

School supports refugee bid

Pupils appeal to organisations to provide a welcome in the borough

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A Harlesden secondary school joined forces with a Brent charity event to ask the council, landlords and estate agents to play their part in welcoming refugees to the borough.

Brent Action for Refugees held its event at Newman Catholic College in Harlesden Road, bringing together a diverse group of civic institutions, including Brent Council, to help welcome refugees.

Danny Coyle, headteacher of Newman Catholic College, said: "We held this event because we know that businesses in Brent can help vulnerable Syrian refugees. London is experiencing a housing crisis, but there are many empty private properties in Brent. This is an opportunity for Brent council to work with businesses and our community to make resettlement a success."

Nighat Hassan, a volunteer coordinator with Brent Action for Refugees, said: "It is easy to forget that in 1972 Brent welcomed 10,000 Ugandan Asian refugees fleeing from persecution. My grandfather arrived in this country as a refugee of the partition in India. Our



■ Headteacher Danny Coyle with students from the school

community has a history of warmly welcoming the most vulnerable refugees. Unless businesses and citizens come forwards with houses, Brent council may never wel-

come Syrian refugees."

Citizens UK, a charity supporting Brent Action for Refugees, has seen huge levels of public support for refugees. Thousands of peo-

ple have signed up to help Syrian refugees through the Refugees Welcome website, including 727 landlords who have offered their properties to local authorities to house Syrian refugees. At present, only two properties have been pledged in Brent.

Last September Cllr Muhammed Butt, the leader of Brent Council, pledged to support 'at least 50' families as part of the effort to improve the UK's response to the refugee crisis.

A Brent Council spokesman said: "As a borough which has for many years become home to those fleeing conflicts in all corners of globe, Brent Council remains committed to helping Syrians in their hour of need.

"The UK government has committed to take 20,000 households over the next five years and has so far taken around 1,000, so there is ongoing work between the government and councils around the country to work out where these households can be placed.

"Should the government decide to place refugee families in Brent and provide the support needed for the families, they will of course be warmly welcomed."