Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum (MRCF) is a community based voluntary organisation set up to provide support to all migrants and refugees in London. In the past year we have seen people from 59 countries, have helped them with advice and support in their attempts to fit in and start a new life in the UK. Integration is an official term, but at MRCF it is translated into a number of innovative initiatives that take into consideration the diversity of issues and cultures that we are so privileged to encounter. We have helped medical professionals find training and jobs, we used oral history to tell the story of Moroccan migrants over three generations, but we also helped with filling forms and finding GPs. None of these activities would be possible if was not for the contribution of individuals from a wide range of London communities and walks of life who give their time, skills and good will to help make MRCF and indeed London such a special welcoming place.

It is here that we tell the story of that kind of welcome, in the form of mentoring. MRCF Mentoring projects, such as 2 Heads are Better Than 1, help refugees and migrants who feel lonely and isolated, and who do not yet speak English, to spend time with mentors on one to one basis and help them gain confidence to break out of isolation, practice English, learn about London and opportunities they would normally miss out on. And more importantly, they form relationships of trust that help them feel part of the community. It also helps them gain new skills and knowledge and they are better equipped to contribute to society in a meaningful way through employment or volunteering and mentoring.

If you wish to take part in MRCF’s mentoring and volunteering programmes please contact Francesca Valerio on 020 8962 3048 or francesca@mrcf.org.uk.

Executive Director MRCF
Zrinka Bralo

Vovchic is a freelance illustrator.
More work can be seen on www.vovchic.com
Contact details : mail@vovchic.com
Thank you everyone for being here today!

Here at MRCF we help migrants and refugees with their new life in London.

We have volunteer mentors who help mentees to feel comfortable in their new home.

You will meet once a week and share experiences.

We have matched one mentor with one mentee.

As a mentor you will help your mentee finding information and giving support. You can also support your mentee by translating letters or going to important appointments with them.

As a mentee you can ask your mentor about opportunities in your area that are on offer to you - such as study, medical care and sport activities.

Any questions?

Let’s now enjoy a bite to eat and a drink together!

Hassan! Let me introduce you to your mentor Mas.

Mas - Hassan

Please to meet you Mas!

It’s good to meet you Hassan!
Hassan, when did you arrive to London?

one year ago

with your family?

I came alone

I love to come to the park

very peaceful

are you in contact with your family back home in Iraq?

we speak regularly on the phone

your family here with you Mas?

I live by myself...

...but miss... spend a lot time with them-you know, large family dinners, birthdays - always an excuse!

how did you decide to come to England by yourself?

my family decided I must get out and find a safe place with better life prospects-the situation back home is dangerous and uncertain...
Iraq is not the safest place right now! ...war brings much suffering!
there was enough money for just one person

I was sixteen when I left Baghdad

BYE MUM!

It was not an easy decision to leave not knowing the next place of abode— the journey in itself was long and exhausting with serious risks involved!
GET YOUR PASSPORT READY
WE'RE AT THE TURKISH BORDER

PLEASE STOP!

water never tasted SO GOOD !!!
to the dock? I will drop you off before entering the warehouse.

that’s great! thank you!

we’re leaving tonight - come back at dusk.

I will!

hope everyone’s ok back home.
get a ride with one of the trucks

I'm hungry and cold! we're heading north

when will it end? will I make it in one piece?

I'm a long way from home—hope it's worth it!
send me back by plane if I get caught!

LONDON MATE!
that’s how I ended up in London

CRAZY JOURNEY! you must really miss your family!

I DO!

I’d like to get them over for a visit when I have my own place - I live in a squat with five flatmates - not the best place to receive parents!

nothing so sad! we left China to come here when I was 9 ...

what’s your story?
...first I lost all my bearings...

where are we going?

pay attention while crossing!

LOOK RIGHT!

...I was bullied at school because of my spiky hair and Chinese accent!

OI SPIKY CHINK!!

SPEAK ENGLISH
one week later at the museum...

impressive

how was your week?

fine! I work as a GP in a health centre

you up to anything good this week?

It’s difficult to find work - my English is not good - I’m learning from my flatmates but we’re all foreigners!

I played bongo - joined in a few football games in my local park ...

...would be nice to have a girlfriend!

see you next week

good night!
at the salsa class...

UNO DOS TRES
I'm famished!

FAAMEESH?

means starving!

VERY HUNGRY

You're a GREAT DANCER!

I'm faameeshed too!

I gave my best performance today!
THANKS to your bongo beat!

where did you learn to dance salsa so well?

when I was in Colombia studying tropical diseases as a training doctor...
Colombia...

Tropical diseases are diseases that are prevalent in or unique to tropical and subtropical regions. Insects such as mosquitoes and flies are by far the most common disease carrier or "vector"...

shall we salsa tonight?
sure!

...these insects may carry a parasite...

enough studying for today! don’t wanna be late for the salsa class!

good morning! how are you today?
I’ve learnt a great deal in Colombia! I really enjoyed my trip there.

I’ve been passionate about salsa ever since! It’s not so easy - you really need to practice!

I like it too - I’d like to join - THAT WAS GREAT FUN!

THANK YOU FOR THIS EVENING! see you next week!

AT THE SALSA CLASS?