



# Boundless

## The Newsletter for Refugees Welcome, Cheshire East June 2025

### A QUICK UPDATE

Refugees Welcome, Cheshire East, is continuing to support Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, who live in our area. Our volunteers support the families in their homes and run English classes and Conversation Cafés. It is thanks to the generosity of our donors to the Boundless fund that we have been able to establish and maintain our support networks for all the groups of refugees.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!!

Current information can be found by emailing [refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com](mailto:refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com). Or through the Refugees Welcome website. – [refugeeswelcome.co.uk](http://refugeeswelcome.co.uk).

**In this edition of Boundless you can find out about the dynamic nature of our organisation. There are articles about a visit made to Ukraine by a 13 year old with her mother, various of our regular activities, the need for fundraising and our **EVENT** to mark 10 years of Refugees Welcome Cheshire East**



Registered Charity Number  
116990

*Refugees Welcome* aims to support, integrate and empower refugees in every possible way, from sourcing furniture and equipment, to helping with access to medical care and education, interpreting and English learning. We acknowledge the huge contribution which newcomers - including displaced people - have always made to our society. We are committed to helping newly arrived people fulfil their potential as independent members of the community, enriching it with their skills, culture and unique perspective.

Article written by one of our Ukrainian evacuees.



My name is Yuliia, I am 13 years old, and I have been living here in England for the past three years with my mother and older brother. Recently, our grandfather joined us. We are originally from Kharkiv, a city in eastern Ukraine.

I would like to share a story about a recent trip my mother and I took to Ukraine during the school holidays. It is difficult to find the right words to describe what we experienced, but one thing is certain: it was the hardest journey of my life. Even harder than our first journey to the UK, when we were fleeing the war into the complete unknown. Back then, we didn't know where we would live, what school I would attend, how we would cope. But one thing was absolutely clear to my brother and me: our mother would do anything to keep us safe.

I was only 10 years old, but I remember the fear in her eyes when we hid in a basement at the start of the war, listening to explosions outside. We hardly left the shelter — that was our life then.

Like my mother, I believed we would never have to live through such fear again. During our three years in the UK, I often dreamed that the war would soon be over and we would return home. I missed my city, my friends, my old life. I longed to hug my grandmother, to breathe in the familiar smell of our apartment, to see my childhood room again.

So when my mother told me we needed to return to Ukraine over the holidays to sort out some documents, I was overwhelmed with emotion. It felt like I hadn't been home in forever.

Because there are no flights to Ukraine, our journey was long. We flew to Poland and then travelled by three trains. Finally, we arrived in Kharkiv — only 30 kilometres from the Russian border.

I couldn't hold back my tears when we entered our flat. Everything was as we had left it when we fled. I spent hours talking with my grandmother, embracing her, remembering. That night I felt safe again — as though I had returned to my childhood.

But that sense of peace didn't last. On our first night back, Kharkiv came under air attack. My mother had just turned off the light when I saw a bright flash through the window. She shouted, "There's going to be a big explosion, don't be scared!" And then it came — a deafening blast that shook the entire building. I was terrified. I learned then that the flash of



light comes before the sound. There were more explosions after that — the lamps on the ceiling began to sway.

Since that moment, I've developed a panicked response to loud noises. The next morning, even the sound of schoolchildren or a door closing made me jump. Still, I was eager to visit my old school and see my classmates. Most lessons are now held online, but sometimes teachers organise in-person classes so pupils can feel a sense of normality. The classroom was in the school basement — no windows, only artificial light. After a few hours underground, I felt disoriented and frightened. I couldn't tell if it was light or dark outside. I just wanted to be near my mother again.

My classmates, however, were calm. They helped me cope with my fear — perhaps because they've had no choice but to adapt. This is their everyday reality. But for me, it was deeply distressing.

That night, we went to bed again — only to be awoken by the sound of Iranian-made drones, "Shaheds", flying overhead. There were more than twenty of them. Sirens, explosions, engine noises — it was all a blur. My mother held me close and took me into the corridor, away from the windows. She said our soldiers were trying to shoot the drones down to protect us. I prayed that nothing would hit our building. It felt endless — but eventually, it stopped, and we were able to sleep.

The final days of our stay were a little calmer. We managed to see doctors and get the documents we needed. People in the city are trying to live on. Cafés and shops are open. Exhausted citizens work hard to maintain any kind of normality — even after such terrifying nights.

But in Kharkiv, the air raid sirens never stop. The city is just 30 kilometres from the Russian border. Explosions — from missiles or other weapons I cannot name — happen more often than in cities far from the frontlines.

But this visit was not what I had hoped for. The city I loved, my Kharkiv, felt so different — partly destroyed by war and filled with people who, although kind and brave, now live under constant stress. Many try to stay positive, to smile and move forward, but I could feel that something inside them had changed. They look death in the face every day.

Even though I was home, I couldn't feel the same warmth, the same sense of comfort and safety I remembered from before the war. The peaceful, cosy feeling of our home — it just wasn't there anymore. And that was the hardest realisation of all.

I found myself longing to return home — to England. It's a strange feeling. I was in Ukraine, in my homeland, and yet I no longer fully belong there. A part of my heart now belongs to England — to Macclesfield, where I feel safe, where I smile and breathe freely. Where I have more friends than I ever did in Ukraine.

I am only 13, but I want to feel secure about my future. I want to believe that when I come home from school, my mother won't say, "Start packing — our visa has been refused." That would break my heart.

I am Ukrainian, and I am proud of where I come from. But I dearly hope that my life can continue here, in the UK — where I can grow, study, and simply be myself: free and happy. I



believe the war will end one day. But right now, more than anything, I need to know where I will be tomorrow.

Thank you — and thank you to all British people — for the incredible support you have shown to Ukrainians like me.

**Yuliia Boiko**







## Visit of Sarah Russell MP for Congleton.

On Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May Sarah Russell, MP for Congleton, visited St Mary's Church, where English classes take place. She was delighted to meet a number of Ukrainian English students of all ages and their teachers, where she heard at first hand the problems currently faced by Ukrainians living in the UK. They were able to explain how difficult it is for them to plan for the future, when they do not know how long they will be allowed to stay in the UK.

She also met three of the RW trustees, Judith Mayer, Paul Nixon and Nicky Campbell, who were also able to explain about the lack of certainty for the Ukrainians, as well as talking about Afghans, who are still waiting to come to the UK and the problems faced by Syrians, who still do not know what the new régime in their country will mean to them



## 10 Years of Refugees Welcome

It will be 10 years in September since graphic photographs were shown on television and in the press. The one that is still in my mind – and possibly in yours – is of the body of a young boy being carried from a boat up a beach in the eastern Mediterranean. The destitute people were Syrian refugees escaping war and a small group of people in Macclesfield felt we had to DO SOMETHING to help them.

Refugees Welcome Cheshire East was born from that seed. Discussions among ourselves and then with the council. Much planning. Nobody really knew what we were doing, but in spring 2017 we welcomed 5 Syrian families to Cheshire East. 5 Afghan families arrived in 2021, more than 700 Ukrainian people came following the invasion of 2022 and more recently families have arrived from Syria, Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Iran and the Chagos Islands.

We worked alongside Cheshire East Communities Team, supporting families when they made a home in Cheshire East. We are well regarded by them and were asked to be their umbrella organisation, overseeing all the voluntary organisations that sprang up when the Ukrainians arrived. They gave us a grant until February 2024, but, alas, they can no longer afford to support us.

We are currently 8 trustees, a treasurer, an employee of CVS (Council of Voluntary Services), whom we pay for 10 and a half hours per week, and 58 volunteers. Between us we look after all these displaced people and have done so for 10 years.

**WE NEED TO SAY THANK YOU.**

That is why we are holding an **EVENT** on November 15<sup>th</sup> to say THANK YOU to everyone who has ever worked for us or donated to us. We hope that dignitaries will come to say thank you, as well as our amazing volunteers, our refugees and our supporters. Save the date.....

## Macclesfield Conversation Café

One of our regular activities for all our refugees is the Conversation Café, which is held on the first Saturday of each month in a room at the back of St Michael's church in Macclesfield. As well as many refugees it is always attended by trustees and volunteers from Refugees Welcome, Cheshire East and One Project Ukraine, another local charity, brings donated clothes, food and toiletries for any of our guests who want them.

It gives all of us a chance to meet one another and if anyone has a problem, with which they need extra help, there will be an opportunity to discuss it with trustees and volunteers.


We start at 10.00am and finish when everyone has left....!

We always supply free tea/coffee and biscuits.

Funding for the café is from Macclesfield Forest Rotary Association.







## Fundraising

Last year our *Homes for Ukraine* funding, from Cheshire East council, sadly came to an end. And so, since the start of 2025, Refugees Welcome has been actively seeking funding from larger donors and foundations, with the help of new trustee, Mark Buttle. However, things are tough, and the “cost-of-living crisis” has meant that *less* money is being split between *more and more* organisations, all doing great work.

This is important because we would love to continue to support families arriving in Cheshire East; people who have escaped from desperate situations all over the world. It’s important that those families get the chance to join in and to be accepted fully in our community. It’s important that everyone gets the chance to learn English, to stand on their own two feet, to pay taxes, and to access essential services properly. Refugees Welcome is helping on all fronts!

That’s why we would especially like to thank our *individual* donors, who keep us going through the good times as well as the bad.

**Thank you all** (you know who you are).

In March, Nicky Campbell and Waheed Zargar (representing his family who arrived from Afghanistan, following the Taliban take-over) made a moving speech to the “Dragons Den” of the Macclesfield Forest Rotary Club, in an event at The Legh Arms (Toby Carvery) in Adlington. Nicky and Waheed convinced the judges to award Refugees Welcome £796 (see below).



Nicky Receiving a cheque from Emanuel Botwe



Waheed telling his family’s story





## When is an English Practice class not just an English Practice class?

You all know those adverts for M&S food, 'Not just a ... but an M&S ..' So much better apparently. So, when is an English Practice class not just an English Practice class?

When it is run by our wonderful volunteer team who make it so much more. The class takes place on Tuesday mornings at the Methodist church in Macclesfield.


The volunteers welcome everyone into what is both a learning and a social space.

Yes, there is grammar, there is reading, writing and listening, but there is also community, which encompasses everyone who comes no matter where they are from or what their English level is.

There are lots of other ESOL classes and other sessions which teach English and can lead to qualifications, and these are great for those who can access them. But what of those whose English is too basic, who are too shy to speak, newly arrived or feel too old to learn? On a Tuesday morning, they come and take part in a learning experience that is just for them. We have a good number of volunteers so people can almost have 1/1 time at whatever stage of learning they are at, looking at the everyday English they need to get by in our local community.

Then there is social time, tea/coffee and biscuits and if they are lucky someone might even bring cake. This is so valuable for people who may be quite isolated because of their lack of English and confidence in speaking. There is no substitute for making friends with others who are finding it a little more tough. However, if you visit the group, the laughter and sense of fun says it all!!

So, a heartfelt THANK YOU to all the volunteers who give their time so unstintingly to keep this vital space open for those who want to learn.



# And again, a heartfelt message of thanks to everyone!

You can support our work by setting up a standing order for a regular monthly donation - £5/10/20 or whatever you would like to give (see next page).

This will go directly towards:

- Supporting ESOL training for all the refugees who need it.
- Insurance for volunteers working with families
- Professional help to select, train, deploy and oversee volunteers.
- One-off needs – for example extra equipment required when a family sets up home.

Your payment should be made to:

ACCOUNT NAME: Refugees Welcome

SORT CODE: 01-05-41

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 45946426

REFERENCE: BOUNDLESS

Please make sure that your name is clearly written on your BACS payment.

Go to [www.refugeeswelcome.co.uk](http://www.refugeeswelcome.co.uk) for more details or email [refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com](mailto:refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com)

Please send donations / standing order mandates to:

Alan Brown (Treasurer), Refugees Welcome, 13 Lea Drive, NANTWICH CW5 5JS

Refugees Welcome, c/o Macclesfield Methodist Church, Westminster Road, Macclesfield, SK10 1BX

Many, many thanks for your support.

All the trustees of Refugees Welcome Cheshire East



**Data Protection** Refugees Welcome is committed to protecting your privacy and will process your personal data in accordance with current Data Protection legislation. Refugees Welcome collects information to keep in touch with you and supply you with information relating to our work. A full data privacy statement for financial donors is available from Refugees Welcome on request.





**Standing Order Mandate. Registered Charity Number 1169909**

**Instructions to your Bank Manager.**

Name of your bank. \_\_\_\_\_

Branch Address. \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City. \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code. \_\_\_\_\_

**Please pay to Refugees Welcome**

**Sort Code: 01-05-41**

**Account number: 45946426**

The sum of £\_\_\_\_\_ (in numbers) £\_\_\_\_\_ (In words)  
On the \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ and each ☐ week ☐ month ☐ year

Until further notice and debit my account accordingly.

Name of account to be debited: \_\_\_\_\_

Sort Code \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ Account Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**My Details**

**Title:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Forename:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Surname:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Address:**\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mobile number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tick here to boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you give.**

*giftaid it*

In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box.

☐ **I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I might make in the future or have made in the past four years to Refugees Welcome.**


I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is required to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

**Please notify Refugees Welcome if You:**

- Want to cancel this declaration
- Change your name or home address
- No longer pay sufficient income/capital gains tax.
- If you pay Income tax at higher or additional rate and want to receive additional tax relief must include all donations on Self-Assessment Tax form to adjust tax code.





## Some more information about how we operate.

Refugees Welcome Cheshire East started more than 9 years ago, when the Syrian war was at its height. Syrian people were seeking refuge from their war and were living in camps in neighbouring Lebanon. The British government agreed to take a number of vulnerable families under the VPRS (Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme). 5 Syrian families were welcomed to Cheshire East early in 2017. Two further Syrian families have settled in Cheshire East more recently under Community sponsorship schemes and another Syrian family has joined us more recently.

More than three years ago, the Taliban dramatically took over Afghanistan, making life extremely difficult and dangerous for people who had worked in any capacity with UK or US institutions. Many hundreds of people had to leave Afghanistan very quickly. Afghan refugees have been welcomed to the UK under schemes such as the ARAP (Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy) and the ACRS (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme). For the past 3 years 5 Afghan families have lived in permanent accommodation and many more have lived in temporary accommodation locally. Recently 3 more Afghan families have come to our local area.

The invasion of Ukraine on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 meant that huge numbers of Ukrainians became refugees. Many Ukrainians are living in Cheshire East.

So.... Who are the people who work for Refugees Welcome?

7 of us are trustees of the charity. That means we run the charity. We make the decisions about policy, activities, finance and how the whole charity operates

We have meetings, along with our treasurer (a very important person!) approximately every 6 weeks. All of us are retired (among us are a GP, a psychotherapist, a counsellor, two teachers, a Chartered Engineer, a person, who worked in banking, a large project charity worker and one who is a very experienced business man). We all work in a voluntary capacity. We work closely with a team from Cheshire East, although we no longer have a contract with them. We have to report on our activities to the Charity Commission every year.

There are about 50 volunteers who work directly with the refugee families in a wide range of supporting roles. The volunteers also help man the conversation cafés and assist at the ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) classes. Our website is run by one of our volunteers. We are pleased to welcome several of the Ukrainians as new volunteers. The only person who is in a paid job with our organisation is an employee of CVS (Council for Voluntary Services).

We are fortunate enough to be able to work with other organisations in Cheshire East, who are supporting refugees.

We welcome more volunteers and trustees. Please contact us through our website, if you are interested in working with us. We would especially welcome someone who would like to work on the next edition of Boundless!

**Nicky Campbell (Chair of trustees)**

**Registered Charity 1169909**