarians, who have 'caught the **Share My Language** bug'.

5. SHARE MY LANGUAGE AND ESOL CLASSES

As we have seen, **Share My Language** is a really important socialisation tool, which does not have the same public support as English language (ESOL) classes. There seems to be a general thinking, that it is sufficient to learn a language, in order to become “integrated”. However with over 30 years of experience of migration personally and having worked for all these years with different groups of migrants, I can state flatly, that it is not the language itself which has the power to integrate (the shallowness of this can be seen in the EU institutions where English has taken on a purely functional meaning), but it is the culture of the language (and of the country) which needs to be felt, explained, appreciated

and lived through in order to become integrated. On the question of when does one cease to be a migrant one of the answers seems to be, when someone no longer feels discriminated against. My experience is however a little different, and I think that ceasing to be a migrant actually never happens, as we are always from somewhere else, but the level of identifying with “my local community”, my street, my town or even my new country can be said to be equal to that of others.

In presenting **Share My Language** as an alternative (which obviously requires financing and political support), MiFriendly Cities has written the following:

Migrants who come to the UK hold professional qualifications or have years of experience of working in a particular profession. Migrants who arrive in the UK with skills in demand in the UK economy such as teachers, doctors and nurses, often do not practice professions in the UK. This is likely due to a number of barriers, such as, skills and confidence erosion (if have waited a long time before an asylum claim decision), or e.g. CV gaps and language.

English language skills are an important part of integration. However, the funding for providers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes across England has shrunk dramatically over the past decade, from £212.3m in 2008 to £105m in 2018. Currently 770,000 people in England aged 16 and over say they cannot speak English. However, ESOL is one sided and does not encourage the sharing of language and skills.

Share My Language offers a new more collaborative approach.

6. THE UIA ESTABLISHED CHALLENGES

MAPPING MiFRIENDLYCITIES AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED UIA CHALLENGES

Challenge	Level	Observations
1. Leadership for implementation	Medium going towards Low	<p>The management of the project confirms, that the leadership and coordination has improved immensely, as the cities are doing more. However, new challenges keep on coming up. The colour is therefore identified as being between Orange and Green.</p> <p>All three cities, as the main partners of the project, are now working on the legacy of the project, but each city is doing this in its own way, even though all of them are working towards the same common goal. These differences in management, organization and coordination are explained by the fact, that the three cities are different, they have different populations and are organized in different ways.</p> <p>The future autonomy of some actions has led to open discussions on activities in each city. One of the examples are the Health Champions, who now exist in all three cities. The shape and the way their autonomy is prepared varies depending on how that works out in the city. It appears to be more than certain that they will continue to exist after the end of the project. It was mentioned that they must be able to be useful to the whole population and not just to specific communities.</p> <p>Another example is Share My Language: a specific programme developed by Coventry, to develop language competence in more informal ways than by ESOL classes. Coventry has developed this action using a small budget from the project (5 000 Euros) through an internal service and bases its work on a common platform of tools. Birmingham, on the other hand has developed the same action with a much higher budget (50 000 Euros) by commissioning the activity to small associations all over the city. Birmingham is a much larger city and had more flexibility with its funds and therefore can use these funds for smaller groups. This has allowed the city to finance new/hitherto unknown associations. Wolverhampton is following the Birmingham example and has based its development of the action on both the Coventry and Birmingham examples; developing the platform and financing smaller groups. The initiator of the activity from Coventry has trained leaders of the activity in both the other cities. The Share My Language activity clearly shows how the innovative creativity of an activity in one city can be transferred through understanding it, adapting it and putting it into practice in two other cities.</p>

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1. Leadership for implementation	Medium going towards Low	<p>The English language classes (ESOL) are more formal. Share My Language is more creative, more sociable, learning to build relations with people of different backgrounds and origins. Among adults the opinions about them is that they are complementary. This is especially true in the approach to the job market; Share My Language helps a lot with ordinary language, by building up a person's confidence and empowerment, but does not give the required certificate, that ESOL can, as it follows rules and regulations which providers have to respect based, on nationally established curriculums.</p> <p>The coordination with 11 partner organisations, including 3 cities, has improved a lot but the feeling in the top management of the project is that the whole partnership with not come together as a whole after the end of the project. The management has adopted slight changes in its management, going towards a more 1 to 1 approach in its relationship with each partner.</p> <p>The legacy question has become such a strong priority that a legacy coordinator has been employed. The partners think that this is vital in order to identify more funding for actions and see how partners can do even more with the means they possess. The partners are well settled into the financial aspect of the project. There are still challenges in other areas, but are being dealt with with little stress. The evaluation processes allow the project partners to see more of their successes and this is very good.</p> <p>At the level of the West Midlands, the priorities of the project are quite difficult to transfer, as there are 7 cities in that partnership, but only 3 participate in MiFriendly Cities. At the level of the leadership of the 3 cites, the situation is more positive. The local leadership is "not unhappy", mainly due to the improvement of community cohesion seen by each city. However, the question of taking things forward for afterwards appears much less clear.</p>
2. Public procurement	Low	No new developments. Please refer to the previous journals.

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<p>3. Integrated cross-departmental working</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>The Communities Steering Group was not working as planned at the beginning. Now the meetings are organised by each city in turn, for all three. This has produced more engagement and involvement. The next meeting is being prepared by Birmingham on ‘active citizenship’.</p> <p>Initial links have been established with several other departments. However, the question remains as to how to make these contacts more sustainable and efficient, in order to improve the value of the MiFriendly Cities project. The education department is helping to get into schools with diverse populations through the Share My Language coordinator. However, the Central England Law Centre is still facing challenges to get into schools, which are presently more independent from the public authorities. The Public Health Department has not really established links with the Health Champions.</p> <p>The relationship with employers, on the question of employment of migrants and refugees has improved slightly due to the employer’s questionnaire, which has raised awareness. The project is making a big effort to try to make links between different employers by improving the dialogue between them. Interserve, which is the lead in this area, is showing a lot of willingness and wants to develop the employer’s hub. A lot of doors have been opened in the last period but there is still a lot of work remaining to be done.</p> <p>In terms of longer-term legacy, it is deemed very important that the city administration and all the partners work with the whole community. This means that special attention must be paid to not splitting up communities across the cities. The work on integration must be done in such a way that there is something for everyone, with all the nuances that are necessary.</p> <p>Networking is a key question to maintain the impetus of the different legacies. There is a lot of preparation and thinking going on in this area. New funding bids are being considered to see how what has been learnt can be financed.</p> <p>In general, the management feels unhappy about end of free movement. This means that all opportunities will have to be identified to support asylum seekers and refugees. From the employment market point of view, this means there will be an ever-increasing shortage of skills.</p>

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<p>4. Adopting a participative approach</p>	<p>Medium going towards Low</p>	<p>Progress is being made in many sectors especially in engaging participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in Share My Language bottom-up initiatives are not only positively treated but are welcomed. • the furniture factory, since it has moved to a new site, is addressing a wider audience. • the social innovation projects have decided to create a network between each other, in order to strengthen themselves through mutual support. • the Media Lab trainings are pushing up self-confidence and working even further on the capacity of migrants and refugees to talk about their situation themselves. • the Health Champions in Coventry are very highly engaged. They have been doing radio programmes about their work in the communities.

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5. Monitoring and evaluation	Low	<p>Monitoring and evaluation has gone through a process of clear improvement, and from the management point of view the project now knows what it is trying to monitor and evaluate and the information coming from these results is working in a mobilising fashion on the persons leading the various activities. The situation is further aided by the maximised efficiency of the communication WP, which now has a clear vision and knows what it wants to achieve. One of the main tasks of both sectors is to identify and share within and outside the project the “jewels”: i.e. the incredible innovations and actions of the project have come more into the limelight, even though others still need to be captured.</p> <p>The learnings coming out of the project show a certain number of interesting elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee and Migrant Centre (Birmingham) and Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre have learnt to collaborate and have developed closer relationships, • some elements of the project have not worked for some participants, which has allowed learnings at different levels, • the successes of such actions as Health Champions and Media Lab give a flavour of how they have been taken on board, both by the structures creating these opportunities and by the participants themselves, • the client journeys show that the holistic model is really important and should constitute the basis for all future projects, • future planning should also insist on how to get more value out of the projects, what the role of coordinators should really be, how to develop systems, where someone will be a central contact to the client, • the partnership of the project partners has developed very strongly. The observation of this process will help very much in constructing partnerships in future occasions.
6. Financial Sustainability	Medium going towards Low	<p>The different teams are at present drafting projects, but the sources of financing are not yet clear in the post-Brexit reality. New funding opportunities are being searched for.</p>

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<p>7. Communicating with target beneficiaries</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Communicating with beneficiaries has opened up to communicating with the whole community, as the aim is to integrate all the different parts of the community, migrants, refugees and residents alike. This is a slow process and the aim is to achieve a deeper influence in what residents think in general, within a few months. This is being done through the traditional press and social media, however certain actions are exemplary in this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • home makers, where migrants and refugees help impoverished families with the furniture they need. This results in an incredible social mix. • Share My Language is another source of mixity in the way that it works. <p>It is hoped that the process of evaluation will show where improvements can still be made, so that they can be amplified in the last year of the project.</p>
<p>8. Upscaling</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>The guides which have been produced have not yet been shared with neighbouring localities. The interim event created a lot of positive information and exchanges. The decision to leave the EU has not yet made working any easier, as the national level is in the throgs of reorganising itself.</p> <p>The example of Vienna, concerning the approach to migrants gives a lot of food for thought, as it has developed an “integration from day 1” approach. This appears almost impossible in the UK, due to the delays in paperwork needed to legalise migrant’s presence in the country. However, the lack of employable persons is, according to some, going to become more and more acute.</p> <p>It is not really possible to talk about “upscaling” as such. One of the major preoccupations of the project is the lack of support for asylum seekers. There is also a feeling that the capacities of NGO’s could be further developed and increased. There are good relations with senior civil servants, but there is a feeling that when ministers talk about migration they are speaking about a different reality from the one on the ground.</p>

7. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THIS JOURNAL

- Learning the language of the country of residence is an important part of the process of integration.
- Sharing languages and cultural codes as in **Share My Language** gives a feeling of “soft landing” to migrants and refugees, as it assists them in coming out of their loneliness, gives them confidence and allows them, in an informal way, to approach the job market with a higher level of success.
- Formal ESOL language courses are of course necessary, as only they can give newcomers to the UK the appropriate certificate, easing them into the job market.
- Cross-fertilisation of **Share My Language** and ESOL classes could produce dynamic methods of simplifying the integration pathway for many persons, as finally it is becoming obvious that integration is not just a question of language capacity, but more the knowledge about the culture of the language, in other words what stands behind it.
- **Share My Language**, as one of the actions of MiFriendly Cities, symbolizes success, as it consolidates the practices put into action and shows the added value of a partnership working within a common aim.
- Undoubtedly **Share My Language** will constitute part of the legacy of MiFriendly Cities, after the end of the UIA financing period.

8. CONCLUSIONS – LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

“Storytellers rule the world”, says [M. Mazzucato](#) when analysing where power comes from. What is therefore storytelling? In the first instance, when we meet a new person, it is using words, but also gestures, body language and making faces, in such a way as to become familiar with the other person, whilst telling a few stories. At the next stage people often search for similitudes: persons they both know, films they have both seen, places which they like or even having lived through similar experiences and they tell these stories. Then, in the third stage, finally can start an exchange on other subjects, creating new realities or plans together, etc. thereby telling a different story about what is eventually going to happen. The capacity to “tell stories” which implies getting on with others, being a skilful communicator, understanding what listening means, etc. is key to becoming part of the local and indeed city community.

Share My Language has really understood and integrated this type of relation building process, using it to improve the integrative capacities and potentials of the participants, leaving obviously a large part of the time for language learning and being very close to ESOL logics. However, the coordinators and participants of **Share My Language** think that the ESOL classes could do much more to help migrants and refugees on the path to the workplace and could benefit from a curriculum based on the culture of language, and not just its usage.

With the social distancing and lock down situation obviously affecting the success of a process defined by bringing communities together, the MiFriendly Cities team is doing everything in its power to establish innovations that can aid language and culture exchange at a distance. Now more than ever there is a need for connection to one’s community and the power of language has never been more omnipotent. Many of MiFriendly Cities **Share My Language** champions have already ‘stepped up’ to the challenge of finding digital-first innovations to bring people together and continue delivering the valuable work, such as Facebook Live Rhymetimes and WhatsApp groups to keep people connected, to name a few.



A Zoom session between participants.

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.



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