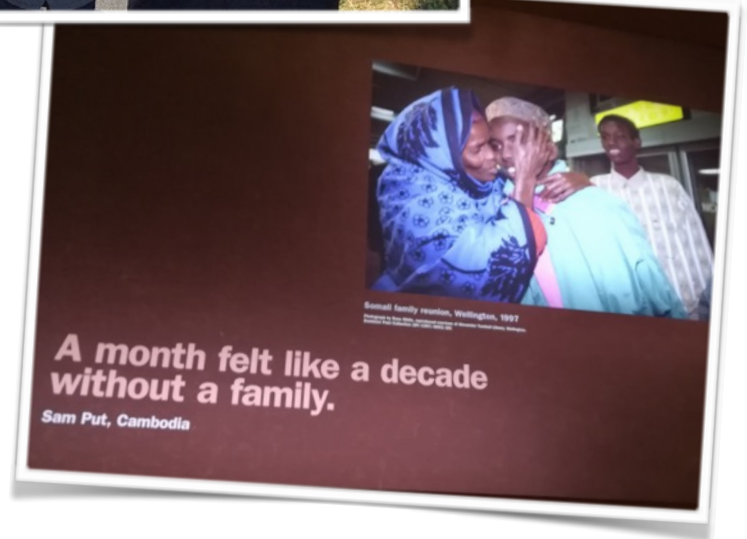


Creating Bereavement Support Communities with Newcomer Children and their Families



by Elaine Roub
2018 Churchill Fellow
June 2019

WINSTON
CHURCHILL
MEMORIAL
TRUST

WINSTON'S
WISH **WV**
Giving hope to grieving children

*‘Sometimes when Fortune scowls most spitefully,
she is preparing her most dazzling gifts.’*

Winston Churchill, 1931

*“What is very important is creating a harbour,
a place where people can feel part of an extended family.”*

Francesca Faggioli, Refugee Trauma Recovery Centre, Wellington, NZ

In 2018, Elaine Roub, Coordinator of Cruse Bereavement Care’s services for children and young people in Northern Ireland, was granted a Churchill Fellowship under the category of “Supporting Vulnerable Children Following Bereavement”. The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, in partnership with Winston’s Wish, offered this Fellowship category in order “to equip people working with vulnerable children to better identify and support those who may also have experienced bereavement.”

In May and October 2018, Elaine travelled to the USA and New Zealand to glean ideas and best practice from organisations working with bereaved children, refugees and asylum-seekers. This is the story of that journey.

Cover Photos:

- 1. Creative Therapist David Cunningham with group of families and volunteers on way to the beach during Get Together residential at Corrymeela, Ballycastle.*
- 2. Volunteer Lee Chaudoin with Elaine at Refuge coffee house, Clarkston, GA*
- 3. Picture at Te Papa Museum Display, Wellington, NZ*

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Acknowledgements

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, *Thank you* for carrying on the legacy of Sir Winston Churchill by investing in our dreams of a better Britain. Your generosity has allowed us to bring home innovative, inspirational ideas and best practice. On a personal note, thank you for believing in me, for taking the time to listen to my dream of creating bereavement support communities with Newcomer children and their families, and then making that dream happen!

Winston's Wish, I so appreciate your vision for expanding our community of bereaved children to include refugees, asylum seekers, looked after children and children with disabilities. Your partnership with WCMT in this venture has broadened our horizons and strengthened services to bereaved children and their families.

Cruse Bereavement Care, I am grateful to you for letting me be a part of your incredible vision of providing somewhere to turn for bereaved people of all ages across the UK. And **Paul Finnegan** (Cruse NI Director), I especially appreciate your visionary leadership and support in allowing me to undertake this Fellowship and bring the learning back home to Cruse.

To all those who opened the doors of your hearts, homes and organisations to me as I travelled (listed in Appendix A), *thank you so much* for sharing your time, hard-earned wisdom and noble motivations with me; without you, we couldn't have begun to build this new community with bereaved children from all over the globe.

The Get Together Team includes an amazing group of volunteers, families and staff members. Big thanks to all of you for your friendship, creativity and compassion, and your readiness to embrace the dream that was born through this Churchill Fellowship. In particular, I want to thank **Maria McEntee**, Assistant Young Cruse Coordinator, for your constant support, encouragement and “holding down the fort” while I was away; I really couldn't have done it without you! And **David Cunningham** (Creative Therapist with Get Together)—my all-time favourite teacher in creativity, trauma recovery, people skills and family follow-up—words are not enough to thank you for all you've imparted to me in these past five years. But then, we've always known that the deepest communication goes beyond words, haven't we?

Julie Stokes, OBE, that hour you so generously gave me in your office way back in January, when I'd given up hope of ever finishing this report, was a total game-changer. Why? Because your gentle questions gave me back my self, freeing me to weave my own story into these pages instead of just a list of experiences and ideas. *Thank you, Julie!*

To all my wonderful hosts in the USA & New Zealand — Jonathan and Fiona Addleton in Macon, GA, Elaine Turner in Atlanta, Derek and Lea Tovey in Auckland, Terry and Margaret Alve in Wellington, and Joan Mitchell and Kathleen Mayer in Christchurch, thank you so much for your warm hospitality, tour-guiding and kindness. Each of you in different ways gave me a “home from home” and a deep sense of comfortable belonging. *Thank you.*

Introduction

“How can we effectively create bereavement support communities with ¹Newcomer children and their families?”

This question is what motivated me to apply for a Churchill Fellowship in 2017. It arose out of an already-established community of bereaved families in Northern Ireland, who have been part of a project called Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering. We wanted to know how we could open the doors of Get Together (GT) to a growing number of displaced children and their families arriving in Northern Ireland, many of them dealing with multiple losses and extensive trauma.

This leading question also arose out of my own story of growing up in Pakistan as the child of American missionaries, living a multi-cultural, globe-crossing life and developing an innate understanding of what it means to not quite fit anywhere—not in my home country, nor my host country; I’m what they call a Third Culture Kid (TCK²). That third culture—the one we created ourselves in a little mission school in the foothills of the Himalaya mountains—became a powerfully formative community that gave us the gift of adaptability and global citizenship. It also gave us an instant recognition of others who shared our experiences of “being foreign”, feeling uprooted and trying to find a place to call home. And finally—no matter where we later found ourselves in the world, it gave us a desire to create community with and be enriched by other cultures.

So, when the opportunity came from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to “travel the world in search of innovative solutions” and bring that learning back to my adopted home in Northern Ireland, I jumped at the chance. The Fellowship category I applied for—Supporting Vulnerable Children Following Bereavement—was offered in partnership with Winston’s Wish to mark their 25th anniversary. It aimed to “equip people working with vulnerable children to better identify and support those who may also have experienced bereavement”, and included refugee and asylum seeking children as a key area of interest.

In order to inform the architecture of this new dream, we had to learn from others beyond the UK. So in my application to WCMT³, I proposed travelling to the USA and to New Zealand, two countries with more experience of receiving refugees than we have in Northern Ireland.

¹ Throughout this Report, the word “Newcomer” refers to refugees and asylum-seekers. I named the travel phase of my Churchill Fellowship “New Hope Refugees NI”, but during my travels and efforts to implement the learning here in NI, the term Newcomer emerged as a more appropriate and welcoming way of describing peoples who come to our shores from all over the world and seek to make Home here. The term “Newcomer” is sometimes used interchangeably with “displaced”, “refugee” and “asylum-seeker” Terms, further defined in Appendix C

² See Appendix C

³ Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (WCMT)

Looking ahead to what my Churchill Fellowship could grow into, I wondered, *What If*:

- * Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering, a community that happens through families coming together at activity days and weekend residentials by the sea, could become its own “third culture”, a safe harbour created with Newcomer children and their families alongside families from Northern Ireland?
- * And what if those children, dealing with multiple losses and often extreme isolation, could begin their journey of trauma recovery together with children from Northern Ireland, finding a new sense of home and hope that stretches beyond a residential weekend into their every-day lives when they return to their communities?
- * To spread the branches of this dream even more bravely, what if other agencies and individuals working with bereaved children were better equipped to open up their doors to Newcomer families who suffer the effects of loss and trauma? And what if those supporting refugees and asylum seekers across the UK could glean a few ideas for their own realms of influence from the people who inspired me on my Fellowship travels?

Well, if all of that were to happen, I would consider my Fellowship a success, for it will have left a lasting legacy for bereaved children—a legacy for them to pass on to their children.

DO NOT PRINT—Experience it instead!

Now that I’m back home trying to articulate all the learning from my travels and the pilot project that followed in Spring 2019, I find it is best expressed in story and charting-the-future form, more so than as an academic report. What this story offers is an *interactive, online learning hour*—via words, video links and pictures—about what might be needed to create bereavement support communities with Newcomer children and their families.

You could just look at the pictures and scan the Executive Summary on page 7, *or*, you can meet some of the amazing people and places I was privileged to visit by clicking the links wherever you find underlined text (e.g. [Imagine the Future](#)).

And if you want the personal journal behind the headlines, see Appendix B.

Whatever you choose to do with it, I hope the stories of human resilience contained herein, and the power of the human family coming together, will inspire and encourage you. I invite you to enter into this story and find your own place in it—to grow in curiosity, openness and confidence about how you can support and foster community with bereaved children wherever you meet them, no matter their experience of loss or country of origin.



[Imagine the Future -
A vlog from Georgia](#)

—Elaine Roub, Spring 2019

Executive Summary

There is no way this report can fully communicate the wealth of learning and inspiration given to me by countless individuals and organisations during my Churchill Fellowship travels to the USA and New Zealand in 2018. What it does try to reflect on are four key messages that I feel I brought home from my Churchill Fellowship Travels:

1. The **certainty that we can** create bereavement support communities with Newcomer families and their children alongside families from Northern Ireland, using the [Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering](#) model.
2. A **strategy** for effectively building such communities (in whatever setting you may find yourself) in a way that capitalises on our strengths, acknowledges our limitations, builds partnerships with volunteers and other agencies, and is enriched by difference and diversity. Aspects of this strategy could be utilised far beyond the Get Together project, by anyone working with bereaved children, volunteering in the community and/or supporting Newcomer families.
3. The **capacity to implement our learning immediately** through a pilot project in Spring 2019 that brought together 10 bereaved Newcomer families with families from Northern Ireland to create a bereavement support community through a residential on the North coast.
4. **21 Reasons** for getting and staying involved in work with refugees and asylum-seekers. These were given by people I interviewed in the U.S., New Zealand and Northern Ireland when I asked them the question: “What do you love about your work?” (Quote boxes interspersed throughout this report.)

What do you love about your work?

Reason 1

“This is a joyous place of celebration and connection which feeds me...”

Wendy Preston, MIXIT, Auckland, NZ

Reason 2

“The fact that they can generate a strength from each other that’s far greater than the individual. They know what they need and all we have to do is facilitate it by making room for their story.”

Matthew Flynn, Asylum-Seekers’ Grief group facilitator at Grief Centre

Context and Background

The “home base” for my [Churchill Fellowship](#) travels is [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) (NI), and a National Lottery funded project called [Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering](#) (GT). This 5-year partnership project with [Corrymeela Community](#) set out in 2014 to work with 50 families who had been bereaved of a parent or child. The project aims to reduce isolation, increase resilience and well-being of children, build confidence of parents, volunteers and care-givers, and raise community awareness of childhood bereavement.

At the end of four years, 67 families and 57 volunteers had participated in the project; 1,400 people across Northern Ireland had availed of the project’s community education element, which is partially delivered by participating families themselves. Most importantly, Get Together truly had become a community, with families connecting with each other both in and outside the project; the most common feedback phrase from families is: “We no longer feel so alone”.

Of the 67 families the Get Together project worked with between 2014 and 2018, only three were from outside Northern Ireland, and none were refugees. The Churchill Fellowship ignited in us a vision for expanding our small community to include Newcomer children and their families. We wanted to learn how we could open the doors of Get Together wider, in order to become a *multi-cultural* community of volunteers and bereaved families.

R. 3- “I love moments like last week when one of the English teachers brought a student into my office to show me how she’d just learned to read her first book!”
—Molly Kennedy, MClass, Wellington NZ

During “post-conflict” years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, Northern Ireland has developed a culture of trying to provide equal funding to ‘each community’, and specific funding for shared community projects (with participants who recognised themselves are Protestant, Catholic or Other). However, this approach misrepresents a growing population who are simply categorised as ‘Other’, due to having no religious or political affiliation or identity with either community . As a subset of this ‘Other’ category you will find the refugee and asylum seeking community.

One thing that many Newcomer families—no matter where in the world they come from—have in common with families from Northern Ireland, is a history of loss and trauma. Many displaced people have experienced the traumatic death or disappearance of a loved one but have not been given the space or time to grieve; for their grief is too tied up in fear and flight and multiple adjustments to new countries, cultures and languages. We know a lot about fear and trauma in Northern Ireland, but we still have much to learn about creating safe places for trauma recovery—not only for ourselves, but also for those coming from outside our borders.

Of the 65.6 million people displaced by war, conflict and persecution around the globe, the United Kingdom resettles only a tiny percentage (just over 6,200 in 2017). In 2016, there were 6 asylum applications for every 10,000 people resident in the UK, compared with 26 applications for every 10,000 people in the EU28.

Statistics for Northern Ireland are harder to track, but Embrace NI's "Refugees in Northern Ireland" 2018 Report suggests that around 400 people are granted refugee status in NI each year, and approximately 720 people were living in asylum support accommodation here in Summer 2017. Northern Ireland receives between 200 and 250 asylum applications per year. Under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), Northern Ireland has welcomed 1,500 Syrian refugees since 2015.

The Churchill Fellowship allowed us to learn from other countries with far more experience than us in welcoming Newcomers. One place that jumped off the map at me was a little town in America on the outskirts of Atlanta, GA, called Clarkston. It is known as the most ethnically diverse square mile in the U.S., having received over 40,000 refugees. I chose New Zealand because it, too, is a small island like ours, and yet it has one of the highest populations of foreign born citizens of any in the world; almost 40% of Auckland's population is foreign-born.

My Fellowship travels were divided into three phases:

- **Phase 1:** May 2018: Travel to Georgia, USA to meet 12 individuals and agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers, and two grief centres which support bereaved children and their families. (See Appendix A).
- **Phase 2:** Oct/Nov 2018: Travel to New Zealand to visit 13 individuals and organisations working with displaced people, as well as two grief centres.
- **Phase 3:** Return to Northern Ireland (June - Sep '18 and Nov '18 - Apr' 19) and run a pilot project with Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering, to show how we can create bereavement support communities with Newcomer children and their families alongside families from Northern Ireland who have experienced bereavement.

Of almost everyone I interviewed⁵ I asked these questions:

- How do you support refugee families and help them integrate into their host society?
- What are the main needs and obstacles they face?
- How do grief, trauma and loss surface for those you work with?
- What do you think Get Together might have to offer refugee children and their families?

⁴"Refugees in Northern Ireland 2018 - Some Basic Facts" - Embrace NI, p. 7 & 12: See Online Report [here](#).

⁵ Interviews were conducted with individuals and groups and were recorded, then transcribed. Written consent has been given for all interviews and photos included in this report. See Appendix A for interview list.

The answers to these questions were surprisingly similar across a range of organisations. The means of supporting refugee families and helping them integrate varied widely, but the same needs were mentioned again and again:

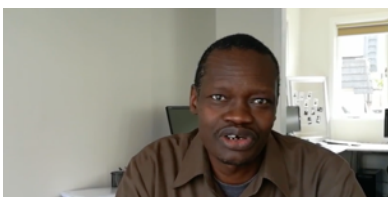
Basic Survival Needs	Integration/Resettlement Need	Emotional/Relational Needs
Safety/Protection/Asylum	Language Education	Safety and control
Food & Housing	Skills Development	Restoration of attachment to others
Livelihood/Employment	Cultural Education & Adapting	To retain family & cultural identities
Transportation	Sense of belonging & community	Wellbeing, hope, feeling accepted
Medical Attention	Grasp of host's systems, laws, norms	Sense of purpose and meaning

The obstacles to meeting those needs were also similar in the two countries visited and, I discovered on my return home, in Northern Ireland:

- Basic Survival** Minimal financial support; short-term housing; language & skill barriers to
Obstacles: employment; complex medical needs. In UK, additional obstacles are laws against employment during lengthy asylum process and long waiting lists for health services.
- Obstacles to Integration:** Language barriers, esp. for older people; inaccessibility or lack of understanding of services available; isolation; fear or prejudice of host community; identity issues.
- Emotional/Relational:** High levels of trauma; cultural stigma RE: mental health issues and seeking help; family roles changing (i.e, children become interpreters for parents) & loss of identity.

Between the lines of the questions I asked lay two others: *“Can we really create a “third culture” where families from all over the globe can connect with each other and begin their journey of trauma recovery together? Or, are we crazy to think we can do this?”*

It turns out the answer to both of those questions—gleaned from 30 interviews with some of the most wise and inspiring people I’ve ever met—was “Yes!”



Gatluak Chuol, originally from South Sudan, was one of those encouraging voices (not in saying we were crazy to try this, but to affirm that we could do it!) Listen to his thoughts here: [Gatluak Choul, on Finding Home](#)

On the Way to a Strategy - Debunking my Myths

During my travels with WCMT, I became convinced that we **can** open up Get Together to bereaved Newcomer families and, together with them, create an inclusive bereavement support community.

But it wasn't always that way. **Two beliefs** that I held needed to be changed in order to get to that point.

The first was that we would probably need to begin this new work with only refugee and asylum-seeking families in order to reduce language/cultural barriers and give people a sense of safety within their own culture. —And that it might be a long time before we could bring Newcomer families together with families from Northern Ireland at a GT weekend in Corrymeela.

R 4: "Seeing my clients getting to stay here in this country, celebrating life with them—that's what I love."

Christchurch Resettlement Services
Staff

The first three interviews of my travels quickly debunked that myth. In Macon, GA, before officially starting my Fellowship travels, I asked my friend [Jonathan Addleton](#) —with whom I'd grown up in Pakistan—for some reassurances in the adventure I was about to embark on. If you've clicked on the link in his name, you'll understand why Jonathan knows a lot about what it means to be a global citizen. His words bolstered my confidence and stayed with me throughout my travels:

"Basic empathy and humanity goes beyond language and culture. People can tell if a human is interested in them as another human in ways that transcend culture and language. I look back over 30 years in 10 countries and realise that I can't have a conversation with someone without figuring out fairly quickly a way to connect. It's a moment that says, 'We have something in common. I'm not the only one.' That's the start of human connection."

Brian Bollinger, Executive Director of [Friends of Refugees](#), was the first person I interviewed upon my arrival in Clarkston, GA. As he spoke, my belief in a mono-cultural start to building our dream began to melt away:

*"One of the things that stops successful integration is when the service deliverable excludes those already in the community. If it just focuses on the new arrival and ignores the host community, that fuels xenophobia. We want to be strategic about the social and economic viability of the **whole** community. That's what we've built—a house in which everyone feels welcome no matter where they're coming from."*

Cindy Bowden, at the Clarkston Community Centre spoke even more strongly about this:

"One of the biggest mistakes people make is segregating refugees. Our whole goal with the Community Centre is for the barriers to come down, to mix the refugee population with the U.S. population—to try and give people a chance to integrate and find a place of belonging."

R 5: "What I find in community work is that it is not a one-day thing. It's a long process. If you don't love it, you cannot force yourself to love the work. But if you love people, there is a place for you. This is where I find myself connected with the people."
— Gatluak Chuol, Auckland Resettled Community Coalition

Over and over again throughout my travels, this message was repeated—not only by multiple agencies that brought newcomers and host cultures together in their community work, English classes and farming projects, but by a Rohingya refugee who told me it was his (American) friend who hired him to teach her his farming skills, and the South Sudanese student who spoke of the difference it made to him when a whole classroom of native-born children threw a welcome party for him when he arrived at his new school in Auckland.

R 6: "I expected them to arrive here as broken, defeated people. The opposite is true. Their sense of hope is infectious. To think that we can be a part of this journey is humbling and empowering and gratifying."

—Duncan de la Feld, International Rescue Committee, Atlanta, GA

The second belief I had before I started my Fellowship travels was really a fear. I was afraid of the levels of trauma the refugee families we wanted to work with may have suffered—That the Get Together programme would not be able to offer them what they needed, or that other families from Northern Ireland, who had perhaps suffered a “less traumatic” death would experience vicarious trauma through hearing the stories of refugee families.

During my travels, it was people highly experienced in working and/or living with trauma who helped me see what my colleague David Cunningham—a Creative Therapist and Trauma Recovery Specialist—had already begun to teach me:

“You cannot “fix” trauma. It is an injury that needs recovery. When we work creatively with the whole family to help them come back into relationship with life and grief through choice, comfort, trust and ‘being with’, it gives them the chance to begin the journey of trauma recovery.”

Adaobi Iheduru, Clinical Manager and Psychologist at the Centre for Victims of Torture in Georgia, underlined this when she talked to me about the four recovery goals they work with their clients on:

To Restore:

- **Safety and control** in your body and your environment; feeling secure in who you are.
- **Connection and attachment** to the human being—within groups, family, English classes, etc.
- **Meaning and purpose to life**, even while they wade through the long process of resettlement; opportunities for volunteering, training, contributing.
- **Dignity and value**, thereby reducing shame and guilt associated with trauma.

R 7: “What do I love most?”

—The clients . . . being able to give them a voice in some way so they can share their story with you .
As painful and challenging as it is to hear these stories, the resilience in these clients is huge. It’s so energising and rewarding for me to see that.”

—Adaobi Iheduru, PSy.D, LP



And Francesca Faggioli, Clinical Manager at the Refugee Trauma Recovery Centre in Wellington, NZ, reminded me of one of our first premises in GT—that they are families first, then bereaved:

“‘Refugee’ is not an identity, it is a life experience. I’m privileged to talk with a person, not a former refugee. They are a person and they want to share part of their life journey with us . . .

What is very important is creating a harbour, a place where people can really feel part of an extended family. This is what most people need. A key issue at the end of the day is the sense of loneliness and disconnection and difficulty to integrate with the host community. Anything that can bridge a gap and give the sense that there is a space, a welcoming harbour where someone can grab a coffee and have a conversation without being judged can really contribute to this feeling of welcome and safety.”

R 8:

“I really enjoy working with people who are former refugees and seeing them make good changes. It’s a chance to learn—I’ve learned so much about myself and about New Zealand. It gives you a broad world experience.”
—Rachel Kidd, Client Services Lead at Wellington Red Cross

Finally, the truth sank in for me: We **can** do this! What Get Together is already offering grieving families from Northern Ireland is one of the things Newcomer families are looking for too—a safe place to just BE, to be met as a person, to be heard and seen, to not feel so alone anymore. In that “third culture”, that common ground of grief, where compassionate Presence and creative ways of just BEing together are the key currencies, we can create community.

Get Together is only one tiny piece in a vast array of individuals, community, statutory and voluntary sector organisations who can help Newcomers find home here in the UK. We are not experts in healing trauma; we are just one little mile in a 1,000 mile journey of trauma recovery.



From Birkenhead Harbour
[- The Power of Story](#)

R 9:

“Seeing them get scholarships and going to their graduation . . . when you see them happy and laughing. That’s what keeps me going.”
—Youth worker at IRC

Gifted with a Strategy

Building on this confidence and much other learning gleaned from my Fellowship travels, we were able to develop a strategy for creating a multi-cultural bereavement support community with both Newcomer children and children from Northern Ireland. The key elements of this strategy can be applied in many different settings, not just GT:

Izadine's Strength:

1. **Capitalise on our strengths;** know who we are and what we have to offer as an individual, organisation or programme. This includes recognising the phenomenal resilience of those we're working with, continuously involving every family in their own healing and home-making by inviting and empowering them to make choices towards that healing.



R 10:

"I count it a real privilege that they let me into their lives, give them a chance to gain faith in humanity again and that they truly matter, they truly count.
They are not a label."
–Ryan Dougherty HomePlus Project
Coordinator, Belfast, NI

2. **Acknowledge our limitations, know our purpose and build partnerships** based on these. Don't re-invent the wheel; consult, learn from and build referral networks with those who have already developed relationships with Newcomer families. Aim for integration, not segregation, addressing host community needs alongside Newcomer needs.

3. **Establish strong foundations** with volunteers and staff. Recognise the gifts and diversity volunteers bring, and equip them with the awareness, skills and knowledge they need, not to deliver a service, but to create community **with** bereaved families from many different cultures.

*"How do refugees process their grief and trauma? They share their stories with the volunteers who just come alongside them as friends and practice Presence."
–Brian Bollinger, Friends of Refugees,
Clarkston, GA*

R 11

"I love working with kids. –When I see them after four months and see how much their English has improved and they're normal teenagers listening to music.
I can relate to them because I also was a refugee.
. . . When they find their own power and confidence and can make eye contact and start talking about themselves. For me, each one is a success story. I was there, I understand. "
– Omar Aziz,
Youth Department at International Rescue Committee, Atlanta, GA

4. **Recognise and be enriched by differences**, rather than being afraid of language barriers, cultural expectations and multiple losses. Learn more about the journey of refugee children, what they bring with them and what have they left behind⁶; discover their barriers to finding home in a new land, what their emotional/relational needs & expectations might be—especially regarding grieving.

The way we implemented this strategy in creating our first multi-cultural Get Together community is outlined on the following pages.

R 12:

“Here there are good neighbours and we are learning a lot from each other. This door is Africa, my other neighbours are Indian, next door to them is Nepal. We want to live in peace and cooperate with the government and give people equal rights.”

Abu Talib, Refugee from Myanmar, on the life he and his family are building in Clarkston, GA

Reason 13 - Why I love what I do:

“I retired three years ago and this (volunteering as a friend and adopted Grandpa to Karen refugees from Myanmar) is my full time work. It’s the best job I ever had! . . . It’s helping people be what they can be. This work gives me a sense of purpose, a sense of community and family. Yes, momentarily I’m poor, but I’m probably the richest person in the world for things that matter. I’ve learned how to love and receive love better than ever before in my life . . . I think my whole life I was prepared for this.”

Lee Chaudoin, Jr, Clarkston, GA

⁶ See Appendix C: Understanding a Refugee child’s journey, from <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma>

Implementing the Learning

After I returned from my Fellowship travels in New Zealand in November, 2018, the GT team immediately began developing a pilot project aimed at creating a multi-cultural bereavement support community with Newcomer families and families from Northern Ireland.

Based on the above strategy and the model we'd used in the first four years of GT we:

- Gathered, equipped and consulted with a multi-cultural volunteer team, including three bilingual volunteers.
- Invited both Newcomer families and families from NI who had been bereaved of a child or parent to attend a creative activity day on 10th March at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre. Seven families from NI and five Newcomer families attended, and expressed interest in coming to the “Roots & Wings” residential which would take place at Corrymeela in April.



Volunteers preparing welcome packs for families.

- To learn more about what the families wanted from the weekend and give reassuring information, two GT team members (including a bi-lingual volunteer where needed) met with each family in their home, showing pictures of past events, answering questions and offering reassurances about the weekend.
- On Friday evening 12th April, five families from NI and five Newcomer families⁷ arrived by bus and car at Corrymeela and were welcomed by the volunteers, who had been there all day preparing for the weekend. Fear and strain began to slowly disappear from people's faces as they reconnected with volunteers and other families whom they'd met at the activity day, shared a meal, and recognised from our opening family art activity that they were not the only ones who had suffered loss; there were other children their age whose father or mother or brother had died, other parents (both from Northern Ireland and Newcomers) who had witnessed the terrible death of a child, and had survived. As the weekend unfolded with boisterous family games, children building tents in a windy forest, painting and playing football and roasting s'mores over the fire,



⁷The weekend was attended by 15 parents, 31 children under 12 and 9 children over 12. Of the Newcomer families, two came from Somalia, two from Syria and one was a Bedouin from Kuwait. The three bilingual volunteers were from Lebanon, Syria and South Sudan.

parents sharing cups of tea and arabic coffee, relaxation exercises and quiet chats, a community emerged, a “third culture” was established, phone number exchanged, trust built, a sense of home away from home.

- A few tears were shed as we waved goodbye on Sunday to the busload of families who’d arrived at Corrymeela just 48 hours before. Exhausted but contented volunteers spent an hour or two cleaning up and debriefing⁸, then returned home to start their work week the next morning (no wonder they are my heroes!).
- In the weeks following the residential, GT staff members followed up each family with at least a phone call, and sometimes a home visit, to see how they were getting on and what had emerged from the weekend for them. For some Newcomer families, we were able to liaise with and get feedback from their key workers. In many cases, we had seen over the weekend the need for further support, and David Cunningham, our Creative Therapist, carefully researched organisations like the Family Trauma Centre and MACS and then facilitated a “warm handover” for those families who needed it.



[Kathleen Mayer](#), on learning to “live colourfully” after her son’s death.



R 14:

“What I love is the joy of seeing these families overcome, seeing the power base shift, women finding their voice, people feeling embraced and supported.”

–Shirley Wright, Christchurch Resettlement Services

Reasons 15-20, from the youth team at Refugees as Survivors NZ (RASNZ):

- Seeing them personally developing, coming out of their shells and integrating into society.
- I’m helping them navigate life! I gain so much more than I give.
- I see their resilience and my own resilience shoots up.
- To know I have been part of their journey!
- I love learning from different cultures, tasting amazing foods from around the world. You get to travel the world every day!

⁸See Appendix C for Volunteer Feedback on this weekend.

Recommendations

I could write a river here about this first mile of Get Together’s journey into creating bereavement support communities with children from Northern Ireland and from all over the globe. But the tears and treasures of this journey for our staff, volunteer team, families and wider community are only beginning to be unpacked, and are beyond the remit of this paper.

Also beyond my remit is what **you** choose to do in your own realms of influence with the learning shared here. Whether you are a volunteer or key worker in an organisation reaching out to asylum seekers, or a teacher welcoming new students from Syria into your classroom, or a community centre trying to figure out how to open your doors wider to Newcomers in your community, I hope some of the gifts we’ve received through this Churchill Fellowship will be of use to you.

The charts below offer a few suggestions for implementing the strategy that emerged in this first mile of our Fellowship adventure.

Strategy	Implementation
1. Capitalise on strengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know who you are and what you have to offer as an individual or organisation. Begin by making a list of all your strengths.• Find ways of continuously involving and consulting with your “target population”, involving them in the shaping of your services.
2. Acknowledge limitations and build partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognise what you cannot offer and invest time in learning from and liaising with others who complement your skill set.• Seek out those agencies already working with Newcomers. Find out what they need from you in order to refer families and ensure smooth handover from Key workers to you at the start, and back to key workers for follow-up.
3. Establish strong foundations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest heavily in recruiting, training, valuing and protecting a dynamic, diverse team of volunteers with the capacity to build trust, step beyond differences and impart a sense of belonging.
4. Recognise and be enriched by differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn as much as you can about different cultural approaches to grief and life, while building relationships on every piece of common ground you can find—sharing meals, garden plots, football, music, creative activities . . .• Be willing to wrestle with the big questions like how to overcome language barriers, fund and work with interpreters, etc.• Wherever possible, work with the whole family, not just the individual child.

I cannot presume to apply this strategy to your specific service or organisation, but the chart below gives a few examples of how these ideas might be implemented in various settings, and the impact that could be achieved.

Strategy	Setting Eg.	Examples of Implementation	Potential Impact
1. Capitalise on Strengths	Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how programmes that work with refugees could fulfil your funding priorities. • Seek input from organisations working with Newcomers when developing new funding streams, (e.g., The National Lottery Community Fund regularly consults with service deliverers about what their funding priorities should be.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funders’ priorities of inclusivity and programme accessibility to all are met. • Programmes/Projects “stretch” to reach a wider and more diverse target audience. • Newcomer families gain access to vital services and more chances to integrate into local communities.
2. Acknowledge Limitations & build Partnerships	Grief Centre/ Hospice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan the horizon around your service and connect with agencies that work with refugees and asylum seekers, (e.g. Get Together project discussed their ideas with Refugee Forum, Red Cross, etc. before implementing pilot project.) • Develop referral protocols to and from external agencies that include building capacity of Newcomer families to reach out for additional support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger Voluntary Sector partnerships mean greater accessibility of services for all. • Increased capacity to provide wrap-around services for families in need of more than just grief support. • Newcomers empowered to access services themselves and integrate into local communities.
3. Establish strong foundations.	Schools with Newcomer children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively recruit bi-lingual teaching staff and teachers’ aides from the Refugee/former Refugee population. • Develop a multi-cultural volunteer programme by connecting with agencies working with Newcomers. • Invest in staff training and support to help address language and cultural barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More diverse and culturally sensitive staff teams able to address language and cultural needs of pupils. • Increased employment opportunities for Newcomers. • Integration helps shift prejudices and provide stronger support for whole student body.
4. Recognise and be enriched by differences.	Local Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host whole-community events and ask Newcomers to help raise cultural awareness through sharing their own art, cookery, etc. • Recruit Newcomer volunteers to help with basic interpreting and local community members to provide English classes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community prejudices and fears gradually broken down, especially by children mixing with one another at local community centre. • Cross-cultural relationships built and communities are enriched.

Reason 21:

“I just love that human connection—we’re giving people a chance, an opportunity to rebuild lives. Maybe what I love even more is the sense of belonging –they know my name and I know theirs.”

–Denise Wright, South Belfast Round Table

Conclusion - A Way Forward

For Get Together, implementing this strategy in the future begins with the [“From Inside Out”](#) conference we are working with families to deliver in Belfast on 19th September, '19. Get Together children and their parents will share their first-hand insights on grief and trauma recovery with a wide audience of professionals, volunteers and families.

It also means continuing to develop strong partnerships with other organisations who complement our work, and seeking funding packages in the future that will enable us to continue to build inclusive, whole-family communities with bereaved children and young people from both Northern Ireland and across the globe.

A Churchill Fellowship is a gift that lasts a lifetime. One year on from the first phase of my Fellowship travels, I feel like a small child who has just taken her first three steps.

Behind me is the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and a host of amazing people in America and New Zealand who have opened to me their homes, hearts and hard-earned wisdom in order to help us take those first steps.

Beside me are two wonderful organisations (Cruse and Corrymeela) and an incredible team of dedicated staff, volunteers, children and parents who have led the way in creating a “safe harbour” for bereaved families from all over the globe.

And ahead? Well, that is perhaps best expressed in the words I penned on my way home from New Zealand last November:

The work we are about to undertake--inviting refugee and asylum-seeking families to join families from Northern Ireland in creating a community of hope around their grief--is no small task.

And it is most certainly not a task we will try to accomplish on our own. It will require strong partnerships, earning trust and placing our trust in those who can best teach us how to live well with that universal human experience called grief:

*bereaved families
from Belfast or Burundi,
Armagh or Afghanistan,
Saintfield or Syria.*

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Appendices

A: Diary of Visits Page 22

B: Travel Blogs Page 24

C: End Notes & Tables Page 32

Appendix A⁹ - Diary of Visits

Phase 1 - USA

Phase 1 - USA	Visit/Interview
7 May 2018	Brian Bollinger, Chief Executive - Friends of Refugees in Clarkston, GA
9 May 2018	Kate's Club Grief Centre, Atlanta, GA with Lane Pease, Programme Director
10 May	Toured Clarkston Community Centre and interviewed Director Cindy Bowden
11 May	Interview with Abu Talib, Rohingya Refugee from Myanmar
12 May	Participated in Kate's Club Family Day
13 May	Day of rest with my friend Deb Rupe at the beautiful Gibbs Gardens
14 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviewed Katelynne Villari at International School in Decatur, GA• Met Ayub (cousin of Abu Talib) at Burmese Community Centre•
15 - 17 May	Observed English classes, volunteered in shop and interviewed Youth Team and Duncan de la Feld, Volunteer Coordinator at the International Rescue Committee, Atlanta
16 May	Incredibly inspiring interview at Refuge Coffee House with Lee Chedouin, full-time volunteer and friend of Karen refugees in Clarkston
17 May	Volunteered at Kate's Club family evening
18 May	Adaobi Iheduru, Psy.D., LP, Clinical Manager at Centre for Victims of Torture
19 May	Global Growers event at Bamboo Creek Farm, Stone Mountain, GA
20 May	Travelled to Springfield, MO, to visit Lost & Found Grief Centre before some holiday time with family and then HOME to NI on 28th May.

⁹ See Appendix B for the story behind the headlines

Appendix A¹⁰ - Diary of Visits

Phase 2 - NZ

Phase 2 - NZ	Visits/Interviews in New Zealand
15 Oct 2018	Hearts & Minds with Health & Support Navigator Viviane Chow- Auckland
16 Oct	Met General Manager Trudie Vos and Volunteer Matthew Flynn at The Grief Centre in Birkenhead, Auckland
17 Oct	Interviewed Wendy Preston from MIXIT
18 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatluak Chuol, Operations Manager, Auckland Resettled Community Coalition • Great evening with volunteers from Mata of Hope on Auckland's North Shore, sharing their ideas and the Get Together story
19 Oct	Visited Auckland Regional Migrant Services women's WISE collective
20 Oct	Workshop with MIXIT young people at Corban Estate Arts Centre
21-23 Oct	Toured the Shire & Whakarewarewa Maori Village with wonderful friends & Auckland hosts, Lea and Derek Tovey
23 Oct	Met Delia Ruane, Coordinator of Seasons for Growth, Auckland
24 Oct	Spent time with Refugees as Survivors youth team and CEO Ann Hood
25 Oct	Glorious train trip from Auckland to Wellington
26 Oct	Molly Kennedy, CE of Multicultural Learning & Support in Wellington
29 Oct	Interviewed Francesca Faggioli, Clinical Manager at Refugee Trauma Recovery Centre in Wellington
30 Oct	To Red Cross in Wellington to meet Rachel Kidd, Client Services National Lead, and the new National Settlement Advisor Dennis Maang and attend an Orientation session for newly arrived refugees.
1 Nov	Flew to Christchurch and had the privilege of interviewing Lois Tonkin
2 Nov	Interviewed General Manager Shirley Wright and her staff team at Christchurch Resettlement Services
3 Nov	Returned to Auckland to pack up, say farewells and depart for home in Northern Ireland on 5th November
Phase 3 - Northern Ireland	
7 December	Interviewed Ryan Dougherty, Project Coordinator at Home Plus Drop in Centre, Belfast
17 December	Met with Denise Wright MBE, Coordinator of South Belfast Round Table
19 December	Discussion with Denise Bradley, Marginalisation Director at Corrymeela
21 December 2018	Interviewed Ann Marie White, Refugee Support Operations Manager at Red Cross, Belfast

¹⁰ See Appendix B for more detail

Appendix B

Elaine's 2018 Churchill Fellowship Blogs - Phase 1

The Adventure Begins - 6 April 2018



On 14th February 2018, I received an amazing Valentine's Day present--the news that I'd been awarded a Churchill Fellowship by the [Winston Churchill Memorial Trust](#). Since 1965, the Trust has been awarding grants to UK citizens to carry out research projects overseas and then bring home their learning and new ideas for the improvement of their sector.

In my case, the sector is "Supporting vulnerable children following bereavement", which fits well with the

Young Cruse Coordinator role I've been doing for the past 13 years with [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) in Northern Ireland. A particular area of interest in this category that caught my attention was refugee and asylum seeking children. This topic is important because in the past four years, Cruse and [Corrymeela](#) have established a proven model of creating therapeutic community with bereaved families through [Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering](#). But we have much to learn about how to adapt this model for refugee and asylum-seeking families.

This Churchill Fellowship launches me on the grand adventure of travelling to the States in May, and New Zealand in October, to learn from organisations supporting bereaved refugee and asylum seeking families. This new learning will help us work with other agencies in Northern Ireland to create bereavement support communities with refugee children and their families.

I'd love for you to join me on this great adventure! I hope the whys and wherefores, explorations, questions, and personal stories of people from across the globe that are reflected in this blog will draw you into this adventure and keep you coming back for more. Do join me on the journey . . .

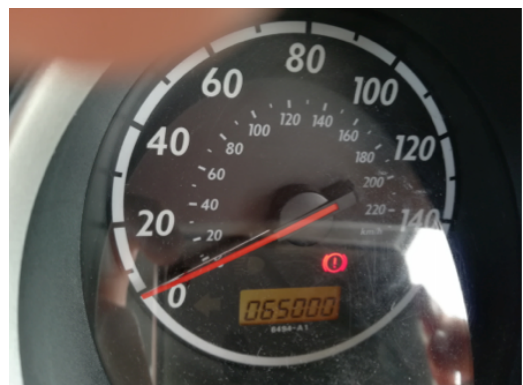
Another Mile—3 May 2018

As I reach another thousandth mile and begin my Churchill Fellowship travels, I contemplate leaving home tomorrow. May is the month to **come** to Northern Ireland, not leave it.

In my lifetime, I have left home for another country at least 40 times, not counting holidays. It's not easy, leaving home, even though a great adventure awaits me "out there". I dislike leaving my garden--so nearly in bloom--and figuring out what to pack, and finishing up last-minute business, and worrying about the unknowns awaiting me when I step off the plane tomorrow in Atlanta, GA.

But in all my globe-trotting, I have never **had** to leave home.

I've never been forced by fear and guns to leave behind the garden I've just planted . . . I've never had to wonder what few of all my cherished belongings to stuff into a bag and throw over my shoulder as I gather up my children to flee for our lives . . . I've never had to walk away forever



from a business I've built from the ground up . . . or try to salvage identity papers, or rescue a child, from my burning house.

And never have I faced the terrible unknowns of a black, raging sea, or miles of hot sand to be crossed barefoot in the hopes of surviving. --All this with the prospect of never again returning to the place I call HOME.

But more than [60 Million people](#) on this planet have had to leave their homes in such circumstances.

In the next few weeks, I will be privileged to meet just a few of those people, many of whom are struggling to find a new home. I will never know their stories from the inside out, but I hope to absorb just a little of their courage, and to learn from them the meaning of leaving home . . . and finding home.

Last day in Georgia - 19 May

It's my last day in Georgia before flying to Springfield, MO for my final [Churchill Fellowship](#) visit, and I'm reflecting on a rather packed fortnight of learning. Here's a whistle-stop tour of the journey so far:

4 - 7th May:

Lovely landing in Macon, GA with life-long friends from Pakistan, the Addleton family. Spent the weekend touring Macon and beautiful surrounding areas and learning much from this hospitable, internationally astute family.



7th May:

Coach to Atlanta airport to pick up my rental car and drive to Air BnB in Scottdale, GA. Met gracious hostess Elaine & settled in before driving the short distance to Clarkston, GA to meet Brian Bollinger, Executive Director of [Friends of Refugees](#). Brian and his team certainly opened my eyes to the values, challenges and joys of welcoming newcomers to America.



9th May:

Had the privilege of meeting Programme Director Lane Pease and her team at [Kate's Club](#) in the afternoon, and then attending an orientation for new families in the evening. What a [refuge this place is for bereaved children and their families!](#)

10th May:

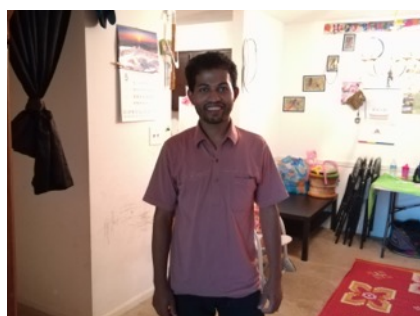
Learned so much from my meeting with Cindy Bowden, Director of [Clarkston Community Center](#), and gleaned new ideas for incorporating

outreach to refugee and asylum-seeking families into our Get Together - Bereaved Families Discovering project.



11th May:

Took some time in the morning to gather my thoughts (it's like trying to fit the Niagara Falls into a thimble!) and then met with [Rohingyan refugee](#) Abu Talib in the afternoon--his story deeply moved me and his courage and leadership within the [Rohingya community here in Clarkston](#) is an inspiration.



14th May:

Another whirlwind of learning and discovery at the [International Community School](#) in Decatur, GA, guided by the insightful school counselor, Katelynn Villari. In the afternoon I met Abu's cousin Ayub at the Burmese Rohingya Community Center. He added his own experience to Abu's moving story of escaping Burma on a boat and being afloat for 27 days with only 7 days' supply of food and water for more than 50 people. One thing that strikes me about these people who have lost so much is how much they are giving back into their new communities in America, and building a different future for their children with courage and grace.

15-17 May:

Spent three mornings in literacy classes, nursery and the shop at the [International Rescue Committee](#). I found myself quite emotional as I watched grown adults from all over the world--some of whom had never learned to write in their own language--struggle to grasp the basics of reading, writing and speaking English. Their courage, perseverance and resilience astounds me; the skill and patience of their teachers and volunteer tutors inspires me. I was also inspired by the enthusiasm and vision of the staff who kindly hosted me at IRC--thank you so much, Duncan and team!



Literacy Class at International Rescue Committee



Further inspiration came from meeting the Kate's Club staff for lunch to present our Get Together project on Tuesday, spending an hour with an amazing fellow named Lee Chaudoin at the [Refugee Coffee House](#) on Wednesday, and attending the International Community School 5th grade exhibition on Thursday evening.

18th - 19th May: Finally, on Friday afternoon, I had the pleasure of meeting Adaobi Iheduru, Psy.D, Team Lead at the [Center for Victims of Torture](#), which has recently opened its doors in a welcoming, healing space in Clarkston. Adaobi's wisdom, experience and compassion far exceeds her years, and

it will take another whole page (next week) to fill you in on that interview.

Elaine's 2018 Churchill Fellowship Blogs - Phase 2

Beginning Phase 2 - 9 October, 2018

There is a time for leaving home and a time for beginning new adventures. Today begins the next stage of the journey for New Hope Refugees Phase 2, as I hop a plane in Dublin bound for Auckland, New Zealand.

As I think again about why I am making this journey, I realise it is to learn a new story and to help bereaved families tell that story in Northern Ireland, so that . . .

the candles of hope
held by a few families in Northern Ireland
who have helped create the Get Together community
can be passed around the circle of the globe,
lighting the hearts of those who have landed on our doorstep
looking for another place to call home.



Auckland Overview

Here's an overview of New Hope Refugees NI adventures in Auckland, NZ over the past few weeks. You can check out the inspiring stories of each of the organisations I've visited on their own websites and FB pages (listed below), but I just wanted to introduce you briefly to them here.

Each person I've met in Auckland has given me so many gifts of insight, inspiration and hope for what we want to build with the Get Together and New Hope Refugees NI projects in Northern Ireland. To give you a taste of this, I've shared one "THT" (*Take-Home-Treasure) with each diary entry.

11 October

Landed in Auckland after approximately 36 hours travelling time from Belfast. Was welcomed by good friends and marvellous hosts Lea & Derek Tovey; so grateful for the long weekend to unwind, sight-see, prepare for interviews and begin to get over jet-lag.

*THT: Kiwi/Finnish hospitality is amazing!



15 October

Hearts & Minds with Health & Support Navigator Viviane Chow

Website: www.heartsandminds.org.nz & FB: @heartsandmindsnz



*THT: People come to Hearts & Minds for information and help navigating through a range of services. But they receive a lot more than that; *they are given support, confidence* to lift the phone and make that first call, and a *network* of new relationships.

16 October - The Grief Centre

with General Manager Trudie Vos and Counsellor Matthew Flynn

Website: www.griefcentre.org.nz & FB: <https://www.facebook.com/griefcentre/>

*THT: I want to bring *Trudie Vos* home to NI with me to help us revolutionise the way we do charity funding, based on her philosophy that we need to build sustainable charities by "*looking at where Mission and Monetised services intersect.*" She quickly earned my admiration as a woman of both great compassion and great business sense.

Grief Centre volunteer *Matthew Flynn* inspired me in so many ways, AND he made me cry when he said the grief group he helps run for Asylum seekers may be the *only* place they have for telling their story. "*Build trust. Give them permission to tell their story. Help them find their voice.*"



17th & 20th October

MIXIT with Director Wendy Preston and, on Saturday, with Youth Workshop session

Website: www.mixit.co.nz & FB: @mixitnz

*THT: What Wendy and her team consistently give every Saturday to refugee-background young people from all over Auckland is *confidence, self-belief, a sense of being seen, heard and valued, a*

finding of their own voice. And they do it through a host of creative interventions, which strikes a chord with our methodology in Get Together.



At MIXIT's Saturday workshop, I spent time with a bunch of teenagers from all over the world, scrawling our thoughts about Migration on a long roll of brown paper. One of them wrote, "A road trip to meet with friends is not the same; Migration means your heart and home are in two or more places."

And I suddenly realised that I knew from the inside out what she meant; I'm a migrant too (From Pakistan to America to Northern Ireland—leaving a piece of my heart in each place). Maybe that will help me understand just a tiny sliver of another's experience when we start to welcome Newcomer families into Get Together.

18 October

ARRC with Operations Manager Gatluak Chou

Website: <https://arcc.org.nz>: @resettledcommunitycoalition

***THT:** The treasures from this interview are too many to list here, but when I asked Gatluak, "What is your advice for us when we have families coming to Get Together who have been through such trauma and loss? What do you think they most need that we might be able to offer?", his answer was:

"What made me secure is what you find in the community. Is the community welcoming? Is the community genuinely concerned about you? Do they love you as a person, no matter where you're from? When you see those signs, you say, "Ah, now I am secure, I am safe."



Thur Eve, 18 Oct: Mata of Hope volunteer team (Website: www.mataofhopenz.org)

***THT:** It was so inspiring to join this group of volunteers for an evening in Ngozi's home, to witness their vision and passion for supporting NZ children and families of African heritage in culturally sympathetic ways. Biggest treasure from this evening is the power of small beginnings led by clear-minded, compassionate people.



Friday, 19 October Auckland Regional Migrant Services WISE Women's Hub with Sasi Niyamathullah

Website: <https://settlement.org.nz> + Youtube video:
<https://youtu.be/PvV7A2rkYAO>

***THT:** From this short session in a community hall with 20+ women from all over the globe, at all different stages in their journeys towards finding home in New Zealand, I brought home this key message: "What these women are most looking for, more than anything else, is community—an opportunity to step outside their four walls and connect with others." And I realised, we can do that; we can help people find community!

Tuesday, 23 October - Seasons for Growth with Auckland Coordinator Delia Ruane

Website: <https://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/re/seasons-for-growth/>

***THT:** Delia gave me a LOT to think about as she explained this far-reaching group programme for people of all ages dealing with all kinds of loss. I loved what she said about one of the things she most enjoys about her job: *“Seeing a child realising they are not the only one going through this.”* Ah, the power of bringing people together . . .



24 October

Refugees as Survivors with CEO Ann Hood and the wonderful RASNZ Youth Team

Website: <http://rasnz.co.nz/what-we-do/ryan/> and FB: @RefugeesAsSurvivorsNZ

***THT:** I wanted to spend all day with this lively group of young people. The biggest treasure they gave me was their appreciation for what they themselves get out of working with refugee-background youth: *“It increases your own resilience when you see how courageous and resilient they are . . . sometimes people pity the “poor refugee”, but the people we work with flip that idea on its head; we gain so much more than we give!”*

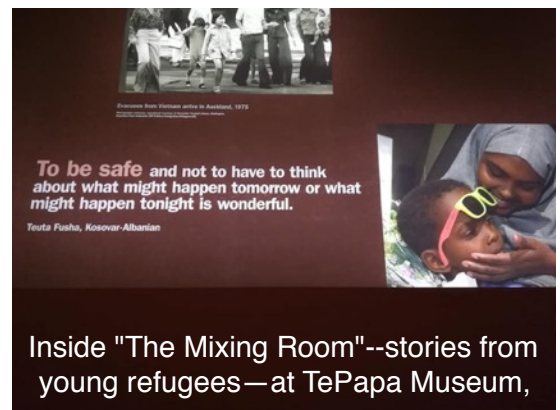
3 November—Wellington

Wellington, NZ is a city of soaring hills, sunny seascapes and elegant buildings. It's also a city--like most places in NZ--struggling to keep up with the demand for housing and mental health services, yet continuously reaching out to support almost 300 new refugees per year.

I began my visits in Wellington at the [Multicultural Learning and Support Service](#) (MClass), where I met Chief Executive Molly Kennedy, and sat in on one of their many English classes. I was impressed by the wide range of services MClass provides, from pre-literacy English to Driver's Education to Employment Preparation, just to name a few. And in the passing on of knowledge, they also pass on confidence, working with a philosophy of empowerment, “doing things *with* people rather than *for* people. English classes are very often one of the only connections new refugees have to the society outside their home, so MClass also plays a vital role in giving people a sense of community.

On Monday I had the privilege of spending some time with Clinical Manager Francesca Faggioli at the NZ Red Cross [Refugee Trauma Recovery Centre](#). Francesca reminded me of the vital importance of providing professional interpreters and constantly reinforcing the assurance of confidentiality in working with deeply traumatised people.

Feeling a bit overwhelmed by the needs I was seeing and wondering how we can make a match between bereaved refugee families and bereaved families from Northern Ireland in our [Get Together](#) project, I asked Francesca what she thinks we might have to offer. Her answer deeply encouraged me:



*“Anything that can bridge a gap and give the sense that there is a space, a **welcoming harbour** where someone can grab a coffee and have a conversation without being judged can really contribute to this feeling of welcome and safety. . . . I’m privileged to talk with a **person**, not a former refugee. They are a person who wants to share part of their life journey with us, and thanks to the therapeutic relationship, they can recover from their suffering and get a better life.”*

At Francesca’s words, **hope** rose in my heart for the dream of bringing New Hope Refugees NI and Get Together into the same room--**thank you, Francesca!**

On Tuesday, in a meeting with Rachel Kidd, Red Cross Client Services National Lead, and the new National Settlement Advisor Dennis Maang, I gained a deeper understanding of the Red Cross’s comprehensive Pathways to Settlement programme. I then had attended an orientation day for newly arrived refugees.



As I sat at the back of the classroom listening to lessons about health & safety, income and tax scales, resources and services--all translated into several different languages--I couldn’t help wondering: How would I cope if I were sitting here in this class as a new arrival from Myanmar, trying to absorb new learning, and all the while thinking about my ill mother and my dead brother whom I’ve left behind in a refugee camp? Would I have the courage to begin learning a strange new language? Would I be able to absorb anything those people up front are telling me? Would I rise to hope or would I sink into despair?

I don’t know the answer to these questions, but the privilege of travelling as a [Churchill Fellow](#) in this beautiful country, so open-armed and full of compassion, has shown me that thousands of courageous, tenacious, displaced people from all over the globe **do rise** above their despair, their distraction and their grief to find hope and to make a new home for themselves and for those of us who try to host them. Thanks to their courage, we in the West are made much richer by the world that is arriving daily on our doorsteps.

5 November - Christchurch

The beauty of Christchurch, on the South Island, captured my heart like no other place in New Zealand.

I arrived here from Wellington on the first day of November, and went straight from the airport to a meeting with the lovely and gracious [Lois Tonkin](#). Lois’ model of [“growing around grief”](#) has been such an inspiration in [Cruse](#), and especially in our work with bereaved families in the Get Together project. I spent more than an hour with Lois, learning how her model of grief had evolved, discussing the impact and meaning of that model in all kinds of losses, not just death grief.



We had a stimulating conversation about how the model of growing around grief might fit in working with refugees who are dealing with multiple losses, and the importance of not making assumptions but rather, coming alongside a grieving person as a respectful witness. We explored together some of the themes that are emerging from our work with families in Get Together, such as how rediscovering choice can counteract the powerlessness of trauma.

This idea was reinforced the next day when I met with [Christchurch Resettlement Services](#) Manager Shirley Wright and her team of Social Workers. They talked about the effect of trauma taking away safety, control and belonging from people, and how they work with the whole family

to help restore those things, giving people choices each step of the way and empowering them to make healthy connections in their new-found communities.

Come to think of it, this message came across loud and clear from almost every agency I spoke with in New Zealand, articulated in the tagline of [Auckland Resettled Community Coalition](#) - “Nothing about us without us.”

The work we are about to undertake--inviting refugee and asylum-seeking families to join families from Northern Ireland in creating a community of hope around their grief--is no small task.

And it is most certainly not a task we will try to accomplish on our own. It will require strong partnerships, **earning trust and placing our trust in those who can best teach us** how to live well with that universal human experience called grief: bereaved families from Belfast or Burundi, Armagh or Afghanistan, Saintfield or Syria.

Elaine with Lois Tonkin in Christchurch



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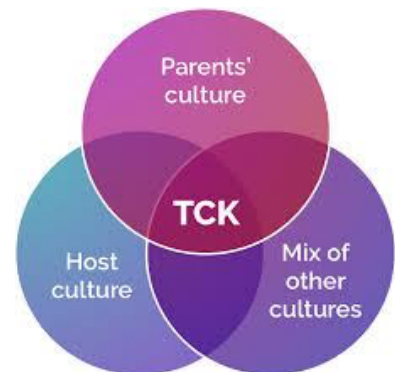
Appendix C - End Notes

Footnote 1 - Definitions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers:

- An asylum seeker is a person who is looking for a safe place outside her/his own country. People seek asylum if they fear persecution in their own country because of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, social group or political opinion.
- In the UK a refugee is someone who applies for asylum, and is successful in being granted refugee status or has been designated as a refugee by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and come here through a resettlement programme.

Footnote 2 - Diagram of a Third Culture Kid's experience:

from <https://peggypilkey.ca/third-culture-kids/>

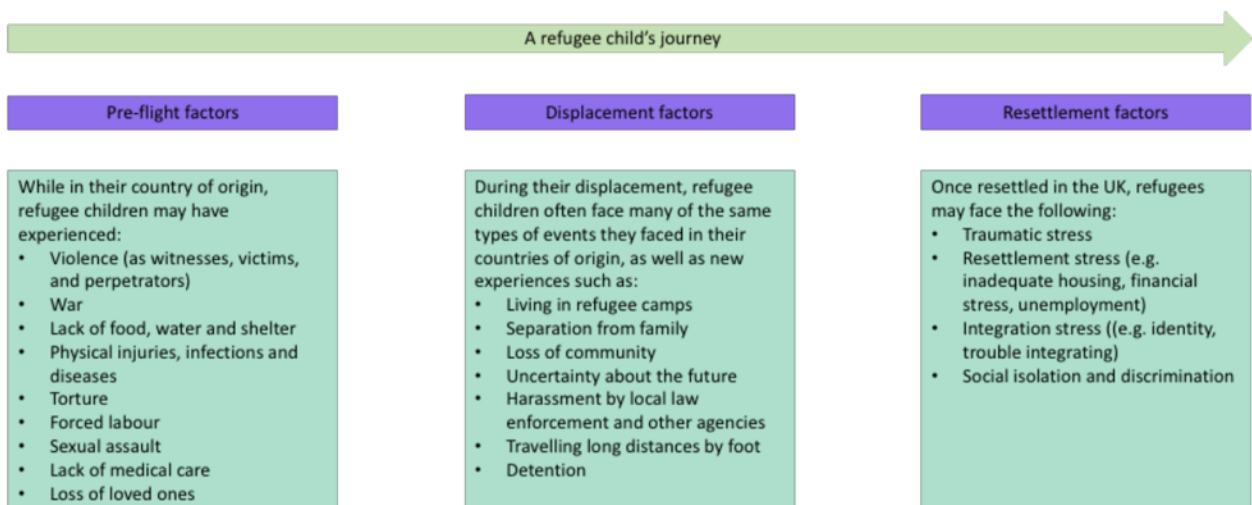


Footnote 6: Understanding a Refugee child's journey, from <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma>

A child's journey

Whether arriving into their destination country having made a long and sometimes dangerous journey themselves, having been resettled from countries surrounding their home country, or having joined a family member via refugee family reunion, specific mental health risk factors exist throughout their journey⁶.

Trauma occurs when a child experiences an intense event that threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical wellbeing.



⁶ NCTSN. *Refugee Trauma*. Accessed 6 March 2018. <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma>

Footnote 8 -

A Sampling of Volunteer Responses to “Roots & Wings IX” Get Together Residential with Newcomer families and families from NI: 10 – 12 April 2019

What made you smile?

- Mohamed sleeping on my shoulder.
- The loss-strain on the faces of some parents disappearing as the weekend progressed.
- Watching & participating with my family in the team games on Sat morning. It was so lovely seeing them bond together and laugh and have fun in the midst of sadness.
- The simple joy of skipping stones with the kids.
- Cultures mixed freely and I didn't see any judgments about race.

I'm thankful for . . .

- Dancing
- The Get Together Team
- The ability to make a difference
- The courage all the families showed in walking through the door on Friday night!
- The trust people show in telling their stories.
- The support of other volunteers at crucial times.
- This team!! – unshakeable!
- Laughter, courage, friendships
- Resources to enable this sort of work.
- The opportunity to work with these wonderful families and be part of this project. I will always remember these powerful weekends.
- Nine weekends!

It would have been better if . . .

- Activities to help more mixing between families from different cultures.
- Maybe fewer families, as pretty chaotic at times (although great) – (X6)
- More bi-lingual volunteers perhaps, as the three worked REALLY hard!
- Warmer weather!
- Corrymeela and Get Together volunteers get more time together to prepare.
- Longer session with parents.

What amazed me:

- The importance of the tiniest of acts.
- The strength and smiles on Fatuma's face. Incredible.
- The energy of the volunteers keeping up with the kids.
- Diversity of children and adults.
- Honesty and openness of conversations with both parents and kids.
- The ability of families to be with each other and share experiences so willingly.
- Appreciation from all who have lost so much. Resilience. Courage—Inspiring!
- Resilience, openness, trust.
- The openness of the families despite the pain—pushing through into intimacy.

What made me want to cry:

- The mum and dad of the family saying thank you over and over when I felt I hadn't done much.
- Little M. asking me to write messages to her Dad so he'll know all about her.
- How beautifully all the teams worked together and our first class bilingual volunteers.
- Talking about the family's upcoming 1 year anniversary of their father's death.
- Knowing grief is never done
- Waving goodbye to my family on the bus.
- Seeing the pain in people's eyes as they and you knew it will continue.