Dorset Welcome Fund
Impact report for Round 6 (grants made April 2025 – Jan 2026)

Summary of funded projects and impact on beneficiaries

Grant recipient	Project	Amount Awarded	Allocations	Number of beneficiaries	Number of volunteers involved
AsOne theatre company	Supporting Ukrainian Families using Art-therapy and Role Play for conversational English. *(Top up awarded August 25)*	£4410 + £4260.02	Dorset Council	30	8
Pavilion Dance South West	Supporting refugees to explore and share their cultural heritage. *(extension to 8/6/26)*	£4560	BCP Council	142	10
Purbeck Connect Ukraine	Purbeck Ukrainian Learning Hub provides English and Ukrainian lessons, meetings and activities. *(Top up awarded August 25)*	£5000 + £4260.02	Dorset Council	55	12
Shaftesbury Refugee Group	Inclusive cultural events based on the heritage of refugees. Visits to local places, summer schools for English development. Transport & Befriending *(Top up awarded August 25)*	£3900 + £4260.02	Dorset Council	130	10
Cheap Street Church	Drop in center activities, distribution of donated goods or clothes, transport and children's activities	£4260.02	Dorset Council	56	12
Citizens Advice BCP	Immigration advice clinics in East Dorset and Purbeck, providing specialist Level 2 support	£7669	Dorset Council	26	2
				439	**54**

AsOneTheatre Company

> ***"The support offered by the DCF staff has been excellent throughout this extended project and allowed us to contribute to the Ukrainian integration and culture in a positive way… It has been a joy to work with the Ukrainian group on this worthwhile project"***

Funded activities

There were regular (weekly) planned meetings and workshops (art and performance) bringing the Ukrainian community in Dorchester together. It was an important time for the parents to come together by sharing experiences in relaxed environment while their children took part in in creative workshops including art, music, dance and drama leading to performance.

Impact

The project has been so beneficial in bringing the Ukrainian community together in a safe shared experience and culture helping to combat isolation for single families and children. Activities included Ukrainian storytelling, singing, dancing, food sharing; and relaxation therapy (there is still trauma and suffering as the Russian invasion continues – with losses of loved ones ongoing). The workshops and rehearsals lead towards performances and exhibitions.

The group has performed on a number of occasions at local events and festivals to the delight of local audiences and residents. These included: Christmas Angels at St Peters Church Dorchester (2025), VE Day Celebrations 2025 at the Nothe Fort (2025), The One World Festival (2025), the Ukrainian Independence Day event (2026) at the Dorford Centre and the Helios event (2026) at the Corn Exchange Dorchester. These performances bring so much joy for the young performers learning about and sharing their own culture.

The benefits of this group have been clearly demonstrated and so it is planned to continue on a voluntary basis.

Story of Change

"I want to thank you for the help and support you provide to our Ukrainian diaspora in Dorset. For our family, our Friday meetings have become a place of power. Where we can switch off our thoughts for at least 4-5 hours and have a great time in a warm circle of fellow countrymen. Talk in our native language, discuss interesting topics. For my daughter Tetiana, participation in the programs that you and Oksana prepare is a Ukrainian language lesson, a Ukrainian

culture lesson, and a creative meeting where she can express herself. I know for sure that we are all waiting for Friday to meet again. I see how not only my but also my daughter's mental state is improving."

Pavilion Dance South West

Funded activities

Partnering with International Care Network we delivered dance and movement classes for refugee and asylum seekers located in Bournemouth

- 5 monthly classes for men and 7 monthly classes for women from May-Nov 2025 at Pavilion Dance totalling 26 attendances
- 6 taster sessions in community to promote monthly classes at Pavilion Dance from April-Nov 2025 totalling 95 attendances
- 1 session with Pavilion Dance Associate Artist based on her current R&D working with Migrant Communities at ICN totalling 19 attendances
- 1 session with Pavilion Dance Associate Artist based on her current R&D working with Migrant Communities at Pavilion Dance totalling 2 attendances

Impact

The various taster sessions and monthly classes at Pavilion Dance were well received by those who did attend. With dance acting as a universal language whereby different people from different places could share and exchange within their cultural traditions. Lack of attendance meant that the monthly classes were cancelled - this was not working for our target communities as their lives are simply too liable to change at any moment and a regular commitment was not possible. We pivoted the remaining funding to support a project-based approach, involving our Associate Artist working with an established group of women to further explore her recent project "Home Bodies and some R&D for a performance which will tour to our venue in 2027.

Story of Change

One of the ICN Volunteers who we recruited as the Assistant Teacher for the Women's Monthly Classes has expressed that being involved in the project has changed the trajectory of her life. She is studying at Bournemouth University and was able to use this project to inform her research into "Migrant Women's experience in Sport and Movement in Western Cultures". Assisting alongside the Lead Artist has developed her skills and confidence and she hopes to continue with this work in the future. When the Associate Artist visited ICN, they connected and will hopefully stay in touch as this work evolves.

Purbeck Connect Ukraine

"We greatly appreciate both the initial funding and the extension to the grant. This has enabled us to continue our activities all this time. While we hope for a speedy end to the conflict in Ukraine, we trust we will be able to continue to provide assistance for as long as the need continues"

Funded activities

Regular meetings were held at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Swanage. On Saturday mornings we provided Ukrainian lessons for children (given by teachers who are themselves refugees), English lessons for adults (given by a qualified ESOL teacher), and an informal coffee morning. During the week, English lessons were given at various levels (from beginners to advanced), according to the changing needs of the refugees. The children's lessons covered Ukrainian language, reading and writing in the Cyrillic script, Ukrainian history and

cultural practices, craft activities and games.

During the grant period, we organised excursions to the Russell Cotes Museum in Bournemouth, Careys Secret Garden near Wareham, Corfe Castle, Bath, Wimborne and Durlston. Such social activities have involved cooperation with other community groups.

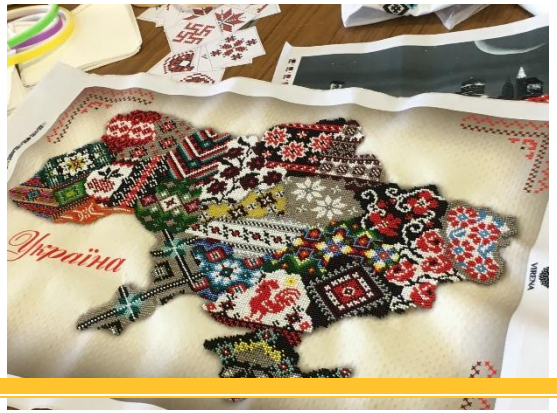
In cooperation with Help & Kindness, we organised a 'Vyshyvanka workshop', demonstrating the Ukrainian art of embroidery. This was attended by about fifty local people.

Impact

The services provided by Purbeck Connect Ukraine have enabled adult Ukrainians to learn and improve theirEnglish, and Ukrainian children to maintain and improve their Ukrainian language skills. Some of the adults who have been here for some time have made great progress with their English and are now much better integrated into the local community. This improves their chances of gaining meaningful employment. Others who have arrived more recently are just beginning to learn. For them it has been valuable to be able to get to know the Ukrainians who arrived earlier and to become part of the local Ukrainian community. Through our meetings, they receive support both from our volunteers and from each other.

The children greatly appreciated being able to interact with their peers in their own language. Without such opportunities, the children are at risk of losing their mother tongue, making it difficult for them to communicate with grandparents and other family members. This would also have a great impact on them on their eventual return to Ukraine. Our Ukrainian lessons provide the chance for the children to interact in their own language and learn more about Ukrainian traditions.

The weekly Saturday morning sessions have provided Ukrainian refugees the opportunity to meet and chat with one another and with our volunteers. This has meant that they have been able to provide friendship and support to one another and also to make known to our volunteers any issues with which they have needed assistance. Some of the services we provided for new arrivals after the invasion, such as accompanying them to Poole Job Centre or helping them register with a local GP, are now provided by Ukrainians who have been here for some time and are familiar with the local area.



The excursions we have arranged have given the refugees the opportunity to enjoy and connect with the beautiful natural environment of Purbeck, and with cultural aspects of society. By taking part in local events, such as the Purbeck Christmas Tree Festival, the Ukrainians have been able to meet other members of the local community and also to remind local people of their continued presence in the area.

The Vyshyvanka workshop provided the opportunity for local people to learn about Ukrainian culture. Some of those attending said it was the first time they had met any Ukrainians in person, and they appreciated the

opportunity to interact with them.

Two of our guests (independently of each other) found they had to find new accommodation at very short notice. As we knew both of the guests well by this time, we were able to find temporary accommodation for one, while she was arranging rental of a flat in Bournemouth, and approach a host near Wareham, who was willing to host the other for a longer period. The host (who happened to be abroad at the time) said that they were willing to take an unknown guest at short notice on the grounds of the fact that we were able to vouch for him. These two incidences show the value of establishing relationships with our guests.

Story of Change

When earlier this year, one of our guests moved to alternative accommodation, we were immediately approached by the former host, asking if we could find a new Ukrainian guest for them. Knowing the host to provide excellent accommodation and support, we were delighted to receive this request. We have frequent contact with the Dorset Ukrainian Community in Bournemouth, and within a matter of days, they were able to put us in touch with a woman in Kyiv who was seeking a host in this area. Being familiar with the hosting procedure, we were able to arrange an online meeting between the host and the potential guest, and when they had reached an understanding, we helped with the visa application procedure. Within a few months, the guest arrived in the UK. She is particularly glad to have found a host in Swanage, as her sister is already living in Bournemouth. On arrival, we introduced her to some of the other Ukrainians living in Swanage. Through them, within days our new guest was able to secure employment at a local restaurant, where the other Ukrainians were already working. They helped her in various ways with settling into life here.The new guest immediately started attending our English lessons. Although her English is still basic, she is very diligent about doing her homework and is making good progress.

Shaftesbury Refugee Group

Funded activities

Inclusive cultural events based on the heritage of refugees. Visits to understand British culture and to share time together. School holiday activities for community inclusion and sports development. Educational support for young Ukrainian people in maths and the Ukrainian curriculum. Help with establishing a new home after a change such as leaving a host family or starting university. Cultural and social activity around music and art.

- New maths tutoring programme has been a great success for Ukrainian teenagers who are taking their exams in Ukraine as well as the UK. Parents want us to consider a new Ukrainian Saturday school.
- Coach trips accommodating up to 50 people included Wookey Hole, Wells Cathedral City, Winchester Christmas Market and Salisbury Races – bringing together Ukrainians from several Dorset towns.
- Yoga classes and meditation lessons were rejected in favour of a better 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.
- Community hosted quiz nights July and November have been a great way to raise the profile of our work with local people, and 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.

- The grant has also supported young people progressing to university and helped families moving from host accommodation into independent tenancies with essential household goods and transport costs.
- A reflective event marking the anniversary of the 2022 Russian invasion was especially significant, combining personal artwork with Ukrainian songs performed by a local choir.
- Ivan Kupala is an important midsummer cultural event which we hosted for the third year and brought together over 60 Ukrainians to share the heritage of making floral headdresses, fire leaping and picnicking

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. Neither of these ambitions can be achieved through a few events but the aim is, over time to contribute to a culture of support and acceptance in all the people we have contact with. 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.

Story of Change

I and D had lived locally for two years under the Homes for Ukraine scheme but had remained isolated from our organisation and the wider Ukrainian community. When the time came to leave their host's home, they faced the daunting task of establishing an independent household without transport, furniture or basic kitchen equipment. Their attendance at an Ivana Kupala community event we had arranged marked a significant change. They discovered a wider network of people with whom they could share their needs, culture and experiences. We arranged transport, connected them with a local furniture donor and supplied essential kitchenware and crockery. We advocated for them to receive a grant for a refrigerator and organised volunteers to move furniture and handle bulky household items. This practical support enabled I and D to establish themselves in their own home. Our support therefore provided more than household

goods: it gave them a secure foundation for independence and a route into a supportive community. What might individually appear to be small interventions collectively removed barriers that had seemed overwhelming and helped them make the transition from dependence on a host to independent living.

Cheap Street Church

Funded activities

During the past year SHARES is working with fifteen Ukrainian adults and eight children. There are now 6 Afghani households in Sherborne with another one that has recently moved to Dorchester; total of 14 adults and 19 children. We have twelve volunteers actively supporting our activities. SHARES and Dorset Council run training to support volunteers and ensure they are all DBS cleared and working within the safeguarding protocols. Volunteers are offered emotional and practical support in an encrypted Social Media group with others in a similar role.

A regular monthly Drop In is held for socialising, sharing coffee, Green tea and biscuits, games and craft activities. Sherborne Food Bank provides donations each month. English Conversation classes have run weekly throughout the summer, when Skills and Learning (who provide government-funded ESOL classes) closed for the summer break.

SHARES volunteer mentor/befrienders visit and develop personal relationships, supporting social and emotional needs. Volunteers supported a number of trips including a local farm where children petted friendly horses and enjoyed visiting the swings and seats around an unlit fire pit. Activities included races in the fields, Frisbee, cricket and enjoying a delicious 'sharing' picnic. On our last trip people enjoyed picking blackberries to take home. A visit to a car boot sale allowed families to practise their English with bargaining skills, and to pick up some cheap clothes and toys. Very successful was a trip to enjoy the aquariums, penguins and sea lions at the Sea Life Centre, Weymouth, followed by a picnic on the beach and, for some, a dip in the rough and exhilarating sea.

SHARES has supported families with the purchase of new cookers, second hand, donated washing machines, beds and bedding and other items that occasionally need replacing. SHARES bought uniform for school children and this year each family received a Tesco voucher for each child. Three laptops and flash drives were purchased to help with learning, in addition to donated tech equipment.

Impact

These activities enabled folks to mix with their friends and volunteers and enjoy special experiences, making memories and sending photographs of their new life to friends and family left behind in Afghanistan. These outings build relationships with local people; can break down barriers, such as preconceived ideas of different cultures; build confidence and a sense of well-being for all involved. Sharing the joy of a first trip to the sea or seeing children stroking horses, whilst the families can take a pride in cooking and sharing traditional, delicious Afghan food, is thoroughly enjoyed by volunteers and participants alike.

Story of Change

"I am from Afghanistan and I want to say thank you for the help that SHARES has done for us during the last 3 years. It helped me to write to Edward Morello,M.P. to help bring my parents from Afghanistan. It also helped me learn English, make good friends and find a job at the school where my children go. They also got new school clothes, and they were very happy with them. We have been to the sea and to the farm to see the horses and we go to the Drop in every month. The support has helped us in many ways and made our life easier. I am very thankful for all the help from SHARES."

Citizens Advice Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole

Funded activities

26 clients have been supported across 4 clinics (15 male, 11 female): 2 were young adults (aged under 25), 2 were refugees and 24 were other migrants including from places such as Ukraine, South Africa, Europe, and India. 11 were from family groups where their issue affected the family unit as a whole.

Across the 4 clinics we have run to date, we have supported clients from communities across Dorset - including Wimborne, Wareham, Swanage, Ferndown, Sherborne, Bere Regis, Bridport, Dorchester, Wool, Blandford and Portland. Each clinic has been flexible, and we have offered as many appointments as practicable.

Each client has received a minimum of half an hour free immigration advice, with many receiving longer advice interventions. Some clients have required extended help, and we have assisted 13 clients further by taking on casework for them outside of clinic time.

Impact

Clients describe having an increased knowledge of their rights and of the law after immigration advice interventions and being more confident to act for themselves in minor matters. They describe the concern they have felt at being unable to secure advice and representation in what they often feel are increasingly hostile circumstances. Many clients have felt as though they have nowhere to turn to find support in such a rural part of the country, and we have found that many are using friends, family members, and unregulated online sources such as ai to support them. This results in longer term issues and can have serious unintended consequences.

Dorset continues to experience a complete lack of both basic and specialist immigration advice provision. This is particularly concerning given the increasingly complex legal landscape facing migrants, which continues to evolve and become more challenging. Those whose casework we have taken on simply would have slipped through the net if our service hadn't been available.

We did not anticipate supporting such a high number of clients and family units across just four clinics. This demonstrates that there are many people in Dorset who need our help. Immigration law intersects with a wide range of communities and life circumstances, meaning that need is often significant but hidden from view.

Story of Change

Client K approached us as a victim of serious domestic violence with a non-molestation order in place. She was in the UK on a spouse visa with her British husband and two British children. We assisted the client to apply for the Migrant Victim of Domestic Abuse Concession, which allowed her 3 months access to public funds, so that she could get housing and financial support. We assisted the client to find a specialist legal aid lawyer to represent her in her application for Settlement in the UK under appendix VDA (Victims of Domestic Violence).

Client S, an 18 year old Ukrainian male, had been refused an extension on his Ukraine Scheme visa (UPE). He arrived in the UK 3 years ago with his family unit. Unfortunately, the family had received poor and unregulated immigration advice in rural Dorset and several mistakes had been made during the application process. We submitted a new UPE application for him; this was quickly granted and now he can start his degree apprenticeship in the UK.

Client Z is a Dutch national in a long-term partnership with a British national living in Swanage. He was granted EU Pre-Settled Status in 2020. Subsequently, his Polish mother became seriously unwell and he has spent much of the last 5 years caring for her in Poland, as well as supporting his partner and mother by working in various university roles across Europe and beyond. Unfortunately, he is the first client we have seen whose Pre-Settled Status may be curtailed due to extended absences from the UK. As this is a new area of the Immigration Rules, the case will require our Level 2 adviser to make representations to the Home Office on whether those absences were reasonable. It is one of the first cases of its kind in the UK.