

OCTOBER 2022

A Day Like This

*In partnership with Highly Sprung
Funded by CrossCountry and Community Rail
Network*

CRP Officer: Julia Singleton-Tasker



Key Pillars:

- A. Providing a voice for the community
- B. Promoting sustainable and healthy travel
- C. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion
- D. Support social and economic development

CRP Aims:

1, 2, 5, 8, 9



Concept and Aims

This project was designed to promote the safe and accessible use of travel by rail for underserved audiences. We wanted to document, celebrate and share the experience of communities experiencing their first day trip by train and to highlight the places and opportunities that can be accessed via the railways.

There are already schemes to help young people coming into Coventry to negotiate buses through organisations like Positive Youth foundation, but there is nothing comparable on the railways so, working with Highly Sprung, we created a programme of workshops based at Coventry Station in the new community Hub to increase rail confidence and familiarisation. A key part of this was to include a day trip out for the participants to an area of the Midlands that they may not know about.

We approached Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre who were very keen to help us recruit participants for the project. As they work with many newly arrived families, they were able to signpost and support not only the registration process but also the day trip and workshops themselves.

We had hoped to complete the project within the year that Coventry was the City of Culture so the final outcome could be a part of the year of celebrations, but due to some unavoidable delays with the project that wasn't possible.





The Project

Based in the new Community Hub at Coventry Station, and assisted by Lingo Link, who provided translation as many of the participants spoke little to no English, our project started with games, physical warm-ups and plenty of opportunities to get to know about each other. Highly Sprung explored how the families felt about rail travel here and in Syria and the types of places they may like to discover on the railways and all the sessions were designed to empower participants to use the trains independently after the project and to also bring them together with others in similar situations. The CRP Officer produced a 'How to buy a train ticket' guide in Arabic for families to take away and we went through how to book tickets using the Trainline app and website. We also had a session on rail safety and did a tour of the station showing where people could go to continue their journeys by bus, bike or taxi. It was lovely to see the station staff interacting with our group and helping them to feel more at ease in the station.



Sarah Worth, Executive Director of Highly Sprung, explains the next phase of the project, *'The most exciting point of the project happened once we had learned the basics about train travel when we worked with the families to plan a very special day out. Having got to know more about each other during the sessions we were able to plan a day which really celebrated the interests, hobbies, and passions of the families we were working with. There was plenty of interest in wanting to experience the opportunities that being in nature provides, especially the chance to see different animals that the families perhaps hadn't ever seen in their home countries. So, after much discussion it was decided that a trip to Mary Arden's Farm in Stratford-upon-Avon would be the most exciting day out.'*

On a very sunny day in October, we began our journey at Coventry Railway Station where the families all gathered in excitement, they were almost as excited about the trip as we were. Even more excitingly the families had arranged a picnic full of homemade treats and dishes from their different cultures.



The Project

Boarding the train at the train station was easily done thanks to the support from platform staff who demonstrated just how accessible train travel from Coventry can be. Only two out of the 25 family members on the trip had ever travelled by train before, so we enjoyed the opportunity to talk about what that first experience felt like as we hurtled through the Warwickshire countryside. My favourite comment was from one participant who couldn't believe how smooth the train felt on the tracks and explained that at home the trains were so bumpy that you almost fell off your seat. Another highlight was seeing our youngest participant, only three years old, seeing sheep and cows for the first time and learning how to make the animals' different sounds, the train carriage was soon full of moo-ing and baa-ing.' (read the full blogpost [here](#).)



Mary Arden's Farm was a perfect location for our trip. With animals, space to run around, activities including pot painting and lots of games, we spent several hours exploring the farm and all it had to offer. One of the participants commented, 'This trip came at a time when we really needed it. There are so many pressures building on our own country. The trip allowed us to relax and just enjoy ourselves.' and all the families have expressed an interest in doing more group trips on the railways. Seeing the families experience, what was for quite a few of them their first ever train trip, was a real privilege and the photos and videos capture the joy they felt on the day.

Two weeks later, we held a mini exhibition at Coventry Station, showcasing their photos, talking about the project and showing the video of the day. We were delighted to be joined by representatives from CrossCountry, Community Rail Network, the National Railway Museum and Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, who were instrumental in making this project happen.



Outcomes

[Click to watch our video](#)



All the participants enjoyed the rail trip and have expressed an interest in doing more group trips on the railways. Seeing the families experience, what was for quite a few of them their first ever train trip, was a real privilege and the photos and videos capture the joy they felt on the day. The Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre are very keen to repeat the project or to work with us in another way, so we can continue to make an impact on the families and individuals who are newly arrived in the city.

A Day Like This has created many opportunities for legacy work. From finding places to display the photos taken by the participants, to using the video to inspire future performance pieces by professionals, communities and schools, the experience and the resources created by the project can be used in numerous ways.

The specific outcomes were:

1) 25 participants came on the rail trip and each workshop had between 15–20 attendees. For the workshops, we produced a ‘How to buy a ticket’ guide that we had translated into Arabic.



2) A video was produced with the day out documented and with participants providing a voice over of their experiences in the project. The video is available from our website and we’ve already it as part of our rail week at a local secondary school, to inspire students to create a short drama piece around the railways connecting people and places.

3) We have delivered more rail confidence sessions with CRMC.

4) The National Railway Museum are looking at acquiring our video and photos for their collection.

5) Presented the project at the Hub for European Refugee Education’s - Refugee Education: Continuing Conversations Networking Event in March 2023.





Feedback and Legacy

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This trip came at a time when we really needed it. There are so many pressures building on our own country. The trip allowed us to relax and just enjoy ourselves.

“The group was very joyful, and I really thank them for the efforts they made to make this joyful and comforting.”

The trains were very accessible. There were ramps which meant we could easily get my dad on and off the trains, he is in a wheelchair.

It was amazing.

We feel like a family.

We feel like we used to in our country when we can go out together.

This trip made us feel like that again.

The children were all so excited.

They dream of going on another trip like this again.

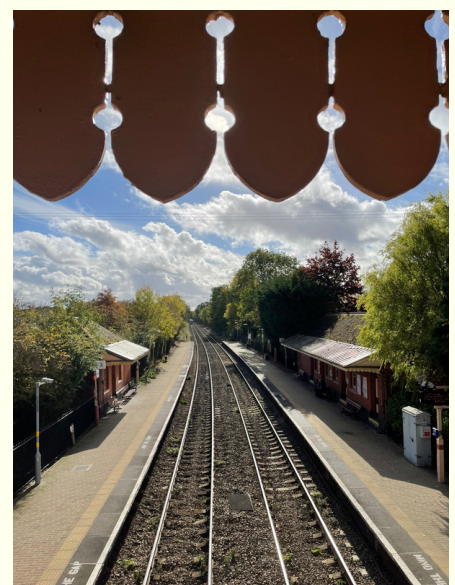




Costs

ITEM	COST
Workshop Delivery, Project Management, Film Production	£5,000
Room Hire	£150
Refreshments	£406.49
Photographer	£300
Translators	£1,011.11
Resources	£152.56
Travel cost for participants	£260.14
TOTAL COST	£7,280.30

Our initial budget was £6,000; however, we had not factored in the need for the translators. None of the participants spoke a great deal of English, so translators were essential to the project. Participants were also struggling to get to the station due to the cost of the bus, so we offered to cover those costs too, which we hadn't factored into our original budget.





With thanks to...

Our project partner:

HIGHLYSPRUNG

THEATRE THAT MOVES

Our funders, without whom the project would not have been possible:



And to Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre for supporting and participating the in the project.



Our thanks go to Chiltern Railways and West Midlands Railways for providing us with the train tickets for the day trip and to all the staff at Coventry and Leamington Stations for assisting us and making the day go so smoothly.

