

National Education Union

UKRAINE SOLIDARITY & SCHOOLS SUPPORT



At 4.30 am, 24th January 2022, Ukrainian teachers and educators woke up to the sounds of air raid sirens, explosions and their phones ringing with messages from family, friends, colleague and the authorities as Russia's invasion of Ukraine started.

By 5.00 am contingency plans, which many had never quite believed would have to be implemented, were underway with the first priorities being safety for families and children. Schools were dealing with the triple impact of children suddenly moving away to safer areas and countries, internally displaced people (IDP) and their children arriving and the core of remaining local families for whom the safety, care and education of their children were core priorities.

Now Ukrainian schools are places where the incredible has become the normal and where children and students learn and are cared for under the relentless pressure of a country at war for its survival. Here, in the UK many NEU members, their colleagues, schools and communities have come together to support the continuing education of Ukrainian pupils and students and now we would like to bring together acts of solidarity and kindness, to increase our levels of support, expand their impact and make a material difference to Ukrainian pupils, students and educators.

We think it is time to up our game and work together as NEU Districts and members to (a) share ideas and opportunities to raise money, (b) work with the Ukrainian Educator's Union to send the money to the most needy schools, (c) build relationships with schools and educators in Ukraine for solidarity and other long lasting support including twinning with schools and educators and (d) investigate the possibility of NEU Districts working together to bring Ukrainian Union reps and educators to tour Districts in the UK in the Autumn term

If you would like to link your solidarity actions with other NEU Districts, share ideas, connect with speakers from the Trade Union of Education and Science Workers of Ukraine and are also interested in the possibility of sponsoring a visit by Ukrainian educators and Trades Unionists later this year please do get in touch.

We will organise a Zoom call for interested colleagues early in May to share ideas and our current experiences and ideas and how to move this group forward.

Unfortunately, the NEU nationally has not been as proactive in showing solidarity to our Ukrainian colleagues as we think it should. But local Districts are going further. This is our chance to move things forward.

One of our members, Duncan, approached us about helping fund generators for Ukrainian schools.

He had previously worked in Ukraine in a peer-to-peer teacher training project supported by ISSA (International Step by Step Association) and remained in touch with five schools. Duncan had been raising money informally amongst educators he knew and wondered if we could help.

A donation of £500 from our Social Justice fund soon grew to £3000 and was sent to a school in Lviv.

We later received a reply thanking us for the money which has been spent on ***"the most necessary stuff for the students to stay in the shelters during the air alarm signals, namely: educational board games, stretchers, walkie-talkies for communication, wheelchairs for people with musculoskeletal disorders, power banks."*** As Ukraine has managed to repair their energy infrastructure, we will provide donations for schools to use however they wish.

We are now looking for opportunities to raise more funds with other NEU groups to send another tranche of support.

For further information about Education in Ukraine this link is useful:

The Trade Union of Education and Science Workers <https://pon.org.ua/info-english/>

If you are interested, please forward your name, email and District to dencharman@gmail.com .

You can join our new WhatsApp group here <https://chat.whatsapp.com/EZbOHQ6LXRL1RP5xUbg6yo>

Some things you can do to help this group grow, support Ukrainian schools and educators and raise the profile of Solidarity with Ukraine within the NEU.

1. Raise this issue with your District ISO (International Solidarity Officer) and ask for your District to link with this group. (No affiliation fees or subscriptions required).
2. If you do not have an ISO contact us about how you can become one.
3. If you are already involved in Ukrainian support or solidarity work let us know, via WhatsApp.
4. We would like to collect short, or long, case studies of support or solidarity work carried out by your NEU District and local communities. We can share these examples more widely to encourage and inspire other NEU members to take action.
5. Raise the issue of Ukrainian Solidarity work in your District and agree to link with us.
6. Share the details of this group with supportive colleagues in your District and neighbouring ones.
7. Look out for the details of our national Zoom call later in May to discuss ways forward for this group and how to enhance the work we are doing.
8. **Finally, to show we are serious about practical support please help us put together another tranche of money to be used by a school in Kyiv. We aim to raise £2500 as quickly as possible to follow up on the donation H&F NEU sent at the end of last term. If the Districts we are already in touch with can raise an average of £125 each formally or informally we can do this during May.** You can make donations via our H&F NEU Treasurer using these details:
NEU Hammersmith & Fulham District
Acc 20405193
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