

TOUCHSTONE VOLUNTEER CASE STUDY



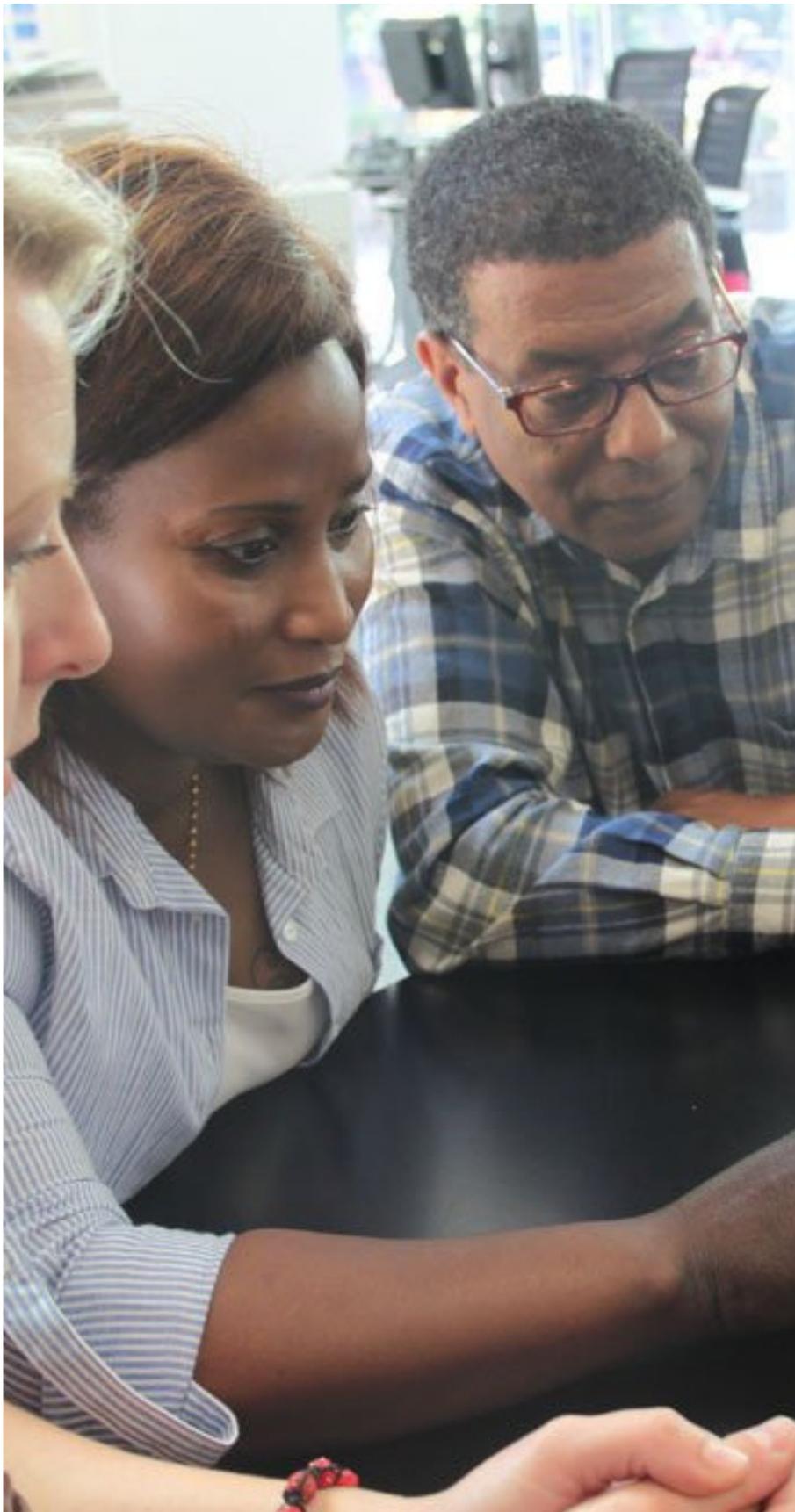
MIGRANT ACCESS PROJECT PLUS VOLUNTEER

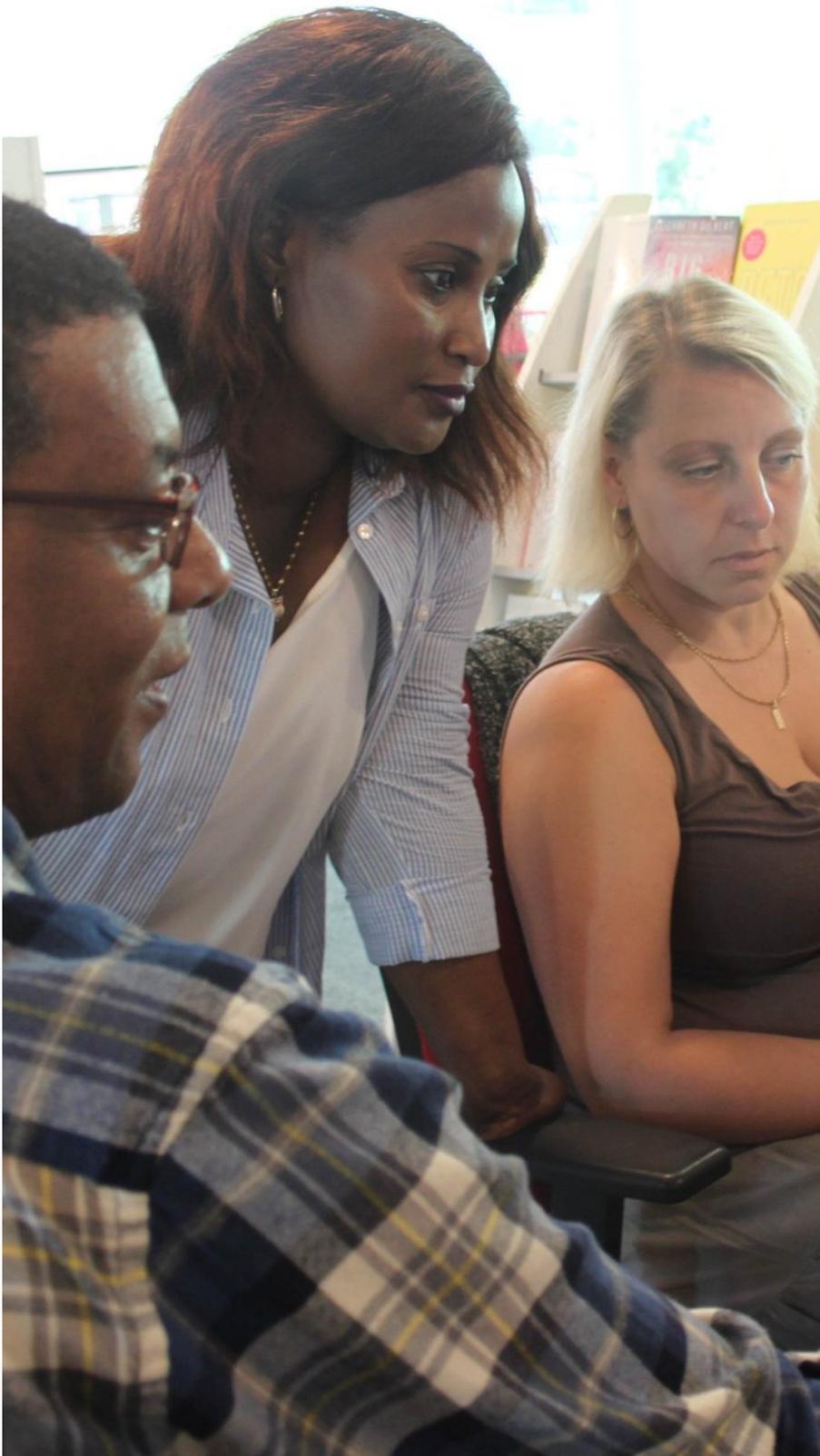
Since September 2017, the Migrant Access Project Plus (which is funded by Leeds City Council) has been working with around 65 fantastic women volunteers who are all from migrant backgrounds. We have men too, who of course deserve recognition, but the majority of our volunteers are women!

They are known as Migrant Community Networkers and they hail from all over the world, from Iran to Eritrea, Mexico to Romania, China to Zimbabwe.

Between them, they speak many, many languages and have a huge wealth of experience. But what unites them is they want to use their own experiences as migrants to help others. They are passionate about helping other people who have also moved to the UK to make a new life, to help them settle in and be part of the community in Leeds.

The MCNs have been with us since January, undertaking weekly training to understand what services are available in Leeds and how to access it, as well as developing engagement skills and understanding of the volunteer role. Since then, their role is to cascade this learning on to their peers - other people in their communities who would also benefit.





Our volunteers have been getting involved and doing this in a variety of ways, sometimes as simple as phoning up people they know after a very training session for a chat and to pass on information, some through bigger groups they are involved in. Some of the volunteers have been out at community events throughout the year, promoting opportunities for people to connect in the local area, such as gardening projects.

Recently, they also visited the Leeds City College ESOL department and a city centre conversation club with a pop-up stall. Together, they engaged with over 220 people from migrant backgrounds, chatting to students, finding out what information they need about Leeds and providing signposting. For some of the students who are new arrivals, the language skills of our MCNs proved invaluable and many were able to converse in Spanish, Arabic and Kurdish, for example, to help make sure information was easy to understand.

Many of our volunteers are also keen to set up their own groups, activities and projects to benefit the wider community, and we are working with them to find ways to do this.

We recently had a celebration ceremony with the first 3 groups of our volunteers and they received recognition for their efforts from the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Leeds.

Many of our volunteers have told us how much they have enjoyed their experience with MAP+ so far - they have made new friends, gained confidence and improved their English, and pushed themselves into new and exciting challenges, and we have loved working with them!