Together We Grow (TWG) Chat

# Purpose

Together We Grow aims to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees. The members of Together We Grow are the asylum seekers and refugees we aim to support. The work of Together We Grow is done by volunteers drawn from the community.

Together We Grow (TWG) Chat is a temporary scheme arising out of the Covid-19 crisis.

The purpose of TWG Chat is to provide asylum seekers and refugees with a regular chat by phone or video conference in English with a Together We Grow volunteer. It is for members who are experiencing much less social contact because of self-isolation or social distancing. Members are also not able to attend their normal English classes.

The aims are:

* Promote the social and emotional wellbeing of asylum seekers and refugees.
* Provide some practice for English language learners.

# What is Together We Grow Chat?

### Members/households must be invited to be considered for TWG Chat. They should complete a TWG Chat application form. Help with completing the form can be provided by Levent Alsancak. Levent is the Member Coordinator of TWG Chat as well as a member of Together We Grow.

Members must be approved by Together We Grow management to progress to partnering with a TWG Chat volunteer. Approval is at the discretion of the TWG management. A decision will be based on the needs of the members, availability of suitable volunteers and the Covid-19 situation.

A member or household of members (asylum seekers and refugees) will be partnered with a volunteer from TWG. This will be done by the TWG management considering the following criteria.

* Personal preferences of both members and volunteers.
* Communication preferences and technology capabilities of members and volunteers.

Once a volunteer and a member/household have been partnered. The volunteer will email or call their TWG Chat partner to arrange the first chat. They will agree the time, date, duration, participants and method of communication. These arrangements will be communicated to TWG Management and the Member Coordinator.

The first chat will be 30 minutes duration. (See Hints and Tips for how to conduct a TWG Chat.) It will take place by video conference, preferably using Zoom. If this is not possible, a phone call may be used. At the end of the TWG Chat, the arrangements for the next TWG Chat will be agreed.

After the first meeting the Member Coordinator will call the member/household and ask for feedback on how the TWG Chat went. The member/household will be asked if they wish to continue. The volunteer will be called by TWG management and asked for feedback on how the TWG Chat went. The volunteer will be asked if they wish to continue. Any issues will be resolved by the Member Coordinator and TWG management.

Chats will take place every week for 4 weeks and can be between 30 minutes and 40 minutes long. At the end of each TWG Chat arrangements will be made for the next TWG Chat.

After 4 weeks (4 TWG Chats), the member/household and the volunteer will be contacted by the Member Coordinator and TWG management respectively.

Both the member/household and volunteer will have the option to continue for one further 4-week period but will be encouraged to change partners. This is intended to help keep the contact fresh and stimulating for both parties. It is not intended that there be an ongoing relationship established.

The partnership will be reviewed every 4-weeks by the Member Coordinator and TWG management.

The maximum number of weeks for TWG Chat will be 12-weeks after which the member/household will have to re-apply. TWG Chat may not be available on an ongoing basis.

Together We Grow will keep the TWG Chat service under review in the light of the Covid-19 situation as well as the benefits of the service.

# Data Protection and Confidentiality

The following information applies to both volunteers and members.

During your TWG Chat personal and sensitive information about individuals may become known. All information must stay safe and confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR Regulations 2018. If you do acquire information about an individual (for example, names, phone numbers, email addresses and other information), you must maintain confidentiality and do not discuss or disclose any data or information with any other members of Together We Grow or with anyone who doesn’t need to know other than Together We Grow management.

# Equality

Together We Grow supports a diverse range of individuals in diverse communities. Volunteers are drawn from the wider community. We ask that you respect every individual’s beliefs and that nobody is treated less favourably or excluded in anyway.

# Safeguarding

At Together We Grow we place the safeguarding and well-being of members and volunteers above anything else.

We should all be alert to any signs of abuse or anything that may concern you. If you have any suspicions about the safety of any volunteer or member you must always raise this with TWG management. You will always be supported by TWG and not raising your concerns is worse than raising a suspicion that is incorrect. If anyone tells you of any type of abuse then remain calm, listen and reassure them that it will be taken seriously. Don’t promise confidentiality as you will need to speak to a limited number of people once you have this information and we ask that you ALWAYS report this to the Together We Grow Chair, Laura Beesley, who is the safeguarding lead.

TWG Chat is a video conference or phone conversation. Volunteers and members will not meet except using these means. This is especially important given the government instructions about self-isolation and social distancing. You must stay safe.

# Hints and Tips

1. Agree meetings at a time when all the participants can concentrate on the chat and not while they are doing other tasks such as cooking or browsing the internet.
2. Video conference is the preferred method of communicating. The recommended free service is Zoom. Basic users can book meetings for 30-minute duration (actually 40 minutes before it ends). Other services may be considered including Skype, Facetime and others.
3. It is best to limit other internet use when using video conferencing.
4. If a phone conversation is preferred use unused free minutes. Do not incur additional costs as these cannot be paid for by Together We Grow. Remember to treat telephone number as confidential and do not keep phone numbers after they are no longer required for TWG Chat.
5. At the first meeting introduce yourselves. The volunteer should explain that they are a volunteer from Together We Grow and that this is a Together We Grow or TWG Chat. State the purpose of the TWG Chat. It is “to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of members and to practice English speaking”. The members/household should be invited to introduce themselves.
6. Volunteers and members/households may have some difficulty with unfamiliar names. You may need to spell or write them down. It’s normal to get the pronunciations of names wrong. Please be tolerant of the difficulties we all have with unfamiliar words and names.
7. Here are some questions that may help the chat get started.

* How are you today?
* What have you done today?
* What food have you eaten today? What food do you like to eat?
* How do you cook that food?
* What exercise have you had today?
* Have you been able to speak to any friends or family that don’t live with you? How are they?
* Have the children been doing school work? Tell me what you have been doing.
* Have the children been drawing or painting? Can I see the pictures? Tell me about them.
* Do you sing? What do you sing?

1. Listen without interrupting. Repeat what has been said to check understanding. Ask open questions – what, where, when, why, how?
2. Allow members who have difficulty understanding English to check their understanding with others or to listen to a translation by other members of the household.
3. Include all household members in the chat. Some people prefer to listen. Do offer them the chance to respond if they wish to but if they would rather just listen, that is fine.
4. To promote mental health wellbeing suggest the following.

* Try to have a routine and go to bed and wake up at a reasonable time.
* Take some time to care for yourself every day.
* Take some exercise for at least 30 minutes a day.
* Get some fresh air everyday if you can.
* Spend some time talking to friends and family. Support them and allow them to support you.
* Drink water regularly and eat well.

# Questions and Answers

Some questions or issues might arise during the Together We Grow Chat.

I need some help to go to the shop or get my prescription.

The TWG Chat volunteer cannot help with these things.

I or a household member have Covid-19/Coronavirus symptoms. What should I do?

The TWG volunteer cannot give medical or legal advice. Read the information on the government coronavirus website and the NHS website.

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

I have a question about my asylum application.

The TWG Chat volunteer cannot help with asylum applications.

Can I call you if I need anything?

The TWG chat volunteer is someone to chat with at the pre-arranged appointments. They cannot provide other help.

I have a friend who would like to chat. Can I give them your number? Will you call them?

All members must apply to participate in TWG Chat using the standard form. Application should be sent to togetherwegrow2@yahoo.com

I would like to send you a gift/visit you. What is your address?

TWG Chat volunteers will not share their address with members. It is not necessary to send gifts or to visit volunteers or members. This is unnecessary travel and contravenes the government Covid-19 instructions.

# What if there’s a problem?

If either the member or TWG Chat volunteer has a problem they may contact Together We Grow Management at togetherwegrow2@yahoo.com.

TWG Chat Application Form is designed to provide TWG management with sufficient information to set up the partnership.

* Contact details
* Information to help selecting a suitable volunteer such as interests.