

Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

People & Places e-Volunteering Report: Sarah Edwards

Education for All: April – July 2021

. *My motivation for volunteering:*

I had some contact with People & Places a couple of years ago and had expressed interest in going out to one of the EFA boarding houses in Morocco to help the girls and housemothers with their English. However, when a change in personal circumstances, and the onset of the Covid pandemic too, meant that travelling to Morocco was no longer an option, I was pleased to hear that an e-volunteering placement was on offer.

. *Was e-volunteering as I imagined it to be?*

Having previously spent some time working on a blended learning programme, and having given some private tuition on Skype, I had a reasonably good idea of what to expect from this kind of placement. I'm glad to say there were no unpleasant surprises!

. *Placement dates and project:*

I started my 12-week placement towards the end of April 2021; the course of one-to-one lessons with housemother Fatima, from the Dar Tinmel boarding house, came to an end in July. The aim of these lessons

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was to help Fatima feel more confident with her spoken English - the more confident the housemothers are with their language skills, the more they can help the girls with their language studies; a better command of English is also useful when the boarding houses receive English-speaking visitors.

. *Pre-placement preparation:*

I felt the preparation for my placement was very thorough:

I was given plenty of background information about EFA and the projects that were being run at the boarding houses. Prior to the start of the placement, a Zoom meeting was set up so that I could meet my housemother and also talk to Karima, EFA's volunteer co-ordinator. I was also put in touch with P&P volunteers who had previously worked on this project, and I found this very useful, as these volunteers were able to give me more information about life in the boarding houses, and a better insight into the linguistic needs of the girls and housemothers too.

. *My experience and work:*

I prefer a communicative, learner-centred approach to teaching, and Fatima responded well to this methodology; it soon became clear that she enjoyed this freer approach rather than anything more structured. I made use of anecdotes, visuals and realia to encourage conversation, and we discussed any difficulties with vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar as they arose; at the end of each session, I would send her an email giving some feedback on our lesson. We soon established an easy rapport with one another, and this really helped the teaching/learning process.

. *What advice would I give to future volunteers?*

My suggestion would be that anyone wanting to help the housemothers with their English takes an empathetic and culturally sensitive approach to the interactions. My housemother was very keen to learn, but at the same time, I felt it was very important that the learning took place at her pace. We were lucky enough to have very few technical problems, but

some did occur from time to time, so a patient and flexible attitude to issues like these will help everyone not to get too stressed!

. *The successes, disappointments and challenges of my placement:*

We were fortunate in that we got on well with one another and this really helped to facilitate Fatima's learning. I think it was useful, too, that I am able to speak some French; it certainly helped in creating a relaxed ambience that made the sessions enjoyable for us both, and whilst I don't think a knowledge of French is essential for volunteers, a knowledge of French certainly contributed to the success of this placement.

I can say quite truthfully that there really were no disappointments, nor any particular challenges during this placement. Although we experienced a few technical issues towards the end of our time together, these were resolved very quickly.

. *What was the highlight of my volunteer experience?*

Finding that there was so much common ground between myself and someone from a background so completely different to my own.

. *Would I recommend volunteering to other people?*

Most definitely. I have found voluntary work to be mutually beneficial – not only are you helping someone who really needs that help, but their appreciation of your input and the insights you gain from such an inexperience are uplifting and invaluable.

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