

Local Acts of Welcome: Refugee Week in Your Community

Tim Finch, National Refugees Welcome Board

With Stefan Haselwimmer, Refugee Campaigner

The discussion began with how to encourage people to become involved:

- Asking people if they can help with a simple and manageable action
- Offering tangible ways of making a difference
- Need to share more stories about ordinary people and how they can become active
- Using the infrastructure that already exists and making the most of it – e.g. Cities of Sanctuary

The audience then shared their own comments and experiences:

- Lots of refugees don't want to be labelled as 'refugees' – especially younger generations who want to be accepted and fit in with their new community
- Using theatre as a way of storytelling – performance work should not be about labelling – instead theatre can be used to build trust and understand different identities
- Using Refugee Week to also highlight the work of those who welcome refugees as an opportunity to widen the audience
- Easier to engage the public with a simple, practical idea rather than with a long term plan
- Small activities are effective – e.g. a game of football with refugees and locals, engages all generations
- Using food as a way of connecting people – encourages interaction
- Placing Refugee Week events in public mainstream venues/institutions to encourage a wider audience
- Welcoming is a mutually enriching act – a positive experience for both the 'welcomer' and the 'welcomed'
- Creating a tool-kit for welcoming, making it accessible so that anyone can get involved
- The need to show how easy it is to get involved and show their support