

Dorset Welcome Fund
Impact report for Round 5 (grants made November 2024)

Summary of funded projects and impact on beneficiaries

Grant recipient	Project	Amount Awarded	Allocations	Number of beneficiaries	Number of volunteers involved	Outcomes
Treads	Art and craft, music, cooking, sport and interactive activities for children and young people.	<i>(extension from previous round)</i>	£5638 Dorset Council	10	3	Improved understanding and friendships between local children and refugee children
AsOne theatre company	Supporting Ukrainian Families using Art-therapy and Role Play for conversational English. Top up awarded August 25 – reporting due August 26	£4410 £4260.02	£4410 Dorset Council £4260.02 Dorset Council	tbc	tbc	tbc
DEED (Development Education in Dorset)	Finding Our Place provides walks and trips for local Ukrainian families.	£4068.30	£4068.30 BCP Council	169	4	Improved English, Improved social connections, confidence and sense of community
Emerald Ant CIC	'Art and Friendship Group' for young Afghan women from Chickerell Camp, refugees and teenage girls from nearby schools.	£4920	£4920 DCF Fundholder	10	6	Improved English, Improved social connections and understanding of British culture
International Care Network Ltd	Providing swimming lessons to female refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants, for wellbeing and relationship-building.	£3899	£3899 DCF Fundholder	20	1	Improved physical health, wellbeing and confidence

Pavillion Dance South West	Supporting refugees to explore and share their cultural heritage. <i>(extension to 8/6/26)</i>	£4560	£4650 BCP Council	tbc	tbc	tbc
Purbeck Connect Ukraine	Purbeck Ukrainian Learning Hub provides English and Ukrainian lessons, informal meetings and activities. Top up awarded August 25 – reporting due August 26	£5000 £4260.02	£5000 Dorset Council £4260.02 Dorset Council	tbc	tbc	tbc
Recreate Dorset	Seeking Refuge Project - music workshops providing support for the mental health and wellbeing of male asylum seekers & refugees.	£3899	£3899 DCF Fundholder	67	7	Reduced stress & anxiety, improved confidence, purpose and sense of community
Safe and Sound Dorset	Ukrainian Women’s support group meeting weekly on a Saturday at The Well to be together, do activities and celebrate Ukraine culture.	£4992	£4992 BCP Council	57	7	Improved social connections and sense of community, improved English and understanding of British culture
Samee	Supporting 9 refugee/asylum seeker/vulnerable migrants to achieve successful self-employment start-up.	£3863	£3863 BCP Council	9	2	Improved financial resilience through securing employment or self-employment
Shaftesbury Refugee Group	Inclusive cultural events based on the heritage of refugees. Visits to local places, summer schools for English development. Transport support. Befriending volunteer costs. <i>(Top up awarded August 25)</i>	£3900 £4260.02	£3900 Dorset Council £4260.02 Dorset Council	130	10	Improved social connections, wellbeing and sense of community
TOTAL		£56,291.36		472 beneficiaries	40 volunteers	

Treads

"We appreciated your understanding regarding the venue issues and the project extension."

Funded activities

We delivered a programme of inclusive, creative and wellbeing-focused sessions for children and young people in Blandford Forum. The primary beneficiaries were refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people, particularly those experiencing anxiety, social isolation, cultural adjustment challenges or bullying. The activities included arts and crafts, cooking, yoga, relaxation techniques, and interactive group sessions, alongside informal English language support and opportunities for one-to-one emotional support.

During the grant period, Bridport youth club closed unexpectedly, resulting in the loss of the venue. We relocated to the Scouts Hut and moved sessions to an earlier, after-school time slot, running until 6pm, and extended the project. The earlier timing did present challenges. Sessions competed with after-school homework clubs, some working parents were unable to transport children until after 5pm, and there was a noticeable drop in attendance among older children and teenagers. In addition, some external activity providers originally booked were unable to deliver at the earlier time. We resolved this by delivering sessions using our own qualified and experienced staff. In practice, this worked well, particularly for arts and crafts activities, which proved highly effective in helping children socialise, build confidence and engage with one another in a relaxed, supportive environment. Despite the challenges, the project continued to deliver meaningful benefits for those who attended.

Impact

The programme was designed to create safe, welcoming spaces where young people could build confidence, develop friendships and explore different cultures together. Young people benefited from regular opportunities to socialise, express themselves creatively and feel a sense of belonging within their local community. Local children and young people also benefited by taking part alongside refugee peers, helping to build understanding, empathy and positive relationships between different cultural groups.

Story of Change

One young girl who attended the sessions arrived initially very withdrawn. She spoke very little, did not engage verbally with staff or other children, and had not formed any friendships at school or in the community. During early sessions, she chose to observe rather than participate and appeared anxious. Through regular attendance and gentle encouragement during creative activities, particularly arts and crafts, she began to engage non-verbally alongside other children. Over time, she formed a close friendship with another girl in the group, which became a turning point in her engagement. As her confidence grew, she started to communicate more, take part in group activities, and visibly enjoy attending sessions. This change had a significant impact on her wellbeing. She became more relaxed, socially connected and confident, and her parent reported that she was happier and more settled outside the sessions as well. This story reflects the wider impact of the project in helping refugee children feel safe, included and able to build meaningful relationships within their new community



DEED (Development Education in Dorset)

"It was amazing to be awarded a grant for this work Thank you!"

Funded activities

DEED and Dorset Ukrainian Community (DUC) organised 4 day trips to the Dorset countryside visiting Durlston Country Park, Kingston Maurward Animal Park and Gardens, Corfe Castle and Kingston Lacy House & Gardens, attended by 169 men, women and children from DUC. For our trip to Durlston we arranged external catering from Unity in Vision so the families could enjoy diverse foods and organised a Ukrainian workshop facilitator who worked with the children on Easter crafts. We couldn't afford to use external catering for every trip so the project provided refreshments such as drinks and snacks, and the families brought their own picnics which was lovely as the weather was amazing and meant they could fully explore nature outdoors. The National Trust offered free entrance to Corfe Castle and Kingston Lacy.

We made sure all the families could travel together by hiring coaches and buses for the day. The coaches were extremely expensive, but much needed, as not everyone drove, and public transport to some of the places visited was difficult and took way too long, especially when travelling with young children. The coach journey was also an important part of the bonding experience because they all got to travel together. DUC raised additional funds and asked Dorset National Landscape to contribute, which they did, enabling us to run all 4 trips.

Impact

Everyone really appreciated spending more time together as families and as a community, speaking Ukrainian with each other in a safe and welcoming environment. They also practised their English by speaking with people at each venue increasing their confidence and self-esteem. It helped them feel at home in Dorset and connect with different people and places here, especially Durlston where they really felt at home and will re-visit as it was relatively inexpensive. They appreciated the diverse food provided as the additional expense of food and drinks on trips is quite prohibitive when visiting as a family.

"I recognize it, it's a beautiful place, I really like going there."

"How beautiful, I look at the photos and am happy, you are all wonderful and together like a big family."

"Thank you for organizing a wonderful vacation!"

"We have an amazing trip yesterday. Weather was wonderful and everybody enjoyed the day. Thank you for your help and support."

- 100% of the adults and children attending enjoyed the trips
- 90% of the adults attending felt welcome in the places they visited
- 90% of the adults attending enjoyed socialising with each other
- 100% of adults and children attending enjoyed being outside and said it made them feel happy
- 90% of adults attending said they enjoyed talking in Ukrainian with each other and practising their English with non-Ukrainians



- 80% of adults attending said the trips had given a boost to their confidence.
- 60% of adults and children attending enjoyed the culturally diverse food provided.
- 90% of adults and children attending felt a connection with at least one of the places they visited (Durlston ranked the highest).

Story of Change

Anastasia Pikalova is the co-ordinator of Dorset Ukrainian Community and her leadership skills have grown immensely through this project. She became a problem-solver, shoulder-to-cry-on, counsellor, translator, fundraiser and spokesperson. She came up with all the ways to adjust the project and raise funding for the shortfall in the budget, saying how important these trips were for bringing her community together and making them feel like Dorset is home, while they hear constant updates about the war in Ukraine.

She remains humble about her skills, and is not afraid to ask for support from us. From talking to the National Trust, to organising refreshments, and hiring coaches, she appreciates the professional support an organisation like DEED can give her group who are all volunteers.

"It was a great pleasure to have those amazing trips with my people for me and my family. People made new connections and friendships. We had opportunities to discuss our day-to-day problems and help with advice from our own experience. Children were playing together and communicating in their own native language. We were sharing food and laughed together. We all have learned more about the Dorset countryside through the connecting of beautiful places and nature and it feels more like home. It was very special and unforgettable memories."

Emerald Ant CIC

"Thank you for funding our 2 Art and Friendship Groups at Chickerell Camp. Personally speaking, this project feels like some of the most valuable work I have ever done. We were really pleased to make it valuable to Weymouth girls as well as the Afghans."

Funded activities

We delivered

- 6 sessions of Art Club on a Wed afternoon at Budmouth School
- 2 days of art workshops, conversation & food at Willowbed Hall
- 1 day at Moonfleet Manor on April 10th to complete the project
- Participation at Refugee Week to share the group's artwork in June



The club met on Wednesday afternoons in the art room at Budmouth School. Afghan refugee girls over 16 and their counterparts at the local school, Budmouth, were invited to attend. Leading it were community artist Sarah Butterworth, and youth worker Stacy Burke. Our intention was to keep numbers low, to allow for translation, and because some of the Afghans lacked confidence. We were able to share personal stories and look at important, sometimes difficult topics. We exchanged cultural stories, looked at religion, ceremony, gender roles in society, careers and ambitions, and learnt about human rights. We also did some art games and worked together across cultures towards a final artwork, carnival fish windsocks.

We delivered 2 whole day workshops at Willowbed Hall, and were joined by 3 other Afghan teenage girls, via social services. These sessions were primarily aimed at progressing the windsocks but we also ran English conversation activities, and at the final one an Afghan mum cooked lunch for everyone. The carnivalesque fish were personalised, with an image representing its creator in the centre, alongside a word describing that person, such as 'curious', or 'kind'.

To end the project, on a sunny day in April we took the group to Moonfleet beach, to photograph the finished artwork, and treat everyone to a cream tea.

Impact

The project has been of significant value to the core target group; young Afghan teenage women on the ARAP Scheme. These girls had suffered extreme persecution before coming to the UK. Under the Taliban their education and freedom of movement and expression had stopped. With high ambitions to be doctors and dentists, they expected to be able to step straight into education when they arrived in the UK, but ironically most were excluded from schools due to being over 16 and having below standard English. Initially the college was also slow to step in with an appropriate offer. The girls were bored, had little or no connection with their peers outside the camp and spent most of their time looking after younger siblings.

The project gave them a gentle and friendly introduction to English culture, a chance to increase their confidence, and a safe space for peer to peer sharing with British girls their age. It provided opportunities for personal creative expression, which had largely been taken from them in Afghanistan. The project provided a much needed break for these girls from their family roles, a chance to focus on their own development as young intelligent women.

"This group helped us, we gradually became familiar with life in Britain"

"I have learned about art, and Women's Day and Mother's Day"

"I learnt about English food, English culture, and English accents"

"I enjoyed talking using the conversation cards"

"It was really great in every part...sharing our ideas and the most important thing for me is speaking in English"

"It was really nice to meet the students and see the school"

Between 2 to 5 Budmouth sixth formers attended the group. Their attendance was erratic, but one girl came to every session. For her it was hugely valuable, and the project leaders were able to support her ambition to work in international relations. They said they most liked "meeting people with different experiences and backgrounds", "making friends with some of the girls", learning about "different values, different experiences". They will take away "greater knowledge of Aghanistan culture and ways of life".

The girls have all left Chickerell Camp and been rehomed with their families across the UK. We have kept in touch with some and they have received further support from contacts we have in their new neighbourhoods.

Stories of Change

'W' translated, but also enjoyed participating in the activities. An Afghan who had spent time in America, her English was of a high standard, but she had little chance to use it, lacked confidence, and had no opportunity to progress her chosen career, dentistry. She had had some training in the US, but this had stopped since coming to the UK. W was employed through the project whilst also claiming her usual benefits.

'H', another girl whose English was above standard, also gained a lot from the project. A good artist, with ambitions to be a neuro surgeon, she came to all the sessions. She made a good friend at the camp, but they were rehomed to Oxford early on, and she was missing her. When the project ended we continued to meet with her at Starbucks until she left Weymouth for Swindon.

International Care Network

"Thank you so much for your support. This project has made a real difference to the women who have taken part and the lessons we have learned will help us develop this work going forward."

Funded activities

Funded activities

Small group, women-only swimming lessons for refugee and vulnerable migrant women in Bournemouth plus beach and shore themed social events for these women and their children. The venue for swimming lessons changed to somewhere less expensive. This meant we did not need to pay travel costs and could put on more swimming sessions. All the women who took part completed at least 5 swimming lesson sessions and up to 13 sessions.

Impact

All demonstrated improvements in their physical health, wellbeing and confidence through taking part in the lessons and developing their swimming skills. Most had never or rarely swum before so just getting in the water and learning the basics of floating, etc. was an achievement for them. Many also commented that they enjoyed the physical activity and doing something for themselves, away from their family caring responsibilities. Those with children said it had increased their willingness and confidence to take them to the beach or swimming pool, especially with the social activities which included a beach safety day supported by the RNLI. Some commented that by taking part and showing their increased swimming confidence, they had also been able to positively influence friends who were nervous about learning to swim.

Some of the women were very unsure about what to wear as they hadn't worn swimming costumes before and wanted to ensure modesty. However, the swimming teacher - who is herself a Muslim and in fact, a previous ICN service user - was able to advise and support them about appropriate clothing.

We will continue to offer swimming lessons for women and are looking into whether we could offer sessions for pre-school children, which their mothers could attend with them. We will fund this through ICN's Jenny Willoughby Fund, a private fund that was set up specifically for ICN service users. We would like to continue to offer additional social activities alongside this.

Story of Change

D is a long-standing service user and attendee at our regular activities including ESOL, Conversation Corner and Homework Club. She was once very shy and needed a lot of support but is now really flourishing. Over the past twelve months she has become increasingly engaged in our activities programme inside and outside our regular groups, as have her two sons. She is a key 'co-production' voice, helping us decide on activities for women and families and encouraging others to take part.

It was D who originally advocated for the need for women's swimming lessons from her own experience and those of other women in the groups. She was one of the first to take part and has continued to encourage women to participate. She has recently become an official ICN Volunteer after expressing a desire to give back because she feels she has been given so much confidence and support through her involvement with ICN.

ReCreate Dorset

Funded activities

We delivered weekly music workshops for 30 weeks, which benefitted male asylum seekers and refugees. We also continued our monthly film screening programme and offered volunteer opportunities in our community garden for the asylum seekers and refugees.

Impact

The delivery of the music workshops helped the men during their most stressful times, particularly for those living in hotels and those who have had to deal with transfers from other parts of the country. The music was both creative and therapeutic for the participants and allowed them to feel part of the community and to de-stress in a safe and welcoming place. Those who were interested in the music workshops also came to our film screenings where the refugees and asylum seekers selected the monthly film. Some put themselves forward for volunteering in our community garden,. In the summer we held our annual community garden celebration where the music group did a public performance.

The original proposal was to deliver the workshops initially at the Dignity Centre before introducing them to our community hub space at TOSH, but it became apparent that the music workshop was not operating successfully in this location, which is very busy. We wanted to provide a calm and welcoming space with privacy and a place to be more relaxed and able to enjoy the music workshop. From May we started the new workshops at TOSH, and we offer costs towards travel, although for those coming from hotels in Boscombe, most walk.

We piloted some workshops developed in partnership with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and continuation funding has been received for 3 years.

Story of Change

One attendee has very little English language, and because of this they find it hard to communicate, and consequently find themselves very isolated and tend to remain in their hotel room, with very little contact with the outside world or other people. Because of the number of different languages spoken in the hotels, it is also hard to build friendships within the environment. He joined the group after attending the Dignity Centre to get support with completing documents and other paperwork he needed for his application for refugee status. He was invited to join the music group because he was keen to learn English. He became a regular member and his language skills improved so he could communicate to others in the group. His interest in our creative groups increased and he also started attending the film screenings. We have seen such a transformation in his confidence and he has reported how welcomed and involved he has felt. He is now volunteering and feels very proud to be involved at the TOSH community hub.



Safe and Sound Dorset

"I would like to thank the Safe and Sound Dorset for their hospitality and care for women who had to leave their home country. Meeting together, doing creative work, singing, practicing English - helps us adapt to new conditions and learn new skills."

Funded activities

The women from Ukraine meet for 2 hours every Saturday. The support worker is from Ukraine and has been here since the war broke out. The group is held at The Well in a private room; we provide drinks, sandwiches, cakes, crisps, fruit and salads. They have had 48 sessions over the year.

Creative activities vary; painting, story sharing, enjoying hospitality including Ukrainian specialities, crafts, colouring, creating beautiful jewellery with flowers encased in resin. Flowers have a lot of meaning in Ukrainian culture so this is very meaningful. They also give out flowers at all celebrations. Most weeks someone plays guitar so they can sing and this is most beautiful to listen to as their songs have haunting tones and are accompanied with tears and laughter. The extra weekend session has included younger women who can't attend during the week.

Impact

These are women and girls who have left Ukraine to seek shelter from the war, often traumatised, some living with host families. This is a unique session where they and their children can come to meet other women and girls experiencing the same, being able to communicate in their heart language amongst fellow citizens, which offers great comfort and support. These women are learning about British culture daily and it's important to have an opportunity to ask questions and understand cultural differences e.g. at a doctors appointment, job centre, expectations in school and at work. Most of the women are also learning English.

"Much fun is had with singing with tears and laughter, flower arranging, sharing of skills like jewellery making and eating the most delicious Ukrainian foods that are wonderful. It's a special and unique meeting to relax, de stress and support one another in our own environment."

Stories of Change

"These meetings are a connection with my homeland. Each of us has our own problems, experiences, and when we get together we can talk about it openly and open our souls and receive understanding and advice. After the meeting it becomes so much easier and joyful and that is why I look forward to each of our meetings. We do art, make jewellery, sing our songs, which is relaxing and gives positive emotions. If we lose this it will be my greatest sorrow."

"Meeting with friends in such a supportive environment is very valuable. For them these gatherings are an important social event that helps reduce loneliness and improve wellbeing. Each meeting offers different creative activities which act like therapy and bring joy and relaxation for the participants. We practise English and favourite songs which adds fun and helps improve language skills. These sessions are not just classes but meaningful community space that supports mental health, creativity, friendship. I hope the sessions will continue because they truly make a positive difference in many women's lives."

"We need these meetings. It's like a breath of fresh air from our homeland. Here in Britain we feel good and calm. We were well received here and people are friendly to us, everyone tries to help in every way. But still we miss Ukraine, our home. We are taught English, how to behave in different situations, in a clinic, a store or a party. We want to be able to express our gratitude to the people of Bournemouth. They give us the opportunity to relax for a while and forget that there is a terrible war going on in our country and we are worried about our relatives who are left there."



Samee

Funded activities

9 refugees from Ukraine received 16 hours each of personalised and holistic self-employment skills support. The delivery was flexible to the needs of each participant, with 7 opting for Zoom support, and the other 2 meeting in Poole library. The 16 hours of support was very flexible with each participant moving forward with their self-employment exploration at different rates.

Impact

Of the 9 refugee project participants, 6 have successfully moved into positive outcomes with 3 starting self-employment and 3 starting traditional employed jobs. 3 are still preparing their business ideas, and they will receive ongoing support from our free online Disabled Entrepreneurs Network group. The 3 participants successfully starting self-employed ventures included a husband and wife partnership who have started a business importing Ukrainian snacks to supply specialist food stores throughout the UK. The third person has started self-employment teaching wellness therapy through Yoga.

The 3 who have moved into traditional employment have been with the same contractor/ employer commencing hospital cleaning roles on zero hours contracts. All 3 abandoned their self-employment plans near to the end of the project in order to take advantage of zero hours contract cleaning, which guaranteed employment income. What we have learned from this experience is that when we are supporting refugees/asylum seekers, we should never underestimate their urgent need to start earning a living due to pressure from their families and cultural expectations of a strong work ethic and proud independence. The support hours saved from the 3 participants entering employment was recycled into giving more support to the rest of the cohort so that nothing was wasted.

Stories of Change

I have worked with my business mentor from SAMEE charity on my therapy business idea from scratch ever since resettling in the area of Bournemouth. Stu was the most helpful and knowledgeable person and I am utterly grateful for his approach. He did recognize at the very beginning that I like the freedom of following my own logic and he let me spread my wings, particularly in ways where my expectation could potentially clashed with future customers.

Stuart was excellent at judging the perfect amount of input needed and was a great companion for me during the process of thinking out loud and processing all ideas. He really helped me to understand a great deal about the mindset of British customers in the Bournemouth area, and how to plan my business marketing in the right way. When I encountered difficulties while putting my business plan together, especially when it came to finances, Stu was happy to walk me through it. It was a pleasure to work with him and I don't think I would have the confidence about my business that I do today.

With this letter, we would like to express our gratitude to you and SAMEE charity for cooperation and strong support in the process of starting our own business here in the UK. The programme of the course is very detailed and professionally designed in order to clarify efficiently all the processes entrepreneurs undergo on their way. The work on the business plan offered us an opportunity to deeper understand our main goals and develop the vision and the strategies on further upgrowth of our business. We wish something like this existed in Ukraine when we were starting our business there.

Stuart, your mentorship is uplifting and motivating, we appreciate every conversation with you. In such hard times and under the circumstances we have to do all these (from the green field in the foreign country) it means a lot to us. Thank you once again for your kindness and support.



Shaftesbury Refugee Group

"The process of receiving this additional and necessary fund was made very easy thank you."

Funded activities

- Additional coach for Oxford trip brought together a wider Ukrainian community and developed community cohesion and a useful network.
- New maths tutoring programme has been a great success for Ukrainian teenagers who are taking their exams in Ukraine as well as the UK. The tutor has reported that she has a greater sense of purpose and the parents have been grateful for the additional lessons and want us to consider a proposal to start a new Ukrainian Saturday school.
- Coach trip to Wookey Hole and Wells Cathedral City – this came from a survey to see what would be helpful to people. Feedback was for a family event and a chance to see more of the UK in the company of Ukrainian friends.
- Independence Day of Ukraine was marked quietly and socially at a local Social Club in Gillingham (see photos)
- Community hosted quiz nights July and November have been a great way to raise the profile of our work with local people, and to provide an opportunity to showcase the great food businesses of two British families with Syrian heritage who came to the UK as refugees.
- Childrens social and cultural activities, swimming, music and gymnastic lessons arose from two requests made by Ukrainian parents concerned that their children were missing opportunities to further the learning that had begun in Ukraine. We have been able to add these activities to an increasing number of Ukrainian children.



Impact

We aim to build a community within our area of people who share the same language and heritage so that they have the chance to rebuild some of the social capital that was lost through displacement. We also aim to make that community visible and accepted within the local community through events that celebrate that heritage and make displaced people visible and the giving of sanctuary normalised. We think we are making headway in this regard because we continue to receive, unprompted, donations and offers of support from a wide group of people, including those who were displaced.

We are currently making grant applications to continue our programme of activities for displaced people focussing on cultural and social events, education and digital inclusion and meeting the costs of learning to drive, moving house and moving onto higher education. We have not yet been successful but do have resources adequate to maintain our programme into the early part of summer 2026 based on our past income and reserves.

Story of Change

K arrived in Dorset with her daughter S (9) from Ukraine in summer 2025. Her host was elderly and helpful but needed support. We were able to provide some household goods, but what S needed to settle in a new home after three years of war was friends and connection. We were able to support gym classes and music lessons and this helped her connect with children with similar interests and helped her develop her English. K asked that her mother, L could also come to Dorset and we were able to help facilitate this and connect her naturally to other Ukrainian guests who came on the same cultural trips.