



Russian Speaking Community Northern Ireland

Charity No: 107128

Annual Report 2022-2023

Chairperson Report

I am pleased to present the annual report for the Russian Speaking Community Northern Ireland for the fiscal year 2022/23. This report outlines our achievements, ongoing projects, and plans for the upcoming year. Despite facing challenges, our community has made significant progress in various areas, thanks to the dedication and support of our members and volunteers.

During the past year, our community group focused on completing governance structure reforms. While progress has been made, further efforts are needed to fully adopt the new ways of working. We actively engaged with our community members to attract new members to the governing board, ensuring diverse representation and effective leadership.

Our permanent projects such as Cultural and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptitsa' (Saturday school), choir and 'Igroteka', continued to flourish, attracting new participants and fostering a sense of community among attendees. We successfully introduced new initiatives such as the Chess Club, Robotics, and Club 55+ for senior adults. These projects aim to cater to diverse interests and demographics within our community and are poised for continued success in the upcoming fiscal year.

Our annual New Year celebration event for kids, directed by the talented Anna Shestakova, was a resounding success, drawing over 150 attendees including children and their parents.

We organized four sessions on Stress Management with a professional Russian-speaking Psychologist. These sessions provided valuable insights and techniques to participants, helping them recognize and manage their emotions effectively.

Our first meeting and tea/coffee party for senior adults (Club 55+) was well-received, with attendees expressing enthusiasm for future activities. Plans were laid out for provisional activities, and participants engaged in the 'Seeds for Bees' project, planting seeds provided by Age NI.

With the support of Belfast City Council, our Saturday school kids enjoyed an educational trip to the Armagh Planetarium. The excursion provided an enriching experience for children and parents alike, fostering a love for science and exploration.

The following chart provides an overview of the funding received by the Russian Speaking Community NI during the fiscal year ending 30 June 2023:

Migrant Centre NI BAME COVID-19 Recovery Fund II - Ref MCNI 112/113

Funded Areas:	CHESS CLUB project
Duration:	18/09/2022 – 30/06/2023
Direct Beneficiaries:	68
Balance C/D 01/07/2022:	£601.80
Total Budget:	£601.80
Received:	£0.00
Expenditures (to 30/06/2023):	£601.80
Balance (to 30/06/2023):	£0.00

Migrant Centre NI NOT RESTRICTED GRANT

Funded Areas:	Adults 55+ project, Robotic club project, Chess Club project
Duration:	18/09/2022 – 30/06/2023
Direct Beneficiaries:	68
Total Budget:	£1,975.00

Received:	£1,975.00
Expenditures (to 30/06/2023):	£1,975.00
Balance (to 30/06/2023):	£0.00

Migrant Centre NI BAME COVID-19 Recovery Fund II - Ref MCNI MGF

Funded Areas:	Community development officer, ZOOM, Saturday School administrators fees
Duration:	01/11/2021 – 31/10/2022
Direct Beneficiaries:	74
Balance C/D 01/07/2022:	£1,925.00
Received 5% of MGF	£1,335.00
Expenditures:	£3,260.00
Balance (to 30/06/2023):	£0.00

Education Authority Generic/Non-Targeted Funding

Funded Areas:	Rent, Public Liability Insurance
Duration:	01/04/22 – 31/03/23
Direct Beneficiaries:	68
TOTAL C/D 01/07/2022	£2,526.80
Total Budget:	£3,000.00
Received:	£3,000.00
Expenditures:	£3,000.00
Balance (to 30/06/2023):	£0.00

TOTAL RECEIVED GRANTS 22/23: £6,310.00

TOTAL SPENT GRANTS £8,836.80

Looking ahead to the forthcoming fiscal year, our community aims to focus on several key priorities:

- Attracting new members to the governing board and fully adopting the new ways of working.
- Introducing a new membership system to streamline community engagement and participation.
- Expanding the range of activities offered by the Youth Club and increasing youth involvement.
- Revision of policies and procedures for youth group activities to ensure safety and compliance.
- Organising new recreational and festival activities for adult beneficiaries, promoting social bonding and celebrating the cultural diversity of Russian speakers in NI.
- Providing child protection training and conducting Access NI checks for new starters to ensure the safety of all participants.
- Strengthening partnerships with sponsors and other national communities in NI, fostering collaboration on projects and enhancing communication channels.

In conclusion, the past year has been marked by notable achievements and exciting developments within our community. As we embark on the next fiscal year, we are committed to building on our successes, addressing challenges, and advancing our mission of promoting unity, education, and cultural enrichment. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all members, volunteers, sponsors, and partners for their unwavering support and dedication.

Oksana Shelest
Chairperson

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelest".

Cultural and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptitsa'

The Cultural and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptitsa' has been successfully operating in Belfast for 8 years, supporting social ties and conducting educational activities amongst the Russian-speaking residents in Northern Ireland.

For the Teaching Centre, the 2022-2023 period was the first since 2020 that allowed for a full, unrestricted teaching programme since the removal of imposed COVID-19 restrictions. This allowed the centre to successfully complete all proposed activities and projects; attracting parents and volunteers into the programme to support where needed.

All children's classes were conducted in groups formed by age and level of Russian language proficiency:

- Early Development Group - Toddlers 1 (3-4 years);
- Younger Group - Toddlers 2 (4-6 years);
- Basic Russian- Alphabet and Reading Beginners Group (5-7 years);
- Middle Group - Intermediate (5-7 years);
- Older Group - Upper Intermediate (8-12 years);
- Russian as a Foreign Language Group (mixed age group).

This year's teaching programme saw the introduction of a new class subject - Development of Speech & Literature. This subject, complimenting the Russian language studies, became a new addition to the academic package offered by the teaching centre. At its core, the main packaged covers Russian Language & Literature.

Aside from the main package, several faculties operate within the school. These are: 'Creative Arts & Crafts', 'Dance & Choreography' & the 'School Choir'. Additionally, students were able to get involved with a Chess Club – a project of the RSCNI.

All the lessons this year, including faculty classes, were developed to deliver lessons on the cultures and traditions of countries from which our students come from. Every month, students were introduced to folklore, crafts, traditional dances from countries such as Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Our ambition for the future is to continue this approach as it has received a great reception from students and staff.

Also, during the academic year, another teacher at our centre had successfully completed their studies based on the methodology of Olga Lysenko. This allowed the school to begin teaching the foundations of Russian Reading & Writing in one of the junior classes.

Aside from in-person sessions, the centre successfully continues an online learning programme. During the 22-23 period, two groups of variable language proficiency, had been undertaking these lessons.

In addition to academic progress, the centre has been able to successfully organise various seasonal festivities with students, staff and volunteers:

Apart from the traditional Saturday classes, during the period October 2022 – June 2023, festive community events were organized in the Centre.

- Halloween (October 2022) – active games, fancy dressing, face painting etc.
- The New Year's Performance (December 2022) - A New Year's Eve Spectacle, organised together by the RSCNI with active support from volunteers and staff at 'Zhar Ptitsa'.
- 12 Months (January 2023) – A theatrical performance featuring students and teachers at the learning centre who participated in the dance & choir group.

- Maslenitsa festive games (February 2023) – modern and traditional active and board games
- End of Year Performance (June 2023) – concert showcasing achievements of all the Centre pupils to close the school year, including our dance groups and a school choir performance.

End of Year concert, there was also an exhibition of artworks from the Centre art class pupils.



During the year, volunteers from the Centre, parents and supporters of RSCNI actively participated and supported the Centre's work.

In June 2023 the Centre volunteers organised group trips for all pupils of the Centre and their families: for the youngest kids - a trip to Belfast Zoo, and for the rest of the pupils - a tour to the Armagh Planetarium.



Maria Kondrashenkova
Cultural Learning Centre 'Zhar-ptitsa' coordinator

Community Youth Club

Robotics Club

The Robotics club was designed for teenagers aged from 14 y.o. and older. The weekly 1.5-hour sessions were running from January to June 2023. For the project the charity obtained 4 smart home starter kits and 3 smart robot car kits.

The program of the club included work with offered constructor kits based on Arduino programming. During the club sessions, the participants were involved in the following activities: the study of the principles of operation of electronic and mechanical devices, game elements, research and working on projects in small teams. The project was fully funded from the charity reserve funding.

The robotics sessions provided participants with initial knowledge about the design and principles of operation of robotic devices, the basics of programming robotic devices, general scientific and technological designing skills. Additionally, club participants improved their memory, attention to detail skills, ability to think logically and analyse data, focus on the main goals. By working in small teams, participants were also given an opportunity to express their thoughts, improve and apply problem solving skills.

The Robotics sessions included lectures on theoretical foundations for the creation of robotic devices, elemental basics with which the device is assembled, the order of interaction of the mechanical components of the robot with electronic and optical devices, the procedure for creating an algorithm for the program of action of robotic means, safety regulations for working with tools and electrical appliances.

At the end of the season, the club organised a smart robot car competition among the club participants, the winners and participants were awarded with winner and participant certificates as appropriate.

In next season, the club is planning to introduce sessions for kids aged 8-13 that would involve explanation sessions of basic electric circuit as well as work in teams on electric circuit kits and technic robot kits. The teenagers' club will continue working on the current robotic kits expanding their functions by using additional sensors and parts for them.

Aleksey Kashkarov
Robotics Club Tutor

Chess Club

The goal of the Chess Club was to organise a full-fledged leisure time for club members, to teach the game of chess for new members of the club who were not familiar with the rules of chess.

The club sessions were held from January to May 2023, and involved chess games, problem solving and analysis of the games played.



At the meetings of the chess club, the achievement of these goals was carried out through the solution of the following tasks:

- development of logical thinking, memory, attention, perseverance and other positive qualities of Club members;
- to give the club members theoretical knowledge of the game of chess and tell them about the rules of the competition and the rules of tournament conduct;
- development of figurative thinking, expansion of ideas about the world around.



The key moment of the classes is the independent game of the Club members, in which they compare the strength of the pieces and their position during the chess game, draw conclusions, find out patterns, and implement chess combinations on the chessboard. The classes use material that is of particular interest to club members: chess miniatures and dramatizations.

Of great importance in the study of a chess course is the specially organized gaming activity of the club members in the classroom, the use of the method of outplaying educational tasks, creating game situations.

At the end of the season the club held a chess tournament for its members. The winners and participants were awarded with winner and participant certificates.

Aleksey Kashkarov
Chess Club Tutor

Community Board Game Club

The Board Game club sessions held from October 2022 to May 2023 were a great success and became very popular among our community members.

The main aims of the club sessions were: to create a common space for social interaction, to introduce and promote board games to our community members of various age, and to familiarise them with new board games.

During club sessions, various board games were represented including classic board games, strategic games, card games, and role-playing games. Additionally, workshops and educational sessions took place for beginners and game enthusiasts. The club sessions were attended by community members from various age groups: children, teenagers, adults, and even senior adults.

In September 2022, participants of the Board Game club took part in an Alice in Wonderland-themed quest and a cosplay show, where they dressed up as characters from the novel. The club's team achieved a 24th place from over 100 participated teams.



In February 2023, the club organised the Board Game Fair dedicated to celebration of 'Maslenitsa' for kids from Cultural and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptitsa'. The event was very popular and it was attended by over 40 kids. The participants were introduced with such board games as 'Ubongo', 'Seek in Sand', 'Double', 'Pixels' and etc. Two gaming sessions for two different age groups took place and at the end of each gaming session three winners were announced, who earned the greatest number of tokens participating in the board games. The event was supported and conducted by teachers of the Cultural and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptitsa', volunteers and the Board Game club members.

Overall, more than 10 workshops and educational sessions were conducted during 2022-2023 season, allowing participants to learn about new board games and enhance their understanding and skills.



The Board Game club successfully attracted diverse players with varying levels of experience, ranging from newcomers to seasoned gamers. Participants had an opportunity to explore new games, develop their skills, and enjoy socialising with like-minded peers.

The workshops and educational sessions held at the Board Game club offered participants a valuable opportunity to learn new games and improve their gaming skills. This contributed to an increased interest in board games and the growth of the gaming community.

At the end of each session as well as at the end of the season the club has received strongly positive feedback from participants and visitors of the Board Game club. They highly appreciated the organisation, the variety of games, the quality of the programs, and the chance to meet other gamers. This confirms that the Board Game club has become a successful and valuable part of our community.

The results of the Board Game club project for the previous year demonstrate its success and positive impact on the gaming community. We hope to utilize these findings to further develop and improve the Board Game club, providing participants and visitors with high-quality gaming programs and events.

Our Board Game club's future plans involve: to increase and improve the variety of board games in the Board Game club collection, to promote the club and attract more participants taking part in the events, to develop partnerships with local game stores and publishers, to increase the number of educational events and workshops facilitating all age groups.

Board gaming club 'Igroteka' coordinator
Anna Shestakova

Community Choir 'Rosinka'

In July 2022 the choir invited a professional musician, Anna Musan-Levi as their new choir conductor and music teacher, which brought their singing to a new more professional level.

With the support from our Russian Culture and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptisa' and community reserve funds, the weekly 1.5-hour rehearsals took place in the Currie Primary School premises and lasted from September 2022 till the end of June 2023. During these sessions, participants worked on voice development and intonation, the basics of music theory and note reading, singing as an ensemble in 3 voices, understanding music and performance. A number of songs was revised from the choir last season repertoire using newly gained knowledge and skills as well as a few new songs were learned.



Taking into account the tough political situation, the choir performed only once this year. We took part in the Pancake Week celebration held in the Russian Culture and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptisa'. The pleasure of our new level of singing and the compliments we received from the audience highly paid off the hard work we did this year. We are planning to continue our fruitful collaboration with our new choir conductor in 2023-2024.

Anna Musan-Levi
Choir 'Rosinka' conductor