

First Ukrainian refugee placed via our scheme

WHEN her flight from Moldova was cancelled, Yelyzaveta Dovzhenko had to think quickly. In the end, she took a six-hour bus journey to an airport in Romania and flew from there instead.

When she arrived in Jane and Paul Cadman's house, near Lee-on-Solent, she became the first Ukrainian refugee to be welcomed to the UK as part of our diocesan scheme.

Yelyzaveta – now known as Liza for short – is a 22-year-old Masters student who lived with her mother, father, sister, brother-in-law and niece, around 40km away from the Black Sea port of Odessa. Her father and brother-in-law are required to stay in Ukraine to fight the Russian invasion, if needed.

She was matched with Jane and Paul, who live near the beach in Hill Head with their son and his girlfriend. They've not known each other long, but they already feel part of each other's families.

"We'd seen the coverage of what was happening in Ukraine on the TV and had collected nappies, groceries and so on," said Jane. "But we have a three-bedroomed house and just thought we could offer a room as well. Our spare room is actually our daughter's who is at university. She does come home sometimes, but she said she'd just sleep on the sofa bed. That shows how supportive the family have been."

Jane and Liza originally met on a Zoom call organised by Citizens



Jane Cadman (right) relaxes with Liza at her Hill Head home

UK, who are our diocesan partners in the scheme to offer homes to Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian bombardment. Liza's flight from Moldova at the end of June was cancelled only hours beforehand. So she took the bus from Odessa to a small airport in Romania instead.

"What is happening in my country is sad, but everyone I have met here has been so friendly and so helpful," said Liza. "Jane is such a kind person, and she has shown real hospitality by opening up her house to a stranger. That could be really scary, because you don't know what someone will be like."

"I talk to my family every day, on the phone or by video call. They need to stay in Ukraine because my dad and sister's husband may be needed. I would like to return there when I can."

Liza's Masters is on the subject of Food Technology, and her studies included a placement to a sausage factory in Germany. So she and Jane have already been examining what food is available in our shops and comparing it with what might be eaten in Ukraine.

"I was worried that Liza wouldn't like our food, but actually she'll try anything," said Jane. "In our family, we always sit down together for meals, and it has helped that we all eat together. Liza has been helping us to learn Ukrainian words and we've been playing games together. We've been learning all sorts of interesting things about each other's cultures."

More than 70 volunteers offered to host almost 180 refugees as part of our scheme, but we still need others to host. Find out more via www.portsmouth.anglican.org/ukraine.