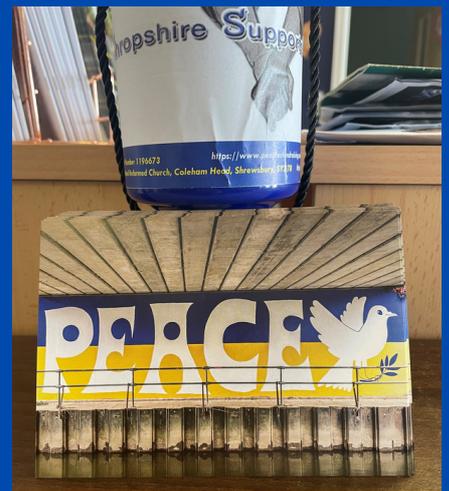


SHROPSHIRE SUPPORTS REFUGEES



Annual Report 2022

A summary of 2022 ...

2022 was yet another extraordinary year for Shropshire Supports Refugees. Just as we thought things were settling down, the war in Ukraine happened to the disbelief of most of the world.

As always, SSR rose to the challenge to meet the practical and emotional support that the people coming to stay with us in Shropshire were going to need. In collaboration with the local authority, Shrewsbury Shopping Centre Management, the Shrewsbury Bid, and our wonderful team of volunteers, the SSR support hub was created, and all of our donations moved to another unit right next door.

With a shout out on our amazing Facebook group, pop-up support hubs started to form themselves all over the county. With a little bit of coordination, a couple of hundred WhatsApp groups and some very long hours, the Ukrainian support network was created and is thriving to this day.

The most beautiful thing was seeing how many people wanted to help, including freshly landed Ukrainians themselves.

We could not have done it without everybody's assistance and along the way we were able to employ six Ukrainian people five of whom had come over because of the war.

Alongside this, we still supported all the other refugees in the county as normal with English classes, activities for the children and families and general day-to-day assistance, although the support needed was minimal because now our existing refugees are well and truly established and independent.

Alongside the Ukrainian crisis Shropshire found itself with its first asylum dispersal hotel. At SSR, we could not see why we would treat these men any different to any other refugees that have come to Shropshire, so coordinated a fantastic welcome, the public raised thousands of pounds some of which was used to buy the men Christmas presents and trainers as they all arrived with flip-flops on their feet.

We were donated equipment to put a fully equipped gym in the hotel plus a TV and DVD player, but suffice to say we've only just begun in showing the world how thoughtful integration can make a difference to peoples lives.

We've excelled ourselves with the partners we work with this year again. A special thanks, as always goes to The National Lottery Community Fund for their continued support.

The challenges continue to come, but we are now a team that's big enough to deal with anything that comes our way.

We look forward to going into 2023 with hope and energy and as always spreading the love.

Amanda Jones
CEO

Team Growth in 2022



The work Shropshire Supports Refugees carries out is as important as ever.

To be able to cope with helping the nearly 600 Ukrainian guests who have arrived over the year, SSR has had to increase staff levels- we are now a team of 15 staff with 6 of the team Ukrainian guests themselves.

With another 45 newly recruited volunteers, we have employed a part time Volunteer coordinator, an activities coordinator and a part time HR person. We have 2 new support workers who are embarking on their OISC level 1 and level 2 training, supported kindly by the Refugee and Migrant Centre in Wolverhampton.



Our trustees team are growing to incorporate people with lived experience on it and we now have a team of 9 paid ESOL teachers and the same again in conversational English volunteers, all headed up by our ESOL coordinator Ginny Sales.

Homes For Ukraine

When news of conflict broke in Ukraine in February 2022 Shropshire responded and offers of support came from many sources. With the imminent arrival of guests, the Community Hub was launched in the Riverside Shopping precinct in Shrewsbury town centre. The hub has been designed to be a drop-in location offering sign posting, help and support, employment guidance, activities and English lessons. The first three months of the project saw an empty shell of a building be transformed into a lively, welcoming and friendly destination for guests arriving into the county.



Community Hub



Congratulations!



Sharing Food

SSR very quickly collated offers of support from around the county and encouraged individuals to develop their own localised support hubs. To date there are now at least 12 of these hubs with the largest and busiest ones in Ludlow, Oswestry, Church Stretton and Market Drayton.

We developed Whats app groups for people to communicate, share help and advice and network. The Ukrainian group has over 261 adults in there, and the Hosts group has 113.

We also developed a "Padlet"- an online resource pool for anyone supporting Ukrainians which we share on a regular basis.

We have distributed free SIM cards from Vodafone to any new guests that arrived, they also accessed the donations unit where they obtained clothes and household goods and we registered them for English if they wished to join us in the Shrewsbury hub.

Complementary Sabrina Boat tickets were gratefully received and we issued leisure centre vouchers and consessionary travel passes to our new guests.

The Hub



Very kindly funded in the majority by the local authority, the Support Hub has been an absolute saviour that has enabled us to deliver such bespoke and holistic support to our existing and new client group. We have laughed, cried and sang together.

The Community and Donations Hub have progressed since their opening to not only provide immediate practical support for new guests, but also emotional support- it offers a regular social space for guests that have now settled over the course of the last 10 months. ESOL classes, Choirs, dance troupes, and social groups have developed, jobs and homes have been found through networking. We are pleased to be able to extend to offering washing laundry and cooking facilities to those guests in hotels.



The hub is continuing to offer sign posting, help and support, employment guidance, activities, a warm space to hang out. Support in the Hub has covered assistance with Biometric Residence Permits, communications with the Home Office, dealing with organisations such as The British Red Cross, assisting registering with GPs, Dentists, Job centre appointments, filling out school forms and preschool playgroups, early help, mental health support and booking accommodation viewings.

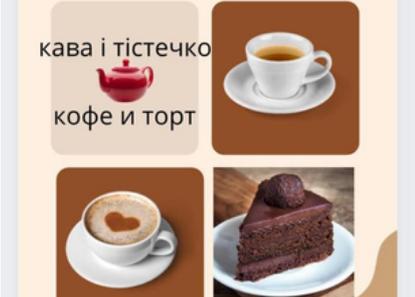
" I want to say thank you to each of you. I am very grateful to you! You were with me in those difficult moments and in moments of joy"



The Hub

The hub has also provided a space for contact between guests and partnership support services such as Enable, Landau, Esol, and Axis Counselling. Activities organised have ranged from weekly coffee mornings to forest schools, arts and crafts for children, days out and a Ukrainian yoga teacher funded by Energize, a craft and chat group for sewing and a t-shirt making workshop to name just a few. This period has also seen a range of therapies offered by our team of volunteer therapists in the community hub; massage, Reikii and Indian head massage are offered in our therapy room, and haircuts and manicures are offered for guests by guests.

It feels like one big family.





4,700

Visitors to the Hub



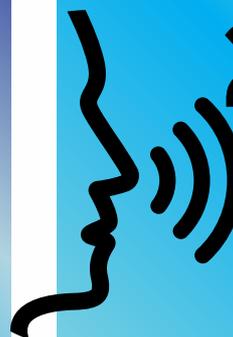
55

Volunteers



3.7k

Facebook Members



20 hours

English Language
Lessons per week

WELCOME

6 days a week

Our Support Hub is open



200+



Events and Activities
carried out this year



Resettlement ...

In November 2022 we were informed of asylum seekers being relocated from Manston Immigration Centre to a hotel in Shrewsbury.

Our immediate response was to purchase essentials for the men including underwear and toiletries. We also took several bags of clothing to the hotel. We realised boredom was a problem within the confines of the hotel so bought them board games, stationery and gym equipment. Since then we have purchased them hair clippers and installed a wi-fi booster to help them access the hotel internet.

We were fortunate to be gifted donations from local businesses and members of the public to include shoes and clothes, pool table and a stereo.

Coordinated with the help of Energize and Shrewsbury Sports Village we were able to offer a free taster day of fitness and activities which was a huge success with the men enjoying football, a climbing wall and boxing.



Resettlement ...

Our more established group of families have had a successful and busy year.

With the guiding hand of our intrepid volunteers five ladies have successfully passed their driving tests with two more in the final stages of learning.

We have had new arrivals with several babies being born and they are now becoming regular visitors to the Support Hub at our coffee mornings.

We continue to provide regular support with access to benefits, advice regarding cost of living support, Homepoint services and Citizenship questions, HMRC and self employment children's activities, homework and HAF clubs.



AFGHAN SUPPORT

Although the majority of Afghan refugees are in Telford, we still provide them with clothes, and they come and visit our Hub regularly. We arranged a couple of activities for their children, and we try to include them in our plans



Funding ...

We remain astounded and grateful for the continuing funding that we have received throughout the year from members of the public and the grant providers who support us.

Shropshire Council and The National Lottery Community Fund continue to be our main funders and we are extremely appreciative to them for underpinning the work we do.

We have also been fortunate to benefit from several fundraising activities from members of the public during the year and these are especially important to us as they show enormous faith and commitment to the values we uphold.



We continue to utilise Peoples Fundraising donation platform via our website and are thankful for the one off and regular donations we receive there.

Activities ...



With the support of Shropshire Council, 2022 saw us engage an Activities Coordinator. With her help and the generosity of the community, the families enjoyed a varied and fun range of pursuits.



Amongst those we would like to thank are.....

- Performers Without Borders
- Bright Star Boxing
- Cavalier Horse Riding Centre
- Wrekin Forest School
- Archery GB
- Jump In

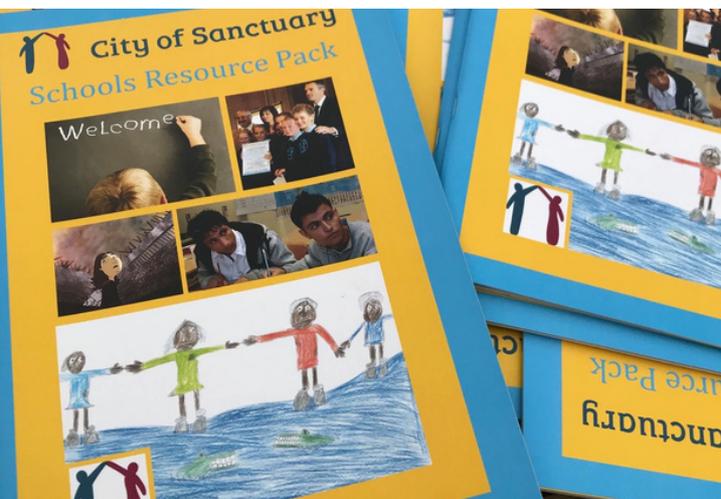


Other News ...

REFUGEE WEEK

In June we celebrated Refugee Week- the theme was 'Healing'

Our team of participants all coordinated by Nikki Holmes produced a vibrant programme of celebrations, from talks by the internationally acclaimed author Gulwali Passarlay, local authors, drumming and clay workshops, a light display by Andy McKeown, food sharing events, coffee mornings, visual arts workshops, Syrian breakfasts, Poetry, Music nights and sharing each other's cultures. It was a beautiful week, and we look forward to next year's.



CITY OF SANCTUARY

Our City of Sanctuary team have been steadily recruiting schools- we are now up to 14 schools working towards the accolade. We had our first school passed as a shining star of an example - Milward school Telford had their portfolio passed with flying colours just before the summer.

RECOGNITION

Finally, SSR was delighted to be recognised for the work done throughout the past 12 months through the 2022 Rotary Peace Award, the BBC Radio Shropshire Make a Difference award as well as the Mayors award. Amanda our CEO was featured in a 3-page spread in Shrewsbury's first Annual and has delivered talks within the county to various groups and in places such as Manchester and Chester, as we now start to have a national profile.

2023 - Together we can do anything.



Thank you for your continued support