

CHERNOBYL CHILDREN'S PROJECT (UK)

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Press Release

Christmas Cheer for Chernobyl Children

Amongst the chaos of cancelled flights, delays and snow-induced misery, there was one bright spot on the horizon at Gatwick airport on Sunday. The flight bringing children from Minsk, Belarus, landed just half an hour late to the great relief of host families, some of whom had endured journeys of seven hours door to door just to meet them.

"We usually worry about their journey to the airport in Minsk, as winters in Belarus can be very extreme and the temperature can drop to minus 25 or lower, making it dangerous to drive." explains Linda Walker, Chief Executive of Chernobyl Children's Project (UK). "But this year we were worrying about the weather in Derbyshire and if they would make it to England at all with all the flights being cancelled!"

During the summer months, Chernobyl Children's Project (UK) brings children from regions in Belarus which were left contaminated after the nuclear disaster in 1986. The children come for a month's recuperation to give their immune systems a break from the radioactive environment.

Every Christmas, a group of mothers and young children in remission from cancer arrived to spend their winter holiday in Longnor, near Buxton. They will end the holiday with a big party on New Year's Eve, celebrating in true 'Belarusian' style with songs, dancing, games and a banquet of homemade food.

Along with the group came teenager Anya, who spends 5 months of the year with a family in Devon. Anya lives at a home in Belarus set up by the charity which took children with disabilities out of institutional care and into a family environment. She loves coming to England and was delighted that the snow didn't stop her holiday!

"Belarusian pilots are so used to flying in this weather, as most of their winter is like this. They must arrive and wonder what all the fuss is about!" says Linda. "We hope the children have a wonderful holiday and that the snow is melted by the time they have to travel home!"

On Monday the children and their mothers had a great day out in Buxton, meeting Santa Claus, courtesy of Buxton Lions, and receiving gifts and support from Belles Shoe shop, Marks and Spencer, the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre and the Hydro tea Rooms.

The group are staying all together at a Centre run by Denis Moors, in Longnor. This afternoon – Tuesday – they will be in Macclesfield. At Arighi Bianchi for lunch and then playing at 'Fun for All'.

They will spend a traditional - if chilly – Christmas with local families, and then if there is the slightest chink in the cold snap next week Denis is hoping to take them to the seaside "It is always such a highlight of the visit" said Denis "The children have never seen the sea before and even on a cold and wintry day, they still think it is magic!"

Further information from Denis Moors 01298 25727 or 07790 941422 or Linda Walker on the numbers above or on 07976 653610