**Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme Case study completed by Joan Cooper Connecting Families Keyworker August 2016**

I am currently supporting two Syrian Refugee families. The first family arrived in December 2015, and the second arrived in February 2016 out of the 5 families that now live in Bath and North East Somerset Council area.

Before their arrival it was a joint effort from the whole Connecting Families Team and wider professionals in the Council and liaison between other Council staff and the Home Office / Central Government, to ensure we were prepared and well equipped for the family’s safe arrival.

For Connecting Families this required securing accommodation and fitting out the home with the basic furniture and provisions required in any home. We received amazing support from Genesis Furniture Project, The Nest and Bath Welcome Refugees to enable us to provide a welcoming home for all the families.

I met my first family at the Airport, a family of four, mum; dad and two children aged 5 and 2 years. We had information before arriving that their 5 year old son was Deaf and Mute. The family spoke no English so through an interpreter I discovered very quickly how frightened they were. As a family they had embarked on a long journey to reach safety. They were unsure at this point if they had made the right choice and were incredibly wary of us. I could only imagine the thoughts that were going through their minds, arriving in a strange country with very little possessions, unsure of who we were and where they were being taken. After arriving at their home they started to relax a little and over the course of the first few weeks they realised they were safe and being well cared for.

My initial support after their arrival was intensive, ensuring documentation was in order, applying for their Temporary Leave to Remain, Bank Accounts and Benefits, arranging medical assessments and setting up Direct Debits for their household bills. All of the parents are working hard with support / teaching from Bath College completing their Maths and English.

Although the 5 year old needed to be in education, it was unclear why he could not hear or speak. He presented as a very quiet little boy, with no facial expressions, living in a silent world. I supported the family to medical appointments and he was fitted with a hearing aid. This was an incredible experience; as soon as he had them fitted he left the hospital smiling and touching things around him in the environment and making sounds to express himself. The next step was with support from the SEND ( Special Educational Needs and Disability) Team who are continuing to support him and his parents to learn how to communicate and assess him for the right educational provision.

To date he has changed into a very happy little boy who is learning new ways of communicating. He is currently attending the same nursery as his younger sister to prepare him for his transition into school in September.

The family had initially found the isolation and boredom difficult to cope with. In Syria, the father worked long hours, providing for his family and is very keen to work here in the UK. Mum stayed at home with an extended family and had a large network around her.

Since more families have arrived this year, they are starting to build a community network and are feeling more settled. The dads are now volunteering every week, and attend a sports session provided by Sporting Family change in Bath. The dad from this one family now has a voluntary job working in a fruit and vegetable shop where he is improving his English and “paying back” for all the help and support he has received to date.

For me as a key worker for Connecting Families, this work has been very challenging work but incredibly rewarding. I have learnt a lot about Syrian culture. Both families I am supporting are very grateful for the help they have received and the opportunity to provide education and safety for their children.

A Quote from one of the families:

*"We were very scared before we met Joan; she has taught us that English people are good and respectful. We feel blessed to have her and the Service helping us. We want to say thank you”* - Syrian Family 2016