

Frontline Bulgaria

Newsletter 18 November 2010



Highlights of our visit to Ruse, Bulgaria **17th – 23rd October 2010**

It was a very productive week! As there were five of us, we were able to go in different directions and focus on various aspects of Frontline's work in Ruse.

Esther (Occupational Therapist) and Helen (Physiotherapist) worked with a total of 11 children who, within the last 2 years, have been resettled from institutional care into small group homes in Ruse. They spent a busy four days working with staff and Occupational Therapy students, **assessing the children's postural, mobility and seating needs**. Some of the children have outgrown wheelchairs and seating that Frontline provided in 2008, with the help of Bulgaria Abandoned Children's Trust. Others were assessed for the first time.

Mary and Gill explored the best way to move forward with Frontline's proposal for an **assessment and equipment loan service** in Ruse. This included a visit to the Agency for Social Assistance to clarify what aids for daily living are now available locally. For adults this amounts to basic wheelchairs, commodes, shower chairs, walking sticks, crutches and frames. But it is still very difficult to obtain suitable seating, wheelchairs and mobility aids etc. for children. We shall therefore concentrate on finding **children's equipment**, as well as adult items that are not yet available in Bulgaria. We have found several sources of good used equipment in Essex and Suffolk and are looking for ways to transport these goods to Ruse for specific individuals, as well as to form the basis of an Equipment Store.

Esther's excellent practical **training on Postural Management** for 30 Occupational Therapy students at Ruse University was a great success. It featured several challenges, such as moulding a cat from playdough...not as easy as it sounds when perched on the front of your seat with feet off the floor and one hand behind your back! And lesson's learned from Esther's multi-coloured pipe-cleaner man will not be easily forgotten! Frontline continues to support the 4-year degree course as much as possible. The first Bulgarian Occupational Therapists graduated this summer. One of the new graduates works at the **RALIZ day centre** that has been transformed since we last visited it in 2008. The centre buzzes with fresh enthusiasm and now has several new rooms, including a Sensory Room.

Emilia from **Friendship Church** showed us the **new youth room**, built into the attic of the church, to accommodate the many young people who are part of the church family. We delivered several bags of warm slippers, pyjamas and blankets, kindly



donated by **British Airways**, which will be distributed to the many needy people who are supported by Friendship Church.

BRITISH AIRWAYS

Emilia took us to visit a **cookery class** for young adults with learning disabilities, based at a local secondary school, where we sampled some delicious Banitsa. She also took us to meet Miro, a young man aged 31 who has physical disabilities and lives a very restricted life in an institution for older people. He has particular need for new glasses and a laptop (*see below*)



We also re-visited **Baba Tonka**, the beautiful house where the church offers much-needed support for children and young people with disabilities, and their families. Hopefully heating will soon be installed so that this essential work can resume through the winter. We also hope to base the new equipment store here.



We were joined on this trip by Corinna from **York St. John University** who established a strong link with **Ruse University** exploring with Liliya, the Director of the OT course, the possibility of establishing placements for final year students. Corinna's family link with the Foreign Office also opened the door for us to meet Steve Williams, the British Ambassador in Sofia who kindly shared his insights into progress in social care and de-institutionalisation in Bulgaria, over a nice cup of tea...a fitting end to a very productive trip!

News from Vidin... We didn't get to Vidin this time. But we have received news that the Summer Programme and Youth Camp run by the Christian Mission Centre went very well and the Youth Club continues to thrive.



Do you have a spare laptop that you could donate for Miro... to help him keep in touch with his friends?

We would also welcome donations of...

- Multivitamins
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste
- Note pads, felt pens, coloured pencils, adult colouring books etc.
- Art and Craft packs and materials
- Small aids for the **Equipment Store** eg. tap turners, jar openers, special cutlery, 2-handled mugs... now available from Boots and other High Street stores



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FRIENDS

in the UK and Bulgaria, for your continuing help, donations, interest and encouragement!

If you would like to MAKE A DONATION towards the work of FRONTLINE BULGARIA, or would like to KNOW MORE about Frontline's work in Brentwood and Bulgaria, please contact:-

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