



Telephone: 0333 305 8570  
Website: [www.europia.org.uk](http://www.europia.org.uk)  
Email: [support@europia.org.uk](mailto:support@europia.org.uk)

## VOICES OF UKRAINIANS IN GREATER MANCHESTER

Transcription of interviews with Ukrainian nationals who have arrived in Greater Manchester, recorded between April and May 2023.

Full audio podcast series available to listen here: <https://europia.org.uk/support-advice/voices-of-ukraine-podcast/>

### Interview 1 - Yana and Yulia

Interviewer: Thank you for your time and for sharing your story with us. Can you tell me a little about yourself? Where are you from in Ukraine?

Speaker Interviewer: We are originally from Dnipro, Central part of Ukraine where we also met. We found out we had a lot in common and started working together. We decided to move to Kyiv about four months before the full-scale invasion where we planned to set up our own business. We had so many dreams and we wanted to start a new life in the capital of Ukraine. When the war began we stayed in Kyiv because we didn't want to leave. However, it was getting more and more dangerous and so we moved to Germany. It was very challenging for us as we didn't speak German. We have listened to lots of psychologists who said that no matter what, it's important to keep living and not putting your life on hold. So we tried to keep our mental well-being in positive spirits by always being busy with something.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing, so you already mentioned you moved to Germany as the first country you entered, how did you end up in the UK?

Speaker Interviewer: We have learnt about the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and we decided to try it. I am more conservative, so I needed more time to get used to the idea of moving again. However, once we went online and posted on FB a request to find a new home in Great Britain, we received a lot of invites. It was very touching and we decided it was worth trying. We had many people that were happy to open their doors for us, but there was one particular family who was welcoming. The woman, a hostess of the family, sent us a lot of pictures of her home, her children, and her dog. It was reassuring and relaxing for us. She showed us that it was safe and secure to stay at her house. And so we moved.

Interviewer: What was your first impression of the UK?

Speaker Interviewer: We imagined Great Britain to be a bit different. I personally expected England to be a more conservative and more closed country. In reality, it turned out to be very open and multinational - it was a little shocking. But London, (Yulia laughs) is just the way it was described in the English textbooks at school.

What was a bit strange to us about the British is that they change clothes when they come home and some food habits seem to be weird. The people are extremely open and sincere, the Brits feel free and relaxed to express their looks and fashion. They like to be individuals and don't pay attention to what others might think of them. Also, it is fun to see that some women wear summer sandals in February.

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Interviewer: What was the most challenging part for you?

Speaker Interviewer: The most challenging part was the language. My English is weaker than Yulia's and I was struggling a bit. It is hard to be part of the society if you don't understand the language. What is needed is time and patience and also it is important to learn to get integrated. One can not just stay at home and do nothing. Now that it's been a year since our arrival, we are both more confident in speaking English.

Interviewer: What about work? Did you find a job here or are still working on your own business?

Interviewer: In terms of work, we wanted to do what we couldn't do back in Ukraine when we moved to Kyiv right before the war. We gave ourselves a second chance and started a small business here in Greater Manchester. It was the right place, the right time and, most importantly, the right people who helped us and put all the puzzle together. Our host family, as always, was particularly helpful again. Our host mum came across an accountant on FB. It is a Ukrainian woman who has been here for over thirty years, and she helped us with everything. First, it was hard to understand where to start and what to do, but slowly and steadily you learn new things. There are two of us. We know what each can do and we are positive about everything and this is the key to our success.

Interviewer: Since you got here did you manage to establish any social connections? Do you take part in the social life of the Ukrainian community for instance at the Cultural Ukrainian Centre Dnipro?

Speaker Interviewer: Yes, we have met many other Ukrainians in Greater Manchester who left the Ukraine because of the war. We have a big circle of friends. We talk to our neighbours, we have dinner together and we go out more than we used to. When we just arrived we stayed at home, we didn't feel like going anywhere, we were more closed, depressed, to say. We were constantly thinking of those who left behind - it was a feeling of guilt - how you can live in safety knowing that others are facing danger. This tension, however, is getting easier now. We meet new people, we want to learn about their experiences and stories. We went to Edinburgh, we travelled a bit around Manchester, we started appreciating life again. Simple things, like sunshine and greenery outside make you happy. You understand that life is going on.

Interviewer: Absolutely! Where do you see yourself in the future?

It is hard to think ahead. Of course, there are some plans and dreams but we cannot think that far. You don't know what is going to happen in two years. You live your life now, you can stop it, but Ukraine is always on your mind. The question "When is this war going to end?" is constantly racing. We do have plans about our business, we want to grow, we want to make it better. In some ideal scenario, we would see ourselves back in Ukraine doing what we are doing now in a peaceful time and place.

Interviewer: It is important to support those who come to Great Britain, but it is far more important to support those who stayed behind and remember that war is not over yet. There are people who need much more help than us. We receive enough support from our local council, we feel that people really care about us, they do not do it just for a check mark. We are still living with our host family, maybe when we are starting to look for a separate place to move out, we will need more help, but right now we are absolutely happy.

Interviewer: Thank you very much Yana and Yulia, and good luck!

## Interview 2 - Anna

Interviewer: Good afternoon Anna, thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Where are you from etc.?

Anna: I am Anna and I am from Rivne. This is in the north-west of Ukraine, the region on the border with Belarus. And this is the reason why we are here. Of course, compared to other cities in Ukraine,

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Rivne is relatively safe but it borders Belarus. We were scared that Belarus supports Russia and any time there could be attacks from that part of the country. I wanted to secure my new-born child. I made the decision to leave Ukraine for some time.

Interviewer: Why did you choose to move Great Britain?

Anna: Well, when the war began I was pregnant and my husband was in Latvia. When all this started we decided it would be better if he did not come back to Ukraine so that he could support me somewhere abroad. I could hardly imagine myself being alone with a newborn anywhere in the world. I did not want to live in Latvia because there are a lot of Russians there. I can not live in the country with the people who kill my nation. So I came across the program Homes for Ukraine and applied. And that's how we found our host family - these absolutely amazing people. They met us in the airport. It was late at night but they were there to meet us. And the next day in the morning they took us to the Job Centre, they helped us with getting our BRPs - they were always there to help us with everything. We arrived in England and this is where my husband met our son for the first time.

Interviewer: What was your first impression of the UK?

Anna: Honestly, I did not expect that people would be so caring and so understanding to us. Our host family drove us where we needed to be because they understood that we are with a child and it might be difficult for us to commute. They were always there for us. The same about those who met us in the Town Hall - the staff were helpful and welcoming. They showed us everything, they explained every detail. Everything was so neat and organised. Really, I was pleasantly surprised. I thought everything would be complicated but the people are amazing - helpful and open. I am extremely grateful.

Interviewer: What were some of the difficulties you were or are still facing?

Anna: Of course we experienced some. My husband doesn't speak English. His English is very basic and he struggles a lot. My English is a bit better. I can communicate well. So I try to support him - I work as an interpreter for him at the Job Centre, for instance. We are trying to find some English courses for him. He watches TV series to learn the language. He is doing his best, but it is hard for him. Unfortunately, this is the problem that most Ukrainians face here in English.

Interviewer: Since your arrival, did you have the chance to socialise? Join the community?

Anna: We live in Bolton and there is a small Ukrainian community. There is also a Ukrainian centre. It is a pretty small old building, as I was told, built by our Ukrainian ancestors who fled the Soviet Union back then. Now it functions well. They run English classes, organise different events, and traditional Ukrainian celebrations. We often go there to meet other Ukrainians, to talk to people. It's a small community, but it exists and it's very important to us. On Saturdays we go to the Town Hall to sing Ukrainian songs and to tell others about war disasters and we fundraise some money to support Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Interviewer: How did you manage to adapt to life in the UK? Did you have a chance to travel around much?

Anna: Well, as to travelling and adaptation. I have not had many opportunities to travel around Britain. My son doesn't let me do it. He is not a big fan of travelling by car. But I take him in a buggy and we walk a lot. Yesterday we went to the farm, and we explored the surroundings. I can't say that it is hard for me to get used to life in Britain. My husband has some experience of living abroad, so we don't find it difficult. We are not bored being alone, though. I haven't seen my husband much before the war as he lived in Latvia and now we enjoy being together and spending time with our son. I really hope that when my son gets older, he will meet children here, and he will play with them. I also want to talk to other mums, not only Ukrainians. There are so many various nationalities living here in Britain and it is amazing. I think it is just great. Also, I really like how open and friendly all these people are. They don't

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really care what country you are from or how you look or even that your English is not perfect. They just take you the way you are. And it is such a positive attitude, such a nice approach to people.

Interview: Do you think you will regret moving to the UK and not moving somewhere else? Is your overall experience living in the UK a positive one?

Anna: Oh no, I will never regret ending up in Britain. I have not thought much about which country to go to, but I have definitely been against Latvia for the only reason of Russians being there. I want to be far away from anything related to Russia, I want my child to be safe.

Living with a host family is a positive experience for us. They made their home our home. We feel absolutely comfortable here. First, I was a little worried about how to be with a small child who sometimes cries and is naughty in the home of our hosts. And I ask how they feel about it. They do not mind it, saying they knew we were coming with a small child and it doesn't bother them. They are a couple fifty years old who have their own children and grandchildren and my host mom sometimes even helps with the child. She can give some advice when I don't know what to do. I like when she shares her experience with me. It is interesting for me to see how the British raise their children. I feel absolutely happy about being in this family. They provided us with everything. On our first day here they bought us literally everything - nappies for my son and a dressing gown for me. I was touched. I didn't expect this. They go shopping now and can bring some fun things for my son because they think he might like it! I have to say that all the people in England are fantastic.

Interviewer: what are your plans for the future?

Anna: What are my plans for the future? Well, it is a tough question. As recent years prove, making plans is a bad thing. We all made plans and Covid interrupted our life. Now it is the war. Of course we planned to have a child, we wanted to live in Ukraine and then the war broke out. I don't know what to expect. I don't know how the situation in Ukraine develops. Now I think more about my son, I want him to be in a safe place. When the war finishes, we will definitely go back home. I want to be at home. I have my parents there and an extended family. My parents have my son as their only grandson and I don't want to deprive them of a possibility to see him, to be with him. But if the war goes on, I would prefer to stay here in England for the safety of my son. I think it is the way all Ukrainians see it. We all can not think that far. We are all apprehensive about our future. If I see myself here in Britain, I would definitely want to work. I want to study and do something that I can and like doing. I have been a sports coach in Ukraine, a personal fitness trainer. This is something I would like doing here as well. I started attending a gym now to see how everything works. The same for my husband - he is looking for a job but struggles because of the language. But if our future is to be in England, we will work for sure. We don't want to be a burden for anyone.

Interview: Is there a message you would like to pass to policymakers in Britain?

Anna: Well, it is a good question. I really have nothing to complain about. There is nothing more I could wish about either. Oh, probably just one thing that repels me a lot. Why are all the documents, regulations, rules regarding Ukrainians issued in the Russian language? I remember I received an invitation to go to the UK and it was written in English, in Ukrainian and for some reason in Russian. Why? Who can tell me this? I complained about it and received a call back. They apologised, of course. Well, I do understand that some Ukrainians speak Russian but I don't want to tolerate this. This is the language in which orders to kill Ukrainians are issued.

To sum it up, I want to say thank you to all the people who support Ukrainians now. I am glad that such projects exist. This is not about drawing attention to us, poor Ukrainians, it is more to tell the world that the war in the XXIst century in the centre of Europe is unthinkable. I am glad the world is open to us, it sees that we fight for our independence, for human rights, for being free. Thank you for the opportunity to express myself, to tell what I think. That means a lot to me.

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### Interview 3 – Sofia

Interviewer: Hi Sofia, Could you tell us more about you and where in Ukraine are you from?

Sofia: Okay, so I'm from Dnipro, it's in the east of Ukraine and really it's very close to Donesk and Gandlagask. So basically the war started in 2014 for us as well. Not like you know the war now that it is. And yeah, they wanted my city and they still want it. So we had a lot of refugees when the war started from Donnievsk, especially a friend of mine who is a refugee as well. So can you imagine, they were refugees in 2014 and now they're refugees again. This is a madhouse really.

Interviewer: When did you decide to move out from Ukraine? And I believe you moved out with your daughter, how old is she?

Sofia: Yes. So I do have Petra. She's six. Those times, she was only five. And between us, I didn't want to move. I was ready to fight because I'm in good shape, and I'm sure that I could do maybe sometimes even more than other guys. But my mom, she was born in 1944, so she still remembers what was after the Second World War. And between us, it was nothing.

And she still remembers what does it mean to be hungry? And you know, these habits when very old people, they used to buy, like, a lot of bread. It was damaged, but they still continue to do this. And this is like, mental. So, Mom said, look, you have to move on because you don't have any idea what could be during this war. And after that, a friend of mine phoned me and he was on his way to the army. And he said, look, this is real war. This is not by mistake. You have to move away because you have to know that they could rape even kids. And this time I didn't believe it because Russian people were not, like, close to our brother or something like that. But a lot of Ukrainians had a part of their family there. For us it was like are you joking? But basically mom just kicked me out and my ex husband, he phoned me and he said look, this is a war let me drive you to the border and first day I said look, maybe it's not a war, maybe it's by mistake so he said okay, we can wait one day. So we were waiting one day and on the second day when everything was just absolutely clear, he and his brother picked us up and drove to the border. So if not for little Anna, I'm not sure that I would have made the same decision, but I don't want her to have a horrible childhood. And

they have already lost everything. But all these stories that we can see on our WhatsApp groups and telegrams that they never show here, for example, in England, to make it clear for people this is horrible what they did in Butcha and Maruis kids and they still bomb all over. So I don't know how to live, how to survive if your child was to get killed. So for me it was like this target that I have to move on. So basically I didn't have any choice because I'm a mom first and my child is my priority.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Could you tell us when you crossed the border, did you decide to go straight to the UK? Have you found out something about the schemes available or under which scheme you are currently in the UK with your daughter?

Sofia: It was UK from the beginning and my decision was very easy to get. So basically dad was a scientist and I did speak English from my childhood and my English basically was perfect. Not like this now. It's like a rubbish but still British people, very kind had always told me that English is okay. So because I do speak English this time with a friend of mine who is an international lawyer. We had a chat about where to go and I decided that it has to be a country with English language because I had a very good job and I'm very well educated, but I wasn't ready to spend a lot of time learning another language. I was sure that everything will be very fast and I will be able to start to work immediately and to reset my life very fast.

Unfortunately, this didn't happen but I will tell you after. We don't have a lot of countries with English around and the closest is England and I do have mom still there in Ukraine. She's 78. And I did realise that if she wants to visit us, she will never fly to America or Canada or somewhere far away. So England

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is the closest and plus the climate here is very good. And that was sure that this is a country of two gentlemen. So here we are.

Interviewer: Well, thank you for that. You came straight to Manchester then. And how do you find Manchester? How did you settle down and would you rather move to any different place within the UK?

Sofia: No. So basically we were waiting for the possibility to cross the border near Romania. We were living in the car for two days with some stranger. She was a ridiculous lady, very young and silly. But everyone was flaking, panicking. So without a shower, without a toilet and it was very cold at that time because in Ukraine it's not like here and without food, without enough water, it was not even enough water to wash our arms. So basically, in two days when I realised that I just cannot continue like this anymore as I do need to sleep, to eat, to go to the toilet, I phoned a friend of mine who is basically a friend of my ex husband, but he is my friend as well. So we went to him and we slept there and he gave us food.. And the next day we got a train to Hungary. From Hungary to Budapest. And from Budapest it was a plane to Manchester directly. And in the airport of Manchester we claimed asylum.

Interviewer: Okay, cool. Have you received your asylum already or?

Sofia: No. So we arrived here on the 3 March. We've been here for more than one year. All my life here is just like I'm fighting with the government. Basically, I'm sending them many emails, I'm calling them, but we are still waiting. During the first eight months they didn't help us at all, we didn't get any support and only in eight months here they started to give us some support for food. So basically it's a bit more than 40 pounds per week for each of us. But do you know how much life costs here right? So this is just nothing. But as for me, the main thing will be to get my permit to start to work, but this one I could get only with my main asylum. And we are still waiting. Still waiting. And this is awful really, because I was sure that everything will be very fast and I will be able to just start to work and to live my life very fast.

Interviewer: So basically, your asylum review is probably the biggest barrier for you to start living your life fully in the UK. What kind of main challenges are facing right now? Apart from how long it takes for your asylum case review, is there anything else that is affecting you or your daughter? Did Petra go to school? How is she settling? And is there anything else you personally experienced?

Sofia: Well, basically I'm very lucky with people on my way, especially here. So I was always the type of person who could easily find a common language with people. And it seems like when the universe put me in trouble, they helped me with very nice and kind people, if not amazing local people and foreigners who are here with me. I don't know how I would survive without them, everyone's so helpful. And Petra is at schools, she goes to primary and this is just an amazing school. This school is like a family for her, her English is better than mine, and my English is still not bad. So, yes, all other things, I cannot say that I'm just not lucky or absolutely unhappy. The only thing is only this asylum and permission to start to work. All other things, I could survive with this. Yes, it's not the easiest period in my life and

yes, I do understand that any other person, especially if they are struggling to speak English and struggling with new environments, for example, it could be just a madhouse. But for me, I'm still trying to stay optimistic. Sometimes, yes, I'm just really sad but it will be a new day and everything will be sorted hopefully soon. Not in a few years, soon, like in Ukraine. Soon, Maybe.

Interviewer: That brings me to my next question about the social aspects of your life since you arrived with your daughter. Have you joined any community groups or are you participating in events organised by the Ukrainian community, for example, at the Dnipro Centre or Ukrainian church? Or maybe you participate in the protest that takes place every Saturday on the Piccadilly Gardens. Are there any social groups that you are part of at the moment?

Sofia: Yeah, so when we just arrived, we were visiting Dnipro a few times and Petra even started there at school. But obviously, because it's very far from where we live, this is not a good solution for us.

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Here, all Ukrainians are just trying to stay together and we do have two conversational English clubs here, so a few different places to go to. And yes, we do have a group, like the Manchester Group and group where I live as well and in Europe. Thank you to you guys and to your love. Yeah, I met a lot of Ukrainians as well. So, yeah, I'm trying to be in touch with Ukrainians because between us, the English very poor and they're struggling to sort any issues. So I'm trying to get a solution for myself and at the same time to save everyone near me. But it's okay, they started to speak English a bit. So basically everything is going on. Not bad. Piccadilly Gardens we were visiting only a few times because It's not easy for Petra. She is very active and for six years old girl to stay near it's just like a madhouse. She needs to run all over. Yeah, but basically I don't feel that I'm lonely here. No, I'm not alone.

Interviewer: Good to hear this.

Interviewer: If you think about the future plans, What are your dreams and plans for the future? Do you plan to stay in Great Britain permanently, do you see yourself as a citizen of Great Manchester? How do you feel?

Sofia: Of course, I can't be 100% sure, but yes especially for Petra, England is like a second motherland to her. Between us, I was talking to a few guys who are the owners of a huge company. One of them I worked for, I used to work for before, and all of them told me the same, like, look, it will be yes and yes, even when the war will finish, where we will get a possibility to rebuild our businesses and everything. And I don't want for her poor childhood, I want her to be happy. If in time, when everything will be sorted and she will grow up, she will decide to move to Ukraine or to any other European country or to stay here, it will be her choice. My duty and my responsibility now is to protect her, to give her perfect education and to keep her safe. And safety is here now, it's not in Ukraine, unfortunately.

Interviewer: Absolutely. Yeah, I agree. I wanted to ask you if you could influence those who make decisions about the life of Ukrainians in Great Manchester, what would you like to tell them? Are there any changes they need to make? Is there any other support that needs to be provided to Ukrainians right now based on your experience and your daughters?

Sofia: Based on my experience. Oh dear, okay. If someone claimed asylum, it would be perfect for the government to let them even have a possibility to phone them to communicate faster because sometimes I am waiting for an answer for more than one month. For example, we got temporary accommodation after four and a half months in the hotels. The hotels were just ridiculous, disgusting, believe me. And this accommodation was mouldy and had holes all over and thank God, I have a lot of friends and some of them were ready to help, but not everyone was the same. And that time I phoned the migrant help because unfortunately you cannot phone the Home Office directly. You can phone the migrant help which is an outsourced company of the Home Office, and told them I cannot stay there. And do you know the answer? We will send this to the safeguard team. They will be with you soon but you have to stay there. That's it. So this communication between refugees or asylum seekers and the government, it's not only not enough and I don't want to use bad words, but it is not working. There has to be some department or someone who will be in charge. And it's not only about us. I hear a lot of stories here when the local government tried to put a single mom with a little child into the host family who is a guy and the whole apartment is absolutely dirty and stinky and they don't even have any possibility of locking their door in the bathroom.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's terrible.

Sofia: It will be helpful if all this communication will be faster and with results not only like with possibilities to chat.

Interviewer :So more checks by the council to see if the host is appropriate for families with children.

Sofia: Yeah. And I believe that someone signed that he has already checked it and our accommodation as well. So this is like this round circle that doesn't work like this. So if it is possible to change something,

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I will change this communication between refugees, asylum seekers and the local government or the Home Office in general. I will be grateful for this one because for now, local people, they're very helpful. But the government, I do understand that they do have a lot of problems now. and plus we have already changed three prime ministers. But life is here now and not tomorrow because you never know what it will be tomorrow and if it will be so this one has to be sorted. Hopefully it will be soon.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for that. And the final question, is there anything else you want to talk about that we didn't cover? What would your message be to the people of Manchester?

Sofia: You meant to Ukrainians or to local people?

Interviewer: To local people.

Sofia: To local people. I'm really grateful to all the local people for their help, because if not for them, I'll not be able to survive. Believe me. I'm really very strong but there were many times when I just didn't know what to do. And without their help, without their support, I'm not sure that I'll be able to talk to you now. Maybe just somewhere from the madhouse. But I have already checked, they don't have a good madhouse here.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

Sofia: They are amazing. Really, they are amazing and they deserve to have the best life. So I'm really appreciative.

Interviewer: I agree. Thank you.

## Interview 4 - Tanya

Interviewer: Hi Tanya, could you please tell us more where in Ukraine you are from?

Tanya: I was born in Mykolaiv, and I was living in Dnipro.

Interviewer: When did you decide that you want to relocate because of the war?

Tanya: It was the third day after the Russian forces took Energodar, because I could not sleep at all in Dnipro. You know, it's only 100 km away and it could be damaging for my children. It was very dangerous for us; we were already living with Chernobyl's consequences. So it was a bit too much last year.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. Could you please tell us about deciding which country to go to, who you came with, and overall your journey to the UK?

Tanya: My school friend lives in Poland, I visit her once a year. As soon as the war started, on the first day I asked her if I could come over to where she lives because of this difficult situation. She said that of course I could come. However, it took some time, it was all very ... well... uncertain. That is why I stayed in Ukraine until, as far as I remember, it was either the 8th or 9th March that I went to my friend in Poland. She lives near Gdansk. There is a government programme in Poland and she was getting money to support us, however, she also has two children as I do, and it was difficult to live all together. Then she found friends who, thanks to the Polish government programme, let me and my children live for three months in their flat because they had moved to a new house. After that, there was a critical point, because I was very clear I did not want to return to Dnipro yet because of the danger, and I was looking for a new accommodation again. It is extremely stressful when you do not know where you are going to be living in the next two weeks. However, because I was asking for help from literally everyone I knew, and I knew many people by then, I found shared accommodation in a dormitory where I lived with my kids for a month.

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My husband, who is in Dnipro, told me about the UK programme. I could not find a job in Poland because, firstly, there are so many people, and secondly, England has a need for immigrants to work. Poland, like Ukraine in my opinion, is a very closed country and if you do not speak Polish well there is no chance you will not find a job. So I started Polish language classes, similar to ESOL classes in the UK, for 3 weeks for 5 hours every day. I had been to Poland many times before and the language was not completely new to me, I could speak Polish but it was difficult at a professional level. All my attempts led nowhere. And that's when I said that I was up for trying to get to the UK. It was not through sponsors, but the Homes for Ukraine scheme via the Scottish Government. We all applied and I did not even hope that the entry permit would be granted, but this was a chance to change something. The process was very easy as we all had biometric passports. We simply scanned our passports with our phones, which was very strange for me – the process, photos, using a phone for all this. Two days before the closure of this scheme, we got the entry permits. After that, I was looking for flight tickets, which were very expensive as during the school holidays everything is very expensive here. We arrived in Scotland on the 2nd of September. Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme we were housed in a beautiful resort town by the sea. I love everything connected with hiking and the seaside. It is a beautiful place, but during our bus journey I nearly cried because I realised that my skills as a category manager will not be needed in a small town with a population of a few thousand. The only job options would be to clean or to cook. However, I was hopeful that having come so far on this journey I would find some solution.

Interviewer: And how did you end up in Manchester? Did you consider Edinburgh or, for example, Glasgow?

Tanya: During that bus journey I met a woman who was even more desperate than me. She is a very kind person, very interesting. The next day at breakfast, she told me that she has a friend living in Manchester, who had already found a job and accommodation and was ready to move in her own place as her initial six months with the host was ending. And that her host was living alone in the house and wanted to help another person. This was fantastic news for me, a ray of sunshine.

The paperwork took over a month. When I was asking my council and other people who I thought might be able to answer whether it was at all possible – to change from the Scottish programme and move to Manchester, England. People were saying that they saw no obstacles, that I should be able to do it. Nevertheless, my council said it was not possible, that they would not support me, and even terminate my participation in the programme. I could not understand if the move was at all possible and what I should do, simply wait or something else.

Interviewer: Was the council in Scotland?

Tanya: Yes, in Scotland. I spoke with a young girl from the council who, as I understood, was quite new there and she quit before we left Scotland, so perhaps it was just unfortunate circumstances that I did not get the correct answer. This would have eliminated stress, as at the time I lost sleep again over this situation. But one day Alan wrote to me that he had got the reply already and I could come with the kids. And so, I am here in Manchester.

Interviewer: And that's great! What were your first impressions when you arrived at the host's place? Did you have any cultural shock, positive or negative? What impressed you most?

Tanya: Yes, it was a cultural shock, but a positive one. When the war started, I did not expect anything at all, even from Poland, to welcome us Ukrainians. I thought it could only be short-term, only those 90 visa-free days in the EU. Very unexpectedly, everybody we met was incredibly kind, showing only compassion and support, only positive emotions. I did not expect this, I was pleasantly surprised.

Interviewer: Did you manage to find a job?

Tanya: Yes! Yesterday! It was unexpected. I had my first interview yesterday and I have a job offer already. And it was so easy for me because it was related exactly to my job, it was so easy. Overall, I

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think employment is a very complex issue, for many people I know here. This was my first interview. Before, nobody was even inviting me for interviews, I had the maximum of a telephone conversation. I am working on improving my English every day. I listen to lots of materials in English and learn new words. My replies were not so bad, but I did not have a single interview. I used to work as a category manager – a person responsible for the procurement, storage and sale of goods. I was working at a large company in Dnipro with a massive goods volume, where I had a broad range of tasks. I have many skills, including knowledge of Enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, Excel, PowerPoint, presentation and communication skills. I used to communicate with many people on a daily basis. Here in the UK I saw vacancies where I would be a good fit, but there was no progress past the calls with the hiring manager. Yesterday was my first interview in the UK, the first time I was invited for an interview at all. I received my job offer literally a few hours afterwards. Having finished the interview, I said straightaway that everything was so good, so easy. I had no problems with English, or with answering questions, or talking about myself. If I hadn't had this job it would have proven to me that this is simply because they don't want to see us for whatever reason.

I also know about a lot of success stories, but in the areas with less candidates applying. The vacancies I was applying for had on LinkedIn up to 240 applicants. This is a huge number, incredible competition, one chance out of 240. I realise that maybe some of those applicants are not suitable at all, from other countries, or do not have the skills... but still there are so many applicants.

Interviewer: So, you found a job that matched exactly your previous career!

Tanya: What I found used to be part of my old job – as a procurement pricing analyst. Pricing and goods promotion were my tasks at my previous jobs. It is extremely important for me that my new job is connected with the previous one in some regard. I know and can do a lot, and I want to keep building my career in this sphere. I used to love my previous job.

Interviewer: My congratulations on finding a good job!

Tanya: Thank you! It was so unexpected, and the whole process took two days!

Interviewer: On another note – have you managed to build your social connections since arriving here? For example, do you take part in the life of the Ukrainian community? For instance, there is Ukrainian Centre 'Dnipro' in Manchester, Ukrainian church, Ukrainian rallies every Saturday at Piccadilly Gardens, or maybe some other groups. How do you socialise?

Tanya: Yes, I can tell you. There is also a lovely centre in Ashton. It is unbelievable. I could not imagine this – these people... I did not know that Manchester has such a big Ukrainian community and most people arrived here after World War II. People are extremely nice, and the place is wonderful – full of carved wooden decorations, incredible. These people maintain their bond with Ukraine. I saw a performance there at Christmas – they sing and dance much better than me, even though unlike them I live in Ukraine. They maintain authentically Ukrainian singing and dancing. They also provide practical help, for example, we meet there every Thursday, our kids go there, they organise various celebrations. Several times, they organised fundraisers for Ukraine, we took part by preparing some varenyky. By 'we', I mean several ladies with kids from Ashton, Hyde, Mossley.

Interviewer: You mentioned kids. Did your kids manage to adapt? Do they like life in the UK? How old are they?

Tanya: My older girl is 14, the younger boy is 8. My daughter found it easy at first, but now it is getting harder as teenagers here are different, their habits are different, and they behave differently during classes and breaks. At first things were easier, but now she tells me that if we move out from our host's house, maybe she could find a school for girls or just a different school. Her current school is not bad, she is constantly being moved to a higher maths set, and, overall, I have no complaints that something is wrong. But there were a few instances... My daughter is rather petite for her age, and

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perhaps sometimes struggles to protect her boundaries. Overall, everything is ok. She studies well. In Ukraine, she was attending a school with enhanced studies of foreign languages – English and German. So here school is not too difficult for her, the only foreign language they study is German, which she already knows a bit. And she does not struggle with English, maybe only at first ... At the beginning a Polish speaking teacher was assigned to support my daughter because we spent 6 months in Poland. My kids really enjoyed our time spent in Poland. There were so many opportunities for their development, often free or very affordable.

Interviewer: Thank you

Tanya: And a few words about my son. It was very difficult for him at first, but now there is another Ukrainian boy in his class. The families have already gotten to know each other, and things have improved considerably. He also has a better command of English now and can communicate better. So, everything is really good with him now.

Interviewer: That is wonderful. I understand that the war goes on, but what are your plans for the future? Do you want to move to England permanently? Do you see yourself as a Manchester resident?

Tanya: At the moment I would like to move here permanently. But there is a difficult issue of integrating here and finding a good job with a decent salary. My current job offers the possibility of promotion, but I currently have no understanding of the ins and outs of this. With my current salary I don't feel financially secure enough, but I will do my best as I know my potential.

Interviewer: Thank you, Tanya. You mentioned integration. Could you tell us 1 to 10 how integrated you feel in the UK? with 1 being the least integrated and 10 fully integrated?

Tanya: Currently at 6 because I have not started my employment yet. I found a job, and this has increased my score. I feel comfortable here. I have a close friend – the woman who stayed with the same host before. I am not sure how this miracle happened; she is a wonderful person. I belong to a good community in Ashton, thanks to the local Ukrainian centre. I also met a lot of Ukrainian ladies at the ESOL classes, those who don't attend the Ukrainian centre for one reason or another. Socialising is very important for me; it improves my life satisfaction a lot. Everything else is more or less sorted. I do not feel any particular difficulties in life here.

Interviewer: As to the support provided to Ukrainians. From your personal experience, if you could influence the decision-making of politicians regarding the support for Ukrainians in Greater Manchester, what would you tell them? Any thoughts you would like to share.

Tanya: This is a difficult question. On one hand, I am very grateful, as I did not expect to receive that much support. If there was no war and I wanted to move over here (which I did not), it would have been much more complicated. Now I am not paying for accommodation thanks to my host, with whom we have been staying for more than 6 months now and he let us stay. I have access to healthcare. However, my son has legs of different length, slightly, Pavel cm only. In Ukraine, he was using special insoles. In England, I have already been waiting for the appointment for this for over 6 months. I cannot believe this and do not understand this. In Ukraine, it was much more accessible. From the healthcare system, dentists confuse me the most. One of my teeth needs attention, I have a very slight toothache, but I am dreading the dentists here. I understand that going to Ukraine for this would not be a solution, taking into account the money I would spend on the flights for myself and the kids, whom I would have to take with me. On the other hand, I still do not have my own accommodation... I do not know how this would work with the Ukrainian community. Our Ukrainian community in Ashton is helping everyone to find accommodation. My friend was even part of the programme, shortly after the war started, under which that Ukrainian centre was covering 50% of the accommodation cost for a year. This was great! Now they are helping by looking for accommodation and being guarantors for the tenancy. I am so grateful to these people. I do not know much about this process, as I have not done this yet myself. I

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would appreciate more affordable activities for the children. At the same time, Tameside Council had organised Fuel4Fun club during the whole school holidays – this was very convenient and my kids enjoyed it. Not sure what else to add, perhaps I do not have enough experience.

Interviewer: Then the last question – what would you like to say to the Manchester residents?

Tanya: I am extremely grateful for their support, no other comments. I got support from people everywhere - at school, at my ESOL classes.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Tanya: Thank you.

## Interview 5 – Lisa

Interviewer: Good morning Lisa thank you for sharing your story with us today, Could you tell me a little bit about yourself, where in Ukraine are you from?

Lisa : Good morning, I am from Kyiv.

Interviewer: When did you make the decision to leave your home and move to a different country?

Lisa : I did not make this decision straight away, in the beginning, it was my sister who had left home and moved to Manchester, she is currently living in London. After that I have also decided to leave, because I wanted to be in the same country, so we can be together as a family.

Interviewer: So you started planning the move to Britain straight away?

Lisa: Well, I didn't really plan, I think it was maybe as other people who left Ukraine planned. But I didn't find it too difficult for myself, in terms of the process of applying for documents and going through the system I found it fairly easy.

Interviewer: How did you find out about the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in the UK? Did you find out about it online or did your sister tell you about it?

Lisa: Yes, it was my sister who told me about this scheme. She found out about it first, found a sponsor and received the necessary documents. Later on, I also found a sponsor and received all the documents relatively fast thanks to my sister's advice and help. We also tried to look at different options where to go. On one hand there was no such opportunity to look at options but on the other, I did not have any ideas or preferences, so I have agreed to the first possible place, and I did not think much about where exactly in the UK I want to go.

Interviewer: This is from the first month of the war?

Lisa: No, not the first month. My sister left in the first month of the war or maybe at the end of the first month, I then followed later on. I did not have a lot of emotional resources at the time to come up with a detailed plan, since nothing was clear.

Interviewer: Do you ever regret coming to Manchester? Have you thought about moving to any other city or town within the UK?

Lisa: Oh No, I do not regret moving here but since I live outside of Manchester city, in a village, it is not so easy for me to get used to it. I moved from the Capital City of Ukraine, I am used to a noisier city life, with more opportunities. So, if I were to choose, I would like to live in a similar place or even bigger. When you are a young person looking to find opportunities and prospects for development it is much easier to do so in a big city rather than a small village.

Interviewer: Thank you, we all have probably heard a lot of stereotypes regarding the UK. What is your experience after coming to the UK, is it positive or negative? What surprised you the most? Maybe a different mentality, or some other things?

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Lisa: I had no plans at all to move to a different country before the war and therefore I did not learn about differences in mentality of other cultures to then experience them in reality. I cannot really say that I came across anything radically different. Maybe just one interesting point, at least for myself, is that the UK is accepting a lot of people from other countries. I did hear about this somewhere, and I have friends who have chosen to live in the UK before the current events, due to working abroad with foreign companies. So I did know a little about the UK from people in my close circle but I didn't come across anything too new or radically different except the fact that there are so many people from different nationalities and cultures and they are all linked together. Having so many nationalities and cultures together is much more popular here in the UK than in other countries with more traditional points of view... at least those countries that they call traditional... or Conservative is a more fitting word.

Interviewer: Thank you. Did you encounter any obstacles since arriving in the UK? for example, finding work, learning the language, or anything else?

Lisa : In the beginning, I wanted to improve my English language, so I was looking for all possible courses I could take. It wasn't easy to find one as some of them have already started and I was told I missed some of the curriculum already and therefore couldn't join later on. The course dates and enrollments are very strict so it was a difficult process. Also, it was quite hard to get hold of anyone sometimes. The job centre was completely not interested in me also, at least the one that I went to.

Interviewer: So you still couldn't find a job?

Lisa : Yes, with the courses I managed to enrol and I completed everything I could. At the moment I am actively looking for work. I am at the stage where I am searching for work online and sending out my CV, after which I am waiting for replies and next steps. I did not get any advice about this either. Interviewer: From the jobcentre?

Lisa: From the jobcentre, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, what is the most difficult thing for you currently during your job search? Is it understanding the skills required to be offered a job offer, do you want to find work in your specific sector or are you open to other opportunities?

Lisa: I am open to new opportunities, but what is also difficult for me is that in Ukraine I worked as, I am not sure how to explain it, self-employed, I was working for myself. I worked as a mathematics teacher; I have a University degree in art and humanities so I was not dependent on employers. It was very pleasant since I made my own work schedule and amount of hours, and decided my own salary if I can say that. Here, I need to adjust to someone else, nevertheless, I am open to new opportunities and am looking for something where I can develop further and use my mathematical skills. I was also able to finish a course in front-end development but that's at a beginner level and most employers require a mid-level so it didn't make anything easier.

Interviewer: In the future, are you maybe looking to start your own business here once your English language improves? For example, to be a maths tutor like you were in Ukraine?

Lisa: To be honest, it is not what I want to do here. I would prefer to be employed by someone and to be in a circle of people from whom I can learn and gain experience from. If I am to start my own business, I will most likely do it in Ukraine when the war is over.

Interviewer: Thank you. Have you managed to establish any social relationships since you arrived in the UK? If so, which exactly? For example, are you taking part in the Ukrainian community here, do you visit the Dnipro (Ukrainian cultural centre) centre? Maybe you attend the Ukrainian church or take part in events for support of Ukrainians which occur every Saturday on Piccadilly Gardens? Or maybe there are other social groups that you have joined?

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Lisa: I can say that the only people that I am in contact with are the ones with whom I attended my English courses and some other meetings, but that is all.

Interviewer: Is there a particular reason why? or is it just your own personal choice?

Lisa: I would be interested to know of these possibilities to socialise, maybe I just don't have enough information about these activities.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. What about life in general here in Britain, have you been to theatres, cinemas, galleries, museums?

Lisa: Yes, I have been to the museum, I really enjoyed it, it was very interesting. I didn't have much time recently as the courses were taking up most of my time but since I am all finished now I will have more time to explore again. If we are talking about theatre and cinemas it all depends on having a salary, to be able to attend those.

Interviewer: Yes, of course. Did you have a chance to travel? Which places would you like to see in Britain?

Lisa : Since my sister is currently living in London for half a year now, I had the opportunity to visit London, I had a chance to quickly see Birmingham on the way to London, and I am planning to visit Liverpool of course next week due to Eurovision. I would like to see the atmosphere of the city during this time. Which other places I'd like to see..... well from the famous ones probably Cambridge, Oxford...these two for now

Interviewer: Thank you. This question is difficult as the war is still ongoing, but do you have any plans for the future? What are your dreams? For example, are you planning to stay in the UK, do you see yourself as a resident of Manchester or have you not yet thought about this?

Lisa: Everything will depend on the possibility of work, I do not see my future here if I do not see my own development. Of course, I have gained some experience from our meetings and courses, but I do want to go faster and further in terms of my development. So if everything turns out well then it makes sense to stay, on the other hand, I still have many thoughts about Ukraine. They did not disappear and will never do. Do I see myself as a resident in the UK? Well, not for the rest of my life that's for sure. But for permanent residency, yes, I am looking to live between the two countries at the moment.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Could you tell us from 1 to 10 how adapted you feel to life in the UK? with 1 being the least adapted and 10 fully adapted? Where on that scale would you put yourself?

Lisa: I would put myself in the middle, I would choose 5 only due to the reason that I am currently unemployed and that is a very important and big part of living a full life.

Interviewer: Thank you Lisa, if you could influence the decision of the local council regarding the support of Ukrainians in Greater Manchester, what would you want to tell them?

Lisa: The support of Ukrainians in Greater Manchester... I would put attention on social services, in my opinion. They should not only be responsible for control but also provide services, advice and answers to questions. I found all the answers to my questions mostly from the internet or from accidental acquaintances. When it comes to some exact order of actions you need to do here from when you arrive, such as arranging documents, I think the council should give more advice and be more helpful. Well, they are involved at the very start when everything is still on paper. On the general level everything works very well but locally, everything depends a lot on the people, plus, I could find out about some communities much faster or that they are even here but I didn't get any information or help from the council. It seems to reach only certain people but not people like me it seems.

Interviewer: So you would say you would like more support with integration?

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Lisa : Yes, for example, if I were to visit a job centre I don't think it would be too difficult for them to print out some brochures with information about local communities when it's so hard for them to arrange a meeting every time. It would be nice to at least come for one day and understand what communities they work with or something similar like that.

Because if you really want to find something, of course you will find it. And that's what I did, but you may only find limited information about things and communities and others will just go past you and you may never find them. So it would just be easier to have a route that people can take to find these Ukrainian communities, and other things.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. The last question, From your experience with the British people, and residents of Manchester, what would you like to tell them?

Lisa : Unfortunately, or fortunately I have been only able to speak to a very small circle of people who know what is happening in Ukraine and in general, I understand that Britain supports our people a great deal. At least in my circle of friends, everyone understands the situation and is trying to help Ukrainians any way possible, for example answering questions, giving advice, telling stories and helping with solving things. There is no problem here. People are very motivated to help you unlike social services.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

### **Interview 6 - Svetlana**

Interviewer: Hello Svetlana, first of all thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Could you please tell us about yourself? Which city in Ukraine are you from?

Svetlana: Hello. My daughter and I are from Kharkiv. We have been staying in Manchester for 6 months and several days already. We had been in Latvia for 9 months before coming to the UK. And before going to Latvia we had spent 2 weeks in Ukraine after the events in February 2022.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your arrival to the UK and whether it was the first country you entered. What was your journey like?

Svetlana: Our journey from Ukraine was very long. We spent almost a week travelling within Ukraine, it was a long journey. The first country we entered was Hungary, and then we went to Austria. From Austria we got a flight to Latvia. We registered as refugees for the first time in Latvia, Riga. We spent 9 months there. Then we learned about the Ukrainian scheme in the UK. We decided to apply and were successful. We came here under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to stay with the hosts, they are wonderful people, we are so lucky.

Interviewer: How old is your daughter?

Svetlana: She will be 10 soon, in summer.

Interviewer: Do you maybe regret coming to Greater Manchester and do you consider moving to a different place in the UK in future?

Svetlana: At first, for some reason I understood from the messages we exchanged with our hosts that we'd stay in a small town near Manchester. But we actually live not far from the city centre. We did not consider moving to another place. We have not even been anywhere yet. A lot of my time is spent taking care of my daughter, working remotely, and sorting out various everyday tasks that keep coming up.

Interviewer: Thank you. What were your first impressions on arrival – for example, from meeting your hosts, the support available, maybe a cultural shock?

Svetlana: I cannot say that we experienced any cultural shock. Of course, our English level was insufficient, so-called 'baby English', survival only. However, the woman hosting us is an amazingly kind

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person, she helps us to settle and adapt. She is helping with many of our tasks. When compared to Ukraine, we know what and how things need to be done there, how to apply for the necessary documents, and where and how to ask for help. Here in the UK, it is not only different culture but also different ways to handle paperwork, and this shocked us at first. In Ukraine, for example, getting a place in school does not take very long, a week, maybe two weeks. We arrived in February, and my daughter went to school after the New Year, in January this year. School administration told us that our case was sped up in the light of special circumstances, and otherwise it would have taken even longer. And there are many similar tasks regarding documents with which I do not know where to go, how to approach the issue, and do not even know how to ask the question correctly. Even people with good command of English struggle with this. I understand that all this is much easier for people who live in the UK, who deal with these issues every day, who have grown up within this system. However, even our host who is very smart and switched on struggled with some of these issues while helping us.

Interviewer: I think maybe you had similar experiences accessing healthcare, registering with the GP, dentist. Did you have any experience with this?

Svetlana: I can say that the registration was quite quick, as was getting our Biometric Residence Permits which took less than a week. I acknowledge that this is thanks to our host who has helped us enormously and keeps helping even now. I understand that the healthcare system is failing not only us, people who are new to this country, but everyone in the UK, everybody living here struggles with accessing healthcare, long waiting times, and getting appointments. For example, I received a letter inviting me for the next appointment in a year. Waiting that long might result in complete hearing loss, but I was told that this situation is not urgent. Unfortunately, this is how the system works now, nothing can be done, and one can only wait.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you. What are the main difficulties you are overcoming right now?

Svetlana: I think the main issue concerns every Ukrainian. This is my personal opinion and this problem is very acute for us. I want to stress once again that we are extremely lucky with our hosts, our initial six months has expired, but they let us stay until we find our own accommodation. To rent a place is really not an easy task, even taking into account that our host suggested that they act as our guarantor for the whole year of tenancy, not just for 6 months. Despite this, many landlords are reluctant to rent to us because of the kid, the limited 3-year leave to remain, and so on. But many do not even explain the reasons for refusing and one simply does not understand what to do. I cannot count on social housing because there are so many applicants, long waiting lists, and we are not in the priority categories. That is why I am now looking into various options to move to our own rented accommodation. There are so many documents that need sorting, and I do not know how to do it correctly. If not for our host's help, we would have not been able to do half of what is now done, and done successfully. I certainly wish people from Ukraine had access to some info-centres simply explaining what to do, how to do it step by step. For example, I am working as an accountant remotely, but not for a Ukrainian firm but a third country. I explained at the job centre that I have a contract with a foreign company and asked whether I need to declare here my income from another country. Nobody has been able to provide an answer to date. At first, they said they would respond in my online account, but in the end, they replied they could not answer this question. I do not know what to do next. I realise the answer exists somewhere, but I do not know how to find it and find it promptly. There is not that much time I can spend resolving this while also working and looking after the kid. There are only 14 hours in a day unfortunately, I wish there were more sometimes.

Interviewer: Thank you so much, I see what you mean. Perhaps it is problematic to sort out taxes because there is no information about this in Ukrainian. Did you ask for assistance from, for example, Citizens Advice?



Svetlana: You see I do not even understand what you are talking about. In order to ask for assistance from them I need to know about them and that they can provide help and information. People ask 'Have you asked them?' 'Have you done that?', but I do not know anything about those things they mention. I wish somebody could tell me that if I have a problem with Y, I can do Z. Then yes, I will devote my time, use Google Translate, and find information I need. Maybe I will come again to such info-centre or an advisor who can tell me 'Great, you know A already, but you also need to look into B. And with this question you need to go there'. This is a massive body of information and unfortunately we do not have access to it now.

Interviewer: It would be great to have some sort of guide from the government.

Svetlana: It would be great! It would simplify the process of settling in for people. This is the hardest part of integrating because locals are very friendly and helpful, but often do not know how to help. There is also the language barrier. Google Translate sometimes delivers some ridiculous translations and when you translate back in order to check the outcome - it is so funny. However, I understand that when people receive such funny auto-translated messages they often do not get what you wanted to ask or say.

Interviewer: We mentioned integration and I have a question - have you managed to create any social relationships since your arrival here? If yes, please tell us more about that. For example, are you taking part in the life of the Ukrainian community? Maybe you are attending Ukrainian Cultural Centre 'Dnipro' in Manchester or Ukrainian church. Do you take part in rallies in support of Ukraine on Saturdays? Or anything else you would like to mention.

Svetlana: We attend a Church in Manchester and there are other Ukrainians among the congregation. Ukrainians gather every Sunday to talk and socialise. We hold conversations about faith and our beliefs, but we also talk about our everyday problems, share useful information and support each other. Having a community of like-minded people is extremely helpful. Unfortunately, we do not attend 'Dnipro', it is a bit far from where we live and we do not always manage to go. However, we were planning to go there and I think we will in the near future.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. A difficult question, especially as the war still goes on and you are from Kharkiv (as am I, my parents fled to Germany), but what are your plans for the future? Do you plan to stay in England permanently? Do you see yourself as a Manchester permanent resident?

Svetlana: It is a very difficult question. You know I hope with God's will everything will be fine in Ukraine, all the horrors will be over and the good life will return. Now we understand that the war will end, but things will never be the same as before February. It will be a post-war country and life is always hard in a post-war country. If it were only about myself, I would have probably already returned and stayed home. But this is also about my daughter. I don't know if I want this kind of life for my daughter or not. If there is a chance for the kid to have a good life, if the UK provides such an opportunity, I would like my kid to have a good life, opportunity to study and be safe. Safety is the priority today.

Interviewer: Thank you. Speaking of kids... Has your daughter managed to adapt to life in the UK and does she like it here?

Svetlana: My daughter is very artistic, she spends a lot of time drawing. She draws on everything from tiny paper scraps to huge sheets, she just draws, draws, draws... I realise that every mother thinks her child is talented, but my daughter is truly talented because she has never studied art before and I would like her to study it. I believe that thanks to her inspiration and drawing she is adapting better than maybe some other kids. However, it is a bit hard for her at school because of the different education system. By the way, I don't quite understand this system because it is very different from education in Ukraine. I do not understand whether my child is studying well or not, whether she understands the topics covered or maybe she needs a bit of help. I do not get this because the system is designed differently.

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I do not know... In Ukraine, there was a lot of homework to do every day and various tests with the results available to parents. We, parents, struggle with adjusting to the new system, but children of course like it. They only get homework once a week and do not have to read that much material. It is easier here and kids have more free time to do what they like. It is better here in that regard. There is another boy from Ukraine in my daughter's school, there are also some Russian-speaking kids, it makes things a bit easier for her because she can chat with them. I noticed that during our 6 months in the UK my daughter made many new friends. School staff and teachers are nice. She likes it here.

Interviewer: Thank you. How would you rate your level of being integrated in England from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least integrated and 10 fully integrated?

Svetlana: I wish I had something to compare against and understand what it is like to be fully integrated ... Perhaps somewhere in the middle.

Interviewer: Maybe I will rephrase that a little ... Would you say you are living your fulfilled life here or perhaps there is still a feeling that this is a temporary stay with the hope of coming home?

Svetlana: You know, I think this period in life has taught us not to get too attached to things because you never know what comes next. You live your life, have everything, and then comes the moment ... I am sorry it is not easy to talk about this... when you need to leave everything behind and flee into the unknown. Compared to that, I am much better now. Of course, we feel better here where we do not have to jolt with every loud sound. However, during our first six months abroad spent in Riga, Latvia, all loud sounds caused ... well you jolt. Once my daughter and I were walking on the street, and a car drove by, it probably needed some repairs because it was making sounds loud enough to scare us. It is not easy, but this is our experience. We never wanted this experience for our kids, or ourselves. Being here, being able to sleep well and walk on the streets safely means so much.

Interviewer: Yes, thanks a lot. If you could influence the decisions of the local authorities regarding the support for Ukrainians in Greater Manchester, what would you like to tell them?

Svetlana: You know, first of all, I would like to thank them for the opportunities given to us. I appreciate it so much, truly. But in Ukraine many people had good careers and valuable work experience, it would be amazing to have work opportunities. Ukrainian do not like to sit idly, we need to keep busy, to work. Life does not stop, it goes on and I want to work. And I am not the only one like this. Getting benefits feels uncomfortable because as a healthy adult I can work and continue my career. However, it is not clear how to improve the existing skills or learn some new skills with limited command of English. As an accountant, even though my English is not perfect at the moment, I could have been working, earning and not being a burden to the state. I could have been a person who pays taxes and feels as an equal member of society. This is the main thing for integrating in my opinion. And many of my friends, people I am in touch with here, would also be very happy if they could find a job here.

Interviewer: The last question then – maybe you want to say something to people in the UK, and to the Manchester residents in particular?

Svetlana: Oh, I want to thank them, sincerely and from the bottom of my heart. For welcoming and supporting us... sometimes, complete strangers offer help... it is wonderful. Thank you so much!

Interviewer: Thank you.

Svetlana: Thank you.

## Interview 7 - Alex

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Interviewer: Hello Alex, good afternoon! First of all thank you for agreeing to participate in our conversation. Could you tell us a bit about yourself and what was your way to Great Britain? When did you come and under what conditions?

Alex: Good afternoon! Thank you for inviting me. I'd like to tell you that I left Ukraine before the war. When it started I was in Poland. I helped my wife and children to evacuate to Poland as well. We were there for some time. As there were a lot of refugees, it was getting more difficult to find accommodation. All things considered, we decided to move to Britain. Firstly my wife and kids came here and I joined them shortly afterwards, as we wanted our family to be together.

Interviewer : Why did you decide to go particularly to Britain? Have you come under those new schemes?

Alex: All of Europe was opened for Ukraine. However, I had chosen Britain in particular, as this country supported us a lot and it always had a constant vision regarding such things as aggression. It showed her face in World War I and World War II and nowadays it remains to be at the same position against the nazism.

Interviewer : Don't you regret that you got to Manchester? Did you arrive in Manchester straight away? What was your way?

Alex: Yes, I arrived here straight away. I'd like to tell you that it's a pretty nice city and people are quite pleasant. That's true. That's not just for paying a compliment. Communicating with these people I have never noticed any hostile attitude to us. By any means. Regardless of whether they were local English people or people from other countries, their attitude was absolutely the same. They were friendly, helped a lot, especially English people. I'd go as far as saying that there are a couple of families that took a huge part in my life.

Interviewer : So we can say that your first impression and experience of staying here is pretty positive. Or were there any disadvantages?

Alex: It was very difficult the first few months because it is an absolutely different culture. But once I understood a lot of things, I saw that this country is very nice. And I like it. And I liked Manchester a lot as well.

Interviewer: Also, what obstacles did you face after arriving? Such as finding a job, learning language or some accommodation problems.

Alex: I faced some issues with accommodation firstly. Unfortunately, because I didn't pay attention to my sponsor's attitude to this at the beginning. I am really grateful for the support I got both from Ukrainians and from the Ashton council. Currently I am living in a hostel, but it looks like I'm going to find a sponsor.

Interviewer : Thank you. What are the main difficulties you have to overcome now?

Alex: English language

Interviewer: Is there any difference in the support you required at the beginning and now? Have your needs changed in comparison with the beginning?

Alex: Probably no.

Interviewer: Did you manage to find a job?

Alex: I am focused on learning English now. As it is an absolute horror, when you work and people do not understand you and you don't understand them either. First few months I was trying to work, but now I want to pay more attention to learning English to be able to speak fluently.

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Interviewer: The questions regarding your settling down. Are you taking part in the life of the Ukrainian community?

Alex: My life has significantly changed since I arrived. I am visiting the Ukrainian centre in Ashton, also I am following Ukrainian communities on social media. From time to time I am taking part in events to support Ukrainians. Also, I try to financially support my relatives when I have opportunities for that.

Interviewer : Why did you decide to leave Ukraine before the War? What are you going to do in the future? Are you going to stay here? Do you see yourself as a Manchester citizen?

Alex: I have to say that my social position was the main reason for leaving Ukraine. So I left Ukraine before the war. The War wasn't the reason. Frankly speaking, if anything changes I don't want to return there at all. I love Ukraine very much. I am trying to improve my language much more compared to the way I was speaking in Ukraine. Great Britain is a nice country and I'd be more than glad to stay here. But I can't definitely say whether I will stay or return.

Interviewer : I wanted to ask you about your kids, did they settle down, do they like life in Great Britain?

Alex: My children like life in Britain very much. They like all the opportunities they get here. Such as visiting the gym and swimming pool in the school. They like studying as well. My younger daughter is especially delighted as she started primary school. My older daughter already has her own opinion about everything. In general, all the family is happy.

Interviewer : Do you think their education is very different from Ukrainian?

Alex: Yes, it is absolutely different. But I can't say that the quality of education is worse.

Interviewer : In case you can overall estimate the level of your adaptation on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is completely dissatisfied and 10 is completely satisfied. What will be your answer?

Alex: I am somewhere between 3 and 4, cause I have not learned English before and actually the language barrier is the main obstacle that appears everywhere.

Interviewer: One of the final questions, in case you could influence the local council's decisions regarding support of Ukrainians in greater Manchester based on your experience, what would you like to say, what should be changed? As I understood and as I know the agreement between you and your host didn't appear to be the same as you planned. And you had to go through a bit of a different way. Do you think that the local council could help you with that?

Alex: I think I just need to adjust my facilities. Generally, as I communicate with Ukrainians, so everything they told me about, they said with a big gratitude. Let's say I have never heard any offence from them. The one thing I'd like to talk about is the hostel. It's really difficult for me to stay there, considering that I am studying. If it is possible to solve the problem with accommodation, it would be really nice. And I am pretty satisfied with the rest of the things, government and people's attitude.

Interviewer: Where do you live now?

Alex: This is a hostel for temporary homeless people.

Interviewer: Do you want to say something to British people, especially those who live in Manchester.

Alex: I can't talk without referring to the situation that we have in Ukraine now. I would like to tell them if they can't realise that nowadays we have the kind of things that were happening in Syria six seven years ago, now happening in Europe. So if it won't be stopped in Ukraine, it will be in united Europe and spread all over the world further.

Interviewer: Thank you, I absolutely agree. Is there anything else we haven't talked about but you'd like to discuss?

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Alex: What I'd like to talk about? I'd like to say that Ukrainians still need support and you need to pay more attention to them. It is really difficult in Ukraine now. And I know that from my friend's stories. Even those, who lived better and had their own car, their business, they have a desire to move, because they lack money. So I understand that it is really difficult in Ukraine now. When they get support in England from the government, Ukrainians always try to send some money to their family at least, though it might be a small amount of money. It is a great contribution to the Ukrainian economy. Regarding the gratitude, there is no doubt that we are thankful to Great Britain that they accept us and provide such support. It is beyond words to say how grateful we all are. Thanks a lot.

## Interview

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Victoria

Interviewer: Good afternoon, Victoria! First, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. Could you please tell me where you are from? Where were you when the war started? And when did you decide to leave the country?

Victoria: Thank you very much. I am really thankful for inviting me and having a chance to share my experience. Maybe it will be useful for someone. I was born in Donetsk, Ukraine and lived there for a long time. When the war started in 2014, my family and I stayed there. We bought a house on the 9th of April. Unfortunately on the 26th of April in 2014, everything started. We did think of moving out. But there was a mortgage, my husband worked there and I had to take care of two small kids, one of them was a toddler and the other one was ten months old. My husband is a foreigner, he is a Palestinian. Unfortunately, he didn't have any other experience except working in a taxi and fast food sphere. So taking into consideration all these facts we understood that it's better to stay there, as we were not able to afford house rent. In case we would sell the house it was just enough money for food, so we decided to stay. After some time, the military actions had decreased a bit, so we paid back all the money for the house and started saving money to buy our house in Bucha or Irpin. So we were thinking about buying an apartment there, and my friend was ready to help, however we didn't buy it. Meanwhile we lived in Kramatorsk, our kids were studying there. We visited Donetsk just on holidays, as my mother stayed there. Once we went there the full-scale war started and we were trapped. So we didn't have a chance to return to Kramatorsk, as we did before, through the blockpost. My husband has a big family. He has brothers who live in Denmark, Germany, England and Donetsk. One of his brothers lives in Manchester, in England. My husband had a dream to return to his parents and live together. So we decided to move. Firstly we had to go through the Russian Federation. Then we got to Latvia, Riga, stayed there for one month while waiting for our visa to England. And finally we got here.

Interviewer: So You almost bought a house in Bucha, Irpin.

Victoria: Yes! It was a pretty similar situation in Donetsk and Bucha, we were very close to that.

Interviewer: What is your experience here? What is your first impression of Britain and their support? Did you have a kind of cultural shock? As a lot of us have had some stereotypes about Britain since our school life. What were your and your family's impressions?

Victoria: First of all I was surprised in a good way. We spent one month in Riga, Latvia. And I was impressed by their attitude towards Ukrainians. When we arrived in Manchester as tourists, everything was absolutely fascinating! One of the positive factors was meeting my husband's family. As I had only once seen them before when they arrived in Donetsk in 2013. They travelled around the world and said that Donetsk is pretty similar to Germany. Of course I was pleased to meet them and it was such a cosy atmosphere.

Interviewer: What difficulties did you come across after arriving?

Victoria: First, some organisational moments. My husband's brother helped us to solve all the issues. However, we had some issues with starting a bank account, changing our driving licence, and medical

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help. I have to mention I have a lot of issues with my health, with my back. I hoped that I could make some check up here, but it took a lot of time at first. But now I am receiving needed treatment step by step.

Interviewer: Does the health system differ a lot from the Ukrainian?

Victoria: Yes, a lot. First, I was impressed by its size, new interior and equipment. I was surprised that even face masks are for free here. In case there were more money in Ukraine it would be invested in the reconstruction for sure, meanwhile, I think that our doctors are more proficient. Getting to the right doctor here takes a lot of time. If you get to the emergency you have to fill in the form at the reception, then the nurse makes a check up, you have to wait in a long queue. While in Ukraine a doctor examines a patient right away and prescribes some treatment. Also, when I got here with my children to the hospital, we got antibiotics for free, meanwhile you have to buy all the medicine on your own in Ukraine and it's pretty expensive.

Interviewer: My next question is regarding your adaptation in Great Britain. Did you manage to find a job?

Victoria: No, I didn't. Actually I haven't looked for it yet, as I am currently on maternity leave. My husband had to work and I applied to the job centre as of now. I want to start working, but my younger son is in a nursery only twice a week. Once he starts school, I will have more time and will be able to look for a job, based on my education.

Interviewer: Have you been able to socialise here since you arrived? What do you do exactly? For example, maybe you take part in a life of the Ukrainian community, visit the Ukrainian centre Dnipro or Ukrainian church? Are there any other social groups for you and your husband?

Victoria: I believe that social life is vital. First of all, this is Europia, which supports me a lot. We have meetings every two weeks here, and attend crafts sessions. There were yoga classes before, which I attended with my daughter. Occasionally we visit the Ukrainian centre when some events are there. Also, I visited a workshop for women. I don't visit a church as I am a muslim. I met two new friends here as well. One is from Kyiv and the other one is from Kazakhstan. I made friends with a girl from Kazakhstan. We visit muslim centre here on a regular basis. Also, I am open to communication in groups on Facebook, such as "Ukrainians in Manchester". I am taking care of my kids and don't have a lot of free time, so chatting is a nice socialisation for me as well.

Interviewer: Did you have a chance to visit a theatre, cinema, museum, exhibition?

Victoria: Yes, I did. I like it in England very much, as it is pretty similar to an active Ukrainian social life. I am a very energetic person and can't stand staying at home. And I am trying to spend time actively with my family. First of all, it was a meeting with the Polish community in Europia, it was so cosy. My family and I visited a lot of places here, such as Stonehenge, Wales, and Leeds. Also we visited some museums, walked in parks in Manchester. There seem to be a few places that I haven't seen yet.

Interviewer: The next question is quite sensitive, as your home is located quite close to the front line. What are you going to do in the future? Do you have any plans? Are you going to return to Ukraine or stay here? Do you consider yourself as a resident?

Victoria: Yes, it was a very complicated question last year. However, I have already made a decision. If the English government gives us a chance to stay, we will stay here. At the beginning it was very pleasant to stay here as tourists, then it was a period of homesickness and a desire to return home. Still it is so difficult to talk about. To move here was not our decision. It was forced emigration. We had just three days to pack our suitcases and move. If it wasn't England, we would stay somewhere in Europe. I definitely don't want to return to Donetsk, as we rented a hostel in Kramatorsk, where we didn't even have a separate kitchen to cook. It was expensive to rent a better house. However, when I had some difficulties with my husband's family, at first I thought I would return to Ukraine. But I

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understood that I couldn't just take my kids and leave them without their father, though the relationship with my husband got worse. So I decided to stay. After that there was a period when we got on well with my husband, the situation in Kyiv got a bit stable in summer, so we were going to return to Kyiv and start a new life there. Unfortunately in November, the number of attacks increased again throughout Ukraine. We didn't want our children to jump on thin ice and get them stressed. It didn't feel safe in Kyiv. In one year after leaving Ukraine I understood it is easier for me to remember my previous life, it wasn't so painful, just some memories left. As a matter of fact I decided to stay here then.

Interviewer: You mentioned children of different ages? Did they manage to settle down here?

Victoria: Yes, they did. At the beginning they were impressed as tourists, because of the new culture and mentality. Then it was a period when they were homesick as well and wanted to return home. I think it was because of the stressful situation in our family, when we went apart with my husband. But I am trying to explain everything to them and calm them down. I like the pace of life here, people are relaxed and they live their life, without any haste. My kids had a gap in their studies, as we were waiting for a school place for a long time. Despite their worries at the beginning, they got used very quickly.

Interviewer: The last question. In case you could influence the decisions of the local government, what would you tell them regarding support of Ukrainians.

Victoria: Firstly I'd like to express my gratitude to the British government and Ukrainian community, which help and support Ukrainians a lot. Actually they were those who coordinated the way I should move further. Also, I am really happy to get support with my accommodation, food bank help, and everything else. If I could ask for more, I would like to ask for the further stay of Ukrainians in Britain. It would be really great if the British government could allow Ukrainians to extend their residence permit. Unfortunately, not all of us have the place to return. We started our new life from scratch, we are getting used to living in England and our children also had a settling down period. I won't be so easy to return. And no one knows when this war finishes. Also, it would be great to have a chance to find work based on our education and skills. I've read that I won't be able to work in my specialty and I am not sure whether my degree will be accepted, even when I improve my English. Besides, it would be really great to still have some benefits when I start working. When one starts work, they get minimum wage, so I won't be able to afford paying all the bills and rent. However, I'd like to start working and make a positive contribution.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to say to British people and Manchester citizens?

Victoria: I do appreciate the help and support a lot of Ukrainians got in England. Despite the financial meltdown in England, they try to help both financially and mentally, providing health support and shelter as well. This year I improved my health significantly and I am grateful for that. There is a chance to meet Ukrainians, as it is very important to us. Thank you!

## Interview 9 - Pavel

Interviewer: Hello Pavel.

Pavel: Hello.

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. Can you tell me where in Ukraine you are from, where you were when the war started, and how you got into the UK.

Pavel: The war in Ukraine caught me by surprise. My godmother called me and said: 'Pavelko, the war has started, make sure the kids are safe. If the connection disappears, then ...' Oh, I cannot remember very well, because it was very stressful. This happened around 5am. She just told us to stay safe. As for my journey to the UK... My wife's sister lives in the UK. Then the Family Scheme opened for relatives. At first I thought that I would send my wife and kids, I have 3 children. I was planning to stay

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in Ukraine, because I own a business in Ukraine, and help my family from there. But the situation was deteriorating every day and I was more and more inclined to go to the UK or with my family, get the 3-year residence permit, and then go back home. That way I could visit them any time. When we came over here and started to arrange the required documents, I realised that the cost of living is quite high here and that it would be hard to provide for my family from Ukraine. Also, despite the fact I am a father of three, I thought that at some point the Ukrainian border would close and I would not be able to visit them. So I decided to stay in the UK.

Interviewer: Which city in Ukraine are you from?

Pavel: Lviv.

Interviewer: What were your first impressions on arrival? What was your experience like –for example when it comes to the support available, maybe a cultural shock, positive or negative experiences?

Pavel: The first thing that surprised me was that it is not such a fairy-tale as I imagined. Not what we think we know about England. I realised that in Ukraine many aspects of life are much more convenient for people. The first thing that comes to mind are hospitals and how quick you can be seen by a doctor – in Ukraine, it is much faster. Over here you apply, register, and the quickest you can get an appointment is in a week or a week and half. This is quite long. And when you go to A&E, you wait for six hours or more to see a doctor and be examined. This is quite a lot. This happens a bit faster in Ukraine. This was the first thing I noticed. Secondly, I thought the roads were bad in Ukraine, but over here they are the same, sometimes even worse. I noticed that there are some repairs being done in the area we live in ... sorry, I am quite nervous ... There are repairs and it has been a year now, and they are still ongoing. This would not happen in Ukraine, there you would just call a hotline and the issue would be resolved quickly. For example, I was surprised when I was working in Macclesfield and commuting every day from Manchester to Macclesfield. There were roadworks in various places as you approached the town. What surprised me the most is that two vehicles arrive, approximately 20 workers get out, but only two people would actually be working. And this happened every time I was passing there, and this is strange for me. The work concerned a small pothole and took a month. I am not sure what was there to do the whole month about a small pothole.

Interviewer: I see what you mean. So did you come with your own car?

Pavel: No, I bought one here.

Interviewer: What difficulties did you encounter on arrival ?– was it for example finding a job, learning the language, or anything else?

Pavel: I found a job quickly. I am a skilled worker, a dental technician. I had a good career in Ukraine. And ... well ... It was difficult for me to gather my courage for this, but I asked for help from a local dentist with Ukrainian heritage. I called him and told him I was looking for a job. He asked me to come to meet him and have a chat. I came and we had a conversation. He asked at the dental laboratory he cooperates with whether they need a dental technician. I had an interview at that laboratory and they saw samples of my work. I performed the task they gave me quickly and well, they really liked it. They offered me a good salary as for the UK standards, however, I thought my work was worth more. The person who interviewed me wrote to his... maybe friends... asking whether they were looking for someone... The thing is that my profession is quite diverse and I can perform a wide range of tasks. I am the owner of a dental laboratory and I can do all these tasks. Tooth implants can be removable or fixed – the first ones you can take out and the second ones are for long-term use, they cannot be removed. When I demonstrated samples of my work, those were non-removable implants, my interviewer saw it was a high quality sample so he was asking around whether somebody needs a dental technician making such non-removable implants. Literally Pavel 0 minutes later another man called me and invited me for an interview. The interview was not far and I met him within an hour. After

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seeing the samples, he asked what salary I was after without even giving me any trial tasks. I told him the salary I had in mind. He replied that it is a bit much for a new starter, however he offered a much higher amount than at the previous interview. In two weeks I started the job I had studied and worked towards.

Interviewer: That's amazing! Thank you so much for your answer. In terms of integration, have you managed to create new relationships since your arrival here? If yes, please tell me more about it. For example, your participation in the life of the Ukrainian community, such as attending Ukrainian Cultural Centre 'Dnipro', Ukrainian church. Or maybe you found some other social groups for yourself and your family.

Pavel: Of course, I am attending 'Dnipro' frequently. At the beginning, shortly after arrival and before I started working, I volunteered there a lot because local people were bringing a lot of donations for Ukrainians. These were the first weeks and almost every week we were sending huge quantities of food, clothes, and any other things needed in Ukraine.

Interviewer: Thank you! As to the cultural life in the UK itself, have you and your family attended theatre, cinema, exhibitions, museums? Maybe you have managed to travel a bit. Maybe you are planning to attend some places of interest in Manchester.

Pavel: I was commuting to work by train and when I was returning to Piccadilly, I was interested in exploring this city and its culture. Almost every time I was taking a different route back home through the city. I found Media City especially interesting, as well as the museums. My nephews and I went to the Art Gallery and the Museum of Science and Industry. We also went to London for four days. There we went to the consulate to renew our children's passports. At the same time we organised a little holiday for ourselves, walked around the city centre, went to some museums – Madame Tussauds, the National Gallery, the Tate Modern, the London Eye, London Sea Life, and properly explored the city by foot. We have also been to Snowdonia twice, to Llandudno and Rhyl, twice in Liverpool, and York once. In addition, we have been to the Peak District and Lake District four or five times for sure.

Interviewer: That's cool! Have you visited Scotland?

Pavel: We are planning to go on the next bank holiday.

Interviewer: Wonderful, thank you. You mentioned your kids. Have they managed to adapt to life in the UK ? Do they like it here?

Pavel: Until the end of the last year they were still waiting to go home and perceived this as something very temporary. After Christmas it seemed to me there was a turning point when they realised that this is not going to end soon and they have to adapt and study here. At first they were even resisting, they did not want to learn the language. My wife and I were trying to stay calm with the kids because it is very hard to force them to study. We realised that it was difficult for the kids to adapt and they were stressed. We did not emigrate, we fled the war. I was never considering emigration and was content with everything in my Ukraine. I have only ever considered maybe going somewhere for a month, or a maximum of six months, to experience life abroad and see different countries, but not to move abroad permanently. So for me it was stressful ...

Interviewer: What about education here? Is it different from Ukrainian education?

Pavel: In my opinion it is easier here, kids have less homework. We have certain problems because our kids don't speak English very well. However, the older kids have adapted much quicker during this year and understand more. The thing is that my kids went to a grammar school in Ukraine with enhanced German tuition; they had German lessons five days a week. English language starts at year 7. My daughter is in year 6 so she did not learn English and she struggled the most. She was coming home and telling my wife: 'Mum, I cannot understand that gobbledygook'. Only after 3-4 months, she started talking in English a little bit.

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Interviewer: Thank you. Another question... you said that you have never planned to move abroad. What are plans for the future right now? Do you plan to stay in the UK permanently? Do you see yourself as a permanent resident in Manchester?

Pavel: One of my kids was in the final year of high school in Ukraine, and the other in sixth form, so their basic school education has not been completed back home. They have to finish school, I think at least here, because in Ukraine right now schooling is not great because of the war. So my wife and I decided that our kids will go to university here. My youngest daughter should finish school at least. Then we will see... For the older kids I think it should be school and university, this is while the youngest finishes her school. Whether we plan to stay here... At least until kids finish their education, and then we will decide. It is hard to make any decisions today. At first, all plans were ruined by Covid, then by the war. Now it is hard to predict any future scenarios, maybe there will be something else after the war, another world crisis. It is difficult to plan. For now, we let our children study and my wife and I try to build a life here. In my professional sphere, at least in Manchester, I consider myself successful. After my first job, I found another, and now I am working in one of the best laboratories in Manchester and earning a decent UK salary. However, I always push myself further and would like to do things better, do more. But this will come with time.

Interviewer: How would you rate your level of being integrated in England from 1 to 10, with 1 being the least integrated and 10 fully integrated?

Pavel: I think it is about 7.

Interviewer: Would you say you are living your fulfilled life here or perhaps there is still a feeling that this is a temporary stay? Is there something maybe preventing you from integrating fully, such as the language barrier or anything else?

Pavel: At the moment the only thing is the language barrier. As to everything else – I live a good life as I did in Ukraine. There is one massive advantage in comparison with my life in Ukraine. As a business owner there, I worked 24/7 and was constantly thinking about work. Over here, I am given directions and need to simply do my job. It used to be extremely rare for me to finish work and go home at 4pm. At my current job, I have such an opportunity and I appreciate it. I use this free time for self-development, learning the language, and finding further areas for self-realisation here or perhaps to reassess my life priorities and maybe update them.

Interviewer: Thank you. If you could influence the decisions of the local authorities regarding the support for Ukrainians in Greater Manchester, what would you like to tell them?

Pavel: The first thing would be to increase trust towards Ukrainians who are looking for accommodation. This is one of the biggest problems. When we were looking for accommodation, it took us around 3 months to find one and we had refusal after refusal. We got our current accommodation when somebody else had refused it essentially because it was quite neglected and this was the only option we could get. We have made some improvements and now it is in quite liveable condition.

Interviewer: Thank you. Do you have anything to say to the Manchester residents and people in the UK in general? people who would listen to this interview.

Pavel: I could have said a lot if I had a chance to prepare for this question. Saying something on the spot... One year I spent here is not enough to give any sort of advice. Currently I am an observer here, I am learning about this country and its traditions.

Interviewer: Maybe something about the sufficiency of the support received or any conversations you had about the war.

Pavel: Everybody I am in touch with has supported us. Primarily I am grateful to the UK, the UK Government, and the Queen for giving us the opportunity to come here. Our family has always wanted

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to visit England. This did not seem possible, as it could have easily happened that the visitor visas were granted for example only to my wife and kids, or me and the kids. But we came here as a family, all together, so I am very grateful.

Interviewer: You mentioned the Queen. Tomorrow is the Coronation of the King. Are you and your family going to take part in the celebratory events?

Pavel: We did not plan to. I thank the Queen because at the time she gave us this opportunity. The British Government and people did so much for Ukrainians. Welfare support is awesome during the whole year. I know people who could not find a job and they receive benefits. The Government also helps those who do not earn enough to pay rent. This is worth commending and appreciating. I am grateful on behalf of my fellow citizens, I thank God I have a good life but I know that not everyone is so fortunate.

Interviewer: Thank you. Is there anything else we did not mention during this interview that you would like to talk about?

Pavel: I think we covered everything, all pressing issues – hospitals and finding accommodation. So that Ukrainians can find accommodation easier. Not even to find, but to get it easier, be more trusted. I am sure that Ukrainians are not deceitful, they are hardworking and deserve trust.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your time.

Pavel: Thank you

## Interview 10 – Darina and Olena

Interviewer : Good morning! Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. Can you tell me where are you from in Ukraine? And can you tell us a little about yourself?

Darina: Thank you. My name is Darina. And I have my mother Olena here with me. We are from Brovary. I left my home on 24th February 2022. We haven't returned home since then and are still looking for our place on Earth. I still work remotely for a company in Ukraine ever since the war started as office manager. I have a good job and a constant income, so I am not looking for work in Great Britain. My mother, she can tell you about herself.

Olena: My name is Olena. I came to the UK on the 12th of February this year. I was ill and had a stroke. I didn't see my children for a long time, so I decided to come here for rehabilitation.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Just to make it clear, did you come with the two of you or did you come with another relative?

Darina: We came with my daughter. I am 52 years old. My daughter is 19. We arrived before my mum. We came to Wales in April 2022. My mother joined us later in February, as she said, in 2023. Now we are in Manchester. The way we got to Manchester, is in one way simple and hard in another, because we came through the program "Homes for Ukraine". Our sponsors are from Manchester, but they also have a house in Wales, and we lived there for eight months. Then the house was sold and we started to look for a new home. At first, we were looking nearby but then we expanded our search all over Great Britain. Honestly, it is very hard to find a home, really hard, and for Ukrainians, it's even harder. In my situation, for example, I have a constant income, but it's not in Great Britain. It's from Ukraine. Maybe it is like that only in Wales or is it all over Great Britain? But for me, it was very complicated to even get an opportunity to view a house. In Manchester, it was a little bit easier, maybe because of my sponsors who lived in Manchester, and they helped us a lot. Obviously, this is how we ended up in Manchester. Maybe it is strange, but we are here only for a week and a half.

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Interviewer: Thank you very much. Why did you choose the UK? Did you plan to come here from the very beginning?

Darina: We crossed the border between Ukraine and Poland on foot, and we stayed in Poland for a little bit. In the beginning, I was really scared because I was sure that after Ukraine the next target would be Poland. I know English so I didn't consider any other option except Great Britain. I understood Polish and I could talk and communicate, but I had a feeling that Poland was a foreign country to me. At the same time, here in Great Britain, this feeling is not so strong. I understand shop signs, I understand when people talk to me on trains, in shops, and anywhere. Great Britain was for me the most logical place to flee. Maybe it sounds strange, but it's true. My mum, she had no choice. She came to us because we are here, so it's understandable.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. What about your first impressions after you have arrived? I mean anything from your hosts to the support you have received so far? Or maybe some cultural shock? Was your impression positive or negative?

Olena: You asked me about my impression - yes, I was deeply impressed. I like this country. I read a lot about this country. I am a teacher. I teach geography and Ukrainian culture, starting from ancient times. Obviously, I found this story with children. We learned that Anne of Kyiv, a daughter of King Yaroslav, our Ukrainian Yaroslav the Wise, was a grandmother of many kings even of England. As a Kingdom, England has its unique history. So as a teacher, my first impression was very positive because of the smiling faces of people who I never met before. I was with my granddaughter; she is fluent in English. The people who met us were very friendly. Later, when we visited the hospital, we went to have some procedures, because I felt unwell, the doctors were very kind. Now the biggest problem for me is language. I learned German at school. I was good at learning languages, but now after the stroke, I started forgetting. I was thinking it would be really nice to have a little book with the most necessary English words.

Interviewer: Very good point. What difficulties did you face after you arrived in the UK? What difficulties are you facing now? I know that you have mentioned language for your mum. What are the difficulties personally for you and your daughter? Maybe something else that your mother didn't mention.

Darina: Some difficulties here are even hilarious. Maybe no one noticed that doors here are closing differently. It was a problem for me because once I couldn't close the door because I didn't know that you should lift the door handle up, because, in Ukraine, we didn't have this thing.

Interviewer : Oh yes, you are right, that is very true indeed!

Darina: It is really funny, but when you face it, you think really, it was so easy. Another difficulty was that we lived in a little town. For instance, we didn't know where to buy toiletries or cosmetics. No idea where we can buy it because there were no shops like we used to have in Ukraine. Here in Manchester, they exist but in Wales... As I mentioned earlier, the real difficulty for me was renting a house, and then socialising. I want more communication and I feel a lack of it.

Interviewer : We will return to the question about socialising a little bit later. You said that you worked remotely, is it because it is hard to find a job here? Or just because you feel more comfortable working like you used to do it before?

Darina: I feel comfortable working as I used to and I am quite happy about it, but my daughter she's looking for work and right now she can't find anything. She has good English and even some experience. She worked as a shop assistant in Wales. Now she's looking for work in Manchester, and trying to find it by herself. It will be very useful for her to attend some courses which can help her understand the process of looking for and applying for work in the UK.

Interviewer : Maybe she would be interested in learning how to write a CV?

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Darina: Yes, writing a CV would be a good skill. Maybe they're special requirements when you are composing a CV. Maybe the mistakes she makes are the reasons she can't find work. And one more. When we were moving, we had to move to another GP. We registered with a new GP, but it will be some time before my mother will be able to get her medicines from the new GP. But her pills are almost finished. They told us that we should call our previous GP and ask them to send us an electronic prescription. Then they told us to call a pharmacist for this prescription. How can we call this pharmacist? I have no idea.

Interviewer: Good. Let's talk about this after the interview. I will try to help you with this and now let's move to the question about socialising. Were you able to socialise since you moved to the UK and if not why can't you do it? You are in Manchester now - do you participate in the life of the local Ukrainian community? Do you visit the Ukrainian Cultural Centre Dnipro or maybe the Ukrainian church

Darina: It was a reason why we responded to your advertisement. We wanted to find more opportunities for socialising. We want to communicate, especially my mum. I can communicate with my neighbours in English and she's just looking at us. All she can say in English is "Thank you" and "How are you?". She likes to talk a lot but she can't. On the Internet, we found that there is a Ukrainian Cultural Centre but there is no website. So we came to you and hope that we will be able to join this club.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your answers. Let's talk about children. You do have a child. Does she like life in Britain?

Darina: It's hard to say. She is sitting at home all the time. I would like her to go out. Actually, it was one of the reasons why we moved to Manchester because, in the small town in Wales, there is nothing except a library and a pub. It was a picturesque little town near the sea. We used to visit the library and pub. She found some friends there, but it wasn't easy. I have a big hope that here in Manchester, the Ukrainian community is larger, so I, my mum and my daughter will be able to socialise more and find new friends.

Interviewer: Is she going to continue studying?

Darina: She is studying remotely until there is such an opportunity.

Interviewer: How can you describe your level of adaptation to life in England on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the least adaptation and 10 is the best? Where will you put yourself?

Darina : I will say that for my mum, it's 1 and about me - I'm probably 7. My mum said she has no problem because I am solving all the problems, but her level is 1.

Interviewer: We will try to solve some of your issues. I hope that you have all the reasons to move up on the scale. Thank you and now probably the last question - if you had an influence on City Council's decisions about supporting Ukrainians in Greater Manchester, what would you say?

Darina: Firstly, I want to say thank you for the "Homes for Ukrainians" program. Secondly, huge support is coming from ordinary people, not officials. So I'm very grateful to our sponsors. They opened their hearts and home for us. They are amazing people. Social workers helped us a lot too, but honestly, they simply didn't have enough resources to help. A lot of work is done by church communities but it's not a government, it's not authority - it's just people who live in this community. So my little request is to give more resources to these social workers who work with Ukrainians, maybe to open some courses for adaptation. I would like my mum to join something like this that will help her understand the English system and all those little cultural details.

Darina: One more important detail is the driving licence. I don't feel an urgent need to drive, but now as I live here for more than a year, I see how hard it is without a car, but my Ukrainian driving licence is not valid in the UK. I need to change it. But even if I change my licence, I can drive only automatic transmissions. Such cars are more expensive to buy. I can't afford it. And again, if Ukrainians can be

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here only for three years, it's not logical to change their driving licence. So, it's a tricky situation with driving for me.

Interviewer: Yes true, we don't have any accurate information about that. Thank you for your answers. Only one last question before we finish, what would you like to say to the British people and the people of Manchester? Maybe something about their awareness of the current situation in Ukraine and about Ukrainians in general? What would you like to tell them?

Darina: I would say that we are very grateful for the opportunity to be here in the UK. And I would like to wish them to get to know the Ukrainians who are living near them. Most of them are well-educated and with an interesting story or background. They are interesting people with interesting thoughts. They have interesting professions and it's so sad that sometimes these amazing professionals are stuck in situations or jobs where they can't use their full potential.

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you a lot for this interview. Darina: Thank you.

### **Interview 11 - Marina**

Interviewer: Good afternoon! We are very grateful that you agreed to give this interview. In the beginning, we would like to know where you are from in Ukraine and maybe a little bit about you, please.

Marina: Well, I came from the city of Kherson together with my daughter. I am 36 years old. My daughter is nine. We lived in the South of Ukraine before the war. Then our city was occupied. We stayed there for a little bit, but then it became impossible to live there, so we left Ukraine. It was a program for Ukrainians to move to the UK and we came here with an invitation from a British family. Before we moved I used to do agricultural work, actually I had my own business. We had a good life. Our life, work and everything else was okay.

Interviewer: Thank you a lot. Tell us more, please. Why did you decide to move to Great Britain? What was your journey from Ukraine to the UK? Did you stay in any other countries before coming here?

Marina: Well, we didn't choose a country to move to, like a lot of Ukrainians. We wanted to stay somewhere temporarily and we were waiting to return home soon. So, we went to Bulgaria and stayed there for some time, hoping to return home. But eventually, we realised that life must move on. That's when I met someone from Odessa who told me about a program for Ukrainians to move to the UK, and I received a lot of help from volunteers to apply for it. It was a long and difficult process, particularly with the application for the program homes for Ukraine. There was a special application to scan passports, but we had problems with it. My passport scanned ok, but for my daughter - had to send all her documents manually, which caused further delays in the process. Eventually, I received my visa after two months, but my daughter didn't. Because this process was so long, we lost our sponsors and they hosted another Ukrainian family. Then we asked volunteers to help us to find a new sponsor. They advised us to try our best on Facebook, telegram channels, and other places. So we had to start from the beginning again. Fortunately, I found a host family, but when we registered I had to apply for documents again. Then I found out that my ID was already done and was sent to the address of the previous family of sponsors. It created a problem again. I had the ID, but the volunteers told me that I should do everything from the beginning. During this time, some laws changed and it looked like now we didn't have any documents for our daughter.

Marina: It looked like the hosts were waiting for us, but I had yet to learn if I could come to the UK. It was so difficult for me with these documents. However, we eventually made it to Manchester and began the process of obtaining biometric cards by giving our fingerprints and taking photographs. After we completed the process, I received a message a month later that my fingerprints would not be checked because I already had an ID, but no one knew where it was. In the database, it showed that I had an ID, but in reality, I didn't. I had to find a letter from Homes in Ukraine in my email, which contained the

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address of the post office that was supposed to send me my ID. At that point, more than 90 days had passed and of course, my letter with ID was not at that post office.

Marina: My letter with ID was sent to the main post office. I wrote a lot of letters to this place. I even wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I needed to find my ID, because without ID I couldn't do anything, I couldn't open the bank account. JobCentre demanded ID too. I needed an ID to work in the UK. I needed an ID to claim benefits. In case, I could show my driving licence or Ukrainian passport, but the ID was required everywhere.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. General question - What were your first impressions after you arrived? I mean impressions about the host family and support organisations? Did you experience any culture shock? Most of us have some stereotypes about Great Britain. Was your impression positive or negative?

Marina: Starting from the beginning, at the airport, I didn't receive a Visa in my passport, only my daughter did, but it's only for general information. About the host family, they were very kind people, a 48 or 47-year-old man and his 8-year-old son. We communicated a lot before we came because we wanted to find out each other's interests. When we started living together it was a very warm and friendly atmosphere in the house.

Marina: The house was quite small. We had a little bedroom and we shared one bathroom with the host's son. But we learned how to live together and respect each other's personal space. You asked about socialising – almost everything we needed, we found by ourselves. I spent a lot of time searching on the internet and found the JobCentre and GP, but it was challenging because of the language barrier.

Interviewer: We will talk about socialising a little bit later. Let's return to the question about your impression of Great Britain and the British people. Did you feel a difference between Ukrainians and British people? I can see how well you communicate with a host family, but what about other people?

Marina: Oh, the mentality is very different. Yes, people gladly receive Ukrainians, and they are willing to answer questions, but without personal effort, you can't achieve anything. I mean if you want something, you need to work hard to get it. We had an agent from a volunteering organisation, and she was responsible for us. She texted us from time to time, but usually, she communicated directly with our host, not with us, and our host then sent us a copy, if it was information related to us. For example, about the school, I wanted to mention it earlier, it is problem number one for us right now. Trafford Council gave us two options for school. We were waiting for a call from our host's son's school, and we never received it. It was strange because many people told me that my daughter should get a place there a long time ago.

Marina: I understand that there are queues everywhere, but constant waiting is frustrating. Waiting for a letter, waiting for a call. It's hard for us Ukrainians because we're used to having exact dates and talking things out - but here you can't control anything - you are just waiting for a letter. All the time waiting. For example, English courses. I was surprised because I wanted to attend an English course since I arrived. I was waiting for a long time for the language assessment. Finally, I did it. They checked my level and still I am waiting for when the class will start. It has been almost 4 months since I moved to Great Britain, but there is still no progress.

Interviewer: What basic difficulties are you facing now? Are there any differences in support and help you needed in the beginning and now? Are your needs and problems changed?

Marina: Not really. The problems with medical care affect me a lot. I simply don't understand how it works here in Great Britain. For instance, I needed a dentist. I wanted to book an appointment, but I was told that there were no free appointment slots. Then I asked what should I do, and what to do if, for example, I have an emergency, an acute toothache and I need a dentist urgently. The answer was we will call you later. We have your number. Of course, I never receive a call-back. So, if you compare the

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health service in Ukraine and here - it is a very big difference because I didn't receive any medical help since I arrived. And of course, the system of prescriptions, you can't buy anything in a pharmacy like we used to do at home. Without a prescription, you can't have any medicine.

Interviewer: I understand. You did mention problems with the school. Do you still live with the same host family in Manchester?

Marina: My daughter is not at school yet. We moved with the host family in Sussex. They were moving, and we moved with them because we had an agreement to live six months together, and then a very difficult conflict situation happened. It is a very emotional and sensitive issue for me. I can describe only general moments. It looked like my daughter and the host's son couldn't communicate anymore. It was bullying from the host's son's side. There were questions like why did you come here, why are you living here, it is not a refugee camp and so on.

Marina: So, we had to leave immediately. According to our documents, we were still registered at the host's house in Manchester. We wanted to leave Sussex and return back to Manchester. Of course, we were ready to pay expenses for travel, but we needed a place to stay in Manchester - a room or anything. Manchester Council's worker explained to me about the refusal of a sponsor because she didn't understand the situation. When I explained to her the reason why we should move from our host, she said - yes I understand you should leave, but now everything will become your responsibility. If you move it's completely our problem to deal with it.

Interviewer: What about your previous Council?

Marina: It was a huge conflict between the Manchester Council and the Trafford Council. Specifically with the Trafford Council. I communicated with a Diva. I heard some stories about this lady. Her treatment of Ukrainians is so bad, and so disrespectful. I felt it when I explained to her that I urgently needed to move out of the host's house, but she told me - no, that is you who didn't understand correctly, you should kind of sit quietly and submit, because you are a guest here, kind of. I even don't know how to say it politely, because it is so sad. She kind of said that Ukrainians are like second-class citizens.

Interviewer: I'm so sorry that you had such a sad experience and I guess after this interview we can talk more about it. Now I will return to some other questions and as I understand because of all that happened, have you had any opportunities to find work since arriving in the UK?

Marina: Obviously we live in a temporary house. We have a temporary address, so we can't start the process. I mean school and work. We are in limbo.

Interviewer: I see. When you lived in Manchester and Sussex, did you manage to establish any social connections? Do you take part in the social life of the Ukrainian community for instance at the Cultural Ukrainian Centre Dnipro?

Marina: We decided to return to Manchester because my daughter used to attend Saturday school in the Cultural Ukrainian Centre Dnipro. Then in Sale, we had another organisation. It was closer to our area. We established many social connections in Sale. We were sharing useful information and felt good in the community. In West Sussex, we had no one really. We were far away from everyone. But a big plus is that there in the local Council, we had a woman, who is originally from Ukraine, and who helped me to organise the move to Manchester. She regularly asks me how things are going. I am very grateful to her. After we moved, I couldn't find a new organisation close to my area. All organisations I know are far away.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. It's good you said that there are some Ukrainian people who are working in City Councils. What about your daughter? How is she? Does she like life in Britain?

Marina: The process of adaptation for my daughter is very difficult because she doesn't have any friends her own age. When she used to go to school, she had more interactions with kids. Honestly, the school

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was not for studying. It was more about communication. She's nine years old and it is just normal to have friends her age. She's studying online at a Ukrainian school. After online lessons, we usually walk together. We try to organise something, but it's only me and her. There are no Ukrainian kids in West Sussex. Here in Manchester, she had friends, and they played together, but in West Sussex - with no Ukrainians, it was very sad.

Interviewer: Does she keep in touch with friends from Ukraine through the Internet?

Marina: Yes, she does. She keeps in touch with her friends. That's why she's all the time on her mobile, because of the Internet.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for your story. You answered almost all our questions and we have only one last question left. If you could influence the decisions of the local authorities regarding issues of support for Ukrainians in Greater Manchester and even all of Britain, what would you like to say?

Marina: The only request is for local authorities to have more officials who understand the mentality of Ukraine and Britain. It would be very useful to have diversity in this case. Both sides would avoid a lot of problems and misunderstandings about what is acceptable here and what is not. Additionally, it would be really nice if there would be an organisation or an online consulting service that can offer support and advice for new arrivals. Or a guide that explains step by step how to start the process of settling here. Such an organisation would make my life easier in many aspects. It would help me understand the system.

Interviewer: I see. Thank you. Would you like to add something before we finish Marina: I guess I told almost everything - about medicine, about schools, about education. About work, I had no personal experience with going through job interviews, but some Ukrainians told me that to be hired for work, you should have references. These references should be written by someone from the UK, and it's really hard for us because we just arrived. It's not easy to find someone who will write a reference letter for you. But without references, you will not be able to find employment. So where can you find these references?

Interviewer: Thank you a lot. Thank you for sharing your personal experience, Marina: Thank you too.

## **Interview 12 - Igor**

Interviewer: Hi, thank you very much for agreeing for this interview today. Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and where in Ukraine are you from?

Igor: Well, actually, I am from Ternopil, which is in the Western part of Ukraine. Now, I'm 18 years old and I'm currently a college student. I'm doing the first year of my A levels and I'm doing further maths, and physics. After college, I would like to go to university in the UK.

Interviewer : Great. Thank you very much. Could you please tell us more about your experience coming to the UK? You came here with your family or on your own? How did you learn about these schemes that are available? What was your journey like?

Igor: Well, my aunt and my uncle have been living here for 20 years. And so basically, they have told us about the family scheme, which we used to go to the UK. Well, I would say that the first, I don't know, probably two or three months, I was like, I don't know, so much and a lot of changes have come to my life. I was a bit, not a bit actually, but I was shocked. It was frustrating. What am I going to do next? What am I going to do next? What will be in the future? I was really terrified about this. I would say moving to another country was quite a difficult experience at first. But then I came to the college, and I got a very good help there. I started to adapt there, and it was a good experience that helped me to, I would say, come back to the routine.

Interviewer: Sure. Thank you. I understand it was very difficult. I can imagine. Maybe could you tell us more about your experience when you arrived? Did you have any culture shock, maybe positive or

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negative? You might have had some stereotypes about Great Britain. What was your initial experience when you arrived?

Igor : Well, actually it was quite positive because... Well, there are some stereotypes about the UK and British people, but I wouldn't say that they're really something that is true when you come here. It was positive because in the area where I live, we have a Ukrainian community which helps us. There are people who have been living here for many, many years. And actually, I would say I travelled a bit in the UK. I was here actually... Well, I came to the UK as a tourist, I would say, about 10 years ago. We've come to our family. I was a bit familiar with living in the UK. I have travelled a bit to the countryside and I've discovered that the UK is actually quite a beautiful country. There are many places for tourists that we can visit and there are universities if you want to develop as a professional in your chosen field. It is also very good because there are many, many opportunities for foreign students as well, which gives me hope, I would say.

Interviewer: Okay. How easy was it to enrol to the college and how did you find it? Because I believe probably the education system here is quite different to the one in Ukraine.

Igor: Yeah, actually it is a bit different because in Ukraine, when students finish school, they usually go to the university straight away. But in the UK, I've discovered that the system is a bit different. You go to college first and then you go to university. But it was quite easy to enrol. In my opinion, the requirements to go to the university in Ukraine are a bit higher than in the UK. I was covered, I think that even the syllabus that we're studying in college, I think, is easier than in the Ukraine.

Interviewer: Good to hear. I mean good to an extent where it's a little bit easier to secure a place and continue with education. Your English is very good. I believe that wasn't a challenge for you, but what would you say were the main challenges upon your arrival for you or your family?

Igor: The main, I think, was to find an accommodation first because I think that the cost-of-living crisis has affected a bit and the prices and the bills are going up. We have managed to do it, but I think the system itself with the renting, with the bills was quite a new experience, I would say, because in Ukraine, we used to live in our own flat and now we are renting the property. That was a new experience. We had to go with the first available accommodation that we could find.

Interviewer: Thank you, Since your arrival, have you joined any community groups? And if yes, how are you finding them? For example, maybe you participate in events organised by Ukrainian community centre Dnipro or maybe you go to Ukrainian Church or participate in Saturday meetings on the Piccadilly gardens that take place every Saturday. Or maybe you found some other social

Igor: Yeah, I took part in the Saturday's meetings in the Manchester Piccadilly in the city centre. Yes, we go to the Ukrainian Church. Sometimes I volunteer in the Ukrainian Culture Club, Dnipro. We organise some events. For example, we organised the event that took place on the 24th of August one year ago, which is Ukrainian Independence Day. First, I helped with humanitarian help. We have sent humanitarian help to Ukraine. We have managed to fill cars. We helped to organise that help for Ukrainian people.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. That's amazing that after your arrival, you still managed to continue to help your country and the Ukrainians. Okay. I think I answered quite a few of my questions which I had planned. If you could determine the level of your adaptation to life in England on a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is perfectly adapted or 1 is minimally adapted, where would you currently place yourself?

Igor: Well, it's hard to say in terms of scale, but I think at the moment it is 6 or 7 because I am still discovering some new things about the educational system in the UK. How to, for example, meet entry requirements in terms of what documents you need, discovering the thing called UCAS, how it will help you to go to university. There are still some areas that I'm discovering for myself. I would say at the moment it is 6- 7, 6.5 if you want.

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Interviewer: Thank you. Actually, going back to socialisation. You said you came to the UK about 10 years ago, since your arrival after the war, did you find some time, maybe on your own or with your family, to travel around the UK? Or maybe you have some places on your list, some cities or places that you would like to visit?

Igor: Yes. We usually go to the countryside, I would say. Most are on the weekends. We travel with family. But also I would like to travel to London because I have some friends there as well. I would like to go to Edinburgh, for example, to discover it, the Scotland in general, I would say it is quite a very beautiful part of the UK. And also we have travelled to Snowdonia, which I think as far as I remember, it is in Wales. I think it is the highest mountain in the UK. So we've been there. And I think in the summertime, we will be able to travel more.

Interviewer: Yes, hopefully you have a good summer ahead of you. There will be plenty of opportunities, I used to live for a couple of years in Edinburgh, so I definitely can recommend a visit. Okay. I have another question, if you could influence those who make decisions like policymakers about Ukrainians in Manchester, what would you like to tell them?

Interviewer: I've never thought of that, actually. I think they're doing a lot for Ukrainian people. They're helping us. I think the main point would be to continue doing that because I think it is important actually to help each other, I would say, to develop a place where we all live. I don't know. That's probably the thing I would like to say.

Interviewer: Thank you. And if you had to say something to the people who will be listening to this interview, the people who live in Manchester or just the general public in Great Britain, based on how aware they are of what's going on in Ukraine right now, of how supportive they are, or just in general, what would you like to tell them as a Ukrainian?

Igor: What I would like to tell you... I know people are supportive, that's true. I don't really know. We value that you do not forget about the people in the Ukraine, the people around the world. I would say that's the best thing I think at the moment, that's all we can do to make the world a safer place.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. I believe you made a lot of new local friends at college. Yeah. Are they supportive? Are they aware of the conflict in the war?

Igor: Yes, they are. They are supportive. When I tell them that I'm Ukrainian, they always ask me how's it going now? When do you think the war is going to finish? They supported me with this thing. They helped me with adaptation and I'm glad to hear that people are aware. Actually, they know what is going on. That's the main theme.

Interviewer: Great. Thank you. Is there something that we perhaps didn't speak about in this interview that you would like to share with us from your or your family experiences? Is there any other subject that you would like to discuss?

Igor: I don't really know. I think I have shared everything. I said what I think and I guess that many Ukrainian people would agree with me on that. I think that's all. My experience is positive, and it's good that I have the opportunity to share it with someone that could help people around us hear our voices.

Interviewer: As a Ukrainian, I can definitely agree with you. Thank you so much for your time and for the interview, and share your story. I'm really happy that you and your family settled in the UK now and can live some sort of normal life which you used to have before in Ukraine. We continue to support Ukraine. Hopefully, we will celebrate the victory soon. And thank you so much for your time today.

Igor: Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity.