

An update from Alana on the arrival of the latest New Syrian Scots

On Tuesday last week we received our first new family, a family of 6 who despite travelling since 2am were an absolute delight. Mum disclosed being a musician, loving maths and with a small command of English. Children were confident and inquisitive. The youngest boy enjoyed playing with a batman toy while their youngest daughter asked for a Barbie... I've no doubt she will have many Barbies to play with as soon as any of our wonderful volunteers get wind of her request!

The Imam and a family helper visited the family while we were there bringing hot food and they have arranged transport to the mosque this (and hopefully every) Friday as well as help getting to halal food shops. The family's Support Officer, Ghaith, will be taking the family to NESCU tomorrow to pick up the cash payment, as per Home Office instructions. They will then be taken shopping and have a £150 gift card from Primark to spend on any clothing items needed. This was funded by the generosity of local Aberdonians via the Resettlement Fund. The family then have their GP appointment in the afternoon. Throughout the rest of the week we will be completing our support tasks: tenancy agreement; housing benefit applications; etc.. DWP assessment, dentist, fire service home visit and health presentation will hopefully be delivered next week and the following week.

The families arriving on the 28th were quite emotional and there were tears – from them and staff alike. The first question we were

asked was about how far their houses would be. These two families are related and the decision to accommodate them in the same block was met with enormous relief – and hence the first tears. One of the dads asked me if they would be welcome here in the city and in the mosque, explaining how people in Lebanon looked down on them and had treated them miserably. The Imam spoke to them all and welcomed them to Aberdeen, speaking warmly of Aberdonians, Scotland and the welcome he knew they would receive and feel in their new homes. Mums and dads were understandably very emotional and it was an enormous privilege to be able to welcome these families on behalf of all of you and Aberdeen.

We'll be working closely with these two young families to support them to understand their rights and responsibilities in Scotland. I look forward to meetings with police, colleagues in Shire and Moray, and health and education over the next week or so in order to ensure we are doing everything we can to get it right for them.

More importantly, new girls now outnumber new boys 6 to 3 which is a great improvement on our one and only girl from phase one!

Also to update you that if all goes well, we should be welcoming our second baby to Aberdeen today as Shukran is at the hospital as we speak!

Kindest regards,

Alana Nabulsi
Refugee Project Manager