



# Welcoming a greener future



Stories of climate action  
with refugees, asylum  
seekers and migrants in  
Edinburgh

A project of The Welcoming



## Dedication

*This booklet is a tribute to all the amazing members of The Welcoming and our volunteers for their commitment to climate action and their active role in helping to reduce Scotland's carbon emissions. Their stories inspire us everyday.*

*We take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the Climate Challenge Fund team and the Scottish Government for their continuous support towards our environmental work.*

*The Welcoming Team*





## Local climate action with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants

Our climate change work began in 2015 when The Welcoming was first funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund to develop the Welcoming A Greener Future project.

The project enables New Scots (refugees, asylum seekers and migrants) to engage in positive climate action and help Scotland reduce carbon emissions.

Our areas of work include:

- Climate Literacy
- Home Energy Savings
- Waste Reduction
- Food growing and food sustainability

The project also offers a volunteering programme for both locals and New Scots, with the aim to build climate resilience within the community. To date, the project has worked with over 100 volunteers, with an average of 200 hours of volunteering per year.

**Since 2015  
we have...**

**Saved 701.5  
tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e**

**Held over 300  
climate change  
activities**

**Engaged with  
over 2,000  
people**




## Empowering New Scots to take an active role in building green communities

A holistic approach to climate education and climate action allows our diverse community to adopt sustainable living practices in their everyday lives.

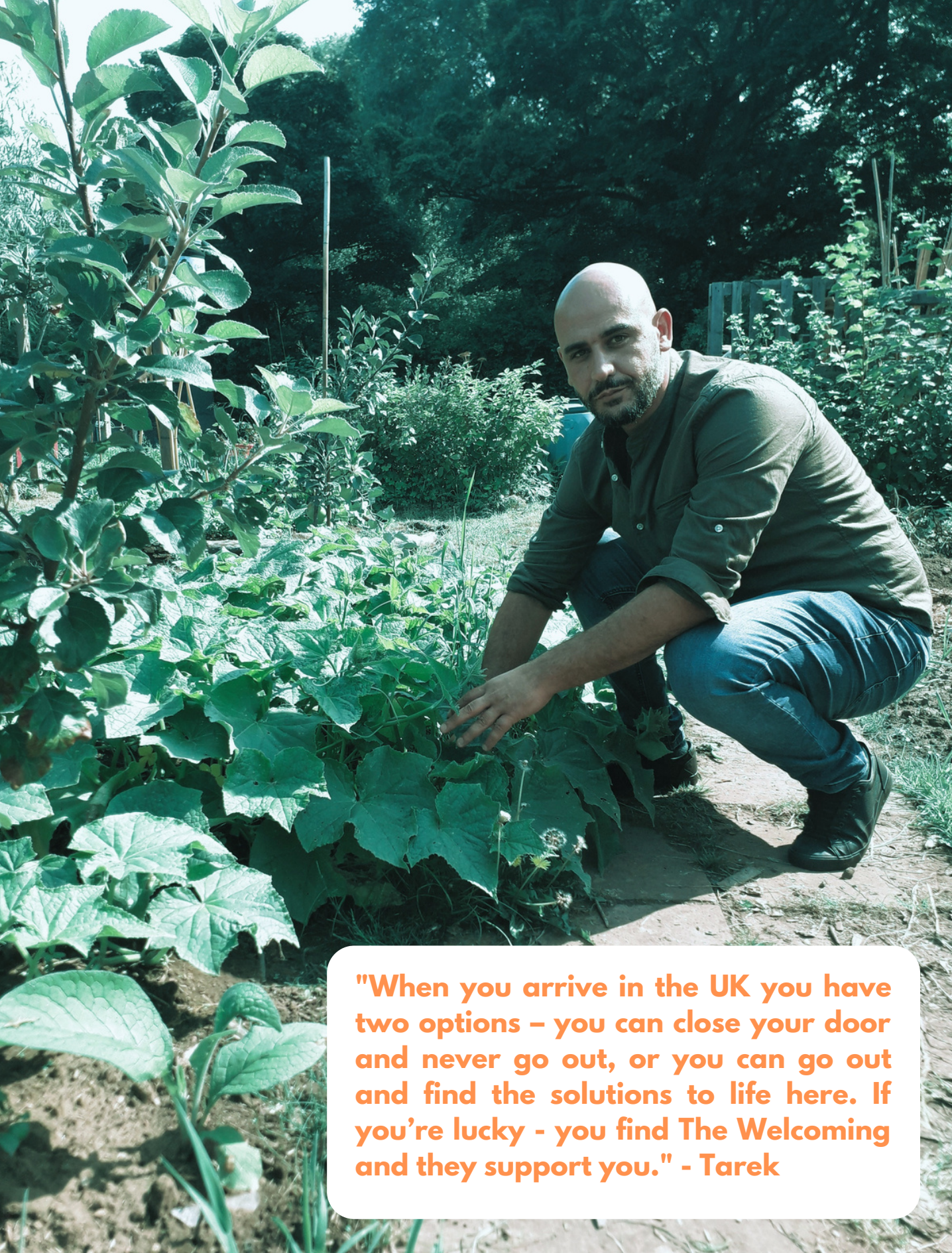
Through our programme of climate change activities, we encourage our members to utilise the wider Welcoming services - including English classes, conversation groups, one-to-one befriending, employability support, and health and wellbeing programme. These activities help our members to work together and gain a positive and proactive approach to the future, leading to better community integration, interaction and cohesion.

Our work has demonstrated that the benefits our members gain through engaging with the Welcoming A Greener Future project are transferable to different aspect of their lives. For example, by using energy more efficiently they also save money on bills and by engaging with our food growing programme they also access healthy food and spend quality time outdoors in nature, improving their wellbeing.

Our commitment to reducing carbon emissions and making climate action relevant to communities who are not often at the centre of climate change discussions, led us to win the **Ashden Award for Green Community 2021**. This prestigious award recognises work which demonstrates how climate action can cut carbon and tackle social issues at the same time.







**"When you arrive in the UK you have two options – you can close your door and never go out, or you can go out and find the solutions to life here. If you're lucky - you find The Welcoming and they support you." - Tarek**





## Tarek, New Scot from Syria Home Food Growing

Tarek fled Syria in 2013, finding refuge in Lebanon. There, he met his wife Roba and in 2016 their son Jad was born. They arrived in Edinburgh in 2017 through the Syrian Resettlement Programme, and joined The Welcoming's English classes and Welcoming A Greener Future project.

The project supports New Scots to reduce the environmental impact of their eating habits through cooking sessions, food sustainability workshops and home food growing.

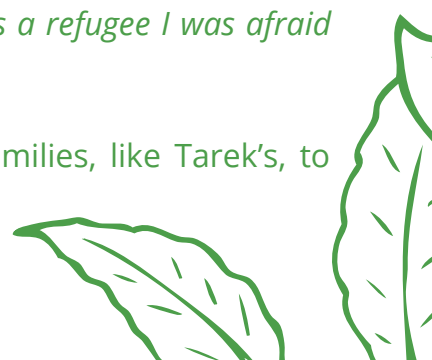
Tarek was keen to develop a food and flower garden. Gardening has always been his dad's favourite hobby, and hoping for a future where his parents and first daughter would join them in Edinburgh, he wanted to establish a garden for their arrival.


*"I didn't garden before in Syria, but I like flowers – my dad grew roses. The Welcoming helped me understand how to start growing from zero and worked with me step by step."*

We offered Tarek practical support - including gardening tools, supplies and advice on how to grow vegetables in Scotland. Last growing season, Tarek collected at least 156kg of usable fruit and vegetables.

*"Growing my own food saves me a lot of money. My children eat fresh vegetables every day. I share the food I grow with our street and the Syrian community. Being involved in The Welcoming has made me confident with the community. As a refugee I was afraid to speak English, now I'm confident."*

In 2020, our home food growing programme helped 23 families, like Tarek's, to start and develop their own food growing garden at home



A photograph showing a seedling tray in the upper left with several small green seedlings in individual compartments. Below and to the right, several coconut shells are repurposed as planters, each containing a young green plant with trifoliate leaves and thin, curling tendrils. The scene is set against a warm, brownish background, possibly a wooden surface, and is lit with a soft, warm light.

**“Through The Welcoming, I now feel that many doors are opening up for me and my family.” - Ahmad**



## Ahmad, New Scot from Syria

### Climate action

Ahmad and his family fled Syria in 2015. They stayed in Lebanon for four years before arriving in Edinburgh through the Syrian Resettlement Programme. Ahmad faced many barriers to integrate in the community, including low English language skills, low confidence and social isolation.

Ahmad was keen to start a new life in Scotland and got in touch with The Welcoming for support.


Initially we provided Ahmad's family with home energy saving advice. Ahmad started English classes at The Welcoming, and his wife joined our women's befriending groups. Ahmad is a keen gardener and decided to join our home food growing programme.

*"When I was in Syria, I used to grow my own food. I also used to make water fountains out of recycled materials to decorate private gardens and outdoor spaces. I continued to do this when I moved to Lebanon. When I arrived in Edinburgh about a year ago, I was not sure where to start."*

Through green skills workshops and discussions, Ahmad learned about local and seasonal food, and how to grow herbs, fruit and vegetables at home. He was also provided with gardening tools, compost, seeds and plants.

Ahmad is now keen to explore ways to develop a business making garden decoration out of recycled materials and we are happy to guide him on his business journey through our capacity development service.

Since joining The Welcoming, Ahmad's confidence has grown, and he has told us he feels happy and settled. Ahmad continues to be a regular member of the programme and has offered to mentor fellow Syrians to set up their own gardens and grow food.







**"We now think about how we  
can live a more sustainable life  
and give back to the  
environment."  
- Eman and Ismael**



## Eman and Ismael New Scots from Saudi Arabia Adopting a sustainable lifestyle


Ismael and Eman, husband and wife, moved to Edinburgh from Saudi Arabia to be with family. Ismael found The Welcoming while searching for English classes, and later discovered all our other services, including the Welcoming A Greener Future Project.

*"It was Ismael who pushed for me (Eman) to join one of the crafting and sewing sessions, and since then, I have also been hooked with the activities! I have taken part in the mindfulness course, which was wonderful, the friendship groups and The Living Well Lunch Club. I have learnt a lot from the sessions about our effect on our carbon footprint."*

At The Welcoming, Ismael and Eman have attended sessions on food waste, home energy savings and sustainable fashion. Together they joined the canoeing session along The Union Canal, where they had the chance to explore a new part of the city, meet new people, and try out a new sport that neither of them had done before.

Today Ismael and Eman are very active in reducing their environmental impact. Mending clothes, avoiding food waste, monitoring their energy consumption and upcycling are a part of their everyday lives.

*"We now think about how we can live a more sustainable life and give back to the environment. We hope The Welcoming continues to do sessions like these for newcomers. (...) these sessions can help people become more conscious and suggest ways we can all participate in to help reduce our carbon footprint."*







"I am more aware of how much water we use and food waste we have in our family and try to reduce it." - Christiana





## Christiana, New Scot from Nigeria Living Well Lunch Club

Christiana is from Nigeria, and she joined The Welcoming in 2019 when she came across one of our women's groups in a local library. Christiana joined the women's groups and later began attending the Living Well Lunch Club.

The Living Well Lunch Club provides weekly activities and discussions about living sustainably. The aim of the group is to increase climate literacy and encourage New Scots to adopt positive behavioural changes for the climate.

*"I am now more aware of climate change and COP26, as I have been given a lot of information about what the climate used to be, what it is now and what we can all do to be more sustainable."*

Through the Club, Christiana attended upcycling workshops, climate talks and classes which helped her discover ways to live sustainably.

*"The talk from Home Energy Scotland enlightened me how to minimise the use of energy and reduce my energy bill. I am more aware of how much water we use and food waste we have in our family and try to reduce it. I enjoyed learning about food waste through different sustainable cooking sessions such as the Spanish tortilla."*

Christiana said there was much to learn about the climate and the Living Well Lunch Club helped her to not only be more sustainable, but also to learn from the community.

*"Meeting people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds enables us to learn more and live happily together."*





For over 20 years, The Welcoming has supported New Scots (refugees, asylum seekers and migrants) to thrive in Edinburgh.

Our vision is of a diverse and inclusive Scotland, where everyone feels welcome and can achieve their potential.

We support New Scots to learn English, make friends, develop skills, find work, live sustainably, and build positive lives in their new communities.

Our Welcoming A Greener Future project guides New Scots to adopt eco-friendly behaviours, act against climate change and reduce their carbon footprint.

If you would like to support our work, please donate through our website and follow us on social media.

*The Welcoming is a registered charity (SC041952) and company limited by guarantee (SC398913).*



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