



**LINK
INTERNATIONAL**

**North Wales
Ukraine Response**

Highlight Report

December 2022

Link International (Link Int.) is a registered charity based in the County of Conwy in North Wales with over 30 years' experience in engaging with people and communities in different cultures in Africa, Eastern Europe and the UK. Our work has traditionally focused on finding innovative ways to empower and enable individuals and groups to address social concerns such as access to health care, education, human rights issues and the prevention of exploitation.

At the outbreak of the conflict in February 2022 the team at Link Int. was immediately aware of the need to prepare, communicate, train and enable individuals, groups, charities and churches in North Wales for the arrival of Ukrainian women, children and men to this area.

The following document is not a formal report, but is rather a reflective account for our team, donors and partners looking back at the plans and progress that we have made since March. We have included some highlights from our experiences, some challenges and also many positive results that have brought help and support to our Ukrainian guests.

We have included details about some of the activities that we have facilitated and supported and the feedback from the people and groups that we have engaged with. From this, we can use the learning that has taken place and as part of this grassroots collaborative work, we will continue to make a difference throughout the communities of North Wales.

December 2022

Background, Vision and Plan	Community Hubs Model	Priorities, Progress and Updates
Opportunities and Challenges	Listening to and Learning from all	Identifying and Reducing the Barriers
Safeguarding and Risks of Exploitation	Connections and Partnerships	Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Background

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24th 2022, led to the start of one of the largest 'mass-exodus' and movement of displaced people in recent European history. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian nationals fled their homes and most headed to the Western part of their country and into the bordering countries of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. For many, their journeys went further throughout the continent of Europe, as government agencies, charities and faith groups rushed to welcome, accommodate and support the mainly women and children who needed help urgently.

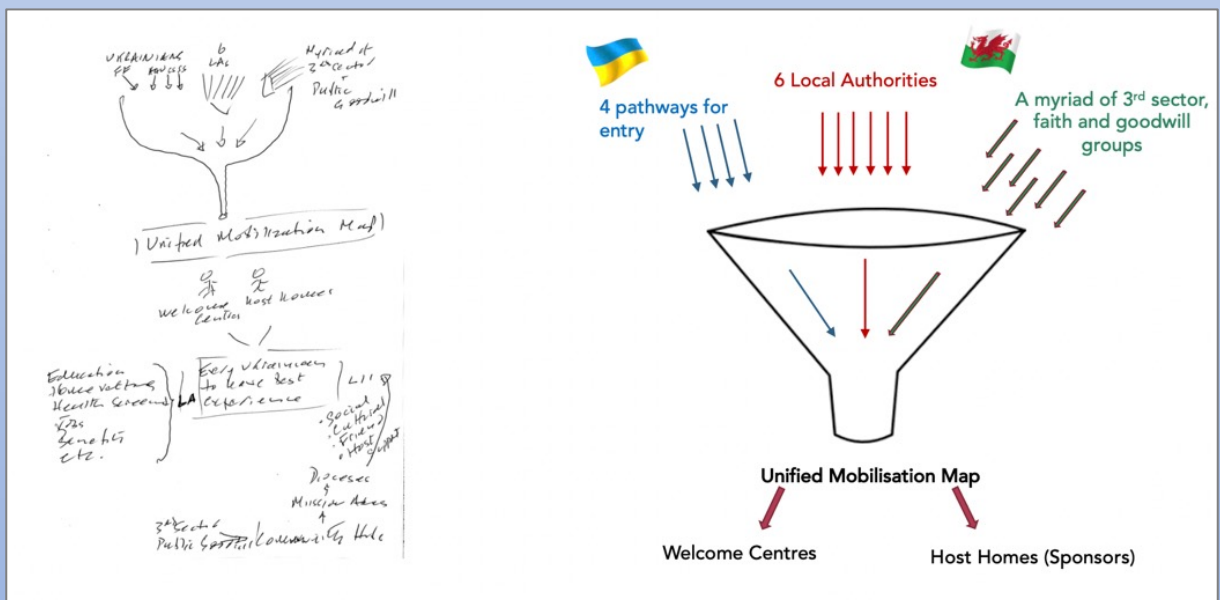
Link International's vision developed with a focus on utilising the local skills and resources, and the structures that were already in place throughout North Wales. In this way an existing bank of support and expertise could be harnessed without starting from scratch or reinventing any community development and outreach models that were already in place. North Wales has six counties, and throughout this region there is one health board with existing 'community support hubs', two Church in Wales Dioceses (St Asaph and Bangor) and many other faith, community and third sector groups, as well as six voluntary councils that work alongside the local authorities and statutory agencies.

Vision and Plan

We began to reach out to the North Wales community and develop our vision and plan as a practical and manageable way to move forward and build momentum. As the UK introduced visas for Ukrainian nationals through the 'Friends and Family' and the 'Homes for Ukraine' schemes, our preparations and conversations with many people continued, and the first families started to arrive in this area. Later in the year guests came in larger numbers on the Welsh Government 'Super Sponsor' route and by then we had a structure that was evolving to meet many of the needs as they arose.

Link International provided a contact point for local people who wanted to welcome and host guests into their homes, using our website as an important point of contact for advice, training and information sharing (Link-International.org/Ukraine).

Our vision started with a sketch of what we believed was needed locally in bringing all parties together.



Our first conversations began in March 2022 with churches and charities as we mapped what facilities and resources might be available going forward.



Community Hubs

The concept of many different cogs moving around in unity to create a productive machine was key, as we imagined how to bring so many elements, skills, people and resources together effectively. In addition to talking with third sector, faith and community groups we understood the importance of engaging with and supporting the developing strategies of the local authorities and statutory agencies as a 'unified mobilisation map' began to be created.



Our focus and efforts were built on the concept of local community hubs, where resources could be pooled, and expertise brought into villages and towns in this area led by local people who wanted to offer their time, skills and resources.



The collective vision and mission statements with our partners stressed the importance of supporting each other and working together. We are particularly grateful to the Flintshire Resettlement Lead for his input in introducing this vision and plan for the region.

“Every community is unique and has something special to offer the Ukrainian guests. We want their experience living in North Wales to be positive, welcoming and inclusive and for each person to thrive”.

“Our aim is to create a positive everyday life for the many people from Ukraine who are settled in North Wales by mobilising the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.”

COMMUNITY HUBS

Working Together Across North Wales

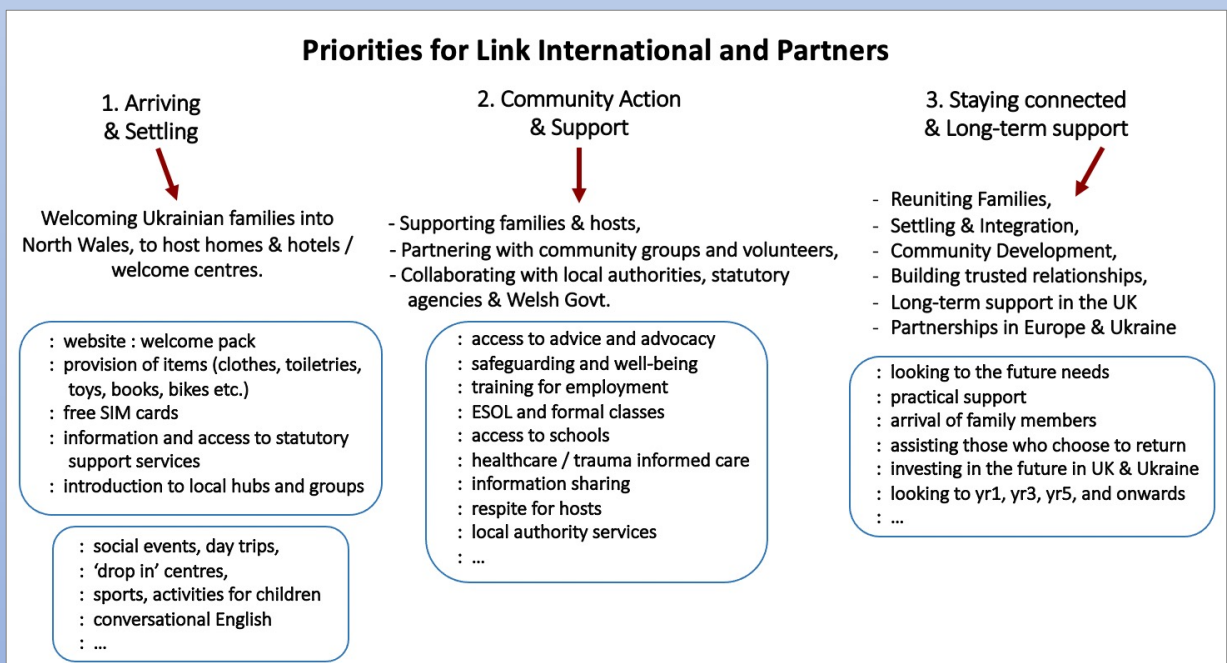
RESOURCES FOR HOSTS & HUBS

Priorities

From the start our model of work was to enable and empower individuals and groups who wanted to get involved, and provide the appropriate and available support. We chose to never 'own' a specific project ourselves, and in this way Link International has been able to work across county boundaries in various roles for advice, advocacy, training and practical support. Our website has become a source of a great deal of important and current information for Ukrainian guests, hosts, hubs, community and faith groups.

Throughout the early months of 2022 when there were a lot of unknowns and little formal structure in place, Link Int. offered support to anyone who contacted us to ask for advice and information, through calls and online events, our website pages and especially the digital welcome pack for Ukrainians who were arriving in this area.

Having taken part in various meetings with the Welsh Government around five tiers of planning, Link Int. produced and committed to three priorities for our work, for the short, medium and long-term support for all involved.



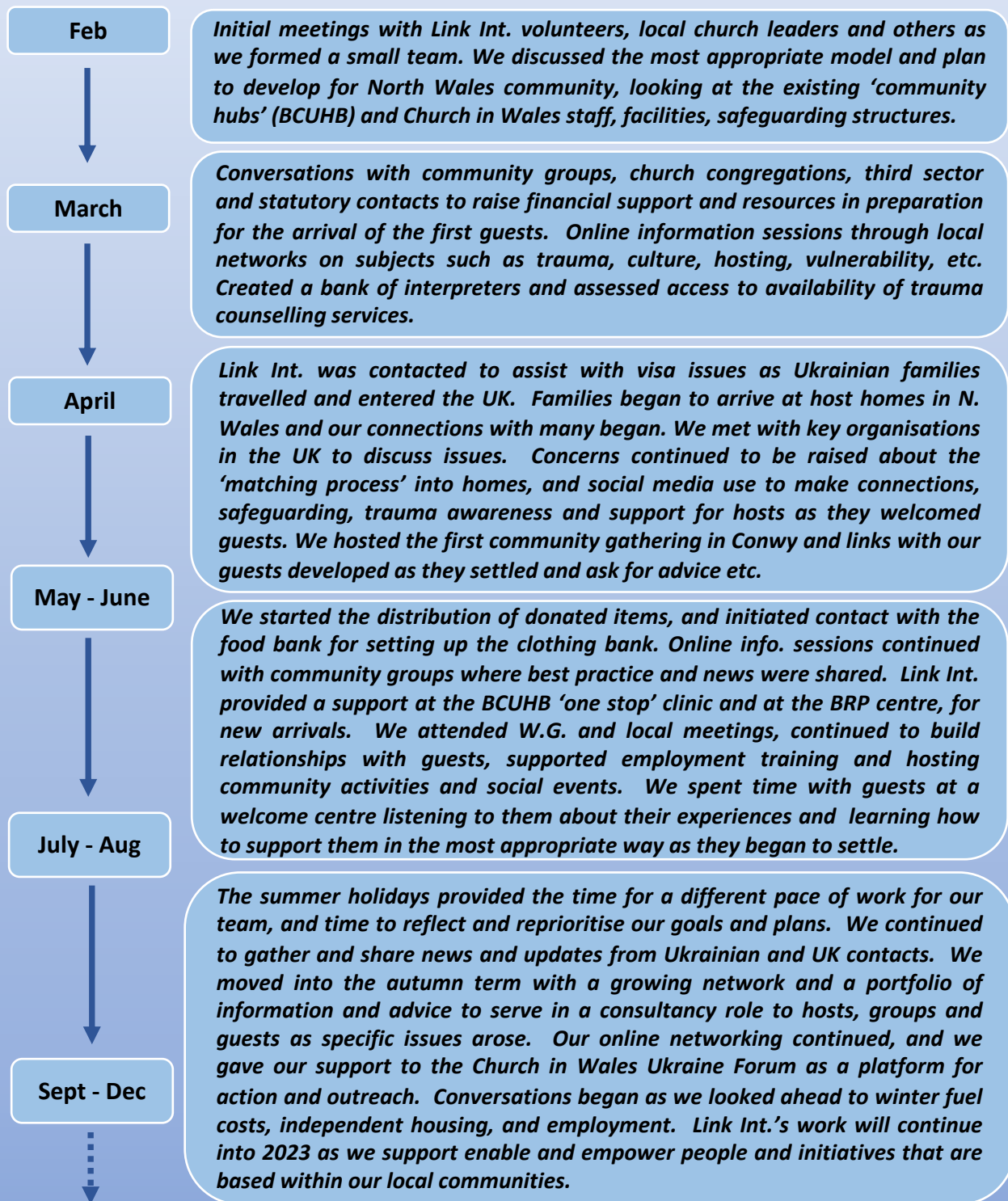
Monitoring Our Progress



(Link International and Partners' Updates)

Throughout the year regular updates have been posted on the website about our work and news from partners, regional hubs and contacts in North Wales. The website, the online networking meetings and personal communication have been a rich source of information and learning during this period of time, where everyone learnt to be very flexible in adapting to the changing needs, challenges and circumstances.

Some highlights of the process and progress throughout the year



Spring 2022

1. Arriving and Settling

During the first stage of 'arriving and settling' we coordinated the collection and distribution of clothes, toiletries, SIM cards and participated in local information and advice sessions. We also hosted one of the first community events in May, welcoming over 100 Ukrainian guests to a local hotel where they met others and were able to share their personal stories, the children played together, enjoyed a meal and activities. The main purpose of this day was to enable our guests to connect and begin to build community for themselves.

Thank you so much for such a warm gathering! It was so nice, and we enjoyed it. The children were very happy that they could meet and play and speak their native language. As adults we were so happy to meet each other and tell our stories to each other and support each other. Thank you so much !!! (attendee)

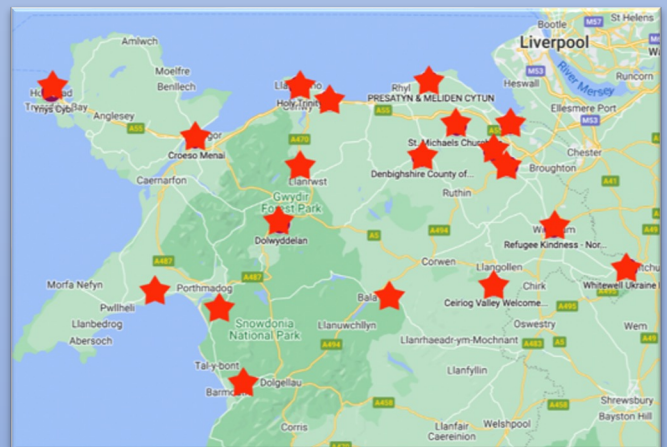
We have hosted two large events since then welcoming over 180 guests and some UK hosts. This has led to regular gatherings where Ukrainians in the area are meeting together to sharing food that they prepare for themselves and having time to relax. There are also local groups meeting for conversational language classes and cultural events and concerts.

Throughout March and April Link International facilitated several online sessions and as the local network grew and we were able to connect with organisations in Wales, the UK and Europe to gather and disseminate appropriate information and advice.

We talked with people in various community groups throughout North Wales and heard about the ideas and activities that had begun to develop, learned about the concerns and issues, and encouraged many to reach out and work with others, so that together we could share best practice and provide the best possible support for all.

We delivered sessions on trauma, cultural differences, safeguarding, vulnerability and risks of exploitation as well as looking at the expectations and responsibilities of hosting in a private home, benefits available etc. while also developing the concepts around community hubs in a very organic and grass-roots way according to each area. We are grateful for input from experts in these subjects including Dr Glenn Miles, and from in depth discussions with Tan y Maen, iCan and local psychotherapists on an approach to and access for trauma counselling in North Wales. We also signposted to resources and training online.

Link International has participated in the Welsh Government's External Stake Holders group throughout the year with the Minister for Social Justice where we were able to share about our work in North Wales and learn from others involved in the initial support for Ukrainian arrivals into Wales. We have continued to attend meetings throughout the year as the Super Sponsor scheme was launched and the increase of support that was needed by the large number of Ukrainian guests who came into the welcome centres and hotels in North Wales.



2. Community Action & Support

As we have got to know many of the families and individuals who had arrived in this area and learned about their needs, we have become involved in more specific assistance for medical support, bicycles, language classes, education etc. We have frequently been contacted by UK hosts for advice and sometimes to advocate around difficult issues. It is very important that we listen to those on the front-line of this situation and to the Ukrainian guests as to what their expectations are and what they want or need.

Thank you so much for your help. I hope that one day we can invite you to our beautiful country Ukraine and share a meal with you. I hope that the sky above our country is peaceful again and we can invite you to our home. (guest)

Opportunities and Challenges

Having spent time meeting with Ukrainian guests shortly after they arrived and listening to them about their experiences, the areas of most concern shared with us include the need to learn English, to find work and to settle in a secure place to live and go to school.

Those people who were staying with UK hosts should have been supported by their hosts, taken to the advice and information clinics, registered with doctors, health care checks etc. and this was a very manageable process in the early part of the year for those coming on the Homes for Ukraine visa scheme. In some of the local counties the experienced resettlement officers and teams were able to reach out very effectively to the new arrivals, while those counties that did not previously have such a team in place took longer.

It is important to remember that nobody was prepared for the work that had to be done in 2022. There is a limited number of experts who have knowledge of the best way to work with displaced people in such numbers with potentially complex trauma needs, certainly with cultural and language barriers, and our approach had to be dynamic as time went on.



“As we continue to support our Ukrainian guests it is important that we bring them into our conversations, and listen to them about their wants, needs and expectations.”

On the arrival of the larger numbers into hotels and welcome centres the work took on a more urgent pace, and the role of third sector organisations and charities such as Link International became one in which we supported the work being done by the statutory agencies.

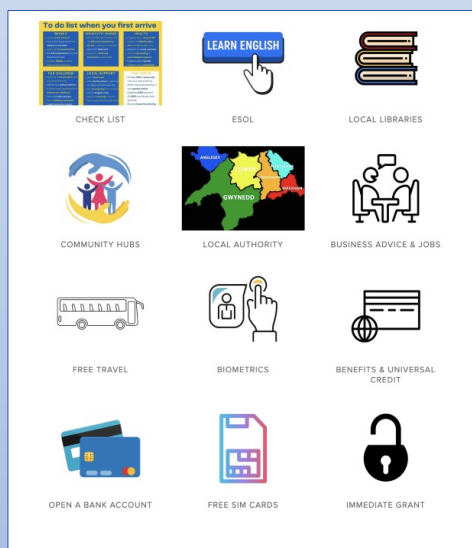
This period of time was not straight forward at all, and we began to hear concerns and discontent from new arrivals, hosts and local people. The conflict brought so much uncertainty and confusion to the nation of Ukraine and further afield, and nobody was prepared for such a massive movement of people with needs for their security, housing and food to be met.

Many British people opened their arms and homes to help, and without much thought or preparation applied to take in strangers from a completely different culture. For some this has led to major issues, misunderstandings and the break-down of relationships. As human beings we do not share the same values, habits and attitudes. Many UK hosts had not prepared for the financial implications that hosting guests would bring and especially in the economic climate that has since hit the UK. Some of these problems have continued over the months and we have been involved in various conversations around the complexity of cultural differences, inappropriate behaviour and expectations.

Throughout the year we have actively engaged with the Ukrainian guests in many settings, including in the advice clinics, in the welcome centres, hotels and in the community, as well as at social and cultural events.

We have also talked to community, faith, third sector, local authorities, political and business leaders which gave us a great deal of insight into the issues, needs and barriers needed to be considered.

The Link International website has become a source for information and advice for all, as we have learnt about issues and concerns, researched solutions and offered help to anyone who contacted us, whether they are Ukrainian guests, hosts, churches or community groups.



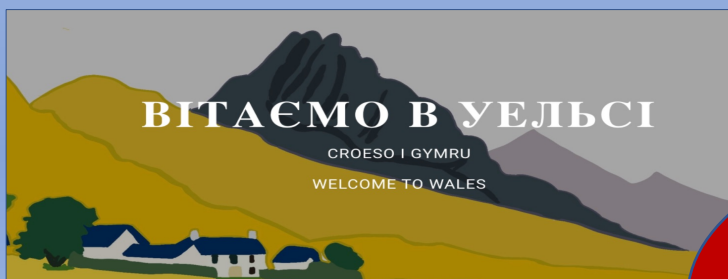
Link International created a virtual welcome pack on our website as we began to identify potential barriers for many Ukrainians in settling and becoming integrated and self-sufficient in local communities.

As we have developed our work throughout the year we have learned as much as possible about the cultural differences and traditions of our guests, and we have met with the Ukrainian Scouting Association in Great Britain at their annual camp meeting. We are very grateful to The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Bohdan Matwijczuk and Mrs Matwijczuk for their pastoral support and insights as we have hosted guests locally in Conwy.

A priority for all the work that we have done is the understanding and knowledge that we are working with and for women, men and children who have come from a different culture to ours, who may have experienced great trauma on their journey, loss and confusion along the way, and are now faced with immediate and long-term uncertainty. The best support for these people has to be holistic and inclusive as show dignity and respect.

The Hiraeth Effect

We felt that as the many people from Ukraine came to Wales, they brought with them so many feelings of uncertainty for what was to come. Many will have a deep sense of longing for their homes and their homeland. "Our desire is that they feel so welcome, and have such a deep sense of belonging, that when they return to Ukraine, to visit or to resettle, they have hiraeth for the land this word belongs to."



*Hir fu'ch taith a mawr eich ofnau
Ond cewch yma groeso Cymru;
Boed ich orffwys 'nawr o'r diwedd,
Boed ich gennym hafan hedd.*



UKRAINIAN FRIENDS AND FAMILIES LINK

Listening to and Learning from Everyone Involved

On July 13th Link Int. was represented at the welcome centre in Bangor for the visit of the Vicar General of the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of London. During the day the Ukrainian guests were asked to share about their experiences since arriving in the UK, and what they felt were the greatest needs that they had at this time. The guests included those currently living in the centre who were all single adults, and families and couples who were being hosted in the area. A short report on this event is available on the Link Int. website ([Link International Bangor visit](#))

During one of our online regional sharing sessions in July 2022, we asked our non-statutory partners several questions so that we could learn from one another about the work being done. Comments are including in Appendix 1.

The questions were:

- What are the highlights of your activities so far?
- What issues and problems have you encountered so far?
- What plans are you considering for the autumn and winter?
- What are the Ukrainian guests saying that they need and want?

Participants at this meeting represented initiatives taking place in the six counties of North Wales and were involved in one or more of the following activities :

- Advice and advocacy
- Activities and Social events
- Language Skills
- Distribution of clothes
- Financial and practical
- Youth work, camps
- Parents and toddlers
- Hosts
- Other

“Thank you so much to everyone who has welcomed us into your town. We have left our homes and all that is familiar to us, and we needed your help when we arrived. We do not want to take everything from you for nothing and for now we have enough, so please let us settle and find our way to live among you until we are able to go home.” (guest)

A very interesting comment that we have heard several times during discussions was that **‘many people did not want to be pampered anymore’**. They were incredibly grateful for the clothes, toiletries, gifts and toys and all the attention when they arrived in homes, hotels and reception centres but they wanted to settle and be able to move forward themselves as proud independent people. We know that this is not the case with all, but it is important to remember.

We identified priorities coming from many of our conversations and began to consider how we could be involved while supporting the local authorities in their efforts to assist the Ukrainians to settle and thrive. The communication with local groups was very important as we learned about the activities taking place throughout the region, as we have included some examples of specific events and initiatives as part of our reflection process.

We have also listened to and learned a lot from our Ukrainian guests throughout the year as they have faced the uncertainties of leaving their homes to come to Wales. There are many challenges to come as changes are made around accommodation and support and the conflict continues in Ukraine. We remain committed to stage 3 of Link Int.’s Priorities as we look to the long-term support that will be needed

Identifying and Reducing some of the Barriers

Examples of concerns that arose and actions taken to assist

- **Language** - access to ESOL and conversational English,
- **Employment** - access to training and jobs,
- **Housing and Accommodation** - to enable everyone to settle,
- **Education** - to attend school, college or university for students,
- **Access to the internet and communication** with family and work
- **Health Care** - medical and dental,
- Initiatives to enable our guests to **'build community'** for themselves,
- **Official Support & Legal Advice** available in Wales and the UK,
- **Safeguarding** and Identifying Vulnerability and Risks of Exploitation,
- **Long-term Support** for all after the initial six months and into the Future

Language

The majority of arrivals into North Wales did not have a good level of English which was an immediate need to address. Many arrived at end of spring and there were few provisions in place for ESOL classes at that time. We reached out to the community to ask for support with formal classes and conversational English gatherings. Many of the guests benefitted throughout the summer through informal social events, and then as colleges opened classes and language level testing into the autumn term. Conversational English was promoted at community hubs and have continued to be a great resource as skills have grown and relationships developed.

go north wales tourism & hospitality academy

Вам потрібна абсолютно нова можливість?

Північний Уельс є одним з найпопулярніших і привабливих місць для відвідування. У нашому секторі туризму та гостинності пропонується сотні різних типів вакансій, і ми хочемо допомогти вам знайти ту, яка ідеально підходить саме вам.

Ти будеш:

- ✦ Ви живете в Англії, Гвінеї, Котів чи Дембшир?
- ✦ Ви зараз не працюєте і вам 25+?
- ✦ Бажаєте набутти впевненості, познайомитися з новими людьми та отримати цінні навички?
- ✦ В Академії туризму та гостинності Go North Wales ми розробили нову програму спеціально для вас.
- ✦ Візьміть участь у серії веселих та інтерактивних майстер-класів, де ви дізнаєтеся, у чому ви справді вмієте, і як зробити перший крок у світ туризму та гостинності.
- ✦ Зв'яжіться з двома фантастичними компаніями Північного Уельсу, які шукають таких же людей, як ви.
- ✦ Маєте наставника, який буде хворувати та підтримувати вас протягом програми.

Хочете дізнатися більше? Відвідайте наш веб-сайт gonorthwales.academy або зателефонуйте члену нашої команди за номером 01492 531731

Підключення | Підтримка | Досвід | Навички | Знання | Приналежність

go north wales

WcVA Wales Community Voice

CgGC Cardiff Gateway Gateway

Європейський Союз
Європейський фонд регіонального розвитку
European Regional Development Fund

Employment

Many people wanted to find work to become self-sufficient and independent as soon as possible. In order to find jobs the obvious barriers were language and access to opportunities. Link Int. contacted the CEO of North Wales Tourism /Go North Wales, who offered to deliver a three day training course for Ukrainians. The first took place in Conwy County in the summer where skills were assessed and information shared about jobs opportunities in the tourism sector.

Housing and Accommodation

The issue around accommodation for Ukrainian guests has been a difficult one and continues to change. We welcomed people into host homes, hotels and centres through the various visa schemes.

It has not be an easy process to find homes for the large number of people who have arrived into North Wales, and this is a changing situation, for at the end of the year the Welsh Government has announced new arrangements. We have been involved in supporting hosts, in advocacy around complications and disagreements, in helping guests to settle in homes and in looking for rental properties. We have met with some whose arrangements have fallen through and then have urgent needs. We have raised issues around the need for change of use permission for holiday lets to long-term rentals, and we continue to engage with statutory agencies on this issue.

Education

The young people and children from Ukraine arrived into our communities experiencing so much uncertainty, having fled their homes, neighbourhoods, schools and universities. Friends have been separated and many families are now living apart from each other, with normality gone. During our first interaction with the children at community events we saw the trauma that many were going through, and the effects of a new culture and language on them. We highlighted the need for informal social gathering as well as the importance for all to find a school or place of learning as soon as possible.

Highlights for us have included

- supporting a young woman to access the English language exam that has enabled her to begin a degree in a North Wales university.
- approaching and working with a private school in North Wales to admit a pupil who had been unsuccessful in gaining a place in a local authority school.
- an invitation by sixth formers in a local high school to assist them as they have taken the initiative to help the Ukrainian pupils who have arrived and need support with English language and resources to enable them to learn and thrive within the school community.

Access to the Internet and Communication

Being connected to the internet and able to communicate with loved ones in Ukraine and Europe is seen as almost a 'human right' in today's society! Many of the Ukrainians were employed in their country online, and some university students took classes on the internet. As guests arrived and began to settle, we were able to distribute over 3500 Vodafone SIM cards so that internet connection was possible. We were made aware that one of the locations being used to accommodate a large number of guests in North Wales did not have adequate internet and we reported this concern to Welsh Government as the lack of access to the wider world was an issue for many. This issue was solved when the guests were moved to a different location.

Access to Health Care

We have provided advice for individuals who arrived with long-standing medical conditions and needed access to doctors and pharmacists so that prescribed medication could continue. As health care is a statutory responsibility for each Local Authority we provided links to six LAs in North Wales on our website and to the BCUHB community hubs.

Building Community

From the arrival of the first Ukrainian guests and the community events that we facilitated, our priority was to be inclusive and encouraging so that people formed connections and groups together depending on the location where they were staying, age of children, relationships that formed naturally and aspects of life that they found they had in common. From the big gatherings at Beechwood Court in Conwy to the shared meals at the Haven Café in Llandudno and the Fish and Chip suppers in Porthmadog, the cultural concerts, trips and social days, we have been so encouraged to see our guests and local hosts make plans to meet and keep in touch through their own social media networks, where support and community has grown for itself. This is such a positive model of inter-cultural community development in action.

Official Support and Legal Advice

The Link Int. website has become a source of information for anyone looking for advice and support, and we provided a bilingual contact form for anyone to connect with our team on our welcome page ([Contact Link International](#)).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is one of our top priorities as we engage with hosts, voluntary groups and local individuals, as well as our Ukrainian guests. The Link Int. website gives clear guidance about working with children and vulnerable adults in accordance with the Welsh Government guidelines and we recommend that all of our partners and volunteers, including interpreters and translators, complete the Welsh Government's Safeguarding e-learning course. We also promote and share relevant information about DBS requirements and signpost to the City of Sanctuary and Welcome Churches guidance. ([Link International Safeguarding](#))

We have been made aware of various safeguarding issues which have caused concern. For example, accounts where guests are told to clean, cook or even engage in inappropriate behaviour with hosts, members of the community who may have good intentions arrive at local hotels, walk through reception and knock on the bedroom doors of guests, without any consideration that this is that person's home, and privacy and respect must be given.

Volunteers who refuse DBS checks or to work with others in the activities that they want to do with guests are encouraged to build some accountability with the local authority, the voluntary councils or others who are active in this space. We want to ensure that volunteers and guests are safe at all times and that there is a sense of belonging and value for all in activities that take place.

Highlighting the Risks around Exploitation

Throughout the year Link Int. has worked closely with Haven of Light ([Haven of Light](#)) which is a local charitable organisation that focuses on the issues of exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking.



We made connections with organisations in the bordering countries of Ukraine within days of the conflict starting, and with the European Freedom Network. We attended many online briefings as the conflict escalated and heard about the serious concerns being raised around human trafficking risks and cases as people fled their homes

([European Freedom Network/ Ukraine response](#)).

Reports from the region included rape of women and girls, the kidnapping of children and a very alarming rise in online searches, for the OSCE states that "'Ukrainian porn' increased 600% since the start of the humanitarian crisis, while searches for 'Ukrainian escorts' increased 200%. These data confirm a spiking demand for sexual access to Ukrainian women, and this demand will serve as a strong incentive for traffickers to recruit and exploit Ukrainian women." ([Identifying and Mitigating Risks of Trafficking](#)).

Link Int. has worked closely with Haven of Light to highlight the issues around and modern slavery and human trafficking. When a person finds themselves in a situation of vulnerability due to conflict or forced displacement the risks around exploitation increase. This may be the case for many people this year due to the situation in Ukraine and instability in Russia.

In our online sessions we have presented on the definitions and facts of modern slavery and human trafficking as a serious crime, which may include grooming for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, debt bondage, forced criminality and labour exploitation.

It is very important that everyone who is working with our guests are made aware that some may have experienced abuse and trauma and may not have disclosed this to anyone. An understanding of vulnerability and trauma-informed support should be a priority and not to assume anything about a person. The risks of exploitation to Ukrainian nationals and need to raise awareness are as relevant to those arriving in North Wales as to those travelling and settling throughout Europe.



In June 2020 we published an article for the G20 Interfaith Forum Viewpoints;
“The Risks of Human Trafficking and Exploitation as a Result of the War in Ukraine.”

(Link International for IF20 Ukraine)

In the UK the Modern Slavery Strategy highlights the 4 P’s model in dealing with this crime, and our role as a charity working with potentially vulnerable women, children and men is to train and inform all partners about the importance of *prevention protection, preparation and prosecution*. This model is also followed in North Wales by law enforcement and other agencies as part of the North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Board’s strategy.

(North Wales V&E Strategy)

We have particularly highlighted the risks around grooming, safe recruitment and working practices. Link Int. produced a bilingual leaflet entitled ‘**Working Safe**’ in collaboration with Haven of Light and resources shared by Stop the Traffik.

Working Safe



As you are looking for work it is important to know how to find employment safely.

1. Tell people where you are working. Note down the address and share it with your friends and family. You can also send them a photo of the address and share your location on your phone.
2. Save emergency numbers on your mobile phone and always keep it with you. Make note of support organisations that can help you.
3. Always keep your ID, travel, and personal documents safe. Do not let your employer hold on to them.
4. Employment contracts can be there to protect you. The lack of a contract poses a risk to your working rights, such as being paid for your work.

If it doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t.

Indicators of suspicious recruitment

Some job ads posted online might not be legitimate. You should be suspicious of any recruitment process which has any of the following characteristics:

1. The employer demands secrecy
2. Recruiters pressure you, for example demanding personal information too early in the hiring process
3. You are not told the salary for the role at any stage in the hiring process
4. The organisation has minimal online presence
5. You are asked to pay a fee to secure the job
6. The trial period is indefinite
7. You are told that an employment contract is not required
8. The recruiter does not check your right to work

HAFAN OLEUNI



www.havenoflight.co.uk

**If you need local support or advice, please contact us
cymru@link-international.org**



www.stophetraffik.org/ukraine

The Ukrainian version of this leaflet is included in appendix 2 and also the live links to help lines.

Connections and Partnerships

During 2022, Link International has engaged with and have been supported by many organisations and groups such as Haven of Light, Beechwood Court, Sanctuary Trust / Conwy Food Bank, Home-Start Conwy, the Haven Café, The Llandudno Trinity Centre, Llandudno and District Soroptimists, The Llandudno, Penmaenmawr and Friendswood (Texas,USA) Rotary Clubs, Go North Wales, the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, the Resettlement Leads in Local Authorities and CVSC.



We have also worked with ministers and congregations within St Asaph Diocese and Bangor Diocese, of the Church in Wales with special thanks to Holy Trinity in Llandudno, the Aberconwy Mission Area, St Paul's Church in Craig y Don, Prince's Drive Baptist Church, Antioch Church. We acknowledge the great work done by Criccieth Family Church and others in Barmouth, Bala, Rhyl and Prestatyn. We are very grateful to The Very Reverend Protopresbyter Bohdan Matwijczuk and Mrs Matwijczuk, Bethany International (MN, USA), Church of the Open Door (MN, USA), the European Freedom Network and many others. At a UK wide level we are indebted to [Sanctuary Foundation](#), [Opora](#) and [Welcome Churches](#) for their resources, training and advice.

We have continuously returned to and looked at our original plan, vision and priorities and adapted our work along the way as situations changed and developed to meet needs of our guests. This has been a journey of learning and reflection for us, our partners and contacts, and we believe that this model of inclusive community action is very important.

March planning

1. Welcoming Ukrainian Families into North Wales

<p>Welcome Centres & Community Hubs</p> 	<p>Events</p> <p>These are very important for the Ukrainian families to have a private 'safe' space to <u>meet together</u> and build their community.</p> <p>Cultural events, concerts, <u>organised</u> trips and meals are so valuable in creating a sense of normality for all.</p> <p>Activities for children which enable them to speak their own language and have fun together!</p>
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The learning continues as we see what has worked and what has not. We have provided regular updates about our work to Welsh Government and local leaders. We have become well connected with community groups, hosts and guests, while maintaining our plan to not own or control any specific project.

We have seen several wonderful community initiatives spring into life, and as a result Ukrainian guests and local people have met together, sharing ideas and getting things done for themselves with a real sense of ownership and pride.

A Few Examples of Collaboration

Throughout the year there have been various initiatives set up in communities across North Wales, and many have brought together local people and the newly arrived guests. Link Int.'s website lists some of the hubs and projects that we have been involved with in one way or another.

March planning

2. Community Action		
<i>Advice, Support and Advocacy</i>	<i>Safeguarding and Wellbeing</i>	<i>Partnerships and Collaboration</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ukrainian guests - UK hosts / sponsors - Local volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training and Information sharing about the risks of exploitation / trafficking - Local team: pastoral visitors - Practical support and friendship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LAs : Conwy Council - BCUHB - Voluntary Councils : eg CVSC - Haven of Light - Church in Wales - Soroptimists - Homestart - etc.

Every initiative has developed in its own way depending on who is involved, the needs and requests, the resources and facilities available. In Llandudno and Colwyn Bay in Conwy County several points of contact for the Ukrainians have been used to provide information, free food, community spaces for social and cultural events, in addition to the support provided by the council and statutory agencies in the town.

LLANDUDNO COMMUNITY HUB



Local churches and a community centre have become common places for the guests, particularly after the arrival of a large number into the town in early summer. Many members of the town have welcomed the guests and offered cooking facilities for shared meal, support for school children in language study, access to sports and leisure facilities. We were delighted to work with a church congregation to provide a Christmas tree and gifts to a group who were being accommodated in a hotel in the town. The Llandudno Hub has an active facebook page.

(Case Study Llandudno and Colwyn Bay)

COLWYN BAY COMMUNITY HUB

In Colwyn Bay a support hub has been set up by the congregation of Antioch Church in their community building @20 Station Road. Ukrainian guests are able to access ESOL support and conversational English. For several months Colwyn Bay library was the site for Ukrainian nationals to access the BRP service for biometric cards to be processed.

In the spring Link Int. approached Sanctuary Trust which runs the Conwy Food Bank, and we are very grateful for their willingness to offer space for a clothing bank to be set up and we were delighted that Llandudno and District Soroptimists accepted our request to help and manage this project.



'NORTH WALES SOUTH CRESCENT'

In the area of North Wales which we have called the 'south crescent' a wonderful collaboration has developed between various local people, churches, business owners and guests. Social events have taken place in the Merioneth Yacht Club, a summer of activities for children, language support, a 'warm winter clothing' gathering, and in December a 'fish and chip' supper in Porthmadog attended by over 60 people as their first Advent get-together which we supported.

Organised social events have proved to be especially important for families and individuals living in this part of North Wales as due to the rural nature of the communities, some of the Ukrainian guests have found that they are being hosted many miles from others with limited access to public transport.

A lot of support has been offered through local churches such as the Church in Wales in Bala and Barmouth, and by Criccieth Family Church.



(Case Study North Wales South Crescent)

Reference to other community projects and hubs can be found on the website.

(Link International Community Hubs)

CHURCH IN WALES : NORTH WALES UKRAINE FORUM

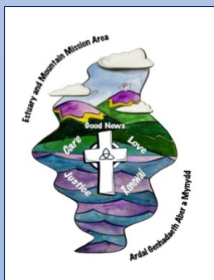


At the beginning of our work in March 2022 our vision around the importance of community hubs came from our connections with the Church in Wales, and the fact that in every town and village there is a church represented in which there are experienced clergy and lay people with all the skills, professionalism, safeguarding structures and compassion needed for this urgent action. Together we needed to prepare for, welcome and support the women, children and men from Ukraine in the best way that we could. One of Link Int.'s first online sessions was promoted by the Church in Wales nationally as we began to inform congregations and members of communities about what would soon be needed. (Link International and the Church in Wales).

Many ministers and their congregations understood what was needed and set to work to provide comprehensive support for all. For example, the collection of clothing, toys and toiletries for a reception centre in Denbighshire, facilities for language support and social events, advice and advocacy, well-being and pastoral support, which has



continued throughout the year.



In the 'Mountain Churches of Halkyn, Rhosesmor and Rhesycae' in the Diocese of St Asaph, Eucharist Prayers have been written in Ukrainian and English for Advent, which has been shared throughout the Diocese as churches continue to welcome and support guests to services as well as community events throughout the week. *This and future liturgy is available through Link International.*

Another initiative that deserves recognition for the amazing support provided to guests is that of the Church in Wales in Prestatyn. The church's team set up a hub in the spring of 2022 to help Ukrainian families in the local area who had arrived into host homes, but suddenly found themselves reaching out to a very large group who had been placed into a holiday camp at the beginning of the summer. This created a real need for essentials as some families that we met had arrived with very little indeed. This large group was later moved closer to Rhyl and again the local Church began to reach out to provide well-being care and goods for the families. Many clergy and lay members of various churches have been serving as pastoral visitors at the welcome centres and accommodation where Ukrainian families have been living since their arrival, and preparations for Christmas in both British and Ukrainian calendars have been made throughout the region, as well as gifts donated by other local churches.

We are incredibly grateful to one church in the Aberconwy Mission Area for the support shown towards a young Ukrainian guest who as a highly accomplished young pianist and student of music requested our help in finding a piano which she could play for her daily practice. What a thrill to have access to a beautiful grand piano, the service of a local piano tuner and keys to the church which has allowed our guest to play for several hours each day. Something very practical, which has brought a sense of normality and security to one person at this time of great uncertainty.

Through the collaborative efforts of the Church in Wales Forum, this work will continue into the months ahead as the situation for the Ukrainian families around housing, health, financial needs well-being etc. may arise.

Looking Back : Reflection from some of our Experiences

As families arrived in North Wales there was a very positive response and willingness to help in so many practical ways. We are very grateful to many local people and organisations who met with us and offered and delivered such innovative assistance. Local organisations and groups were incredibly generous when there was a plea for clothes to be donated to guests at hotels and an arrival centre in the region. Going further than this, Home Start Conwy then began to source and deliver bicycles and toys for families as they settled.

The Soroptimists welcomed our invitation to get involved and soon joined forces with Sanctuary Trust to open the Conwy Clothing Bank. The collective effort of so many people, charities and community groups has been very encouraging and greatly appreciated by our Ukrainian guests. At the beginning of June we took some time to look at our progress to date, the connections we had made and the outcomes that we wanted to see going forward. These points were published on our website.

Link International Impact Report



Collaborated with 7 international organisations



Collaborated with 5 UK-wide organisations



Collaborated with 3 All-Wales organisations



Represented on the WG External Stakeholders Group



Partnered with 18 organisations across Wales



Worked with over 100 Ukrainians directly and supported them with :

Represented on the WCVA 3rd Sector Group

Specifically worked to support Conwy Council with :

- -Developed a digital Welcome Pack
- Wrap around Clinics at Argyll Road
- Social events for Ukrainians
- Establishing Local support hubs
- developing a follow up and tracking strategy for Ukrainians
- Pioneered a follow up Review for Hosts

- Travel & Health Emergencies
- Housing
- Matching with hosts
- Visa applications
- ESOL/EAL
- Social integration
- Welcome Information
- Welcome bags
- School Uniform



Highlighted the 'Hiraeth' Effect

- Provide opportunities for people from Ukraine to meet together, support each other, create home from home
- Provide opportunities for people from Ukraine to set up their own businesses
- Harness the resources of the Ukraine people to support themselves emotional, socially and economically



Training & Information

- Built information webpages and maintained with up-to-date information
- Safeguarding Training
- Trauma Awareness Training
- Human Trafficking Awareness Training
- Hosting support Training
- School integration Support for Ukrainian children
- Church Pastoral Teams Training



Support for Hosts

- 1:1 consultation & personal reviews
- Interpreters
- Training Packages
- Respite, re-energising & regrouping offering free 'holiday' accommodation
- Working with holiday accommodation providers for free week/weekend stays

**Impact Report
June 2022**

At this time we also looked at the expectations that we had moving forward into the summer months and beyond, and presented four main '**desirable outcomes**' which were,

1. *Communities are aware about the needs, and motivated to improve the quality of life, of refugees and their families.*
2. *Barriers in the community are reduced or removed for refugees and their family members.*
3. *Communities are knowledgeable about community based hubs and how community resources can be used to develop and sustain community based programmes.*
4. *Communities participate in planning, implementing and managing community based programmes.*



Since then and throughout the year there have been many successful stories shared with us from hosts and guests alike, but we have been made aware of some very difficult situations throughout the year, and at times have acted as advocates in complicated cases. For example, a large family was hosted in a holiday home at no cost to them for several months at great expense and sacrifice to the owners. Conversations began between the families about long-term viability for the family to stay and the inevitable issues around financial contributions towards bills and then potentially changing the status from being hosted under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to private rental through the local authority's role in supporting this family.

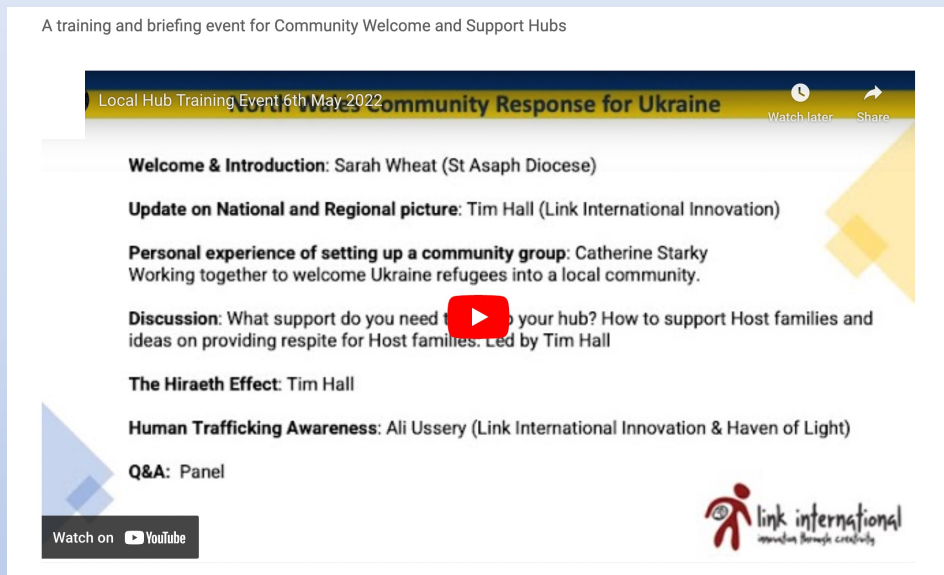
We frequently hear about the wonderful successes of households becoming like family together, or some guests finding a routine of learning English, studying and then taking on employment.

So many of the Ukrainian guests who came to North Wales are professionals with a high level qualifications and expertise in their country, and it is really important that these people find opportunities to work and earn an income.

We have also heard about very difficult situations of misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviour as relationships have become strained and broken down. This is sadly inevitable between people of all walks of life and cultures, which has to be remembered as we move into the next phase and transition for many, especially bearing in mind the new arrangements for those on the Welsh Government's Super Sponsor Scheme announced in December 2022.

The team at Link International has worked hard throughout the year as we brought together our various skills and experience in community development to enable, empower and support local groups, volunteers and guests at this time of action. We have worked closely with many, while also providing a central and online hub of information and resources to support the ongoing work throughout North Wales.

Our interactive sessions were greatly appreciated. We valued listening to all involved and gathering stories and reports, giving each a sense of ownership to everything that was happening. Several of these sessions were recorded and information made available on the website as everyone involved continued to learn from one another as the weeks went on and momentum continued.



Regional Updates

We were all part of a very dynamic community movement as we prepared, problem solved, shared best practice and learned together, during a period of time which nobody had envisaged a few weeks before, and there was so much work to be done. Link Int.'s team hoped to have led on a more formal information gathering and research initiative through the autumn and winter of 2022. This would have been done by engaging with the charities and groups we were connected with throughout the region, and through them and very importantly with the Ukrainian guests as relationships developed. We were unfortunately not commissioned to do this piece of work.

By the autumn we were moving into phase 3 of our plan and focusing on the long-term support that we could offer to the guests directly, through help with access to work, education, communication, accommodation, essential items, social events, pastoral care, and whatever came our way. We will continue to be available for all.

Funding and Support

As a charity with a small team of volunteers, the work that we were able to commit to with our partners was dependent upon the financial support raised through donations. During the year we have made the use of about £10,000 which was spent on emergency funding for essential items as guests arrived, accessing specialist support, the hosting and catering of large events, climbing wall and other activities and equipment, contributions towards helping work led by partners (ESOL access, social gatherings), Christmas gifts, books and games.

Looking Ahead : What's Next?

Our principle of empowering others and not owning a particular project has allowed us to be flexible as we share current information from statutory and government agencies, and work according to changing needs. As a charity with funding requirements, we have not made detailed plans or commitments that we cannot fulfil, but we will continue to support our guests and those working with them.

Our aim since the beginning was for all our Ukrainian guests to settle, be self-sufficient and to thrive. We want to see these families return to their country when the time is right, and we will stand with them. We will plan 2023 onward according to needs and requests, our skills and availability and will encourage others to do the same.

APPENDIX 1

Selection of Comments received Regional Meeting in July 2022

What are your Highlights so far? (selection of comments)

Meeting other organisations within the third sector in North Wales, being able to then signpost to families already with us.

The beginning of some friendships and the breaking down of barriers through social contact.

Recruiting and supporting voluntary groups and volunteers

Integrate incomers with local people through education and cultural activities

Our Drop-In Sessions have varied in attendance from none to dozens coming from all over North Wales, not just local. ESOL has suddenly moved up a gear.

Recruiting and training a fantastic group of lovely volunteers. Finding our groove so we offer a relaxed and friendly welcome; our guests know us as friends and bring new people along.

Introducing Ukrainian families to other displaced groups living here

Finding out from guests what their most pressing concerns are and trying to find creative solutions. Helping some individuals feel safe and secure. Seeing people who arrive with faces tense with stress and anxiety smile and being able to help.

Helping with medical appointments

Shopping trips

Social Gatherings and meals

Providing School supplies

Helping with educational needs

Advice about pet care

Warm winter clothes

Providing a sense of safety

Access to sports and activities

A rather two-tier system with people in Welcome Centre having agencies and services brought to them, whilst Hosts muddle through and do their best. Housing will become an issue when people have to move on from Hosts or Welcome Centres, the property market in Ukraine is COMPLETELY different from in the UK and our guests have no idea at all how difficult it is to find a place to rent.

Volunteers have limits on what they are able to provide, but they also often have the experience and transferrable skills to know how that limited resource can be best used.

Language is the principal issue although technology is helping.

It seems that in Ukraine a lot of people live in homes with district heating and constant hot water (unmetered). We think that relationships with some Hosts may become strained in the winter with worries by Hosts about Heating and energy bills.

Meeting different communities, ensuring that barriers they face are covered such as language barriers and ensuring that the organisation meets their needs.

The issue of most concern for those living with us is finding work. This is a major challenge for non-English speakers and so far (we understand that) the Job Centre hasn't been particularly helpful although the staff have been very understanding and professional.

For some people their trauma has yet to 'come out' and it is important to understand that many are very vulnerable and need professional psycho-social support. We need to have a trauma informed approach going forward.

Registration for children in local schools where there are limited places already

Voluntary groups should be encouraged to work together, share learning and experiences and work in line with what the local authority wants and needs.

Visa issues : supporting a family that arrived on 'family scheme' who needs help to find alternate accommodation and support

Finances may become an issue as we move into autumn. We need to plan to support host families with gift cards etc.

Concerns about the risks of exploitation, forced labour & human trafficking

Safeguarding concerns ...
DBS requirements for volunteers, Reports about members of community approaching single women, Working arrangements, etc.

Plans for Autumn and Winter. (selection of comments)

Regular 'drop-in' for social and conversational English

Continue welcoming people to the Clothing Bank

Social events for Ukrainians and hosts

Informal conversation classes,

Continue to work closely with the resettlement lead within the local authority to support the guests

Providing school uniform for the new term

Need for ESOL classes

Zoom club for school lesson support

Youth events

Continue to host

Intercultural performances

Ongoing sponsorship if finances permit

Staff training on working with different communities

GO North Wales
Tourism courses

Job Fair to introduce local employers to jobseekers

Big craft fair event in November for makers to sell homemade items.

Winter Warm coat/waterproofs/footwear

Social gatherings: Chat over a cup of hot drink and or meals.

Christmas gifts

Pastoral care and wellbeing events

In-person events for host families to meet and have a meal and talk about issues they are dealing with

Deliver information and awareness on the risks of exploitation and modern slavery/ human trafficking

English and Ukrainians Version of the 'Working Safe' leaflet

Безпечне працевлаштування



Коли ви шукаєте роботу, важливо знати, як її безпечно знайти.

1. Розкажіть, де ви працюєте. Вам слід записати адресу та поділитися нею з друзями та родиною. Ви також можете надіслати їм фотографію адреси та поділитися своїм місцезнаходженням на телефоні.
2. Збережіть номери екстрених служб на своєму мобільному, та завжди тримайте його поруч. Запишіть організації, які можуть вам допомогти.
3. Завжди зберігайте своє посвідчення, закордонний паспорт та особисті документи в безпеці. Не дозволяйте вашому роботодавцю їх забирати.
4. Трудовий контракт може вас захистити. Відсутність контракту ставить під загрозу ваші трудові права, наприклад, право на отримання заробітної плати.

Якщо вам здається, що щось пішло не так, то швидше за все, це так і є.

Ознаки підозрілого працевлаштування

Деякі онлайн вакансії можуть бути шахрайськими. Ви повинні ставитися з підозрою до процесу найму, який має будь-яку з наступних характеристик:

1. Роботодавець вимагає секретності
2. Рекрутери тиснуть на вас, наприклад, вимагають персональні дані занадто рано в процесі прийняття на роботу
3. На жодному етапі працевлаштування вам не розкривається заробітна плата
4. Компанія має мінімальну присутність в Інтернеті
5. Вас просять надіслати кошти, щоб влаштуватися на роботу
6. Тривалість випробувального періоду не встановлена
7. Вас переконують, що трудовий договір не потрібен
8. Рекрутер не перевіряє ваш дозвіл на роботу



Якщо вам потрібна місцева підтримка чи порада, зв'яжіться з нами

cymru@link-international.org



номери екстрених /
Emergency Numbers

анізації, які можуть вам допомогт /
Support Organisations

www.stophetraffik.org/ukraine

Working Safe



As you are looking for work it is important to know how to find employment safely.

1. Tell people where you are working. Note down the address and share it with your friends and family. You can also send them a photo of the address and share your location on your phone.
2. Save emergency numbers on your mobile phone and always keep it with you. Make note of support organisations that can help you.
3. Always keep your ID, travel, and personal documents safe. Do not let your employer hold on to them.
4. Employment contracts can be there to protect you. The lack of a contract poses a risk to your working rights, such as being paid for your work.

If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

Indicators of suspicious recruitment

Some job ads posted online might not be legitimate. You should be suspicious of any recruitment process which has any of the following characteristics:

1. The employer demands secrecy
2. Recruiters pressure you, for example demanding personal information too early in the hiring process
3. You are not told the salary for the role at any stage in the hiring process
4. The organisation has minimal online presence
5. You are asked to pay a fee to secure the job
6. The trial period is indefinite
7. You are told that an employment contract is not required
8. The recruiter does not check your right to work



If you need local support or advice, please contact us
cymru@link-international.org



REFERENCES and WEBSITE LINKS

1. **Link International Ukraine**
<http://www.link-international.org/ukraine>
2. **Link International and Partners' Updates**
<https://www.link-international.org/headline-updates>
3. **Link International Bangor Visit**
<https://www.link-international.org/s/Visit-of-Vicar-General-of-the-Ukrainian-Catholic-Cathedral-of-London.pdf>
4. **Official Support and Legal Advice**
<https://www.link-international.org/welcome>
5. **Link International Safeguarding**
<http://www.link-international.org/safeguarding>
6. **Haven of Light CIC**
<http://www.havenoflight.co.uk/>
7. **European Freedom Network**
<http://www.europeanfreedomnetwork.org/ukraine>
8. **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe :**
"Identifying and Mitigating Risks of Trafficking"
www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/c/516423_0.pdf
9. **G20 Interfaith Forum Viewpoints :**
"The Risks of Human Trafficking and Exploitation as a Result of the War in Ukraine."
<https://blog.g20interfaith.org/2022/06/17/the-risks-of-human-trafficking-and-exploitation-as-a-result-of-the-war-in-ukraine/>
10. **North Wales Vulnerability and Exploitation Strategy 2021 - 2024**
<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/North-Wales-Vulnerability-and-Exploitation-Strategy.aspx>
11. **Working Safe**
<https://www.stophetraffik.org/landing-page/ukraine-campaign-phase-2-ukrainian-language/>

REFERENCES and WEBSITE LINKS

12. **UK Specialist Organisations**
<https://www.sanctuaryfoundation.org.uk>, <https://opora.uk>, <https://welcomechurches.org>
13. **Llandudno and Colwyn Bay Hubs**
www.link-international.org/ncoast
14. **South Crescent Case Study**
www.link-international.org/s-crescent
15. **Link International Community Hubs**
<http://www.link-international.org/community-hubs>
16. **Church in Wales**
<http://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/news-and-events/webinar-outlines-ways-to-help-refugees>
17. **Impact Report & Desirable Outcomes June 2022**
<https://www.link-international.org/impact>
18. **Link International Regional Updates**
<https://www.link-international.org/zoom#3>
19. **International Emergency Numbers : Work Safe**
English : <https://www.stophetraffik.org/landing-page/ukraine-campaign-phase-2-english-language/#If%20you>
Ukrainian : <https://www.stophetraffik.org/landing-page/ukraine-campaign-phase-2-ukrainian-language/>
20. **International Support Organisations : Work Safe**
English : <https://www.stophetraffik.org/landing-page/ukraine-campaign-phase-2-english-language/#Here%20are%20organisations>
Ukrainian : <https://www.stophetraffik.org/landing-page/ukraine-campaign-phase-2-ukrainian-language/>

