

WE STAND TOGETHER

On Saturday 15th June, a group of refugees, mainly from Afghanistan took a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Cardiff to watch Afghanistan take on South Africa in the ICC Cricket World Cup.

The visit was the brainchild of Harshil Trivedi, coach and founder of Thornton Heath Cricket Club, who has worked tirelessly over the last few years to develop a thriving club for youngsters in the North of Croydon. Many of his members are refugees from South Asian communities including Afghanistan, so Harshil approached the Managing Director of the Cricket World Cup to see if he could get some tickets. Incredibly, the ICC offered Harshil 50 tickets for the game in Cardiff, so the issue was now on to find a way to get the refugees to the game.

Harshil and fellow coach Asad Butt have been working with Croydon Voluntary Action for many years, initially supported through the ABCD programme and Gamechanger, but more recently through We Stand Together, funded by the Mayor and Comic Relief. Their work has not gone unnoticed and CVA successfully nominated them for the ICC's Cricket Hero's project, so that they will both carry out the ICC Trophy onto the outfield ahead of national anthems at the start of a world cup match this summer.

We Stand Together members recognised that taking refugees to major sports events could have a positive impact on their lives and contribute to greater social integration. Consequently, CVA agreed to contribute towards the coach to Cardiff and the Surrey Cricket Foundation contributed the rest. Another ABCD partner, Lingua House agreed to find a way of contributing to the food. Two of the We Stand Together activators ensued that refugees from across the borough were able to attend including students from Beats Learning.

So a great partnership effort all round!

Although, the weather managed to interrupt play a number of times, the group were able to watch the game played to the end. Unfortunately, Afghanistan failed to win but the group' enthusiasm never faltered and a fantastic day was enjoyed by all.

Many thanks to all who took part. Hopefully this is just the start of further cricket development in the North of the borough, with the promise of an artificial cricket wicket in Norbury, which would enable the club to enjoy outdoor cricket during the summer and begin to play matches and enter tournaments.

For further information on the We Stand Together project or Thornton Heath Cricket Club, please contact Christine.double@cvalive.org.uk

