

# Helping Our Ukrainian Friends

## One Year on – the Suffering Continues



### Summary of work to date – May 2023 Update

Since March 2022 a group of individuals and organisations have been working with Ukrainian refugees in Gliwice, southern Poland to help Ukrainian communities in Poland and Ukraine.

The team made its 8<sup>th</sup> trip to Poland in mid-March, its largest yet, taking 6 tonnes of supplies in four vans. We had such an overwhelming amount of donations from local people and organisations that we subsequently sent another 12 pallets of food and medical supplies on a commercial lorry to Poland. In total over the last 14 months, the team has

1. Purchased and had **delivered 37 generators** for use by churches, schools, orphanages, charities and cafes across Ukraine
2. Delivered 26 tonnes of **donated food supplies**, including rice, pasta, tinned food to villages close to the Russian border in Sumy oblast and across southern Ukraine. Videos that can be found on the group's You Tube site [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyOQCmIALTCX5T4c\\_VbgzwGtlZBER1pao](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyOQCmIALTCX5T4c_VbgzwGtlZBER1pao) show the supplies being delivered to these communities.
3. Delivered 2 tonnes of **general medical supplies**, such as bandages, sutures, surgical gowns and gloves directly to the Kyiv Heart Institute
4. Purchased **specialist medical equipment** for the Kyiv Heart Institute, particularly 15 heart valves and over 600 sutures for use in heart surgery
5. Purchased **flak jackets and helmets** to protect humanitarian aid workers who are helping get our donations to front line communities
6. Provided **financial support for a humanitarian aid team** for four months (April – July 2023), providing funds to purchase fuel and additional supplies, such as bread, to be delivered to communities around Bakhmut and Lyman.
7. Supported **a charity for the deaf** in Odesa, buying head torches, power packs and hi-vis ribbons to help them through the winter
8. Delivered c **1000 Christmas and Easter gift boxes** for Ukrainian refugee children in Poland and in Rivne, Kostopil, Odesa, Kyrvy Rik, Chernivtsi, Kyiv and Karkhiv and Sumy Oblasts.

9. Supported 160 Ukrainian refugee children to attend a **residential summer camp** in Poland, providing them with much needed respite and a range of activities with children their own age (two members of the UK team also attended this camp and worked as volunteers)
10. Supported 90 Ukrainian refugee children to attend **week-long day camps** in Gliwice, Poland
11. Supported financially **three individual families of refugees** in the first days of the war to establish their families in Poland.



Food deliveries in Sumy Oblast

## History

Richard Astle and Tony Bovill visited Donetsk in 2012 to watch England play Ukraine in the Euro finals. Accommodation was in very short supply. Tony's sister had a friend in Poland who had a friend in Donetsk. Tony and Richard stayed with that friend, Galyna Mokryk and her husband, Igor, a heart surgeon. In 2014 Galyna and Igor fled Donetsk as war broke out. They moved to Kyiv where Igor became Chief Adult Heart Surgeon at the Kyiv Heart Institute.

In February 2022, Igor drove his family, Galyna and three daughters, across Ukraine and over the border into Poland, where they found shelter with friends. Richard and Tony offered to do whatever they could to help their Ukrainian friends.

Within four weeks they were on the road to Poland with donated medical equipment for the Kyiv Heart Institute. The next month, they went back with food donations for Ukrainian communities in eastern Ukraine.

Working through Galyna and other refugees in Poland, the supplies were driven across the Polish border to Rivne, and from there to villages in Sumy Oblast, north of Karkhiv. These villages were occupied by the Russian invaders in the early stages of the war and although now liberated, struggle with the lack of food supplies and the degraded infrastructure. They remain under periodic artillery fire, as witnessed in one of the videos sent back to the UK team.

The team now consists of over 20 people, in Peterborough, Stamford, Sheffield, Dronfield and Doncaster.

## Our partners - UK

The UK team is a group of individuals and organisations inspired to do what they can to help the people of Ukraine. The team has no organisational status, and is not a charity, but we can receive charitable donations for specific projects through our more established charitable partners.

The team works with local pubs, churches and cafes to encourage donations of food and clothes. There are regular collection points for donated goods - at churches in Peterborough (All Saints),

Oundle (St John's), Baston, Thurlby, Langtoft, Helpston and Barnack; and at the Willowbrook Farm Granary Café near Helpston which has been part of the project since the start.

Local people are also making significant efforts to support the cause. The Drone Valley Brewery has held several fundraising events, the residents of Helpston raised over £800 through a Meals on Feet event in October and a coffee and crafts weekend, and in November an Art for Ukraine sale and exhibition raised nearly £2500, which bought a generator for a community café in Kyiv. One lady in Sheffield has raised over £1000 by making and selling greetings cards. Another in Baston has helped created a knitting group who have made countless woolly hats.

In addition, local companies around Peterborough have been particularly generous with financial donations. Four companies have donated over £5,000 each and many others have made substantial contributions. Key partners include Princebuild, Cross Keys Homes, Denbury Homes, Comparethemarket.com, Canter Holland, Buckles Solicitors, MacIntyre Hudson, Greenwoods Solicitors, Hegartys Solicitors, the Earl Fitzwilliam Charitable Fund, Barnack plc, Firman Estate Agents, Farrer & Co, Helpston Garden Centre, Allison Homes, and Athene Communications.

Several schools in Peterborough, Stamford, Oundle, Dronfield, Doncaster and Cambridgeshire are now directly involved in the project, collecting food and creating gift boxes for Ukrainian children.



Gift boxes from John Clare School, delivered to Ukrainian children in Gliwice, Poland, July 2022

In total the team have (as of 1 May 2023) raised over £160,000 in cash donations.

### **Our Partners – Poland and Ukraine**

Our key contact in Poland, is Galyna Mokryk. She has been the main organiser of the summer and residential camps.

Through Galyna, we are working with a church in Gliwice. Members of that church drive our supplies across the border to a church in Rivne, Rivne Oblast in western Ukraine. The head of that church, Pastor Aleksander Selepin then takes the delivery across to the villages of Sumy. We are also working with another Gliwice based charity, Uwierzyz Na Nowo, who deliver supplies across the front line in southern Ukraine, including to communities close to Bakhmut, Kherson and Dnipro.

In Kyiv our work is supported by Igor Mokryk, Head of Adult Cardiac Surgery at the Kyiv Heart Institute.

### **Summer camps**

In June and July 2022, we helped to fund a week-long residential summer camp for 160 Ukrainian refugee children living in Poland and subsequently three weeklong day camps for a further 90

refugee children. Two of our volunteers joined the summer camp to help out and ran sports programmes and English language classes.

The camps were organised by Galyna with the support of her Polish friend, Kasha, and the Ukrainian community in Gliwice. Galyna is planning another camp this year, again in Poland, for Ukrainian children who have lost parents in the conflict. We are currently fundraising for that camp and will be sending a team of four volunteers out to help organise activities for the children.



Photos from the summer camp and of Galyna and Kasha, the organisers

### Letter from the Bishop of Sumy

In October 2022 the team received a letter from the Bishop of Sumy

Dear friends!

Sumy Regional Association of the Centre of the CVE sincerely thanks that you have already four times sent us help to support the service of mercy in Sumy region.

Our Sumy region is located on the border with the Russian Federation, was partially occupied, many cities and villages suffered and were destroyed, and are now suffering from constant shelling by Russian troops, especially settlements located along the line of the Russian border. And precisely this aid was brought to the villages to support the people living there. We sincerely thank you for your support of Ukraine, for the fact that you did not stay aside, but provided very timely and necessary assistance, thanks to which thousands of people in the Sumy region received food products. May God bless you abundantly bless and supply all your needs!

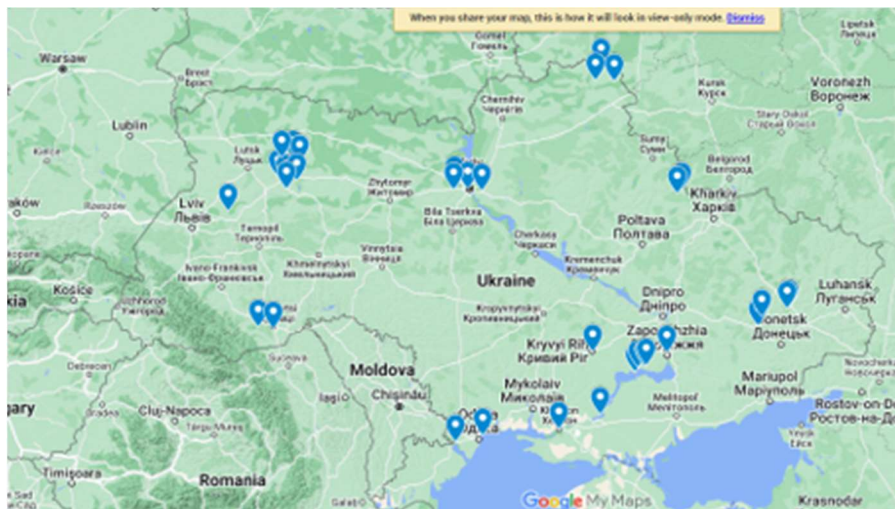
Bishop of Sumy Oblast

### Generators

During December and January, the team raised nearly £40,000 to buy generators for communities across Ukraine. Twenty-one were bought in Poland and loaded on to vans during the team's delivery in December and taken to Rivne, western Ukraine from where they were delivered to Kyiv, Chernivtsi, Odesa and locations in Sumy Oblast.

A second delivery of 16 additional generators was delivered in early January to front line locations around Kherson, Dnipro and Bakhmut.

We are incredibly grateful to our Polish friends – particularly Pavel - who purchased and delivered the generators and to the many local companies who donated so generously to help make this happen.



The map shows where the generators were delivered.

There are videos of the generators in action on our You Tube channel - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLY0QCmIALTCWsFXBOQBJ7nNxesWmz1Rrp>



### Christmas Campaign

You can watch videos of the Christmas Campaign and the trip to Poland and Ukraine on our You Tube channel - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLY0QCmIALTCVSGeIUFGmtNimtouWhnjx-> and there are lots more photos on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/HelpingUkrainesurgeons>

Three vans carrying around 5 tonnes of food, warm clothes and Christmas Boxes for Ukrainian children set off from Peterborough on 30 November, travelling through Germany and arriving in Poland on Friday 2 December. As part of the Christmas Campaign, we had arranged with our Ukrainian friends in Poland for a Christmas party for Ukrainian refugee children. 120 children joined us in a church in Gliwice for an evening of music and singing, including a very average rendition of the 12 Days of Christmas by the UK team!



Handing out gifts to Ukrainian children near Rivne, Ukraine, 5 December 2022

On Sunday 3 December, the empty vans started on the long road back to England through a cold and snowy Germany, while one of the team joined the trucks travelling across Poland, and over the border into Ukraine, stopping near Rivne, where our long-term partner in these projects, Pastor Aleksander, has his church.

The next day we unloaded all the donations and were able to visit the church where the local school is currently based in the basement. Their normal building is unsafe as it has only a covered trench, rather than a concrete basement, for use in air raids. One of the generators will ensure that they don't have to sit in the basement in the dark, when the electricity is off (at that time it was only on 4 hours a day). We gave out 120 of the Christmas Boxes, each one of which had been created by children at schools in Helpston, Oundle, Peterborough, Dronfield and Doncaster. The video on our YouTube channel shows the children saying thank you!

### **Easter Campaign, March 2023**

Working with the wonderful team at Princebuild, the Easter Campaign was the largest yet. A team of 12 from Dronfield and Peterborough drove four vans (three of them Princebuild vans, kindly donated for the drive) out to Gliwice and two of the team then travelled on again to Rivne to deliver the supplies to Pastor Aleksander. The vans were loaded with food, medical supplies and nearly 1000 Easter Gift Boxes, all carefully made by individuals and families in Peterborough. Local schools at Nene Park Academy and Northstowe Academy were also involved in collecting supplies. Camping stoves and tourniquets also made up a large part of the delivery – essential items for communities facing not only fuel shortages, but missile attack.

Once again, we hosted a party for Ukrainian refugee children in Gliwice and gave out 150 Easter Boxes. The party included recitals and gymnastics from the children and our very own Tony Bovill also picked up his guitar and treated us all to "The King of the Swingers". We unloaded all the vans – it was an impressive sight to see all that had been donated on the tarmac at the freight yard in Gliwice - and reloaded them onto the trucks of the Polish team.

Neil and Richard travelled with the Polish team on into Ukraine, and delivered the supplies to Rivne and were also able to give out Easter Boxes at schools in Rivne and Kostopil, near the Belarussian border. There was a great sense of weariness amongst our hosts and concern for the future – no one dares to think about what might happen next.



### Our friend Marcin

We first met Marcin on our January delivery and then drove with him to Ukraine at Easter. He is Polish and married to a Ukrainian. He has recently given up his job in Gliwice to dedicate himself to delivering aid to eastern Ukraine and has moved his family to his wife's parents' home in western Ukraine. We are providing Marcin with financial support to help pay his expenses, particularly fuel, and to buy additional supplies, such as bread and bottled water. He regularly sends us videos and photos of his work, helping us to understand the reality of life in the war zone and the terrible destruction of its towns and villages.

### Charity for the Deaf, Odesa

One of our Ukrainian friends in Peterborough put us in touch with a charity for deaf people that works in Odesa and Kherson. They are struggling without electricity – they communicate by sign language, which is obviously impossible in the dark. We supplied them with two generators and also sent a package of head torches, battery power packs and hi-vis reflective strips to put on their clothes. These were delivered by Amazon to Poland and then by post to Odesa, arriving in late January.

In March, we also used the Ukrainian postal service to deliver Easter Gift Boxes to the charity. We put them in the post in Rivne on Monday afternoon, and they were in Odesa on Tuesday morning!



Deaf people in Kherson receiving torches and batter power packs, January 2023

## Community café in Kyiv

Through our Ukrainian friends in Gliwice, we were introduced to a community café in Kyiv which provides meals for the military and for the homeless. We were able to send them food and two generators for them to continue and expand their work.



## Families in Chernivtsi

We met with Anna on the summer camp for refugee children. She and her family are from Kharkhiv. Their homes were largely destroyed in the first weeks of the war and with their families they fled to the western city of Chernivtsi, where Ann and her friend Ann had studied many years before. They spent six months living in a school, sleeping on the floor. When they moved into more permanent accommodation, they were struggling with access to electricity.

Our project supplied two generators – one for the school and one for the house where one of the families live. We sent a smaller battery pack for the other family.

Anna and Ann are both teachers and continue to teach their students online, as they are disbursed across Ukraine and indeed other countries. As part of our Easter Campaign, we also delivered 80 Easter Boxes to the families and to the children that Anna and Ann teach, using the wonderful Ukrainian postal service to get the boxes to them!



***“Without your help and support we would never have been able to afford this power pack and ease our kids to spend time in darkness.”***



## Families in Oswiecim (Auschwitz) Poland

Immediately after the Russian invasion, three families fled Kyiv and Dnipro, crossed the border into Poland and were picked up and taken to shelter by one of our Ukrainian friends, already resident in Poland. They had never met before but were living in a small flat in a town they had only heard of through its awful history. They had no money and limited access to food. We supported them initially financially and later with regular supplies of food. Now only one family remains in Oswiecim. One of the others moved to England in July and is hosted by one of the core members of our team. Another family returned to Kyiv. Leaving just one family, Lena and her two twins, Lisa and Nastia – we visit them every time we are in Poland with a box full of gifts and supplies!



## Next Steps

Our plans for the rest of the year include fundraising for another summer camp and a further three deliveries of humanitarian aid.

This year the summer camp is smaller – up to 80 individuals – and will be made up of mothers and children who have lost fathers/brothers in the war. They will be travelling from Ukraine to join the camp (3-10 June) which will provide professional counselling and respite for both Mums and children. The event is being organised again by the Ukrainian refugee community in Poland and by Polish specialist counselling services.

A small team of four volunteers from Peterborough will join the camp to provide hands on support and organise the afternoon activities for the children, including sports, arts and English lessons.

We are planning deliveries to Poland and on to Ukraine in July, September and December.

## Links

There are lots of photos of our work on our Facebook page -

<https://www.facebook.com/HelpingUkrainesurgeons>

This map shows the locations where the 37 generators were delivered -

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1wTiyGQxFoZqQAqXSTR-aStFUsbYecc&usp=sharing>

There are a number of videos of our work on our You Tube channels:

Generators <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy0QCmIALTCWsFXBOQBJ7nNxesWmz1Rrp>

Christmas Campaign - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy0QCmIALTCVSGeIUFGmtNimtouWhnjx->

Easter Campaign - <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy0QCmIALTCV&v1PT0oyqsgc-cbaZgar6>

Other deliveries in 2022 [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy0QCmIALTCX5T4c\\_VbgzwGtIZBER1pao](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLy0QCmIALTCX5T4c_VbgzwGtIZBER1pao)

And our Just Giving page is <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/helpingourukrainianfriends>

