

Conversation Club

REVIEW OF 2019



INSPIRING LIVES
IN OUR COMMUNITIES



Conversation Club



Come along and learn English

FREE OF CHARGE

BEGINNERS WELCOME

Various groups available in Sincil Bank
Please see the time table on the back page

Email community@lincolncityfoundation.co.uk

**MAY
TO DEC
2019**



3

VENUES



21

NATIONALITIES



151

**HOURS
DELIVERED**



439

**ATTENDANCES
BY STUDENTS**



Conversation Club Introduction

Since May 2019 the number of local people studying English has gone up week by week. We have seen a great increase in those people getting involved with events and activities in the Sincil Bank area. There are a variety of groups at Bishop King and St Peter at Gowts schools as well as a several groups at The Community Hub on Portland Street. It is heart-warming and positive news all round so we have put together a few stories and photos so you can read and see what's been happening.

Enjoy

**SINCIL BANK COMMUNITY
ORGANISING TEAM**



Organisers

TOGETHER WE WILL
**BE HEARD,
 BE POWERFUL AND
 MAKE CHANGE.**
 FOR GOOD.

To find out about our work and Community Organising, visit
www.lincolncityfoundation.com
 community@lincolncityfoundation.co.uk 01522 563797

Lincoln City Foundation

community communication

“IT’S GOOD TO TALK” WAS A FAMOUS CATCH PHRASE FROM WHICH UK COMPANY? AND WOULD YOU AGREE WITH THAT?

How would you feel if you weren’t able to speak to someone because of the language barrier? You can imagine it could be quite limiting and possibly scary. In Sincil Bank it was identified that people lacking in English ability find it hard to integrate into local communities. As community organisers we have initiated steps to tackle it by introducing more conversation groups in the local area. We originally began with one group at Bishop King School and we now also have groups at St Peters at Gowts School and The Community Hub on Portland Street. It has been good to see the wide variety of people benefitting from the classes, countries including: Bulgaria, Mexico, China, Poland and Italy to mention a few.

Several of the attendees have found that they have improved their confidence and have gone on to take part in our “Introduction to Community Organising” Course. This really creates a positive platform from which to integrate and become influential members of the local community. Hopefully you will see them at an event in Sincil Bank soon.

If you would like more information about our classes or courses please contact, community@lincolncityfoundation.co.uk.

And by the way, the company catch phrase was from BT.

A selection of students with Senior Community Organiser, Alice Carter.

// INTERVIEW //

JOANNA OKRASA

CHINA, BANGLADESH AND IRAQ ARE REMOTE DESTINATIONS ON MOST PEOPLE'S MAPS, BUT UNBELIEVABLY YOU CAN FIND CONSCIENTIOUS PEOPLE ORIGINATING FROM THERE STUDYING ENGLISH AT LINCOLN CITY FOUNDATION'S WEEKLY CONVERSATION GROUPS.

We now offer study opportunities Tuesday to Friday at both Bishop King and St Peter at Gowts Schools, as well as at The Community Hub on Portland Street. The conversation groups were originally established by Project Manager, Joanna Okrasa. She highlighted a need to help those with limited language level gain experience and potential to be more involved with their local community. It can sometimes be an issue which can cause friction between neighbours so to see more and more people learn English is good news for Sincil Bank. It has been five years since the first group and we had chance to catch up with Joanna recently who had some insightful comments.

Can you remember the first class? And tell us a little about how it came to existence?

I can't remember exactly the first class as it was over five years ago. I was a newly appointed Community Organiser in the Sincil Bank area, knocking on people's door and listening to their views on the local community. It soon became apparent that there are many people living in this community who struggle to communicate with their neighbours due to the language barrier. There seemed to be a tension between different communities living in the area, often purely caused by not being able to converse with each other.





Furthermore, one of my colleagues, who'd been working with women from different backgrounds, suggested that there are conversation sessions held in another area, which seem to be very popular. I decided to try setting something similar in Sincil Bank and see if anyone was interested. I was offered a free venue at the local church hall and started advertising the first weekly session. Within the next few weeks, there were about eight participants attending the Conversation Club regularly. They were from different backgrounds, different cultures etc however they all had loads in common – being eager to practice speaking English and learn about British and other cultures.

Who were the key people involved?

At the beginning it was just me facilitating the sessions, and the participants. The participant abilities varied and I soon noticed that the ones who are more confident speaking English focus on those who aren't – they encouraged them and gave them confidence to try. The sessions become friendly gatherings with no teacher and no agenda – just a chat over a cup of coffee.

Every now and then we had visitors, native British speakers, who would pop in for a chat. Also, about a year down the line, we started going to Age UK coffee morning to get the participants speaking English with strangers, in different setting. We all enjoyed it!

What did you get out of it?

Personally, I learned so much about different cultures! The knowledge and experience I got by facilitating the Conversation Club is invaluable. I learned things I wouldn't have read in a book or seen in a movie – real life experiences. I also made new friends – even though there sometimes is a language barrier, if you are open to other people, you can connect with them on many levels.

Why do you think it's important?

I think these sessions are extremely important – I feel it is our community's responsibility to welcome people who move into the area, help them build their confidence and show them that we care. Creating a safe, friendly space where they can improve their language skills, knowledge about the area/ culture and connect with others is crucial for the cohesive and thriving neighbourhood.

How do you see the future?

Whilst we keep offering these sessions as a Foundation, I'd like to see new facilitators developing from the Conversation Club groups. The ideal legacy scenario would be regular sessions led by empowered people who used to attend Conversation Club, wanting to give something back. Those who have been through that experience are ideally placed to support new comers.





QUENIA

QUENIA HAS BEEN ATTENDING CONVERSATION CLUB SESSIONS FOR A PERIOD OF NINE MONTHS. SHE ARRIVED IN LINCOLN FROM BRAZIL AND JOINED THE CLASS SOON AFTER SETTLING IN THE CITY.

Initially Quenia was shy and quiet, she was quite reluctant to join in openly with conversations unless asked to contribute. Whilst her knowledge of the English language was good, her confidence in speaking with others was low.

Over the weeks Quenia's belief in her communication skills has increased; she speaks more freely in sessions and has also made friends with other members of the class. Quenia's first important step was to gain a voluntary role in a local Charity shop where she could practice speaking with customers. She also attended a training session – 'Introduction to Community Organising' – delivered by the Community Organising team and conversed with other native speakers and people she had never met before.

Quenia is now at the point where she contributes enthusiastically during Conversation Club sessions and has clear passion for engaging with others. Recently, Senior Community Organiser Alice, received a reference request for Quenia, who had successfully been accepted for a role as a Care Assistant. This was especially pleasing given that Quenia's employment in her native country was within the nursing profession, and this demonstrates the confidence she has built to continue with this career in England.

JOHN



I would like to thank Neville for encouraging me to study and use English. As a new migrant from Hong Kong, I haven't had the opportunity to learn daily interactive English from a native speaker in my country. In Hong Kong, although we use English in our everyday written correspondence, we seldom use this language in our conversations.

My classmates from European countries also share with me their cultures, which enrich my knowledge of their customs and social behaviours.

The course is really amusing, and you will never feel dry.

JIENA

Coming from another country I have not found it easy to get to know local people in Lincoln.

This conversation group is not only a good chance to practice English but also can boost people's confidence.

I am glad I found it in Spring in the Lincolnshire website then I went there with friends, we all very happy and benefited a lot from these groups.

ASTOR



I joined this Conversation Class since mid of July. In the class I meet with a lot of classmates. They come from different countries like Greece, Italy, Mexico, Spain... I am grateful for my teachers Neville and Alice, who prepare some worksheets for us to practise every time. We also have a useful topic for discussion every lesson. I have a lot of opportunity to practice my English speaking. Every lesson, I will learn some vocabulary, phrasal verbs, pronunciation and sentence structures. I enjoy studying this language and learn more about the English culture in this Conversation Class. It will enable me to settle in this country more easily.

ION



I am really pleased with the course, the lessons are easy so we learn quickly. All of the students here are very motivated to learn.

MARIELLA

My name is Mariella, I am 29 years old and I moved to Lincoln from Italy last July. At that time I was looking for new exciting opportunities, so when my boyfriend Antonio found a job here I decided to move along with him, even if leaving my home country was no easy decision.

My first week in Lincoln was quite challenging since I was unfamiliar with the place and didn't know anyone. The first thing I did was looking for English classes in town, because I wanted to improve my English and meet new people: when I found the Conversation Club delivered by the Lincoln City Foundation it seemed perfect for me.

The first person I had a contact with was with Alice and, soon after, Neville. They immediately provided me with all the information I needed and encouraged me to come for the forthcoming session. Since the first time we met they have been incredibly nice and friendly, and they immediately made me feel comfortable during the session. The Conversation club sessions are always helpful, as they give you the opportunity to improve your English while talking about a wide range of topics, and having an insight into english life and culture.

When I first arrived in Lincoln, I felt quite insecure when talking with locals, but now I feel a lot more confident and this is really helping me with applying for work opportunities. Currently I am

volunteering as a historic research assistant in the Lincolnshire County Council, and it is also thanks to Neville and Alice that I gained the self-confidence I needed to get myself into a work environment.

But if there's one thing that I immediately loved about how Neville and Alice run the Conversation Club is that we are always encouraged to discuss about our different cultures. I had the chance to meet great people and good friends to spend my free time with, I am learning new things about their countries and I feel that this is really enriching me!

For example, last week the Foundation organised the Festival of lights, and I participated in nice workshops about this important Indian festivity. The parade and the following party were an amazing event involving many people from the area and it was inspiring to see how everyone was included despite of their origins.

Neville and Alice are constantly proposing new activities and trying to involve everyone with passion and enthusiasm. They do a great job in making us feel part of the community, encouraging us to share our opinion and think about what everyone could do to improve the neighbourhood.

I am grateful to be part of such a lovely community and spend time with them, as it is a valuable opportunity to meet new people, share and learn from them.

ALEKSANDRA

SINCIL BANK RESIDENT, ALEKSANDRA HAS RECENTLY BEEN INVOLVED WITH CREATING A **BULGARIAN COMMUNITY GROUP** TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR BULGARIAN PEOPLE.

The idea being that they can develop and access opportunities in the local area. We had chance to catch up with her last week and ask a few questions about her English experience, as she has been attending our conversation groups to brush up on her language skills...

How many languages do you speak?

Bulgarian, English, Russian, Greek and French, but I didn't practice it for more than 10 years.

When did you start studying English?

I have never learnt English. Everything I know is from my everyday contact with English people and from my work with children in school.

What is your favourite language?

Greek and English

Do you have any favourite words?

Maybe squirrel :)

Why would you recommend English classes for Bulgarians?

Because I know how hard it is to know how to write and even say your name in other language.

Why should Bulgarians get involved with the community group?

I would like Bulgarians to feel more comfortable in this country. We can support them with language, filling forms and general help or advice. Once they are organised with these types of things, they can enjoy life more smoothly in the future.

Why do you think people should learn English/come to the classes?

For a better life and work; knowledge; protection; improve language skills; and making social contacts.

How long have you lived in Sincil Bank?

Two years and half.

What do you like about England?

I like the architecture and old buildings; the good manners; the good sense of humour; the friendly people; the order.

What do you like about Sincil Bank?

Closeness to the centre; good schools; closeness to our community.

As you have been a volunteer, why is it important to try volunteering?

Because it can provide new experiences which may lead into other things such as full time work.

What do you do now?

I work with children at Bishop King as a dinner lady, it's been enjoyable because I get to talk with the children and play fun games after lunch.

I will soon be starting an apprenticeship to teach as a teaching assistant which is really exciting for me to learn more about the English education system.

What is your dream for the future?

I would like to be a teacher, to learn English perfectly and to tour and explore Asia.

Who is your inspirational character/person?

I don't have a specific inspirational character or person because that would limit my mind. In every aspect of my life, I have a different person who inspires me. There are so many that I won't have time to sort them out

Do you have any study tips?

Yes, I try to not think in Bulgarian first and then translate in English. I translate my favourite songs and stories. I try to remember whole phrases and then use them. I try to not be embarrassed when I speak with mistakes and learn from such situations.

Thank you Aleks, we look forward to seeing you and the group out and about in the community soon.

Free English Groups

by Lincoln City Foundation in Sincil Bank

Time	Day	School	Level
10am – 12pm	Tuesday	Bishop King School, LN5 8 EU	Beginner/Advanced
9am – 11am	Wednesday	St Peters at Gowts School, LN5 7TA	Beginner
10am – 11am	Thursday	Sincil Bank Community Hub, Portland Street LN5 7JX	Intermediate
11am – 12pm	Thursday		Advanced
9am – 10am	Friday		Beginner
10am – 11am	Friday		Intermediate
11am – 12pm	Friday		Advanced



For booking and questions please email
community@lincolncityfoundation.co.uk