

ACTIVE CITIZENS TOGETHER PROJECT NETWORK
NEWSLETTER THREE: JANUARY 2017

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS.

Hello again to all members of the Active Citizens Together Project Network. We wish you a very happy 2017, and hope that you will feel inspired to get involved in the life of your local community this year.



Our featured 'Active Citizen' for this edition of the newsletter is Petr Torak, MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) – Petr was awarded his MBE in November 2015 for services to the Roma community.

“I was born in the Czech Republic and lived there until I was eighteen. In 1999, my father became politically active, challenging inappropriate and discriminatory treatment of the Roma / Gypsy people. Because of my political involvement, our family started suffering racial persecution and several violent attacks. In May 1999, my parents decided to leave the Czech Republic and we moved to the UK where we applied for asylum. When we arrived here we were moved to an immigration centre in Southend-on-Sea. After about a year we moved to Peterborough. I've been there sixteen years now, and think of Peterborough as home.

I go back to the Czech Republic once or twice a year to see family and go to conferences. Unfortunately the situation for Roma people hasn't changed much, they still suffer discrimination and hatred.

When I was a teenager I wanted to do things to help others - to be an 'action hero'! After high school in the Czech Republic I applied to be a police officer, but then we left the country. When I received my UK work permit I started working in factories and warehouses. As my English improved I moved into customer services roles. In 2003 I went to a police station to ask about joining the police and was told that I had to be British to be a policeman, which wasn't true. So I continued working in customer services. Then I started working for Peterborough City Council and stood

for local elections. I didn't get in but it was a very valuable experience. After the election, I met a police officer who was very 'pro-community'. He advised me to become a Police Community Support Officer, which I did in 2006. In 2008 I became a Police Officer.

In 2010 I also helped set up the Community Partnership, 'Compas', mainly for Czech / Slovak / Roma people. Our team of volunteers use the Voyager Academy, Peterborough where we have local festivals; Saturday Czech and Slovak school, art & craft club and others. We have a FB page (Community partnership group) and website with a good resource section, including a guide to integration in the UK – www.compas.org.uk.

In 2013 I met Jim Davies, a Romani police officer from Thames Valley and talked about getting more Roma to join the police. The Gypsy Roma Traveller Police Association (GRTPA) was launched in December 2013, and I am Executive Director. We support Traveller and Romany officers, who often hide their ancestry for fear of prejudice.

I'm very pleased to have fulfilled my dream. Having a purpose is very important for me. And when I do motivational speeches to children and young people around the country, my aim is to 'plant a seed' so they realise that their future and the future of their community is in their hands. If they are determined to achieve, they will do very well."

Active Citizens Together – Winter Workshops

When?	Where?	How to register for a place
Sat 28 th Jan 2017, 9:45- 11:45am	Polish Sat School, Harlow	http://smp.eelga.gov.uk/events/active-eu-citizens-workshop-harlow/
Weds 1 st Feb 2017, 2:00- 5:00pm	Park Crescent Campus, Peterborough Regional College	Sue Hay: (m) 07920-257-964 (e) sue.hay@eelga.gov.uk Rachel Heathcock (t) 01284-758311 (e) Rachel.heathcock@eelga.gov.uk

There will be lots of other workshops taking place up to summer 2017 for European citizens wanting to get involved in local activities. Keep updated by visiting our web page: <http://smp.eelga.gov.uk/events/>

What are people saying about the project?

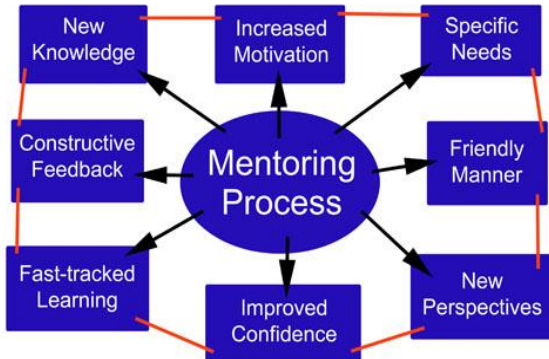


“I was really pleased I could attend the Hatfield workshop to see how the sessions work. I was impressed by the workshop content & engagement by attendees. I hope the participants do become more active citizens as a result.”
(Cllr Lynne Sparks, Deputy Mayor, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)

“Many thanks for sharing with me the newsletter - great news, great success! Hope you get a lot of Polish participants. Let me know if we can help with anything in the future. I shall certainly share the information here.”
(Anna-Maria Norman, Head Teacher, Polish Saturday School, Cambridge)



“It is good to see European Citizens from around the Eastern Region getting involved in their local communities. It is so important for integration and learning about the British way of life.” (Ginny Shoemith, Police Community Support Officer, Suffolk Constabulary)



Mentoring

We run a mentoring programme as part of the Active Citizens Together project, so that project participants can have some guidance and advice from a mentor (or buddy) in the community if they would like to. This diagram illustrates the mentoring process.



Audrone from Lithuania (in the centre) is a qualified teacher. She told us that she would like to become a local councillor or to get experience in a school.

So Rachel Heathcock from the ACT Project Team arranged for her to have a mentoring meeting with Jo Rust (on the left) who stood as the Labour Party parliamentary candidate in the 2015 general election, and is the Secretary for the North West Norfolk Constituency Labour Party and the King's

Lynn and District Trade Council.

They met up in October, and discussed the opportunities available, including joining a local Parish Council. Jo agreed to put Audrone in contact with the Parish Clerk.

Jo said, “Commitment and passion are important. Audrone and her daughter Eglemordasaite are very keen to get involved in their local community and help ensure decisions made benefit the village they live in and the people they live amongst. It's very exciting to learn that there is a vacancy on the parish council that could possibly be filled by one of them.”

Audrone’s daughter has subsequently arranged a meeting with the Parish Council about the vacancy, and Audrone has asked the ACT Project team for a mentoring opportunity as a Teaching Assistant.

Urszula from Poland (on the left) is now a volunteer at a charity shop near where



she lives in Hertfordshire. Abigail Ravenscroft, who works at the shop (on the right) acted as Urszula’s mentor when they met up with Sue Hay from the ACT Project in November 2016. Abigail told Urszula all about working in the shop, and the different opportunities that it would give her to meet people and help the SCOPE charity, which supports people with disabilities.

Urszula was a teacher in Poland. She said “I like my job in the charity shop. The staff are very friendly”. And Abigail said “Urszula seems happy, and talks to other members of the team, asking us to correct her grammar and tenses when she goes wrong. She’s absolutely wonderful, and we’re pleased to have her on board. We’ve started getting her chatting to customers.”

Migration news



Here are three pieces of information you might find interesting – particularly if you have come to the UK from mainland Europe:

1. On 8th December 2016 the Government launched an inquiry into immigration. To have your say **by Friday 20th January**, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons->

[select/home-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/161208-new-inquiry-immigration/](#)

2. On 12th December 2016, a report was published on an inquiry into securing the future of EEA+ nationals in the UK by British Future.
<http://www.britishfuture.org/articles/eu-nationals-report/>
3. 'The 3 Million' is a support & pressure group of EU citizens living in the UK
www.facebook.com/The3million

BREXIT and British Values



"I am Michal Siewniak. I am an EU migrant from Poland, a local 'community activist' and Community Development Manager with CVS (Community Voluntary Services) Broxbourne and East Herts.

It is now more than six months since the EU referendum. The British people voted, and although it was close, the message was clear – 'we want our country back, we want to control our borders, we will be better off outside the EU'.

I have lived in a number of European countries but I don't remember seeing anything like the effect of the vote. It seems to have resulted in a complete lack of ability to have a mature debate on issues which affect us all, like globalization, migration and the refugee crisis.

[Racist or religious abuse incidents recorded by police in England and Wales](#) jumped 41% in the month after the UK voted to quit the EU. There were 3,886 such crimes logged in July 2015, rising to 5,468 in July 2016, according to the [Home Office](#).

'Hate crime' takes many different forms, and needs to be addressed quickly (e.g. in primary schools). I know that currently the British Values subject is being taught in our schools, and I think it is really important to embed these values as early as possible, so that young people can be brought up in a society which respects people from all walks of life.

I was brought up under communism in Poland, and when I watched the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 I never dreamt that Europe could change so much in such a relatively short period of time.

In my case, and for many other EU nationals reading this newsletter, living in the UK has enabled us to improve our life chances and language skills. It has also helped me break down various barriers and promote cultural diversity. So I am worried that Britain has chosen the ‘isolation path’, when we are stronger together. I am also worried that many EU citizens, who come here legally and for good reasons, will now be treated as “second class citizens”.

I don’t want to see Europe divided again. My experience has taught me that we must work together to address global issues, to champion diversity and challenge prejudice.

[Parliament Week, 13th-19th November 2016](#) was a great example of active citizenship. It is a UK-wide programme of events and activities to inspire, engage and connect people with parliamentary democracy and processes. Our event in Welwyn Hatfield focussed mainly on democracy and young people, to enable them to develop a sense of ownership over their circumstances, and become proactive members of their community.”



[Do you speak English?](#) One hundred people have now taken part in our ESOL sessions (English for Speakers of Other Languages) across the region, with tutors using materials prepared for them by the ACT Project team. The focus of the classes is on topics such as:

- Government in the UK
- How you can become an active citizen and help improve your neighbourhood
- Voting & councils in your area

Using different activities, class members are able to practice their English and to think more about their rights and opportunities as European citizens while living here in the UK.

Here are some comments from a tutor who used our materials with a group of adults over several weeks at an English language café in Cambridge:

“They enjoyed talking about their community and we reported back the next week and said what we had promised, or done – to meet our neighbours, find out about volunteering, research our local council. They enjoyed the volunteering workshops and appreciated the visits from outside agencies. It encouraged us to talk about new topics, and promoted discussion about the differences between our political system and theirs. The variety of activities worked well – reading, discussion, questions and group work.”

So if you are involved in ESOL and would like us to meet you to discuss our free teaching materials, please do get in touch with us.

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Employer: Cambridgeshire County Council

Salary: £10.56 per hour

Working Pattern: Flexible hours

Hours: Variable on supply basis

Location: Various



Closing date: 20th January 2017 at midday

We are looking for bilingual people who are interested in working as Bilingual Teaching Assistants. The post will be on a supply basis with Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Diversity Service (CREDS). You will be required to work in primary and/or secondary schools when a need is identified (i.e. not regular daily work). CREDS is part of the Directorate of Learning within Cambridgeshire County Council.

If you have GCSE or an equivalent level qualification and can speak English and can speak one or more of the following languages: Bengali, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Panjabi, Romanes, Romanian, Slovakian, Spanish, Urdu, we would like to hear from you. We would also welcome applications from speakers of languages spoken by refugees such as Dari and Farsi.

All applicants will require an enhanced DBS check and all selected applicants will have to attend minimum of 2 days paid training. Previous unsuccessful applicants should not reapply.

For informal enquires please contact Bethan Rees or Kinga Kuzman on 01223 703882, or mobiles: Bethan Rees 07879 447457, Kinga Kuzman 07884 114688.

Interviews will take place on Friday, 3rd February 2017 at Cambridge Professional Development Centre.



We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter. If you would like to talk to us about the Active Citizens Together Project, here's how:



Sue Hay: (m) 07920-257-964 (e) sue.hay@eelga.gov.uk

Rachel Heathcock (t) 01284-758311 (e) Rachel.heathcock@eelga.gov.uk

And look out for our next newsletter in May.