

Refugee guests and hosts in the Wantage area

At the meeting of Wantage Methodist Church council on Wednesday 9th March, we launched a discussion about the plight of Ukrainian refugees, the willingness to welcome and host even those without family ties in the UK and the slow, inhuman UK response.

In the meantime, there have been promising developments, though there are still many unknowns about the new sponsorship scheme and concerns remain about possible bureaucratic delays and practical hindrances to the vulnerable refugees who are in such need.

We suspect that many other groups around the country, and possibly nearby, are probably having similar discussions, and that some might be well ahead of us, especially if they have pre-existing contacts with Ukraine. We are therefore reaching out to you, not necessarily as possible hosts (though we recognise some of you may be considering it), but as someone who might be well connected in one or more sectors of our local community, or might be experienced in supporting refugees, or might be involved in local voluntary activities.

The situation is obviously extremely fluid and we recognise the need to be adaptable but, at the moment, our aims for Wantage and the surrounding area would be:

- to set up (or join) a self-support group of potential hosts who can share experience on issues they experience (and explore the possibility of group sponsorship, should that emerge as a possible viable option) and expedite the process (including finding and pairing with guests; advise on DBS requirements)
- to set up (or join) a broader support group for hosts, helping them navigate the process of volunteering and welcoming guests
- to set up (or join) a support group(s) and for Ukrainian guests, helping them navigate the practicalities of setting up a new (hopefully temporary) life in a foreign country and culture, which might include issues such as:
 - accessing nurseries and schooling (with possible provision of a dedicated nursery in early months)
 - accessing a “youth group” for Ukrainian children to meet with each other (with/without local children)
 - support for parents (mothers) who wish to work
- to monitor progress and difficulties which can be fed back to local and national government to ensure urgent implementation of the humanitarian response

If you feel you could be involved in any of these groups, please contact:

Revd Keith Underhill keith.underhill@methodist.org.uk 01235 763321
Or Dr. Mike Skinner mikeskinn@googlemail.com

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