



Release

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Educafe wins bid to become West Berkshire's Diverse Ethnic Communities Support Agency

West Berkshire Council has appointed Educafe as the district's Diverse Ethnic Communities Support Agency, following a comprehensive bidding process conducted by the Council, Thames Valley Police and NHS Berkshire West.

In line with the Council's "Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020 – 2030," the community engagement organisation will provide a voice for local diverse ethnic communities. The Council and its partners will work with Educafe to find the best ways to meet the needs of these communities.

The Council and Educafe share a common goal to ensure that residents from diverse ethnic communities are made aware of the support that the Council, NHS, local charities and other voluntary organisations can provide. This joint aim is to help reduce health inequalities and address employment, racial and other inequalities. As part of their service, Educafe will operate a confidential Helpdesk that will direct people to the relevant service provider to meet their needs.

The Council will work in partnership with Educafe to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the wider community, agencies and public services so that they can provide the required support to the diverse ethnic community population.

Educafe will work directly with local providers to ensure that their services embrace different cultures and promote social inclusion, health and wellbeing through events, food, education and language support. There will also be opportunities for local providers to meet residents and inform them about their services at 'pop up' Community Cafés set up by Educafe.

Pop-up ethnic market stalls will also take place throughout the year to support local ethnic community enterprises. These events will promote commerce as well as shine a spotlight on the rich cultures of diverse ethnic communities amongst the wider community.

Councillor Lynne Doherty, Leader of West Berkshire Council and Portfolio Holder for Communications and Engagement, said: "We are proud of the incredible diversity of West Berkshire. Our ambition is to provide residents from diverse ethnic communities with support, representation and a voice, as well as educate local service providers and the wider community of their needs.

"We are delighted to be partnering with Educafe to help people to gain access to the services they need and are entitled to. We were very impressed with Educafe's strong track record in supporting diverse ethnic communities and their plentiful ideas to progress social inclusion and celebrate the wonderful diversity in West Berkshire. Ultimately, working with Educafe, we want to empower individuals and communities to identify and benefit from their own strengths and resources."

Clare Middleton, Educafe Co-Founder, said:

"At Educafe, we create safe, friendly spaces for people to eat, learn and make new friends. Our customers, learners and followers represent the minority voices who enjoy living in West Berkshire but may feel isolated and excluded from the wider community. There are around 30 languages spoken in the district and many different cultures live side by side, each with their own traditions, but all with similar needs and sharing the same concerns. Their low visibility and lower levels of engagement within the wider

community, and with the Council, is often due to their lack of English language skills and, sometimes, a cultural fear of engaging with officialdom.”

Colline Watts, Educafe Co-Founder, added:

“Educafe addresses the issues and concerns of minority groups, through friendly, targeted interactions between people using our services and the wider community. We have a direct line of communication with the Council and with public and independent service providers, and we support people to access them. We run small, targeted projects including English as an Additional Language courses, and work with individuals to improve their employability and work skills.

“We will also promote inclusion through our regular ‘pop up’ Community Cafes. These mobile events will bring people together to share their experiences and learning, and enable them to form new friendships – or simply to feel that they are part of, and have something to contribute to, the wider West Berkshire community.”

Educafe will run a free six week Job Support Club and English for Work course for people who speak English as an additional language looking to start or return to work. The course will take place from 11 June to 18 July at Newbury Town Hall, with appropriate Covid-19 safety measures in place. Further information can be obtained from: <https://sites.google.com/view/educafe-uk/job-support-club-esol-for-work>.

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