

**Open access holistic Health Visiting support for refugees and asylum seeking families**

***Olive Branch***

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**Stockton Area:  
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS FT  
Health Visitors**

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## **Purpose of Document**

This case study focuses on an improvement in service quality, innovation or a new way of working, specifically along one or more of the strands of the health visiting service vision and family offer

**Community  
Universal  
Universal Plus and  
Universal Partnership Plus**

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## **Brief Description of Case study/Project**

The Olive Branch is a small element of services offered to refugee and asylum seeking families in Stockton, the project aims to facilitate and develop independent living for asylum seekers and refugees and identify and meet the families health needs both physically and mentally whilst also empowering and enabling them.

In essence for the adults the aim is to encourage social integration, prevent parental isolation and low mood which can lead to depression.

Olive Branch is a group which is offered weekly for two hours. There is also an appointment system within the drop-in for individual private consultation with the health visitor (HV) for signposting, support and advice. The HV is a supplementary prescriber so can offer guidance and treatment prior to referral to a GP.

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## **Challenges**

- One of the major challenges over the last few years has been the streamlining of services and resources both within health and the wider multiagency support network that the service referred to and was supported by. This has meant that whilst demand for support has increased the staff available to offer this have reduced in numbers and this is an ongoing challenge. The project addresses this by tailoring the service and structuring the delivery to build resilience and capacity for the clients, through the appointments within the session. For example should the client need a prescription this is normally generated via the GP surgeries so the client has to collect the script and take it to the chemist. This builds up their own skill base and gives them control of at least one element of their life, whilst also ensuring that the Olive Branch is not seen as an alternative to the GP in the longer term.
  - There are challenges with clients who are undergoing the asylum process, such as overcoming language barriers
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## **Summary of Achievements**

The project offers early support for families, building relationships and resilience, addressing minor ailment issues and signposting or facilitating contact with other groups and agencies, the impact is outlined below.

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## Impact

Parents from minority ethnic backgrounds are actively encouraged to meet, socialise and play together, with staff available to offer advice and guidance across a wide range of subjects, if necessary an interpreter is used.

The families are supported to independence at a pace that is appropriate to their needs.

The last Joint Area Review (JAR) report highlighted that the group:

- Helped to close the gap between educational performance of this vulnerable group and the majority.
- Family attendance at Olive branch encouraged the use of children's centres and participation in adult education, amongst other activities
- Provided a clinical practitioner with the ability to clinically assess and prescribe treatment and refer to GP if deemed necessary, which has benefitted the families
- A sustained commitment, has resulted in attendance on average of 30 – 40 clients per session.

The JAR also commented that “We are particularly impressed by the way that people of different cultures and backgrounds come together and are made to feel welcome, regardless of their language, religion or nationality”

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## Benefits

- Improved health and wellbeing of the asylum and refugee families.
  - Limiting of the impact of parental mental health upon the children, and early identification of the need for support
  - Early identification of health concerns
  - Behaviour and parenting support for families is easily accessible.
  - Social Integration for both adults and children
  - Free access to community services to assist development of English for both adults and children.
  - Good grounding to access services confidentially, and continue to access services if families are given leave to remain in the UK and establish a good and happy life
  - Promoting positive child development to enable them to adjust to new educational environments in a seamless way.
  - Diversion therapy for all of the family who may have been victims of torture, rape and imprisonment.
  - Mixed culture families come together for the greater good of their children regardless of their life difficulties.
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## Innovation

- This project is tailored to meet the needs of the families it targets and adapts to what the community identify as their need
- Olive Branch enables the health professionals involved to access a wide variety of families, from differing and varied backgrounds and enables and facilitates them to

support each other and learn quickly about what is available within the local area to help and support them

- Olive Branch has raised the profile within the community of the Asylum seeking and refugee families, thus allowing them to support each other.
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