

Bruton Supports Ukraine – Update

BRUTON

SUPPORTS UKRAINE

January 2023

Inna's Story

Seven has always been my favourite number. That's why there was no surprise when the airplane that brought us – my son, my friend, her two daughters and me – to England landed at Bristol Airport on May, 7. After almost three months of the war in Ukraine at that moment, two months of which were spent in Poland in a state of despair and turmoil when waiting for visas to the UK... Much had been left behind, but so much was also in store.

Unlike common stereotypes about England as a land of constant rains and endless mists, the country met us with the bright sun and warm weather. It was definitely a good sign, and the next months spent in England only proved it. The reality has removed a lot of misconceptions about England. For example, the one about English people as conservative and reserved. Instead, we met extremely friendly, open, and empathetic people with big hearts and readiness to help those in need. The whole English society runs through the common idea of support and charity.

One more striking discovery was the sophisticated English humour and ingenuity. It is one thing to watch comedies and read comic writers, and it is totally another to live in the environment where every other can be nominated for the National Comedy Awards. Apparently, the ability of English to see the comicality of everyday life is the secret of their positive-minded nature. In our case, the English humour had a healing effect and goes on helping overcome life difficulties.

Diversity, on the one hand, and equality on the other, are other things that catch the attention. The respect and loyalty to be found regardless of your nationality, personality, background or personal beliefs make everyone feel unique and valuable. All of this contributes to mental health and life satisfaction.

In general, life in the UK is full of impressions and findings: unbelievably beautiful landscapes, pleasant and friendly people, an unexpected variety of English accents, and a bit challenging roads. At the same time, this is a land of freedom and opportunity.

Inna and her son live locally, having moved in to independent accommodation after staying with their host family. Inna works as a resettlement officer for Bruton Supports Ukraine and works at the Wells and Yeovil refugee hubs.

Bruton Supports Ukraine

2022 was quite a year in a lot of ways. As the situation in Ukraine unfolded in the early spring, the Bruton area was quick to start formulating a response. A first meeting gathered interested people to discuss ideas, out of which a steering group was formed for what has become Bruton Supports Ukraine. Ten months on the group is thriving and supporting more than 50 Ukrainian refugees and their host families in and around Bruton.

Contact Us

Email –
ukraine@stmarysbruton.org

[Bruton Supports Ukraine | St. Mary's Bruton \(stmarysbruton.org\)](https://stmarysbruton.org)



What we've been doing

The needs of our guests and their hosts have changed over time.

As guests arrived there was a mire of paperwork to wade through, appointments to attend and checks to be done. Ukrainian refugees are eligible for Universal Credit, so registration for that and subsequent Job Centre appointments were needed. Children – we have more than 20 kids in the group - joined local schools and pre-schools.

With the help of the amazing Jo Taylor an English language tuition programme was set up – enabling every adult Ukrainian guest to be paired with a qualified English teacher for free language tuition.

It quickly became apparent that getting people together (both guests and hosts) regularly was going to be really important. Throughout last year a programme of social events was organised and run by the group – including wonderful visits very generously hosted by the National Trust at Stourhead, Hauser and Wirth, The Newt and others. Wincanton Leisure Centre kindly offered members of the group a free weekly swimming session.

Our guests have enjoyed meeting together for a cuppa and a chat at our drop ins, in Bruton Community Hall, hosted by our volunteers. Arts and crafts, games and sewing have proved popular with adults and children, as has sharing home made cakes!

We have also had visitors to a drop in, and a Job Coach from the Opportunities Hub scheme was well received and helpful for guests. This link continues and guests have attended the Balsam Centre for c.v and employment preparation.

Who are we?

The steering group has a core of members, all working together and in regular contact. They are: Maria Chambers, Rev Jonathan Evans, Ruth Forbes, Carol Fradley, James Hood, Ewan Jones, Christine Kaltoft, Fiona MacIntosh, Jock Mendoza-Wilson and Tricia Rawlingson Plant.

The steering group is supported by fantastic volunteers – doing everything from offering translating and interpreting, giving lifts, helping at socials, assisting with paperwork and appointments, entertaining at the Christmas party and more.

We are really grateful to all our volunteers and those that have supported hosts and given guests such a warm welcome to our community. Thank you all.

We have also been supported by kind and very generous donations from across our community. Thank you to everyone who has enabled the group with financial support.

As a steering group we continue to make links with and visit other local hubs to share and glean information, contacts and possibilities of funding to ensure we and our guests are well informed.

The year ahead

The situation in Ukraine continues to be dreadful and for many of our guests there is no current thought of returning home. We want them to know that they continue to be welcome in our community.

We have had relatively few new arrivals recently (although if you feel you could host Ukrainian refugees, do please get in touch with the resettlement team at the Council [Home - Homes for Ukraine](#)). So, a lot of our efforts now are focussed on helping those already here to continue to settle and play a full part in our community.

We continue to look at ways to help people into meaningful employment – we have some fantastically skilled and able people in the group – from university lecturers to pharmacists and poets to teachers and nurses. One of our tasks this year will be to try to support people into jobs relevant to those they did at home. If you are a local employer and could offer opportunities to our Ukrainian guests, please email ukraine@stmarysbruton.org Thank you.

Some of our guests are ready to move on from their hosts and into independent accommodation. In fact, some did last year! Of course, this is a very big change and needs planning and support. Our team are helping with the transition – even loading up donated furniture for new homes and arriving with tool kits to assemble things as needed! If you have furniture or furnishings that you would like to donate to refugee families, there is a facebook page for ‘donations for refugees in Somerset’ which is a great place to post what you can offer.

We continue to try to help guests find suitable accommodation – if you own, or know of, reasonably priced local rental accommodation that might be suitable, please let us know by emailing ukraine@stmarysbruton.org Thank you.

The kids continue to do really well in their new schools. Many are still doing Ukrainian schooling online as well as their British schooling – so holidays are especially precious!

The group had a stall at Bruton late night shopping to promote and fundraise. Guests, hosts and volunteers pulled together their creative talents and Christmas decorations, chutneys, dog coats, knitted scarves and hats filled our tables and contributed to our funds.

As time went on we started to try to pull together information to help guests into employment and, eventually, in some cases towards finding and moving in to independent accommodation.

The year finished with a wonderful celebration of Epiphany (6 January) at Mill on the Brue (thank you Tricia!) Howard Smith did a tremendous (if rather hot!) job distributing presents for children in his Santa suit. Thank you to everyone involved.

Could you host?

If you could host new refugees, or take a family already here looking for a secondary hosting placement, please get in touch with the resettlement team at the Council [Home - Homes for Ukraine](#) and email us Ukraine@stmarysbruton.org



Tetiana's Kitchen

Every update we will be sharing a recipe for something typically Ukrainian – recipes provided by our guests.

Ukrainian Salad – 'Olivie'

Ingredients

- 2 potatoes
- 2-3 carrots
- 1 can of peas
- 300-400g ham/cooked pork
- 1 cucumber
- 4 eggs
- 1 bunch spring onions
- Mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper to taste



Preparation

Boil potatoes, carrots and eggs

Cut all ingredients into small cubes

Finely chop onion

Mix all ingredients, add peas and stir through mayonnaise. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Decorate with greens.

How you can help

You can get involved with our group by volunteering. Just email ukraine@stmarysbruton.org and we'll put you in touch with Ruth, our Volunteer Coordinator. We're always looking for more help!

If you are a qualified ESOL (English) teacher, could you join our group of volunteer tutors? If this interests you, please email ukraine@stmarysbruton.org to be put in touch with Jo, who runs our free language tuition programme.

If you can help to support us financially, that would be great too. We receive no government funding, so rely on the generosity of our own community and some specific grants made by local charities. The best way to donate is by using our LocalGiving page – use the QR code. Donating this way allows us to claim giftaid on your donation – so we get 25% more than you donate!

