

Initiative plans to help integrate migrant communities

Inclusion project aiming to really 'Make It Happen' in Angus

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A new initiative is coming to Angus which hopes to help integrate and reduce the sense of isolation prevalent in the local migrant community.

Plans are to set up a Make It Happen community cafe as part of the Social Support and Migration in Scotland (SSAMIS) project which focuses on migration from Central and Eastern Europe.

The project is being co-ordinated in Angus by Dr Paulina Trevena, a Research Associate at the University of Glasgow, a sociologist who specialises in international migration.

Over the last two years Dr Trevena has compared the situation of migrant populations in Glasgow and Angus and has found that more urban areas have stronger support networks than rural ones, and is hoping to address this lack.

The trial phase of the project will have a pop-up community cafe run in the former OBs at 19 West Port, Arbroath, with a number of workshops and language cafes due to run October 4-16.

With significant Central European migrant populations in Angus and new populations arriving, such as Syrian refugees, it is hoped the project will create an informal forum for people to come together, get help in accessing various services and to feel more part of the community at large. As the community of Angus is becoming more diverse, there is an increased need for community-building and inclusion.

Dr Trevena explained: "The idea is to create a place for the whole community to come together. From our research the things that have come out for Angus is that the migrant population is quite isolated. They tend to

work in segregated workplaces such as fish factories and farms and they don't have the space or time to

pick up English. I've met a number of Czechs who are fluent in Polish, which is a very difficult language to learn, but not English.

"There are many people who would like to learn English but cannot access language courses. Many people would like to have more Scottish friends, but where are they supposed to meet them, especially if their English is limited?

"I think in general in Angus there needs to be a place for people to meet and come together on the basis of shared interests."

All events at the Make It Happen cafe will be free, and will include information and advice sessions with the Citizens Advice Bureau, various Angus Council departments, DEAP; English language cafes; taster lessons in Arabic, Czech, and Polish, crafts, music, poetry, dance, an international swapshop for

books, clothes and toys, and lots of activities for children.

Dr Trevena said: "We're also trying to connect people with things that already ex-

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ist. We want to show people these things are in place, you just have to have know about them and have the courage to come to them.

“We’ll also be working with artists to create a living map, a place to re-create people’s life stories and help people reflect on what makes a place a home. There will be a lot of creative things to do, such as glass painting, cartooning, illustrating, and knitting.”

A family ceilidh is also planned for Friday, October 14, 6.30-9pm, in the Old & Abbey Church hall.

Dr Trevena is keen to see if people will travel from other burghs of Angus to the pop-up cafe which will indicate how the project should proceed.

She said: “The whole idea is to trial it and establish a permanent community cafe for the whole community to come together. There is also

an element of marketing in the pop-ups because we want to see what will draw people in, what their wants and interests are.

“If it goes well that will give us a very good basis to apply for further funding.”

Currently the project is being funded by the University of Glasgow’s Impact Acceleration Account, with some funding from Angus Council. It is hoped that in the future Dr Trevena’s Angus steering group, consist-

ing of representatives of Angus Council, D&A College, Police Scotland and other local institutions, will be able to apply for funding for the project.

For more information about Make It Happen search for the SSAMIS Project on Facebook and go to ‘events’.

Make It Happen are looking for volunteers who could help out at their events! If interested please contact Paulina via email on Paulina.Trevena@glasgow.ac.uk





Dr Paulina Trevena (centre) at a 'Make It Happen' project event in Peterhead recently.

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