Chernobyl Children's Life Line Wirral Link
End of Visit Report 4th June—2nd July 2016

Arrival- 17 tired children and 2 leaders arrive at Manchester Airport

Our group of children arrived tired after their long journey. Many had travelled over-night to reach Minsk. Most came from the Stolin area, a highly radio-active area near to the Ukraine border. Most will never have ventured outside of their local area and so this was the start of a big adventure.

We were delighted to welcome Maryia back and to meet Sviatlana as our leaders, both teachers in Belarus.

We hosted 10 girls:- Alesyia, Alina, Dasha, Dasha, Dziyana, Karina, Kristina, Ksusha, Lera and Ryma and 7 boys Andrei, Dima, Ilya, Vadizm, and Venya and Dima and Styopa who were repeat visitors .

Every year, Holmeswood Coaches of Ormskirk provide the transport to and from Manchester Airport.

The Important Stuff

The kids, as always, were kitted out at the Clothes Show hosted by the Heart of Egremont Centre. We had lots of kind donations which Jayne, Michael and Joe sorted, washed and set out so beautifully for the children- this means they can go home with full suitcases!

The next few days involved dentist visits to Steve Wright at Thornhedge Dental Practice and Andrew Morton at Hamilton Square Dental Practice — this year some got away with no treatment but others had as many as 8 fillings. A visit to the dentist is unattainable for many in Belarus yet the radiation, love of sugar and lack of good dental hygiene mean dental problems are common. Seven children also benefited from new glasses courtesy of Specsavers in Birkenhead.

Donations from various groups and individuals enabled us to purchase a year's supply of multi vitamins for the children and for any siblings at home. They also took home smoke and CO2 alarms supplied by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

And so the fun began …

Knowsley Safari Park & Blue Planet Aquarium

The kids love the visits to the Safari Park and aquarium. Getting up close to a shark or an elephant is something many could only dream of.

Knowsley Safari Park

Oxton Cricket Club for Lacrosse and Tea—we are always made so welcome by Christine Gibson and the girls.

The children love to swim at Europa Pools. Once again, Wirral Council provided free swimming passes for the duration of the visit and, as always, they were well used. Venya couldn't wait to show his parents how he had learnt to swim on his return

Ice Skating

The kids enjoyed a morning ice-skating at Deeside before lunch at the Little Sutton Methodist Church - where they were presented with gift bags from the church and from Sainsburys, Ellesmere Port

Tea and magic at the Johnny Pye Pub, Heswall provided by Bobby and his team with a magician on hand to leave the children spell-bound!

Beach Fun— many great days were spent at the beach, a novelty for the children as Belarus is land-locked! They enjoyed beach-games with Ebb &Flow, crabbing and had a wonderful afternoon with the Pirates of the Black Pearl — the kids loved it!!

Our day out in Liverpool

The children had a fabulous day in Liverpool. They sailed across the Mersey on the famous Mersey Ferry, had ice-creams at the Albert Dock, a visit to the World Museum and a birds eye view was had from the Wheel of Liverpool.

… and several days at New Brighton!

Adventure Golf

Free fair rides for the month at Adventureland. We had a whale of a time!

The children loved the 3-D film, popcorn and drinks courtesy of The Light Cinema

Laura and Simon, as well as hosting 2 boys, arranged fun filled sessions at Bubbles World of Play and provided free passes, for the children, for the entire trip. They also stepped in when the rain meant the beach BBQ had to be cancelled!

Colomendy

TEAMWORK

COURAGE

Each year the children spend a long weekend at Colomendy Outdoor Centre. This gives the hosts a bit of time to catch up with their own lives, provides the children with the opportunity to get to know each other better and also they enjoy lots of fun and exercise in the fresh Welsh air.

The weekend is designed to be fun but also to bring out the children's qualities and skills. The supportive environment and team work often leads the children to do things they previously feared or couldn't imagine they could do.

It also brings out the different skills and personalities of the children and great friendships are made here. This year the children's efforts were recognised with the awarding of certificates of achievement for each child at the leaving party.

Archery

Zip wires

Abseiling

Fencing

Teamwork

Caving

ELAINE, JACQUI, MARIA, MARY AND RYAN CO-ORDINATED SEVERAL SESSIONS AT WIRRAL MET COLLEGE.

The children spent a number of days doing sports and activities with the enthusiastic students from the college at The Oval and Conway Park Campus. They had a great day orienteering at Birkenhead Park and Afternoon Tea with party games. The students also prepared the girls hair, nails and painted their faces in preparation for their farewell party.

The children also enjoyed …..

Bowling and lunch courtesy of Whitby Methodist Church and a morning of fun activities at Blacon Adventure Playground.

Tuesday evenings with Chloe Salusbury learning a dance routine to perform at the farewell party. We discovered we had some very talented (and flexible) young people amongst us!

Lunch at the Wirral Hundred Pub, Great Sutton, Hilbre Pub, West Kirby and tea at the Community Soul Café, Wallasey was warmly received to fill hungry tummies.

The children had a great evening with the brownies at St Stephen's Church, Prenton .

Once again the West Kirby Disabled Sailing Club took the children out on the Marine Lake—they were thrilled!

After sailing and lunch at the Hilbre Pub it was off for a workout at UTS Gym in Hoylake.

We spent an interesting and informative morning at St Bridget's Primary School, West Kirby. We participated in an art class and spent time learning about each other's cultures.

And so farewell …..

The children had a lovely farewell party, where they delighted their hosts, guests and friends with a show full of singing and dance.

Each child received a Certificate of Achievement and each child presented their families with a love heart expressing their love and thanks to the host families.

… and so we bid our friends goodbye and wish them well for their life's journey filled with memories of their visit to the Wirral in 2016.

It would not have been possible to organise such a busy 4 week holiday for our Chernobyl Children without donations from many organisations and individuals, free access to many of the activities and hard work by a whole range of individuals. Our heartfelt thanks to you all and we hope to see you again next year—Lynne, Garth and Maria

News from Belarus …..The children and leaders all arrived safely back at Minsk. Unfortunately, their luggage was delayed but we understand all but 1 bag has arrived. We are putting together a replacement bag for Karina Karpinskaya and will get it to her as soon as possible.

This is what the children have been saying to their families about their visit……

Ilya 's mum phoned to say thanks and said that her son is so impressed and happy, she feels gratitude to all the people and especially the host family. "I can't recognize him. He is so confident and happy!"

Styopa Baranouski 's father said that they couldn't make him to keep silent even for a while. He is full of impressions, eager to share and wants to study English.

Lera Kishkel's father notices that her English has improved and Lera is determined to succeed in it at school. Every evening she shares her impressions with Granny and cousins describing day by day of her trip.

Vadzim Belavus is still under impression of his visit to Manchester football club and his determination to become a football player is very strong. He plays football every day, his mother says.

Karina Karpinskaya's parents are proud of their daughter as we told them that everyone had been impressed by her singing. Karina shares her first impression of the country she had been dreaming of for a long time, '*It's GREEN. The drive from Manchester to Upton took just one hour, but I didn't see anything on the way except huge green grasslands, tall and grown green trees, green bushes, and green plants of all shapes and sizes*

Venya Filanovich asked his parents to take him to the river to prove that he can swim now. Venya's parents say, *'If medals were presented for generosity and kindness, Wirral link would be the top of the podium and decorated in gold.'*

Ryma Brutskaya doesn't want to take off the bracelets and clothes she has been presented with.

Dziana Lazitskaya's mum notices that her daughter's appetite is better and thanks the host family for the clothes especially warm coat and footwear as her husband died and she is alone to bring up her children. *'For some people it may seem just an act of kindness. But for me and my daughter it is a big life-changing helping hand',* ***she said.***

Alesyia Ralava's mum says that this trip is a real fairy tale for her daughter, escaping from reality. Alesyia as other children of this area is expected to look after younger siblings while her parents are working or tend livestock and maintain the vegetable patches on which they rely for food.

Kristina Pashkevich and Alina Liashuk spent an hour on phone yesterday evening sharing about their trip.

Ksusha Smirnova's mum said that she became tidier and more organized.

Alina Liashuk's mother appreciates the optician appointment for the eye treatment which was done in England for her daughter.

Dima Nazdryn-Platnitski's mother said that the boy has become more optimistic and sociable.

Andrei Pashkevich family expresses their enormous gratitude for a year's supply of vitamins sent for each of their five children.
All the parents are grateful for the dental care and eye test their children have been provided with.

For the children, the important thing is the memories and friends they made, and for some there will be a new-found desire to study languages, or it might change their attitude to school. But the parents set great store on the health benefits. They always say, "Thank you for doing this, it means so much…'

All the parents thank the host families for hospitality and taking care of their children. Much of this venture would not be possible without the help and generosity of so many. ***As no one stands as tall as when he stoops to help a child.***