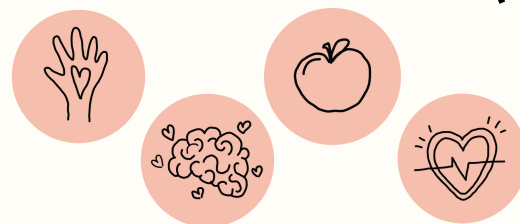


IRAQI WOMEN ART AND WAR (IWAW)



IWAW received £6,000 from Well Together to deliver weekly sessions focused on art activities, support and social connection for women from a variety of countries who have experienced war.



IWAW's weekly sessions are run by Rana Ibrahim at The Source in central Oxford. Rana uses her experience and skills to bring people together and organise art sessions that have therapeutic benefits. In addition to the art, she assists the women who attend to organise events such as fashion shows, to access education, to discuss important issues such as domestic abuse and mental wellbeing, to create connections, to exercise and have picnics and walks together, and to look after their health and wellbeing.



“Never in my dreams did I think I could do the fashion show - then I did! It was beautiful.”



IWAW FASHION SHOWS

IWAW worked with the women to create fashion outfits from their countries, and they have been displayed in exhibitions and at fashion shows across Oxfordshire. The skills learned and the sense of community and achievement have improved their health and wellbeing, and given them confidence and hope for the future.



FAMILY AWAY FROM FAMILY

The women said this group has created a sisterhood and is their new family, without whom they would have no such support. Some were previously scared to leave their house, as they knew no one and did not speak the language. Now they have made friends in the group and are learning English together.



Many countries are represented within the group, including women from Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Syria, Egypt, Balochistan, Kuwait, Ukraine, Iran, China, Kurdistan and more. Even when countries have conflict with each other, the women say that when they come to the group, it is different and there is no conflict: “We come here and we are all human. We are every culture and every colour. Women support each other.”

As in many families, there are chances to spend time with each other, try new activities, share food, exercise, discuss and solve each other’s problems and learn new things. Through IWAW, some women have started studying at college and some have gained work experience to go on their CVs.

“We come from a place of war, of stress, and here we find friends, we do dancing, we do walking, we talk, we do so many things. And we share our problems here. It is stress-reducing so we have less need to call the doctor. We just need somebody to listen to us - that is the best medicine.”

