

Ukrainian youth drop-in 29th April 2025: Co-creation Report

In April 2025, the Rural Refugee Network (RRN) ran a pilot drop-in session for young Ukrainian refugees based in the Petersfield area, on a Saturday afternoon in central Petersfield. The young people not only enjoyed the community and friendship of their peers and RRN staff and volunteers, but also worked together to scope out the kind of provision they would find helpful in future. This pilot afternoon, made possible with support from East Hampshire District Council, marked an important step in understanding and responding to the needs of young Ukrainians in the area.

The Ukrainian conflict has triggered the worst refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. In response, many Ukrainian families have found refuge in communities across East Hampshire and Havant, where the Rural Refugee Network (RRN) has been supporting refugees since 2016. Since May 2022, the charity has been providing tailored English language classes and employment support to meet the needs of the local Ukrainian refugee community. Building on this experience and its long-standing inclusive and participatory approach, RRN is well placed to explore the development of bespoke provision for Ukrainian young people in the area. The charity will also draw on insights from its externally evaluated Youth Discovery project for young asylum seekers in Portsmouth. The coordinator of that initiative will take the lead in delivering any future provision for Ukrainian youth in Petersfield.

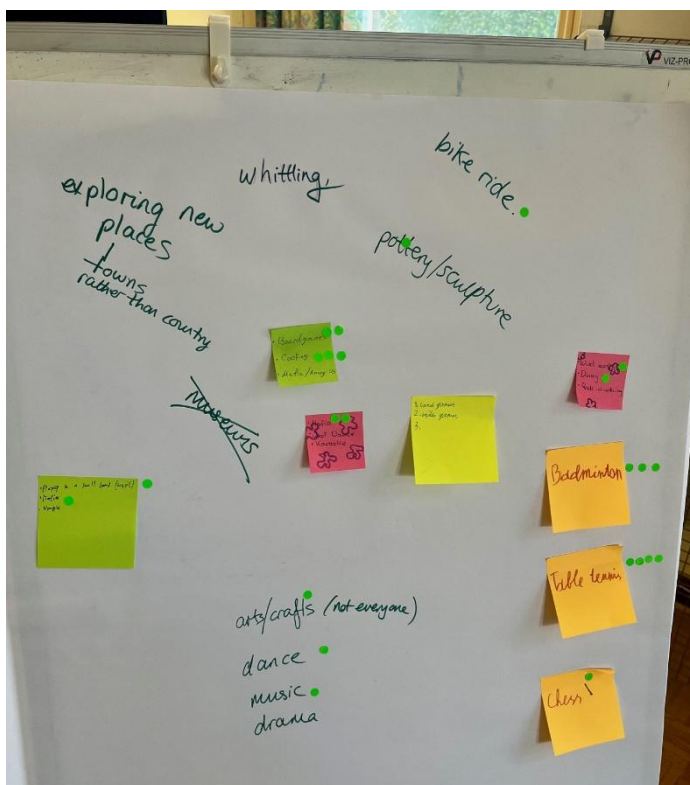
The young people told us that they would like to spend time together in a relaxed and enjoyable environment, with a focus on playing games and socialising. There was also interest in learning new skills and taking part in creative activities. The main ideas grouped around the themes of sport, arts and games. The most popular suggestions included badminton and table tennis tournaments, cooking sessions, and strategy games such as chess and Mafia, a popular Ukrainian game.

Sport

- Badminton
- Table tennis
- Diving
- Climbing
- Watersports

Arts and practical skills

- Pottery
- Sculpture
- Music
- Cooking
- New languages
- Drama





- Dance
- Pottery

Games

- Chess
- Mafia
- Video games
- Just dance
- Karaoke
- Card games

The young people felt that visits to museums or new places are less of a priority than getting together to play games or learn things together. None of them are interested in support with English or school work. 80% of attendees said they would come again, with the rest saying they maybe would.

The young people who attended ranged in age from 13 – 15. Although the group came from a range of different schools, they quickly relaxed and connected over informal games of Connect 4 and Jenga. The welcoming and collaborative atmosphere helped build trust, creating the conditions for a genuinely productive co-creation session. As their confidence grew, the young people naturally took the lead in shaping the rest of the drop-in, enthusiastically introducing RRN staff and volunteers to their favourite game, Mafia, and ending the session by running two lively rounds themselves. The young people's enthusiasm, sense of ownership and willingness to lead highlighted the value of creating a space that is safe, welcoming and genuinely shaped by their voices, with clear potential to build on this momentum through continued support.