



Scottish Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development visits The Welcoming Association.

The Edinburgh-based association supports over 1500 migrants, refugees, and other newcomers from 80 different countries and more than 70% of these are EU citizens.

Edinburgh, Scotland (18th December 2019): - To mark the International Migrants Day, Mr Ben Macpherson, Minister for Europe, Migration and International Development, visited The Welcoming Association and met with service users, staff and members of the Board of Directors.

The Welcoming Association has been supporting migrants and refugees since its inception in 2000, working to ensure that newcomers feel at home in their new communities by offering opportunities to build confidence, socialise, and develop English language skills.

The association provides a wide variety of complementary services, including English language classes, employability support and guidance, home energy advice, cultural outings and social activities. Off site, The Welcoming coordinates and supports meetings across Edinburgh, ranging from one-to-one befriending and Welcoming Women's Groups, to a range of health and wellbeing activities and family-friendly community events. Opportunities to cultivate friendships and build supportive networks are a crucial part of all the activities offered. All activities are free of charge and accessible on a drop-in basis to over 18s. Currently over 1500 migrants and refugees (newcomers) from 80 different countries benefit from the services that are provided by The Welcoming Association.

Nick Croft, Acting Chair of The Welcoming Association, said *"I welcome the minister's visit to our association as it demonstrates his recognition of our work and his commitment to engage with organisations that deliver good services to communities. Scotland has offered a warm welcome to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in time of crisis. However, newcomers need support to build positive lives in new places. We look forward to working with Mr Macpherson's ministerial department to improve the wellbeing of newcomers in Scotland."*

Staff Director, Tesfu Gessesse, stated *"My colleagues and I welcome Mr Macpherson's visit and the repeated assurance given by the First Minister Ms Sturgeon to welcome and protect those who made Scotland their home. I am confident that Ms Sturgeon will mainstream her concern for improving the wellbeing of newcomers among all her ministerial departments."*

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