

Frontline Bulgaria

Frontline Partnership - Reg. Charity 1099813



September 2017 Newsletter 31

This will be the last newsletter from 'Frontline Bulgaria' after 15 years and 38 visits involving 65 volunteers!

In early September a Frontline Bulgaria team including Mary and Gill (Frontline), Cliff (technician), Esther and Asma (Occupational Therapists) and Heather (Physiotherapist), supported by Tahera, followed up the second large shipment of special needs equipment sent from PhysioNet in Yorkshire UK to the National Association of Resource Teachers (NART) in Sofia. www.physionet.org.uk
www.narubq.org

During our five-day visit we worked with staff from NART to assess the children and teenagers who visited the equipment store for a wide variety of seating, standers and walkers etc. We had met several of the families previously and it was lovely to see them again. Often they had travelled for many hours, such as two mothers who arrived in a red van with their children. They returned to Ruse (a five hour journey each way) with additional equipment for three other children too. It was a tight squeeze! Some families sent a self-assessment form so that equipment could be selected and delivered far afield. NART plans to renovate the building to make it fit for purpose. But currently space is very limited and access via the flight of steps is tricky. So some assessments – especially those involving hoists – took place outside in the sunshine. We also visited a social care home near Pazardjik run by NET and were then able to put aside equipment for eight of the residents. www.eng.foundationnet.info

We had arrived to find the storage space packed full and we could hardly move. But by the time we left it was a different picture and much of what remained was due to be dispatched across Bulgaria. There was also time for Cliff to construct sensory room equipment (see over) whilst others of us delivered training days for NART and 'For Our Children' – completing a very busy week!

We have seen considerable progress in the provision of services for children with disabilities since our first visit to Bulgaria in 2002. Significant factors are the resettlement of disabled children from the big, isolated institutions (now closed) into smaller care homes, the involvement of international and Bulgarian NGOs, increasing numbers of children being fostered, adopted or returning to their families, and the establishment of the Occupational Therapy profession through the Bachelor and Masters OT programmes at Ruse University. Our involvement in these areas has included provision of training and support alongside our Bulgarian partners and contacts, mainly in Vidin, Kula, Ruse, Sofia and Varna.



We have been particularly inspired by the dozens of families we have met who strive with relentless effort and amazing resilience to meet the needs of their disabled children in often very challenging circumstances.

'Frontline Bulgaria' ends on a happy note!

It has been a privilege to work and serve together with individuals and organisations in their communities. Although 'Frontline Bulgaria' ends officially on 30th September, we move on in the knowledge that activities we have been involved in are in the hands of very able Bulgarian friends and colleagues



Many connections remain strong, built on long-established professional contacts, friendships and church links that no doubt will continue on a more individual basis in the future

For example two of us, with friends from our church in Suffolk, will soon be visiting Friendship Church in Ruse. This community-focused church has supported us in many ways since 2008. We will be helping with some practical work on Sam and Pam's house, whose wonderful wedding we attended in August. They recently returned to Ruse after Samuil successfully obtained his degree in Biblical Studies (and a lovely wife!) at All Nations Christian College in the UK. Together with Sam, Pam and Friendship Church, we thank God for all his blessings over the years.

'Thank you' to all who have joined us in this journey!

The goodwill of our volunteer teams, and all who have helped through practical, prayerful and financial support over the last fifteen years, has been legendary!

Thank you so much for your partnership in this project!

FRONTLINE PARTNERSHIP *is committed to building an inclusive community by helping to break down barriers to inclusion and offering opportunities for people to participate and contribute to the life of their community regardless of disability or disadvantage. You can find out more about Frontline and its other projects in Brentwood, Essex by going to:-*

<https://www.frontlinepartnership.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/#!/frontlinepartnership>

Sensory Room Equipment

*Bolster swing (R) – pictured without vinyl cover
Platform swing (L)*

For a copy of Cliff's instructions to make a bolster swing please contact Frontline Partnership



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