

Boundless

The Newsletter for
Refugees Welcome,
Cheshire East
August 2022

Support Refugee families in Cheshire East

Welcome to the summer edition of Boundless, the newsletter for
Refugees Welcome, Cheshire East.

A QUICK UPDATE

In the last few months the work of Refugees Welcome has expanded hugely. We have seen the arrival in the area of large numbers of Ukrainians fleeing the Russian invasion through the Ukrainian Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine. This means that we are now coordinating an umbrella group alongside Cheshire East communities team, involving a range of local charities, organisations and host families, helping to integrate and support them. We are also continuing to support a significant number of Afghan families still in bridging hotels waiting for suitable accommodation as well as those who have found homes and are beginning to rebuild their lives in Cheshire. On May 14th we celebrated the five year anniversary of the arrival of the first five Syrian families with a ceremony in Macclesfield Methodist Church. Although they are now integrated and much appreciated members of our community we continue to support them where necessary.

Current information as well as details about how you can help Ukrainians fleeing the war can be found on [the Cheshire East website](#). You can also register on the government website [here](#).

In this edition of Boundless, read some more memories and experiences from our Syrian families and those who have worked with them, as well as what it has been like for recently arrived Ukrainians and their hosts. There are also articles on our Ukrainian Conversation Café, two concerts for peace and more...



REFUGEES
WELCOME

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.

New Northerners Part 2: More reflections from the Cheshire Syrian community



Loulou and three of her children with local friends Rand and Carole, celebrating "little Eid" in their garden in Macclesfield.

The spring edition of Boundless featured some reflections by two of the Syrian families who came to Cheshire five years ago when Refugees Welcome was set up.

Here are the memories of two more of the original five families. Ammar, Loulou and their four boys live in Macclesfield. They arrived in March 2022, separately from the other families because their baby son was too ill to board the plane they were originally booked onto.

David Mayers, a volunteer with Refugees

Welcome, first got to know them over the summer of 2018 when he helped to entertain the children in the garden with games of badminton, football and rounders while other volunteers worked with the parents to improve their English. "We had a lot of fun and laughs, and I was amazed how quickly the children were settling in and picking up English culture and habits." He has found it "a great privilege to get to know Ammar and Loulou and their family". Earlier this year, he asked them to recall their early impressions:

"We arrived at Manchester airport on 7th March 2017. It was cold and grey, but not raining! We were very pleased to arrive, because now we were safe. We had a very long day – a 3 hour flight from Beirut to Istanbul, then a 5 hour flight to Manchester. We were very tired, but we were met by Maria and Paul from Cheshire East and Emma the interpreter who made us very welcome.

"We were very pleased to arrive, because now we were safe."

"For the last 3 years we had lived in a camp in Lebanon in one room for the whole family; there was no heating, no water and the windows were broken."

We travelled in a minibus to our new house in Macclesfield, it was lovely and clean and so big! For the last 3 years we had lived in a camp in Lebanon in one room for the whole family; there was no heating, no water and the windows were broken. In winter it was very cold. We shared a toilet with 20 other families.

We should have arrived one month before, but our son Majed had a temperature of 41 degrees at the airport and we couldn't travel. Because of Majed's poor health we had to travel from Beirut with a doctor. He came with us all the way to Manchester then went back to Beirut. We are very happy to be here in Macclesfield and hope we will be able to stay. People have been very kind to us. We don't want to return to Syria."



One of the many refugee camps for displaced Syrians in Lebanon. The first five Syrian families to arrive in Cheshire East came from these camps where conditions are dire. Lebanon – a nation with its own serious economic problems - currently hosts about 1.5 million Syrian refugees, just over half of whom are children. Cold, heat, poor nutrition, overcrowding, poor sanitation and insecure legal status make life exceptionally difficult.

Ammar and Loulou regularly attend the English classes now run by Refugees Welcome in Macclesfield and they have introduced us to an exotic new beverage: cardamom flavoured coffee! They make it at home and bring it in a flask for everyone in the group to share during the break. They have also brought their soap-



“I rarely visit without being offered some tasty Syrian food”: A selection of traditional Syrian food cooked by Loulou.

making skills to their new community and often make gifts to their friends of the soap they make by hand in their home. David again: “Their hospitality is very generous; I rarely visit without being offered some tasty Syrian food. They still find many aspects of English society strange, but they are very grateful for the warm welcome they have received and have every intention of staying in Macclesfield and giving their children the best possible start in life”.



Hussam, Sahar and their five boys also live in Macclesfield. Their youngest son was born in Macclesfield. Hussam talked to our Arabic-speaking volunteer Jemila about his experiences and the friendships he has made:



“We came to England from Syria in search of a better life. We had to first learn how to communicate in English, which is a significant obstacle for us because we knew very little English. But we were fortunate in that we were able to find wonderful friends who assisted us and taught us English: we are grateful to Dot and Hillary, as well as Jill and Yvonne. We miss Hillary a lot and are deeply saddened by her passing. And we had a lovely caseworker named Sandra, who assisted us in scheduling appointments, was willing to drive us to the hospital and she has been assisting us for five years. As we came outside from the airport we saw Sandra smiling and we were even happier when we found out that she was our caseworker. And we are grateful because we are now more reliant on ourselves. We are also grateful for Dot’s weekly assistance with our children’s homework and with our English as well as Yvonne and Jill’s help.”

Last year Hussam and Sahar’s son won a medal and certificate in a Macclesfield Library reading contest. One of the books he particularly enjoyed reading was *Boruto: Naruto Next Generations*, a Japanese manga series.

The family has touched the lives of everyone who has got to know them. Jill, one of the volunteers described them as “a warm and loving family, who have also taught me a lot about Syrian life and customs. I admire their resilience in adapting to our at times unfamiliar British ways!” and Yvonne, a fellow volunteer has also learnt so much from her warm relationship with the family and is “in awe of Hussam and Sahar’s parenting skills”. Their caseworker, Sandra wrote “to see Hussam and his family move forward, grow in confidence and become independent has been a pleasure... They

are a credit to themselves and everyone who has supported them.”

Katherine Edwards

Ukrainians in Cheshire

Hosts and guests

What has it been like to host two Ukrainian guests?

Many thanks for this account by a local host who would like to remain anonymous.

The house is full of life and laughter.

I have two Ukrainian guests who have come to the UK under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. They had been displaced within Ukraine from their home city near the Russian border and we were matched up by a group in Stockport.

I did think “What have you done?!” when I was waiting to meet them for the first time in person as they came through the gates at Arrivals. They had more reason to be nervous than me. They had taken a huge risk in coming to live in a stranger’s house, in a foreign country with very little English – and they had put all their trust in me to do their paperwork and make them feel safe and welcome.

It’s been just one month now, and I can honestly say that it’s been a hoot! Not awkward or tense or distressing. The house is full of life and laughter. Mum is near the age of my own adult daughters who have left home. Within one week, she had a part time job, and her daughter was in school. They are becoming more independent and the welcome they have received from people has been so generous and heart-warming. An excellent weekly ESOL lesson from Refugees Welcome has been essential to give Mum the self-confidence to have a go at expressing herself in English. The “Say Hi” app is being used less and less.

I can’t do a thing about how they’ve had their old lives ripped away from them.

It’s all gone- their city, communities, apartment, family, and best friends. I know they are sad and sometimes angry about what is happening to Ukraine.

Making them welcome felt like the right thing to do – but what I didn’t anticipate was how much I would gain. It’s been so interesting – it’s been an adventure.

It’s been so interesting – it’s been an adventure.

The Ukrainian Conversation Café

The bureaucracy of the Ukraine situation faced Refugees

Welcome with a unique challenge. We knew people were coming to Macclesfield and the surrounding area through both the family scheme and the Homes for Ukraine scheme and wanted to help.

But how do you help people if no-one is allowed to tell you who

or where they are? So, someone said why don’t we hold a Conversation Café and invite people to come to us. We had done that before for our Afghan families and friends so it seemed the perfect idea. With the help of volunteers, a lovely Ukrainian lady already living here, the support of St Michael’s church and the Macclesfield Ukraine Aid Collection Point, the Ukraine Conversation Café was opened for the first time at the end of April. Posters were put up advertising the event and we waited to see whether anyone would come.



It is now August, and the Café has been open every week. A whole host of regulars come to visit with new people coming all the time. There is a real buzz of conversation in halting English and Ukrainian, lots of use of translation apps if our English-speaking Ukrainian friends are not there, people meeting each other, children playing, friendships being forged and all sorts of help being offered where needed. Our volunteers and the guests and hosts are getting to know each other, and our volunteers really enjoy the time they spend there. So far we have reached 39 families or individuals and quite a number of hosts, that adds up to almost 100 people. We have integrated Ukrainian people into our English class for Syrians and they have received a really warm welcome which has been wonderful to see. Who knows where will go from here but we just know we will be there every Saturday for as long as we are needed.

Anne Towers

Two Concerts for Peace

On Sunday 19th June a “Concert for Peace” was held at St Michael’s Church in Macclesfield. It was hosted by East Cheshire Quakers and the very generous proceeds were in aid of Refugees Welcome, Cheshire East. It was an absolute privilege, not only to be invited to attend the concert, but also to compère an afternoon of such quality.

The Canadian folk singer, Dan McKinnon opened proceedings. He is an engaging singer-songwriter, who performed a mix of his own songs and others that are well known. He was followed by the premiere of “What Will You Say?” A few years ago Macclesfield School children attended a poetry workshop and wrote poems on the themes of peace and the futility of war. These poems have been published in a book called, “Worn with Pride”. American composer, Taylor Giacomini, was moved to set some of these poems to music. Taylor’s hauntingly moving composition was performed by several students from Surrey, along with local choir members. At one point thoughts of one of our local Afghan refugees were added by Waheed, himself. The whole performance was absolutely wonderful. I hope it will be performed widely. Refugees Welcome would like to thank everyone involved for a glorious afternoon of music and for their great generosity.

Nicky Campbell



Concert for Ukraine
Ivan Hovorun
Pianist
1.15pm Thursday 9th June
St Michael's Church
Free concert but opportunity to give to local charities **Refugees Welcome & Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid Collection Point**

In June, we were honoured to welcome Ivan Hovorun, a supremely talented Ukrainian pianist to play a lunchtime concert at St Michael’s Church in Macclesfield.

Ivan has performed with major Eastern and Western European orchestras as diverse as the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine and the Manchester Camerata, Collegium Musicum.

He has won many prizes and scholarships; and is forging a reputation as one of the most perceptive and intelligent young musicians of our time. The piece he chose to perform for us at St Michael’s was: Kreisleriana, Op. 16, a

composition in eight movements by Robert Schumann for solo piano, subtitled Phantasien für das Pianoforte. He closed the concert by playing the stirring Ukrainian national anthem, which was greatly appreciated by all the Ukrainians in the audience.

Nicky Campbell

The following Prayer for Ukraine was included in the concert programme.

God of power and justice we pray for the people of Ukraine today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons. We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow, that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace, for wisdom, discernment and compassion to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear, that you would hold and protect them.

We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

As well as to Refugees Welcome, proceeds from the concert went to **Macclesfield Ukrainian Aid Collection Point** who collect urgently needed supplies of clothing and medical equipment at their base at Unit 2c, Sutton Mill, Gunco Lane, SK11 7JL; and transporting it to where it is needed in Ukraine.



Book Recommendation: "Lovers and Strangers" – Clair Willis

Modern Britain is a society which has been enriched, shaped and defined by immigration. This book tells the story of post war Britain through the eyes of the people who arrived here as newcomers from the 1950s. Former prisoners of war from Poland, Ukraine or Latvia; people from the Caribbean invited to apply for jobs in the new NHS; people from the Indian Punjab or Pakistan, planning to return home after earning enough to lift their families out of poverty; people from Ireland, Italy and Cyprus looking for a better life for their children... Their stories are told with insight, humour and compassion. They were the generation of people who fought the first battles on the road to multiculturalism and their struggles for survival, belonging and identity in near bankrupt, austerity Britain make for fascinating reading. Clair Willis' research is meticulous but she puts the experiences of individuals right at the centre, so her book is compelling and accessible.

Katherine Edwards



Wanted: a teacher of English as a foreign language!

We are looking for someone to teach English to a group of mainly Syrian and Ukrainian refugees once a week. The class currently runs from 10 30 – 1 00 on a Tuesday morning in Macclesfield Methodist Church but it may be possible to change the day to suit the right teacher. It will be a paid position and there is a friendly and experienced pool of volunteers who assist with the sessions. The sessions are non-accredited and responsive to the practical needs of the learners. Please get in touch if you are interested or know anyone who might be.

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:

- Vital equipment for families - eg. pushchairs, cots, phones
- Providing Welcome Hampers for newly arrived families
- Insurance for volunteers working with families
- Professional help to select, train and oversee volunteers
- Room hire and some other expenses for English lessons
- One-off needs (For example, during lockdown we had the funding to give every refugee family access to a laptop to communicate with volunteers and to continue their children's education online.)

Your payment should be made to:

ACCOUNT NAME: Refugees Welcome Community Account
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 for more details or email 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



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.





Instructions to your Bank Manager

Name of your Bank _____
 Branch Address _____
 Town/City _____ Postcode _____

Please pay to Refugees Welcome

Sort Code **01 05 41** Account Number **45946426**

The sum of £ (in figures) _____ (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 _____ First Name _____
 Surname _____
 Home Address _____
 Postcode _____ Date _____
 Email Address _____

Tick here to boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you give.
 In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box



I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I 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 needed 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 tax on your income and/or capital gains

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.