



Russian Speaking Community Northern Ireland

Charity No: 107128

Annual Report 2023-2024

Chairperson Report

I am pleased to present the annual report for the Russian Speaking Community Northern Ireland (RSCNI) for the fiscal year 2023/24. 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 actively engaged with our community members to attract new members to the governing board, ensuring diverse representation and effective leadership. We held multiple introductory meetings with those who expressed their interest in Trustee Board work. Tatiana Panova has joined our Board as a trustee and she is responsible for volunteers recruitment and management.

Our permanent projects such as Culture and Learning Centre 'Zhar-Ptitsa' (Saturday school), choir, Robotics club and 'Igroteka', continued to flourish, attracting new participants and fostering a sense of community among attendees. We successfully continued with our new initiative Club 55+ for senior adults. This project aims to cater to diverse interests and demographics within our community and is poised for continued success in the upcoming fiscal year.

Our annual New Year celebration event for kids, directed by the talented Inna Sudilovskaya, was a resounding success, drawing over 150 attendees including children and their parents. The event was actively supported by volunteers and staff at "Zhar-Ptitsa" with traditional Father Frost and Snegurochka characters, New Year gifts, festive activities, dancing and singing around the Christmas tree for children and adults. This was the biggest event of the year to celebrate the arrival of the New Year before everyone took a break for Christmas holidays.

With the support of Belfast City Council, we organised a community day out for all children and young people and their families at Shaw's Bridge park and river that included active sports games, team building activities in the park, laser tag and kayaking. A community picnic organised after activities provided lots of opportunities for socialising and making new friends. The event was facilitated by amazing team of Mobile Team Adventure. About 60 children and young people took part from Zhar-Ptitsa centre, Youth club and other community members.

The following chart provides an overview of the funding received by the Russian Speaking Community NI during the fiscal year ending 30 June 2024:

Community Activity Medium Grant 2023-2024 Tranche 1

Funded Areas:	Robotics Club, Choir, Saturday School
Duration:	01/04/2023-31/03/2024
Direct Beneficiaries:	150
Total Budget:	£4,976.50
Received:	£3,981.20
Expenditures (to 30/06/2024):	£4,976.50
Balance (to 30/06/2023):	£-995.30

Community Activity Micro Grant 2023-2024 Tranche 1

Funded Areas:	Saturday School, Robotics Club, Youth Club
Duration:	01/04/2023-31/03/2024
Direct Beneficiaries:	150
Total Budget:	£1,494.00
Received:	£1,195.00

Expenditures (to 30/06/2024):	£1,494.00
Balance (to 30/06/2023):	£-298.80

Education Authority Generic/Non-Targeted Funding

Funded Areas:	Rent, Public Liability Insurance
Duration:	01/04/23 – 31/03/24
Direct Beneficiaries:	150
Total Budget:	£3,577.00
Received:	£3,577.00
Expenditures:	£3,577.00
Balance (to 30/06/2024):	£0.00

TOTAL RECEIVED GRANTS 22/23: £8753.20

TOTAL SPENT GRANTS £10047.50

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

- Attracting new members to the governing board
- Expanding the range of activities offered by the Youth Club and increasing youth involvement.
- Continue 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
RSCNI Chairperson

RSCNI Culture and Learning Centre ‘Zhar-Ptitsa’

It has been another successful year for the Culture and Learning Centre “Zhar-Ptitsa” that has been running in Belfast since 2015, supporting social ties, conducting educational activities and community events for children and families coming from different parts of Northern Ireland and united by the common language and culture. “Zhar-Ptitsa” is one of the longest-running projects of RSCNI aimed at teaching Russian as international language, literature and speech development in Russian, artistic and dance skills, and providing additional opportunities for children from Russian speaking and mixed families to interact and socialise in a range of activities. It is also open for anyone interested in Russian language and cultural diversity of the Russian speaking countries.

Kids’ classes and activities were delivered every Saturday (except for school holidays) throughout the school year, and included Russian language, Drama and speech development classes, Literature class, Dance class, Artwork and Crafts and a new class in Calligraphy. Approximately 43 children between age of 3 to 16 attended the classes. 7 children attended Russian language classes online.

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

- Early Development group - Games & Alphabet (3-4 years);
- Basic Russian group - Foundations of Russian Reading & Writing (5-7 years);
- Intermediate group – Reading Beginners & Writing group (6+ years);
- Upper Intermediate – next level after the Intermediate group and beginning World around us programme (7+ years);
- Advanced group – More complex Russian grammar and World around us (8+ years).

This year’s teaching programme saw the introduction of a new subject – Calligraphy or the art of joint-up writing in Russian. This subject, complementing the Russian language studies, became a new addition to the learning package offered by “Zhar-Ptitsa” and consisting of the Russian Language & Literature classes. At Calligraphy classes, children not only had the opportunity to develop practical calligraphy and literacy skills, but also were able to learn about the history of Slavonic scripts and development of the system of writing in Slavic culture.

Pupils of “Zhar-Ptitsa” were also able to get involved with the Robotics Club – a project of the RSCNI that included a beginners group for younger children (7+) and a more advanced group for older children building programmable robots.

Aside from in-person Saturday sessions, the centre successfully continues an online learning programme in the Russian language. During the academic year 2023-24, two groups of different language proficiency have been undertaking these lessons once a week throughout the academic year.

In addition to academic progress, the Centre has been able to successfully organise various seasonal festivities with pupils, staff, parents and volunteers.

We had a number of new volunteers joining us in the past year at our “Zhar-Ptitsa” centre. A special themed open class was organised by our new volunteer Nadezhda Narovska to celebrate Cosmonautics Day and to allow children to learn about space and its exploration. All children received special themed certificates recognising their effort in learning new facts about this popular topic.

Apart from the traditional Saturday classes, during the period September 2023 – June 2024, festive community events were organized in the Centre.

- Halloween (October 2023) – active games, fancy dressing, face painting, treats and Halloween disco.
- Maslenitsa festive games and celebrations (16 March 2023) – modern and traditional folk games, singing, dancing, fun and tea party with traditional Russian food bliny (crepes) and other traditional food and traditional folk costumes.
- End of Year Event (June 2023) – concert showcasing achievements of pupils to close the school year, including our dance groups, reciting poems and the award ceremony for pupils, volunteers and staff.

At the End of Year event, there was also an exhibition of artworks from the Centre art class pupils and Puskin's poetry reciting by parents and teachers to celebrate the poet's 225th birth anniversary.

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

Darya Hanzharova,
RSCNI Culture and Learning Centre "Zhar-Ptitsa" Coordinator

RSCNI Community Youth Club

RSCNI Robotics Club

It's been a remarkable year for the Robotics club, full of experiences that were exciting and fun. In 2023-2024 season, 3 robotics groups started their work delivering services to total 25 participants. The majority of participants (20) were also attending Russian classes at our Culture and Learning Centre, and the rest of participants were from Russian speaking community residing in Northern Ireland.

Robotics workshops covered various activities, methods and techniques. Through robotics participants

- learned how real-world technologies work;
- were introduced with control systems, sensors and smart technology;
- designed and built smart robotic devices;
- gained expertise in programming, science, technology, and electronics;
- and also developed such transferable skills as creative thinking, problem-solving and innovative mindset.

Participants of the senior children group worked with complex robots, which required robot full setup, including electronic sensors and control systems followed by programming and trial ride.

The robotics club has got in total 24 robotic kits, of which 14 kits are aimed at older age children and help to develop in-depth programming skills and 10 kits for junior participants that were obtained with the financial support of the Belfast City Council during the year of 2023-2024. The current number of the robot kits allows every participant to access each time a different robot after finishing previous one.

The Robotics Club 2023/24 season finished with final Robot competition, where all participants exhibited their built robots and presented their functions and capabilities. Robot cars participated in a race. All participants received participation certificates and winners were recognized with winner awards.

Oleksi Kashkarov,
RSCNI Robotics Club Lead

RSCNI Board Game Club

The Board Game Club exists to unite teenagers by interests and includes the creation of a visual-active, active self-education environment focused on identifying and developing creative, cognitive and communicative abilities of children.

This year, we consolidated strategic thinking skills with the help of such games as Citadels and Secret Message. These small at first glance games help teenagers learn to think through their actions several steps ahead, bluff, teach attentiveness and concentration when achieving the goals.

One of the favorite games for a large company appeared to be Code Names. The game allows one to develop imagination, quickly search for associations, group pictures with different messages and work in a team. The game has become so popular that we have changed the regular set to an XXL set.

Well, let's move on to the absolute favorites of the Board Game Club. In the second place in popularity is the Bunker game. This is a discussion game of elimination. The game is popular among young people and adults. It helps develop discussion skills, emotional intelligence, increases interest in various professions, motivates to study various social phenomena and their psychological impact on a person in non-standard conditions, enriches vocabulary. The popularity of the game makes the manager think about purchasing a new, more modern set.

Well, the undisputed leader of the Board Game Club is the Mafia game. This is a psychological step-by-step elimination game with a detective plot. The game develops deductive skills, emotional intelligence and the ability to read body language. It also teaches the ability to persuade and conduct productive discussions, promotes speech development.

The popularity of the game is so high that participants have to use all the characters to speed up the passage of the games. The maximum number of participants in the Board Game club was 37 people and we had to divide the participants into two groups and hold both Mafia and Bunker at the same time.

From all of the above, we can conclude that a comprehensive approach to organizing and equipping the subject-development environment and the refusal to duplicate the school-office system help in pedagogical work, and also bring children and parents closer together in the educational process, especially when it comes to bringing parents and teenagers together.

The survey showed that the interest of teenagers and parents in the implementation of the project is satisfied and most of the participants regularly visit the Board Game Club.

Anna Shestakova

RSCNI Board Gaming Club Coordinator

RSCNI Choir “Rossinka”

This has been a quiet year for the choir “Rossinka”, and we had fewer rehearsal and performance opportunities for various reasons beyond our control. The rehearsals were conducted by Oksana Churikova, who is professional musician and recently moved to live in Northern Ireland.

The project was supported by the Culture and Learning Centre “Zhar-Ptitsa” and funded by Belfast City Council in addition to our community reserve funds.

The weekly 1.5-hour rehearsals took place in the Currie Primary School premises and lasted from September 2023 to the end of March 2024. During these sessions, participants worked on voice development, intonation and breathing exercises, singing as an ensemble in 2 voices, understanding music and performance. A number of songs were revisited from the Choir’s last season repertoire using newly gained knowledge and skills, as well as a few new songs were learned.



The Choir performed twice this year. We took part in the Christmas and Pancake Week celebrations held in the Culture and Learning Centre “Zhar-Ptitsa”. The pleasure of our new repertoire and the compliments we received from the audience highly paid off the hard work we did this year.

Yekaterina Perova,
RSCNI Choir “Rossinka” coordinator

SRCNI Social Club 55+

The Club 55+, organised by the Russian Speaking Community Northern Ireland (RSCNI), serves as an initiative to promote social interaction and support among older members of the community. Established with the goal of expanding social circles and reducing loneliness, the club provides a welcoming platform for people aged 55 and older to engage in various social and cultural activities.

Activities and Communication

The club utilises a WhatsApp group as its primary communication platform, enabling members to stay connected, share updates, and plan events. This digital approach allows for spontaneous outings and gatherings, accommodating members' varied interests and schedules. Throughout 2023-2024, Club 55+ organised a range of events and outings, each contributing to the Club's sense of camaraderie and purpose.

Overview of 2023–2024 Activities

In the 2023–2024 period, Club 55+ organized multiple outings and activities, featuring a mix of outdoor adventures, cultural experiences, and social gatherings:

- **2 July 2023** – Outing to **Glenariff Waterfalls and Forest Park**. This event attracted 18 members who enjoyed a scenic walk followed by a barbecue, marking the outing as a memorable success.
- **28 July 2023** – Social gathering at **Robinsons Bar** in Belfast, providing an informal setting for members to connect.
- **23 August 2023** – **Visit to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens**, allowing members to explore historical grounds in a relaxing setting.
- **24 September 2023** – **Russian-themed tea party** at Blick Studio on Malone Road, Belfast. This gathering attracted 20 attendees who participated in various games, demonstrated their artwork, exchanged books and plants.
- **7 October 2023** – Trip to **Springfield House, Co. Londonderry**.
- **21 October 2023** – Outing to **Tollymore Park, Newcastle**, a picturesque setting ideal for socializing and exploring nature.
- **18 November 2023** – Visit to the **Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum**, allowing members to explore Northern Ireland's industrial heritage.
- **3 December 2023** – Attendance at **Boris Grebenshchikov's Concert** at the Empire Concert Hall, offering a shared musical experience.
- **16 December 2023** – Outing to **Murlough Beach, near Newcastle**, followed by a meal and karaoke at Firuze Restaurant, combining nature with culinary enjoyment.
- **13 January 2024** – **Pottery Masterclass** at Loaf Pottery in Crawfordsburn. Eleven members participated, enjoying a hands-on artistic activity.
- **5 May 2024** – **Easter Celebration** at The Dock Café, Belfast, providing a festive atmosphere for members to celebrate together.

Impact and Importance

Club 55+ has proven to be a valuable initiative within the community, fostering meaningful relationships and offering regular opportunities for older adults to engage in enriching activities. Through diverse outings and cultural events, the club encourages active participation, helping to alleviate social isolation among seniors. A notable value of the Club lies in its spontaneous outings, like the impromptu visit to Hillsborough Castle and Gardens and the trip to Springfield House in Co. Londonderry, made possible with a free National Trust Family Pass.

Conclusion

The Club 55+ is a commendable project by RSCNI that strengthens community bonds and enhances quality of life for its senior members. Given the positive impact and continued engagement, further support for the Club 55+ would be a beneficial investment in promoting community wellbeing for older adults.

Tatiana Panova
RSCNI Social Club 55+ Coordinator