

Lesley Urbach



Lesley Urbach's maternal family came from a small town in North-East Germany which now belongs to Poland. Her mother, neé Eva Wohl, and three aunts escaped to Britain and Argentina in 1938 and 1939. Their parents were murdered at Auschwitz on 19 February 1943.

Lesley will be coming to Kendrick Library on Wednesday, 26 February 2020 to talk about her family & their experiences relating to the Holocaust.

Since retiring from her work as a careers adviser, Lesley has obtained a Masters in Jewish History and Culture from Southampton University. She works as an independent historian focusing on MPs who campaigned on behalf of Jews from and in Nazi-controlled Europe after Hitler and his Nazi Party gained power in 1933. She is co-founder of the 'Remembering Eleanor Rathbone Group'. As well as engaging in Holocaust education, Lesley volunteers with projects supporting refugees.

Lesley volunteers for a programme called JUMP which has been running for eight years and aims to support young unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees with the kind of adult companionship that young people often crave but rarely get when alone and new to a place.

JUMP currently has 20 pairs of volunteers and young refugees. Adult volunteer 'befrienders' like Lesley provide companionship and emotional support for the young asylum seekers.

Lesley and Zahra were brought together two years ago through the Jewish Council for Racial Equality's Unaccompanied Minors Project, known as JUMP; it is one of many examples of civil society organisations stepping in to facilitate and support the integration of refugees in Britain.



Zahra was 16 when she escaped from domestic slavery and sought asylum in the UK. At 10, she was snatched from her village by people-traffickers and taken to the Middle East, before being brought to Britain to work as an unpaid housekeeper.

Lesley's parents came separately from Germany in 1938 and 1939, just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Her father escaped at 19. Her mother, 16 at the time, and a younger aunt came on the Kindertransport for Jewish children escaping Nazi Germany. Her story is different to Zahra's but it is relatable. It gives the pair a bond of understanding to form their friendship on.

Progress is evaluated by JUMP every year, and it is entirely up to the pairs how long they continue. Both Zahra and Lesley saw theirs as a relationship that would carry on indefinitely. They enjoy their fortnightly get-togethers in London and the opportunity to chat and offer advice. As time goes on their relationship becomes stronger.



JUMP