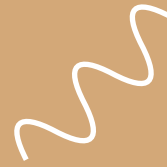


The Green Space at Braunstone Town Case Study Olena



Olena's story:

For seventeen years, Olena was a primary school teacher in Ukraine. Life with her son was predictable and steady. The day the war started, that began to change. Believing the chaos would pass quickly, they moved to her parents' house, expecting to stay just a week or two. Instead, the war was relentless. Sleep was impossible. Every night at 11:30, the air raid siren wailed, forcing them into the cold basement. They never knew how long they would be trapped there. She faced a brutal choice: **"Stay here and be killed, or leave."** Her parents urged her to go. She and her son eventually fled to Poland and from there were relocated to the UK.

Settling in was difficult. **"It can be lonely,"** Olena admitted. She missed simple connection. She found it on a drizzly day at a Ukrainian concert in the Buzzing Roots community garden.

Wrapped in a blanket with a hot drink, she listened to the music and felt a quiet peace.

She decided to seek out that feeling and those people again.

Here, she met Liga, the garden organiser, and other refugees from Ukraine.

She began attending mindfulness meet-ups, improving her English and looking after her well-being.

Olena realised she was part of something bigger.

In her words, **"what we bring is all unique and different, but when you bring us together we can create this."**

The support she found at the garden gave her confidence. **"When someone believes in you,"** she says, **"they help you to become more."** That help is practical, too.

Because money is still tight, the community fridge is a necessity. Olena sees the depth of this care daily; her son always makes sure she passes on her thanks for the food.

In the community garden, Olena found a sense of belonging and a team to rely on.