



Report September 2023 to October 2024

OASISS Open ArmS in Shelford and Stapleford Community Group

As of 24th October 2024, 46 Ukrainian families (95 OASISS guests) had moved into independent accommodation: 5 Ukrainian families were still living with their hosts (12 guests); and 9 individuals had returned to Ukraine. This is a remarkable improvement on the numbers from September 2023 and we would like to thank all the organisations who have been so supportive in this exercise notably, SCDC, CCC and Great Shelford Village Charity.

However, the situation facing OASISS remains broadly unchanged. Together with SCDC/CCC, we have tried with only limited success to identify new hosts to accommodate refugees still seeking escape from Ukraine (we have a small number of families still seeking our help) and some of those already here still need to find a new host family. Unfortunately, our appeals to date have met with little success. The war in Gaza, the US Presidential election, and other global challenges have drawn attention away from Ukraine and the needs of its population. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any likelihood of a resolution soon.

OASISS Events

Defender's Day Celebration Great Shelford Village Hall – 25th November 2023

Over 120 guests attended this highly enjoyable event (disco, live Ukrainian music, dancing, and pizza). Guests who joined us from other local villages for the first time commented that “it was the best event in Cambridgeshire organised for Ukrainians”.

In the past year, we realised there was a continued need to focus on cultural events to better help integrate our guests into the English way of life. At present many of our guests remain in their homes when not at work or school. Last year we organised a highly successful seaside trip to Wells-next-the-Sea - for many their first experience of the beach and the sea. We also had several coffee mornings and lunches, and most

recently (above) the Defender's Day celebration. Accordingly, the following events were organised:

Spring afternoon tea, North Building, All Saints - 13th April 2024

An opportunity for our guests to gather and build community/networks. The tea was an enormous success and we received positive feedback from attendees (60+) who greatly appreciated the opportunity to gather, to keep in touch and to strengthen their community. Discussions were held and suggestions garnered for future community events.

Stratford on Avon and Coventry Cathedral Cultural visit – 8th June 2024

This outing was planned to combine a viewing of the Coventry Cathedral Church of St Michael, built immediately adjacent to the ruins and tower of the former cathedral, which is a symbol of war-time destruction and barbarity, but also of peace and reconciliation with an extended opportunity to explore the 16th century birthplace of William Shakespeare. A coach was hired for 59 guests (mainly Ukrainian guests plus a few OASISS helpers) costing approximately £1400. We would like to thank Little Shelford Parish Council for its generous donation of £150 in support of this outing. Although the weather was initially gloomy the sun shone fulsomely upon Stratford and a rewarding fulfilling time was had by all. A Ukrainian speaking guide and expert on William Shakespeare was recruited to accompany and entertain on the journey.

On the return trip Guests were asked to complete a questionnaire on how best OASISS could continue to best serve the needs of our Ukrainian community. The response summary was clear – a desire for continued OASISS support, an appetite for more trips/events (some good suggestions) and a willingness by some to become more engaged in event organisation. OASISS also needs to focus on how it might grow confidence levels and increase social interaction/integration within the local communities.

Shelford Feast – 7th July 2024

Fun at the Feast. OASISS and our Ukrainian guests had a great day at the Shelford feast. The OASISS guests organised their rota for the stall and ran it successfully. They were kept busy with a steady flow of guests all day. It was great to see them having fun and working with confidence.

Event planned – Christmas Fayre at Hampton Court 7th December 2024.

OASISS and ITAC (It Takes A City - Registered as a charity in England No 1190676)

OASISS is not a registered charity, but a community group formed quickly to help Ukrainian refugees. It has been able to accomplish its objectives thanks to the amazing support of our hosts and many supporters across our local communities. 'It Takes a

City', (ITAC) has until now facilitated funds collection and management but is no longer able to help us in this way.

To serve and support our guests going forward OASISS has opened a community bank account with Barclays Bank whilst exploring to find a suitable partner with full legal status.

As of 30th September (56 months since foundation) total funds raised was £17,940.80 and expenditure has been £17,603.32. Balance £337.48. Additional funds will be sought to help finance specific needs and trips going forward. Guests will also be asked to start making contributions to events to aid cash flow.

Robin Haines

It is with great sadness that we record the death and loss of Robin Haines who died tragically in an accident on 6th May 2024. Robin was a prime instigator in the creation of OASISS and served with enthusiasm and dedication as its Vice Chair until September 2023. The OASISS committee and community will miss him and repeat our enormous thanks for his contribution, humour, and tenacity. In recognition of his role the Ukrainian guests have made a collection, and plans are afoot to plant an English oak tree (*Quercus robur*) in his memory on the Wale Recreation ground in the Spring. And finally

Note from the chairman:

Two particular committee members also deserve special recognition for their endless, but quiet support of so many OASISS guests; they were the mainstay of the coffee mornings, have organised bicycles, house moves, stored and distributed furniture, and have been there in challenging times for many of our guests – thank you Susie and Gaby.

Report prepared by Charles Kingdon on behalf of the OASISS team – Gaby Barnard, Ali Burd, Susie Everett, Maryna Mykhailova, Charles and Caroline Kingdon, and Eugene Shevchuk