



Building Bridges Project

Bakewell area asylum seekers' and refugees' network



October 2022

We are at last beginning to get our act together after the Covid lockdown. Our advocacy group, on the ball as ever, is keeping its eye on the national scene where the Government's actions to prevent asylum seekers arriving in this country, or having any rights if they do, gets ever more hostile.

Our hospitality group has done splendid work this summer, as the article in this issue shows. We have been aware that a lot of attention has been on Ukraine, which is right and proper. However, we can forget that asylum seekers keep arriving into the UK from many other countries and their needs are also great. This is why the hospitality group has this summer concentrated on welcoming those from countries other than Ukraine. However, it takes two to tango, so we have been delighted to have made contact with the Upbeat Community in Derby who are doing splendid work with refugees and brought a group over to enjoy what the hospitality group so generously offers by way of food, craft and social activities and friendship.

However, we are aware that Ukrainian refugees still need all the support we can give them. Keeping in touch with the growing number of families now in our area is not always easy as each group is developing its own life and activities. Nor do those hosting want to be inundated with offers of help. However, we are delighted to include an inspiring account of the experience of one host, as well as to be updated on what is happening in the Youlgrave area. *In the latter case, please note the appeal for help at the end of the article and consider whether you might be able to respond.* Meanwhile a committed few in our network continue to go into Sheffield on a regular basis to help refugees with English language skills.

This autumn we at last have an opportunity post-Covid to meet each other informally again. This will be from **10.00 - 12.00 on Saturday, November 19th, at the Bakewell Methodist Church**. A notice of the programme is in this Newsletter and a reminder will go out nearer the date. At that meeting, we will be able to hear at first-hand more of what the Upbeat Community in Derby is doing from a number of refugees with whom it has been working. We shall also be updated on how the offering of hospitality to Ukrainian refugees in Youlgrave is developing. *Please note the date now and do your best to be with us to support these initiatives, as well as to meet up with others deeply concerned, like yourself, about how we can best respond to the ongoing refugee crisis.*

The details of **our next clothing collection** are not yet clear as the immediate needs of asylum seekers and refugees are constantly changing. However, we have this in hand and will let you know via a separate email when this is happening and how you can help.

David Clark (Co-ordinator)
davidclark588z@gmail.com

Bakewell area asylum seekers and refugees annual gathering

Saturday, November 19th 10.00 – 12.00
Methodist Church, Matlock Street, Bakewell

Please join us for our first meeting since Covid!

Programme

10.00 Coffee and conversation

10.30 Welcome and opening comments

10.35 The Upbeat Community - Derby

A Christian charity that exists to help refugees settle and
rebuild their lives in the UK



Elliot Cooper
(Refugee Integration Worker and Tutor)
**along with asylum seekers from Derby
will tell us about their work**



Helped resettle
over
100
Syrian and Afghan
individuals

Provided
578
hours of
English classes
from beginner to
advanced levels

Supported
56
refugee children at
our **Upbeat Kids**
holiday club

Delivered
204
Christmas presents
to **refugee children**

Supported
80-100
Afghan arrivals
in hotels at any
one time

11.25 Ukrainian refugees in our area

An update on what is happening locally

11.50 Reports and notices – finish by 12.00

Youlgrave's homes for Ukrainian refugees

Kate Fairchild

In response to Russia's war on Ukraine and the staggering number of displaced people this has created, the UK government launched the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. On the same day, a small group of **Youlgrave** residents started to connect.

Our group includes households who were able to host one or more refugees, as well as residents who are able to offer support to hosts and their Ukrainian guests. Nearly seven months on we have welcomed 21 Ukrainian refugees (and one trailblazing Ukrainian dog!) to Youlgrave, Middleton-by-Youlgrave and Gratton. One of our hosts has also been instrumental in helping other Ukrainian refugees find sponsors across Derbyshire.

Our 21 guests are split over eight sponsor households and include six primary school children, one teenager and two toddlers. Most have settled into their new Derbyshire lives well, although one particularly torn family has since moved back to Ukraine, and we are unsure if they will come back to the UK. We can only wish them well and be here for them should they choose to return.

Youlgrave isn't the only area in the Derbyshire Dales with a thriving Ukrainian community. There are big groups in Darley Dale, Matlock, Wirksworth and Winster, with various refugee families dotted around in towns and villages such as Bakewell, Pilsley, Ashford-in-the-Water, Monyash, Birchover and Rowsley.



Across Derbyshire Dales small communities are offering great support to Ukrainian refugees. Despite the obvious challenges these locations pose, our new Ukrainian friends are building lives for themselves with the support of their sponsors and all the new friends they have made.

There are two principal areas where local Ukrainian refugees need support now:

Since the refugees received bus passes, they have all become much more independent, however living in small towns and villages still poses logistical problems. One of the most pressing needs remains access to face-to-face English lessons. The best being ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). There is nothing in the Bakewell area and there is a big need.

Can anyone help with either group or 1:1 face-to-face English lessons?



As the stay of Ukrainian refugees approaches six months in the UK, some, through no fault of their own, are being asked by their sponsors to find new accommodation. Generally, this is because sponsor's circumstances have changed, and they need to reclaim their homes.

Can you help by taking over sponsorship and offering a room in your home? Are you able to offer self-contained rented accommodation?

If you can respond to either of these requests, please contact Kate Fairchild on 07980 623 935 or email her at k8.fairchild@gmail.com

Hosting a Ukrainian family

Rachel Melland

I decided I could offer my house to up to six Ukrainian refugees when we heard about how they were fleeing the war and flooding into Poland which couldn't take any more. I offered our accommodation via UA4EU which comprised of just four 'techy' blokes spread around the world who, because they felt that no-one was matching up the refugees with offers of help, put a really easy noticeboard service online.



I got sent daily emails with photos of desperate family groups who were interested in living on our farm near Buxton. I replied to a lovely looking family. We messaged for weeks as they filled in all the online visa applications for six of them. They then travelled to the Warsaw Embassy and on to Germany. There they were offered accommodation by a German family while they waited for their visas. However, by the time they got their visas to live in the UK, they had been offered a flat in Germany and accepted it.

After that, I was messaged by the mother of another family, Natalia, who also video-called me. We got on straight away. I could tell she was a lovely, polite and quiet-mannered woman. She wanted accommodation for herself, her husband, their nine-year old son, and for her sister and her two sons aged nine and eleven. I made it quite clear that we lived in the countryside. That was fine as both her family's and her husband's family's roots were on farms.

They got their visas within six days of applying online which was amazing. Obviously the applying online part was taxing, and she 'Whatsapped' me all the time asking for more official numbers and documents. It worked out well that I had tried earlier to get a different family to stay because, by this time, my husband and I had been DBS checked by Derbyshire County Council and had passed the safe home check. We were good to host!

Natalia's family travelled to Poland by bus, waiting 15 hours at the border into Poland. Eventually they met up with her husband who had luckily been working in Poland when the war broke out. They flew to Manchester airport. I met them at Buxton station. I could tell straight away that we would all get on. The whole extended family are hard-working, polite, old-fashioned moral people.

Natalia and Iryna took over the kitchen. Basically, for two and a half months they cooked all our meals for us: delicious Ukrainian food from scratch. We ate dumplings, borscht, ravioli-like stuffed things, fried dumplings, aubergine and garlic dishes, sour cream stuffed rice and pork dishes, and puddings and cakes too!

When they first arrived, we visited the primary school I had arranged for the boys. The welcome given by the head teacher and staff was overwhelming. Everyone was so kind and enthusiastic. The boys loved their school from day one. They were allowed to start a month before the summer holidays in June which really helped them.

I took the women and Stepan round Buxton visiting Natwest to open accounts, the jobcentre, the Buxton Zinc community centre where they were given free laptops and told about free English lessons every Monday, and the Post Office where they were handed 6 x £200 which was very generous.

My husband and I had recently bought an old car which we got insured for Stepan so that he had transport. Within a week he had got himself a builder's job in Harpur Hill and left for work each day at 6.30 am. I took the women to our local pub which welcomed them with open arms. They had started work within two weeks.

I took the boys to school in Buxton everyday, and fetched them at 3.30 pm. If they weren't working, Natalia and Iryna helped me clean my holiday yurts. In between, they cleaned our house. They were always to be found in the kitchen by 4.00 pm starting work on the evening meal. They even demanded gluten-free flour so they could make gluten-free versions of everything for my husband. Stepan took our dog out whenever he was home from work. Any spare hour he had he mowed all my yurt lawns and our garden. He also tried to help David with farming.

During the heatwave I took them all to the River Dove where the boys swam. I also took them to Monsal Head for a picnic as well as up High Wheeldon Hill to see the view of Chrome and Parkhouse Hills. They all came to shared lunch at the Quaker Meeting House and it was lovely having eight children playing football in the Meeting House garden. With Stepan I put up an old tent in our garden and the children camped out during the hottest days - although it was then 44°C in Ukraine, so our heat wasn't really affecting them like it was me!

A few weeks ago, they moved into their own rented accommodation in Buxton. However, they call us family now and I really think we will be friends forever!

Homes for Ukrainians after the first six months

Sue Clark
(Advocacy group)



In March 2022, many UK citizens agreed to sponsor accommodation for refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine for a minimum period of six months. The government offered sponsors £350 a month.

For early refugees who arrived in March, that six months is now up. Thus, for many, their present host arrangements may cease. For the same reason, there is also likely to be a peak of refugees, who came in April and May, looking for alternative accommodation in October and November.

The full scale of this impending 'homeless' problem is not yet known. The Office for National Statistics recently suggested that about 25% of sponsors were not able to offer hospitality after the six months. Thus, for them, decisions will have to be made about where they might live next.

What are the possibilities?

- Some may choose to return to Ukraine even though no end to the war is in sight. Their current sponsors, encouraged by the government, may agree to continue to house them, with continuing financial support.
- Some may seek a new sponsor, using such channels as social networks, local councils, churches or refugee charities. Most are likely to want to stay in their current area to prevent disruption to schooling, jobs or community links.
- They may apply to their local council for supported accommodation. However most councils already have long waiting-lists for social housing and both they and the refugees may face a backlash if refugees are seen to be ‘jumping the queue’. In addition, councils are already under pressure to find permanent homes for the over 10,000 Afghan refugees who arrived in the UK last year.
- If they have enough money or have found jobs that pay enough, refugees may choose to rent from the private sector. In so doing they may be entitled to the housing part of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. However, accommodation or renting is currently expensive and in short supply.

Sadly, it seems that a plan for after the first six months was one nobody even began to think about when the offer of Homes for Ukraine originally went out. It now seems that for large numbers of our Ukrainian guests, yet another uncertain time of upheaval looms.



Refugees and Rwanda

Paul Wilding
(Advocacy group)

A euphemistically entitled ‘Migration and Development Partnership’ was agreed between the UK and Rwanda in April 2022. The Partnership allows the UK to send to Rwanda some refugees, mainly young single men, who would otherwise claim asylum in the UK. Their asylum claims will be processed and decided in Rwanda. If applications for asylum are successful, migrants will receive permanent resident status there and be offered permanent accommodation.

The UK made a down payment of £120m to launch the scheme, with an extra £20m added in September 2022. Each refugee also attracts a payment of £20 or £30k for relocation and temporary accommodation. So it is a very expensive initiative.

**THE UK'S REFUGEES
TO RWANDA SCHEME:
CRUEL, COLONIAL &
AN AFFRONT TO
AFRICA.**

The Plan received legal clearance from the High Court and the first flight was scheduled for 14 June. However, a last minute intervention by the European Court of Human Rights led to the flight being cancelled. A further legal challenge has since been launched in the High Court and judgement is currently awaited. The Plan seems to have strong support from the Liz Truss Government.

The policy raises a number of important issues.

- Is it legal under international law?

- Rwanda’s record on human rights is, at best, dubious. Is it a safe place to send asylum seekers?
- Is it a morally acceptable policy? The Archbishop of Canterbury says it raises ‘serious ethical questions’. Prince Charles (as he was then) was reported in *The Times* (10 June 2022) as having described the policy in a private conversation as ‘appalling’.
- Is it likely to achieve the aims Government has set out for it - deterring people from making dangerous Channel crossings? Boris Johnson claimed it would ‘save countless lives’. So far there is no sign of such a deterrent effect.
- Does the policy offer value for money? How about if the eye-watering sums involved were invested in improving what the Home Office currently offers to asylum seekers making it to the UK?



Channel crossings in small boats

David Winder
(Advocacy group)

The press reports daily on the increase in channel crossings by people seeking asylum here. There is very little discussion on the motivation of migrants. The Home Office refers to all of them as ‘economic migrants’ and has implemented a series of measures to ‘make these crossings unviable’, in the words of the former Home Secretary. These measures include increasing patrols by the Royal Navy and private contractors to intercept boats and take their passengers into custody. Other steps include increasing the capacity of the French authorities to prevent boats leaving French waters.



Non-governmental organizations have undertaken research to estimate the percentage of arrivals who would qualify for asylum. One major study by the Refugee Council reveals that 91% of arrivals are from ten countries where human rights abuses are common. Of these, 61% are likely to be recognized as being in need of protection as a result of asylum claims and allowed to remain in the UK.

The report concludes that the existing punitive measures aimed at preventing people from making ‘irregular’ journeys to the UK have been unsuccessful. They have failed to break the business model of the people smugglers and are likely to push people into longer and more dangerous sea crossings which will only serve to increase the profit for the people smugglers.

The Refugee Council Report has the following recommendations for government:

- First, commit to expanding existing safe routes including both resettlement and refugee family reunion.
- Second, establish a humanitarian visa system to allow people to apply for a visa to enter the UK for the purpose of claiming asylum, thereby reducing the need for people to make dangerous journeys across the Channel.

- Third, recognize that many people seeking asylum have no option other than making an irregular journey, as recognized in the 1951 Refugee Convention, and therefore they need to be treated fairly and humanely by receiving a fair hearing on UK soil.



The numbers of migrants crossing the Channel in small boats will continue to increase unless the government refocuses their efforts on protection-based solutions rather than punishing and criminalizing people in need of protection. Yet the latest government proposal by the new Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, is that no migrant who crosses The Channel will be able to claim asylum in the UK!

‘Together with Refugees’ A new and powerful advocate for change

Gill Tishler
(Advocacy group)

‘Together with Refugees’ is a relatively new coalition of large and small organisations who believe in showing compassion for people fleeing war, persecution or violence. Its members include grassroots, community and refugee-led groups, international development charities, trade unions and faith groups.

They believe that how we treat refugees is about who we are, as individuals and as a nation. At our best, we are welcoming and kind to those facing difficult times.

Together with Refugees is coordinating the many voices which speak out on these issues.

The cornerstones of their call for a fairer and more effective approach to supporting refugees are:

- people fleeing war and persecution should be able to seek safety in the UK no matter how they come here.
- people seeking safety can live in dignity while they wait for a decision on their asylum application.
- refugees should be empowered to rebuild their lives and make valuable contributions to our communities.
- the UK should work with other countries to do our bit to help people who are forced to flee their homes.



They exhort us all to be part of the change we want to see. Why not display an orange heart (their logo) in your window, car, on your phone wherever you can - to show your support. <https://togetherwithrefugees.org.uk>

Bakewell Refugee Hospitality Days in July and August

Sue Hepworth
(Hospitality group)

In July we held our second event of 2022. Again our guests – men, women and children – came from Derby and there was a wide variety of countries of origin. It was a warm sunny day and an hour's walk by the river was popular, as was a visit to the Bakewell Old House Museum. We always have activities at the Meeting House when guests can make things to take home, or they can play games such as bagatelle, jenga, chess or pucket, plus badminton in the Meeting House garden. The children had a simple treasure hunt, playground chalking and other fun, and some of them liked to do the crafts.



In August, we welcomed a group of Iranian asylum seekers who are supported by the Christadelphian Church in Sheffield. We were expecting the group to be all men, and had pondered what they might like to do at the Meeting House if the weather was bad, but the day turned out to be fine, and the group turned out to be half men and half women. Such is the uncertainty inherent in planning these refugee days. Sometimes it wears us out, but at the end of each successful day when we know how much our guests have enjoyed themselves, none of that matters.

The view from the kitchen

Linda Gray

A highlight of the day for all our visitors is the 1:00 p.m. lunch provided in the Wesley Hall in the Methodist Church. For the last two events, we have served lunch to between 30 and 40 people: refugees and volunteers sitting down together.

Organising lunch for so many people involves a huge number of volunteers. It starts with planning - several weeks in advance - the food that we will serve, the tasks that need to be done, and who will do what. On the actual day, we start at 9:00 a.m. putting out tables and chairs, decorating the Wesley Hall with flowers, putting out cutlery and crockery. The food arrives throughout the morning, with volunteers bringing in their home cooked dishes, with instructions for cooking/reheating/serving.



As 1:00 p.m. approaches, the tempting aromas of lasagne, spicy stews, pizzas and fruit crumbles often bring other visitors to the Wesley Hall - checking to see what we are doing. We fill three buffet tables with lovely food just in time, and our guests and volunteers help themselves, then sit down to enjoy the food and conversation. Our guests are very appreciative, thanking us with words and big smiles. After lunch it is total chaos for a while as we clear up. It's exhausting but hugely worthwhile!

Volunteering for the Refugee Hospitality Day Reflections from a Newcomer

Carol Woodcock

After my first volunteering experience in the kitchen at the Methodist church, helping Linda in July, (which I thoroughly enjoyed btw) I offered to be responsible for liaising with the link person from a Sheffield church, for our next hosting event on 20th August.

Planning started very soon after the July hosting day. There was a hive of ‘back-stage’ activity with everything from the booking of the minibus, invitations to volunteers, who would set up the tables on the day, indoor and outdoor activity planning, flower arrangements, jam jars for the posies of flowers to go on the tables, all the way to ‘going the extra mile’ with offers of savoury dishes especially prepared for our Persian guests’ culinary tastes. There was even discussion about printing labels for the food and having them translated into Farsi. The latter wasn’t required after all as the group had translators which was very useful on the day. What an amazing team of volunteers to go to such lengths to give the guests a warm welcome to Bakewell.



Late in July, a personal invitation was sent to 20 plus Iranian refugees/asylum seekers temporarily residing in Sheffield and linked to the Sheffield church. It was only as we got closer to the day of the event that I realised the depth of responsibility for ensuring we actually had any guests at all, when so much preparation work had already been done. A few sleepless nights followed as the number of guests fluctuated and the make-up of the group changed, but in the end a full minibus arrived.

The day of the event finally arrived. Light rain showers were forecast but the words of another ‘first time volunteer’, Joe Woodcock, sum up the outcome of the day:

The sun shone on a beautiful day in Bakewell, our guests shared stories and smiles. They brought only warmth and gratitude to a successful trip into the Peak District. From badminton on the lawn, to museum trips and walks through and around the town. I hope this stable peace can continue to be provided for individuals who have been through such unthinkable terrors.

In conclusion, I would like to say what a great privilege it was for me to be involved in such a wonderful day and to have met and worked alongside such an incredible team of volunteers. As we shook the hands of each of the guests on their departure, they were all so very appreciative for their ‘Day in Bakewell’, they waved enthusiastically from the windows of the minibus and the clearing up after the day began.

We hope to host more refugee hospitality days next year. If you would like to help by cooking delicious food, or coming as a volunteer on the day, or to make a donation, please contact:

sue.hepworth@gmail.com