

As the season changes to autumn, it has been fascinating to look back over the summer months and see where Depaul's work in the UK, Ireland, Slovakia and Ukraine has developed even further. And it's good to know that it means many more homeless and marginalised people in those countries have been given support to get back on track and redefine their lives – there are many individual stories of success within that. We intend that the new project in Philadelphia, USA will bring an added dimension to our work around the globe, and I look forward to reporting on its opening towards the end of 2008.



Depaul Kharkiv is at the point of consolidation in Ukraine – and yet at the same time its services are moving in new directions in helping street homeless children. Director Fr Vitaliy Novak has been promoting closer links with officials from the local authority in Kharkiv, including a pilot project taking Depaul staff into the state-run orphanages and assessment hostels which street children so often run away from.

The system in Ukraine is different to the UK in that children needing care are put into “orphanages” even though they may still have a family, and the large scale of some of these places means staff have little time for talking to the children and helping them to deal with the chaotic family life which they may have experienced previously. Bullying too can be a problem in such large institutions, and as a consequence many of the children run away to the streets and no longer attend school. Then there are those children who have run away from home, where their parents may be violent due to the effects of long term alcoholism or drug abuse – and understandably the kids don't want to stay in that kind of environment.

Our outreach minibus continues to go out six nights a week to several stops around the city, and in the period January to August 2008 we have helped 315 different children and young people who are street homeless, generally giving out upwards of 55 meals per night. Under the new pilot scheme Depaul staff and volunteers are encouraging some of the children to return to the orphanages with the knowledge that Depaul staff will visit them regularly. Our expanded team now spends a total of 4 days a week at the orphanages and hostels, and we will be assessing the impact of the strategy and how we can improve on this new service, which will of course require additional funding in the long term.

The shift in direction of services from what was originally envisaged has led to greater co-operation with the regional and district authorities. In July, thanks to funding from the London Housing Foundation, we were able to bring a delegation of four officials from Kharkiv to London so they could compare services for children in care, and gain an insight into the UK's strategies and best practice around homelessness and children's welfare issues.



Coming from a social services background, the group were interested in talking to colleagues in similar central and local government departments, with a 4-day programme which included meeting key people from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Minister for the Third Sector, Phil Hope, at the Office of the Third Sector, and other senior officials from both those departments. There was a tour of the Houses of Parliament and discussion time with Baroness Morris, Shadow Minister for Children, Schools and Families and Women. They met senior managers from Westminster City Council and the Metropolitan Police – youth offending and tackling street homelessness being another area on which they were keen to get a UK perspective. There were opportunities to visit some of Depaul's projects – in London a hostel providing accommodation and support for 16-25 year olds, and in Belfast an accommodation project for homeless families, as well as its employment and training scheme. In Belfast too they met representatives from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.



Over the summer, Depaul Kharkiv was a partner in the summer camp scheme run by the city of Kharkiv's social services, catering for children from state-run orphanages and children from family backgrounds where they are more likely to become homeless. A

series of 2-week camps saw over 300 children spending time near the sea at Azov in southern Ukraine, with Depaul staff and volunteers accompanying them and organising activities such as swimming, football and table tennis.

A special mention for our two Irish volunteers in Kharkiv, Anne O'Driscoll and Mairead Burke, who have been helping at the project since June. They organised fundraising events in Ireland before they left for Ukraine, which not only brought in extra donations for Depaul Kharkiv, but also highlighted the plight of street homeless children in Ukraine to a new audience.

Depaul Foundation and Depaul Kharkiv have joined the Consortium for Street Children, a UK-based charity and umbrella group promoting solidarity amongst its membership organisations which support children around the world who have ended up living and sleeping rough on the streets. Under the Consortium's Grants Scheme we have secured funding over four years which will go towards the salaries of three of the staff in Kharkiv. Our thanks to CSC for their recognition of the work being done by Depaul Kharkiv.



Over the summer of 2008 Depaul Slovensko's nightshelter and day centre in Bratislava has continued

to provide safe accommodation and a meal each night to its homeless residents. The numbers staying in the shelter dropped during this period due to the hot weather, though we still saw on average 150 residents a night. We have been working towards splitting the activities provided on the Ivanska site (the existing warehouse building near the airport) to include a new site in a residential area near the main railway station in central Bratislava. Ivanska will continue to provide shelter for up to 170 homeless men and women throughout the cold winter, while the city premises will accommodate 30 of the most vulnerable people we see, many of whom have been in hospital and require intensive ongoing medical care. The offer of this smaller building has come from two private individuals who will ultimately develop the plot into new housing – but in the meantime they had the idea of giving us free use of the house for a period of at least 15 months. It means we can give people much higher quality care, and this second site will open shortly, with the main refurbishment work on the bathrooms and kitchens nearly completed.

We are pursuing the capital funding for our own purpose-built day centre with shelter accommodation, for which designs have already been drawn up. We are grateful to an existing funder, on the revenue side, who is interested in exploring how they can help with the longer term capital requirement for the new project.

This winter Depaul will lead the way in assisting organisations in other cities in Slovakia to set up temporary cold weather shelters to try and ensure that no-one who is homeless dies from the cold. It makes such a difference when they know there is somewhere warm and safe for them to return to each night.

2% fundraising campaign This campaign runs between January and March of each year. Companies and their employees can ask the government to give 2% of the tax they have paid in the previous year to a charity of their choice. To date we have received 400,000 Slovak crowns (approx. £10,500) with the potential for much more.



Volleyball tournament Funded by Slovak Telecom, the first homeless volleyball tournament took place recently between Depaul staff and residents at our Ivanska shelter,

Nota Bene staff (Nota Bene is Slovakia's equivalent of The Big Issue), and staff of Slovak Telecom. It was held at the shelter and was voted a great success by all those who took part.

Charity fair On 13 September, Depaul Slovensko took part in a Charity Fair in Bratislava. 26 non-profit organisations took part, with three members of staff from Depaul Slovensko attending the event to give out information on our work and respond to guests about our activities. The Mayor of the City of Bratislava was amongst visitors to the event.



Congratulations are in order for one of Depaul Trust's key services in the UK, Redditch Nightstop project, after

it was voted Best Charity/Voluntary Project 2008 in this year's National Lottery Awards in the category sponsored by Woman Magazine. They received a trophy and £2,000 prize money. Depaul Nightstop UK runs a network of 50 housing schemes providing safe emergency accommodation for young people aged 16 – 25 in the homes of local volunteers.

And a success story for one of the young people at Depaul Trust UK's hostel in Gravesend.

A year ago, after experiencing problems in her personal life, Danielle found herself in a downward spiral and sleeping rough. She was referred to the Depaul Trust where supportive and friendly staff have helped her regain her independence and start to plan her future. She has become a keen fundraiser and took part in the British 10k run in London in July. She said: "I held my own fun day and I raised £200 for the charity. I have managed to raise £135 through sponsorship for the run ... the race has helped me give something back to the Depaul Trust so it can help other young people like me who are facing homelessness. It's a horrible situation to be in. It's so great just to have someone that cares." Danielle is now a regular volunteer for Depaul's fundraising team.



Depaul Trust Ireland's Cloverhill accommodation project for up to 18 homeless families is located on the Stewartstown Road in Belfast,

and will be officially launched this September by Margaret Ritchie, Minister for Social Development. The scheme opened at the end of 2007, and is a partnership between Depaul and BIH Housing Association. There's a history of co-operation between the two organisations, including Depaul's Stella Maris hostel for long term street drinkers also in Belfast, and an exciting new flagship project at James Street in Dublin.

The new purpose-built hostel in Dublin will cater for 30 men and women who have a history of long term homelessness and entrenched alcohol use issues. Planning and design with BIH began some time ago but, with a number of set backs along the way, construction was only completed in the past year. Providing a holistic harm reduction response for service users and a high quality of accommodation, it is intended to help mainly those aged 35 years and over, although the 24/7 staffed service will remain flexible to working with all age groups of people with complex needs.

I'm already looking forward to the next newsletter when I hope to report that the hostel in Philadelphia will be open in time for Christmas. There should also be some exciting news about how Depaul Foundation and its subsidiaries will be set up in the future, with some changes to our governance structures. In the meantime, thank you for continuing to support the work of the Depaul group of charities in so many different ways.

Mark McGreevy - Group Chief Executive, Depaul Foundation

