



# ‘A mayor for all’

Congratulations pour in following historic appointment of Migrants Forum CEO as ‘First Citizen of Derry and Strabane’

**THE Chief Executive of the North West Migrants Forum will make history next month when she becomes Northern Ireland’s first ever black mayor.**

Lilian Seenoi Barr will take over the chain from Sinn Fein’s Patricia Logue during what is expected to be a packed ceremony on June 3.

Congratulations on the appointment have poured in from all over the world, including from Mrs Barr’s native Kenya. Closer to home and NI’s First Minister Michelle O’Neill has also offered her good wishes.

Members of the Board of the North West Migrants Forum described the charity’s founder as a “relentless campaigner, activist and champion for social justice” and said she will be an outstanding first citizen and advocate for the city and district.

Chair Marija Stuke said, “Lilian describes herself as ‘born in Kenya but made in Derry’. Since arriving here as a refugee nearly a decade and a half ago she has built a formidable reputation as a relentless campaigner, activist and champion for social justice and human rights. She established the North West Migrants Forum to bring people and communities together, recognising the things we have in common as well as celebrating diversity and difference.

“Whilst it is hugely significant that Lilian will be the first person of colour to become mayor of a Northern Ireland council area, it is testament to her ability to reach beyond traditional binaries and earn the respect of people from all backgrounds.”

## Commitments

As to what the appointment will mean for the North West Migrants Forum, Marija Stuke said arrangements were being put in place to ensure that it will be business as usual for the busy organisation.

“We appreciate that Lilian’s mayoral commitments over the coming year will involve having to scale back some of her day-to-day involvement in NWMF.

“We’re in the process of confirming interim arrangements for the duration of her term of office and in the meantime have reached out to our funders to reassure them and others it will be business as usual as far as all our exciting plans and projects are concerned.”



Our history-making CEO Lilian Seenoi Barr, soon to be Mayor Seenoi Barr.



It was style all the way at our Advancing Race Equality Awards. This is just a small section of the huge crowds that gathered in the Everglades Hotel on March 7.

# A MAGICAL NIGHT TO REMEMBER

OUR Advancing Race Equality Awards were without a doubt one of the greatest nights in the history of the North West Migrants Forum. Approximately 300 people gathered in the Everglades Hotel on March 7 to celebrate the work of individuals and grassroots community groups working to tackle racism and break down barriers.

Nine trophies were given out on the night, including a new 'Special Recognition Award', created by the Migrants Forum.

It went to Sarah Roberts, a Welsh schoolteacher living in Donegal who bravely challenged anti-migrant campaigner Niall McConnell who was filming on a street in Gaoth Dobhair. The clip of Sarah has amassed thousands of views on social media and has garnered her much praise for her courageous approach.

The award for Anti-Racism Schools Ambassador went to Strabane Academy's Anti-Bullying Team while the North West Regional College won Anti-Racism School of the Year. Ulster University student Chaudhary Hamza Riaz was named Young Leader while the prize for Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness went to Multi-Ethnic Sports and Cultures NI (MSCNI). Oakgrove Primary School's Edel Sweeney was named Anti-Racism Teacher of the Year while Dr Mukesh Chugh picked up the Anti-Racism Leader of the Year gong.

Video and oral tributes were also paid to the late Eddie Kerr, a tireless campaigner for all people regardless of race, colour, creed or social standing. (See pages 5 and 6 for more photos from the night)

## Award winners at a glance...

Schools Anti-Racism Ambassadors: Strabane Academy  
 Anti-Racism School of the Year: North West Regional College  
 Anti-Racism Teacher of the Year: Edel Sweeney, Oakgrove PS  
 Community Champion: Hilda Orr  
 Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness: MSCNI  
 Anti-Racism Leader of the Year: Mukesh Chugh  
 Anti-Racism Media of the Year: BBC Spotlight NI  
 Young Leader Chaudhary Hamza Riaz, Ulster University  
 Special Recognition Award: Sarah Roberts

# Mum and Baby Group helping tackle isolation

*'It is the highlight of our working week'*

OUR Mum and Baby Group continues to bring fun and giggles to the North West Migrants Forum.

What began in early January as essentially a test session to see if there was a need for such a group has exploded into a runaway success.

Each Friday morning from 10am to noon Western Trust Health Visitors Donna McNally and Cheryl McElhinney attend the Migrants Forum to offer advice and guidance to mums of newborns right up until the age of four.

Over the months a range of activities have taken place, all with the aim of reducing isolation and creating connections.

From music and dance mornings to making play dough to handing out halal food packages during Ramadan, the Mum and Baby Group has become a breath of fresh air for everyone involved in the North West Migrants Forum.

Health Visitor Donna said, "Fridays are full of fun, laughter, singing and dancing.

"As health visitors we can safely say it is the highlight of our working week. We work in a constantly changing environment, interacting with families who have diverse beliefs, life experiences and culture. This helps us as health professionals learn, listen and understand their needs and adjust our practice accordingly to ensure high quality care delivery.

As well as stay and play, messy play, rhyme time and making play dough, we end every session with the Hokey Cokey.

"Over the summer months we hope to visit the local parks, we are hoping to visit The Giants Causeway and will be going to the local sights with some pit stops such as Petite Village."



Western Trust Health Visitor Donna McNally handing out food parcels during Ramadan. And **below**, a selection of beautiful images from our weekly mums and tots group.





Helping launch the North West Migrants Forum's Anti-Racism Art Competition are St Brigid's College students Peter, Grace and Jayden along with teacher Ciaran Quigley. On left is Irina Chernichenko and right, Gaelle Gormley of NWMF.

# YOUNG PEOPLE URGED TO GET CREATIVE AS SCHOOLS ANTI-RACISM ART COMPETITION LAUNCHED

PUPILS at St Brigid's College in Derry have helped launch the North West Migrants Forum's Anti-Racism Art Competition.

A component of the Advancing Race Equality Awards 2024, the contest encourages young people to use their creative talents to send a strong anti-racism message.

The project proved hugely successful last year with a mountain of original paintings, poems and even songs (see images on right) coming in from all over Northern Ireland.

Once again students are being asked to come up with a work that reflects the theme of anti-racism and which showcases unity and diversity.

All forms of visual art including painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and digital art are acceptable with two great prizes up for grabs. The winner gets £500 for their school while the runner-up gets £250, again to be spent in an educational capacity.

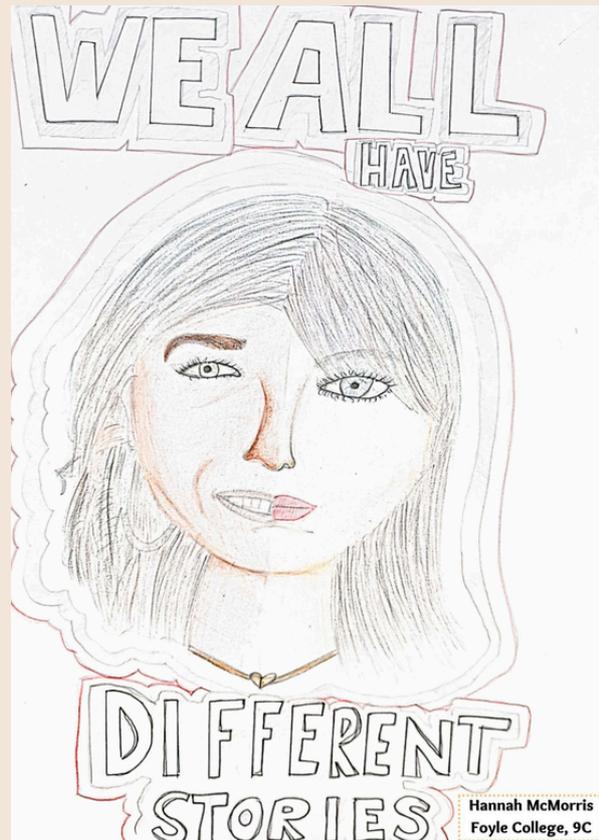
Speaking following the launch of the competition at St Brigid's College, North West Migrants Forum Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr said she was looking forward to seeing this year's submissions.

"Firstly can I thank St Brigid's for helping us launch the competition and no doubt we will see some brilliant submissions from the students there.

"We are really looking forward to this year's competition and to the hundreds of submissions we expect to receive over the coming months. We have two great prizes to be won - £500 for the winner's school and £250 for second place.

"For us this is the perfect end of year project and a golden opportunity to send out the message that racism has no place in our education system, in our communities or in our society as a whole."

On our website, [www.nwmf.org.uk](http://www.nwmf.org.uk) you will find all the details you need - How to enter the Anti-Racism Art Competition, what the criteria is and more on the prizes.



Hannah McMorris Foyle College, 9C





Our Board member and volunteer Beverly Simpson talking to young people in Strabane Academy

# Young people, teachers and parents urged to ‘Let’s Talk Race and Racism’

THE demand has increased for our ‘Let’s Talk Race and Racism’ programme with schools all over Northern Ireland now requesting workshops.

Staff and volunteers from the Migrants Forum have paid visits to Strabane Academy, St Brigid’s College in Derry and Lisneal College in recent months to educate young people on the issues of race, diversity and inclusion.

It is not however just young people who have been requesting our services. More and more we are receiving calls from teachers and even parents’ groups, asking for advice and guidance as they try to navigate the north’s rapidly changing social and community landscape.

On March 22 our CEO Lilian was invited to address school principals and officials of the West Belfast Newcomer Cluster. Held in St John the Baptist Primary School, the day of discussion proved to be very useful for all in attendance.

Similarly, we spent time with parents and teachers in Longtower Primary School, informing them on a range of race-related issues.



Our volunteer Amir speaking to members of the Longtower PS Parents and Teachers Association. And **below**, those who attended the workshop.



# Glitz and glam at our Advancing Race Equality Awards



# More from Awards night...



# New additions to North West Migrants Forum team

THE North West Migrants Forum Team has added three new members to its staff.

Shannon Doherty has joined as Project Research and Campaigns Worker, jointly employed between NWMF and the Committee on the Administration of Justice.

Ei Mon Thant has come in as Co-ordinator of our Social Café while Gaelle Gormley will shortly be appointed as Community Welfare and Integration Officer.

Speaking following her appointment, Shannon said, “This opportunity is a welcome challenge working in the areas of racist intimidation, the hostile environment and the common travel area (CTA) - all of which are hot topics in the political arenas in the UK and Ireland at present.

“Working between the two organisations affords the project a high degree of credibility in both legal and grassroots terms. By harnessing both organisations’ strengths in these areas, there is potential for real impact and progressive change in these three areas. The project spans three years which will be significant in terms of changing governments, draconian immigration legislation and a wider retreat from human rights. Through research, lobbying and campaigning and community engagement, this project will research and respond to these challenges from a human rights-based approach.”

Working on a part-time basis, Ei-Mon has taken on responsibility for organising Social Café events and ensuring everything runs smoothly. One of Ei Mon’s first decisions was to move the Café from its traditional Tuesday and Thursday to a Wednesday (2-5pm) and Thursday (4-7pm) slot. Since taking over she has breathed new life into the project with events such as SingTonicity, fitness class, movie night and a four-week coding programme with local digital technology firm Kainos.

French national Gaëlle Gormley will take on the role of Community Welfare and Integration Officer later this month. Among her duties will be helping individuals and families integrate and participate fully and meaningfully in the community and wider society.



The North West Migrants Forum has three new team members - From left: Shannon Doherty who is Project Research and Campaigns Worker jointly employed between NWMF and the Committee on the Administration of Justice, Ei Mon Thant who will co-ordinate our Social Café and Gaëlle Gormley (standing, right) who will shortly be appointed Community Integration and Welfare Officer.



## Need advice?

If you need advice or guidance on a particular issue Dominic is also available during the week as part of our integration and welfare support team. If you would like to speak to him, you can book an appointment through [advice@nwmf.org.uk](mailto:advice@nwmf.org.uk) or call us on 02871 362184.

# Farewell to Finnian

WE said goodbye recently to American student Finnian Falvey who was with us as an intern for two months.

During his time at the Forum Finnian immersed himself in our campaigns and activities. The 20-year-old participated in our Let's Talk Race and Racism programme, he travelled to Belfast to campaign against the rise of anti-migrant sentiment on our streets and he even helped us put up our marquee which we loaned to the people of Hazelbank for their recent 'Big Lunch' event.

Finnian will be missed by us all but we wish him well as he continues his studies at St Olaf College in his native Minnesota. No doubt we will be hearing much more about him in the future.

Our parting message was a simple one: Don't be a stranger Finnian and remember, there's always a desk for you here at the North West Migrants Forum.



Minnesota student Finian Falvey (Second from left) with Abdulelah Sallam, Ei Mon Thant, Lilian Seenoi Barr, Eva Kaslameti and Conor Sharkey during a lunch to wish him well on his return to the USA. Below: Finnian at just two of the events he participated while with the Migrants Forum.



## *Fun and frolics at our weekly Social Cafés*



**Above:** We had Irina join us in March for a soap making workshop. Our offices smelt wonderful! **Below:** Fun in the sun at St Columb's Park.



**Above and left:** Two images from our glass painting class, hosted by the immensely talented artist Leona Devine.



# Information day held for students and workers

FOLLOWING changes in legislation NWMF organised an information day for international students and workers.

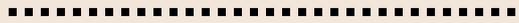
Held in Ulster University's Great Hall on April 13, the event explored a range of issues including the rights and responsibilities of overseas students, understanding discrimination as well as avenues of redress for those who face prejudice in education or work.

Among the speakers was Shannon Doherty (*pictured above*) who is Project Research and Campaigns Worker with the Migrants Forum and Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ). She said the event was highly requested due to recent changes in UK immigration law.

"The session provided accurate and up-to-date advice from myself, my colleague Úna Boyd and Mary Kitson, Senior Legal Officer at the Equality Commission NI," said Shannon.

"Participants were informed of their rights and responsibilities as international students and were advised on how to identify and understand discrimination in education and work. We also offered important advice about the redress process for victims of discrimination.

"We hope it was a useful event and all those in attendance seemed to take a lot away from it."



## Bits 'n' bobs from here and there...



Our members paid a visit to three museums recently - The Museum of Free Derry, the Siege Museum and Tower Museum. They were warmly greeted and given a lesson in local history in all three. Far left is from the Tower Museum visit and below, The Museum of Free Derry.





From left: CAJ Director Daniel Holder, Conor Sharkey, SNP Cllr Graham Campbell, NWMF Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr and Shannon Doherty.

Members of the SNP with the joint NWMF and CAJ delegation.

# Joint delegation meets Scottish National Party in Glasgow

THE Scottish National Party says it is looking forward to developing a stronger relationship with the North West Migrants Forum and its partners in the Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) following a meeting in Glasgow. Representatives from the Forum and CAJ addressed more than a dozen SNP councillors in early April.

A wide range of issues was discussed during the engagement in City Chambers, among them the Conservative Party's hostile environment policy, voting rights for refugees and the Migrant Forum's ongoing Common Travel Area campaign. Chief Executive of the North West Migrants Forum, Lilian Seenoi Barr, explained how under the current CTA arrangements, some individuals are barred from crossing the border despite having the legal right to live and work on the island of Ireland. Councillors heard how people have and continue to be stopped and searched simply because of how they look.

"There is no sense of belonging for people like us in the North of Ireland," said Mrs Barr.

Director of CAJ, Daniel Holder, revealed how similar checks were being carried out on ferries to Scotland, a route travelled annually by hundreds of thousands of Irish people.

He said, "What has happened is that the Home Office has ignored its own laws and has begun to do these checks between Northern Ireland and Britain, particularly on the ferries to Scotland.

"Police Scotland and Home Office officials have simply picked people out of the queue on the basis of skin colour and asked for passports that they have no duty to be carrying because you don't need a passport to get on the ferry. This has been going on for years and it has got worse."

The issue of racial intimidation and its links to paramilitarism in Northern Ireland was also discussed at length.

Voting rights for people with no recourse to public funds, children's rights and how councillors in Northern Ireland can gain more direct access to the Home Office were among the other matters aired during the meeting.

Councillor Roza Salih said she would be happy to raise all issues with SNP MP Chris Stephens while Councillor Abdul Bostani vowed to make contact with the Home Office National Community Engagement Team.

Councillor Graham Campbell, who helped organise the engagement, said he felt it was very worthwhile meeting and that he looked forward to further conversations with the North West Migrants Forum and CAJ in the near future.



The stunning interior of Glasgow's City Chambers where the local council carries out its business.

# Meetings, activities, workshops and campaigns

We may be a small organisation but we are big on keeping busy and representing those who need us. Here is a brief photographic trail of what we have been up to since January.



The North West Migrants Forum met with accommodation provider Mears - the firm contracted to house international protection applicants. Many issues were discussed, from hotel accommodation to the need for free transport to the need for better channels of communication between our two organisations. We look forward to closer collaboration in the future. From left: NWMF staff and volunteers Abdulelah Sallam, Ei Mon Thant and Gaëlle Gormley with Mears representatives Tayser Salman, Natasha Lynch and Emma Harkin.



We had the pleasure of hosting Ricky Irwin, Director of Communities with The Executive Office, in March. During a wide ranging meeting we discussed various issues including the Racial Equality Strategy and representation on the Racial Equality Subgroup. Pictured are NWMF volunteers Ahmed and Gaëlle, Ricky Irwin (centre), NWMF Director Lilian Seenoi Barr and Communications Officer Conor Sharkey.



Housing continues to be one of the biggest challenges in Derry. In March we met with members of the Housing Executive team including Race Relations Officer Tony Clarke, Good Relations Officer Andy Mullan, Community Involvement team member Paddy McConnell and Austin Cush of the Housing Executive's Community Cohesion team. Also pictured are our Chief Executive Lilian Seenoi Barr and Joint NWMF/CAJ Project Research and Campaigns Worker Shannon Doherty. We outlined the various issues that exist, in particular the transition from Mears accommodation once an individual has been granted leave to remain in Northern Ireland.

Our Social Cafés run Wednesdays (2-5pm) and Thursdays (4-7pm).  
Some events require pre-registration but if you see something you like,  
simply drop an email to [icsc@nwmf.org.uk](mailto:icsc@nwmf.org.uk)



Bank of Ireland



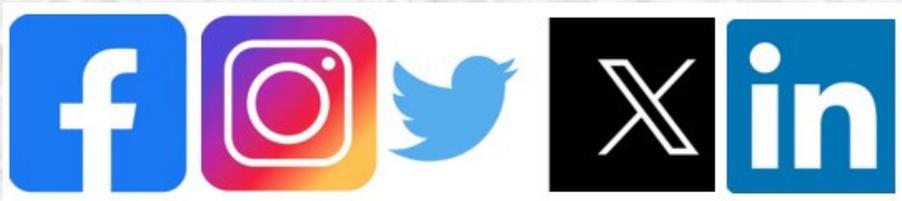
# May Social Cafés!

PROGRAMME	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Sing Tonicity	May 01 (2.00 pm - 3.00 pm)	
Walking in the nature		May 02 (4.00 pm - 5.00 pm)
Coding Class 1	May 08 (10.00 am - 11.30 am)	
Self Esteem Workshop		May 09 (2.00 pm - 3.30 pm)
HOPE Blossom	May 15 (10.00 am - 12.00 pm)	
Coding Class 2	May 15 (10.00 am - 11.30 am)	
Movie of Choice at NWMF		May 16 (4.30 pm - 6.30 pm)
Coding Class 3		May 23 (10.00 am - 11.30 am)
Coding Class 4	May 29 (10.00 am - 11.30 am)	
Refugee Transitioning Guide		30 May (4.00 pm - 5.00 pm)



# We told you it has been busy!

To keep up to date on all our programmes and events follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Youtube.



Our website, [www.nwmf.org.uk](http://www.nwmf.org.uk), is also updated regularly.

If you still can't find what you are looking for, you can always call in to:

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