

# Teaching and Learning in Difficult Times

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Partnership with the Ministry  
of Education and Science of Ukraine



# Programme overview

Teaching and Learning in Difficult Times.  
Supporting Ukrainian teachers of English  
during the war.

**August 2022 – July 2023**

The **impact of the war** on education, following years of disruption as a result of Covid-19, is enormous for both teachers and learners.

In July 2022 we analysed the **immediate needs** of 1,500 English teachers from our network.

We found the teachers were very **committed** and **dedicated** to supporting education in Ukraine, **highly motivated** to join courses and CPD and found themselves in a **strong need of support** to maintain their professionalism as well as mental health and wellbeing.



# Programme components



We adopted the global **Language for Resilience** course to the immediate needs of Ukrainian teachers based on our analysis



We designed the **30-hour teacher development** course and conducted it ten times in **a year to help teachers** identify the inherent teaching and learning difficulties caused by the war and explore ways in of support for learners



We delivered the course to **1,585 Ukrainian teachers from all regions of Ukraine** who were displaced themselves or worked with the displaced learners



We transformed the course into **Teaching and Learning in Difficult Times into a video course**, following the high demand from our participants and teachers who were unable to take the course face-to-face



We scaled up the course to provide a sustainable way for **more teachers to access professional development**

# Kateryna's story

## Background

For **Kateryna Holub**, a teacher of English at a school in Kyiv and one of the Teaching and Learning in Difficult Time course participants, the course not only changed her professional approaches to teaching but also enabled her to help her learners feel safer and more engaged during the lessons. Inspired by what she gained from participating, she decided to become a course trainer. Since then, she has helped other teachers gain confidence in supporting their learners in the classroom during wartime.

Kateryna Holub is a teacher of English with 18 years of experience. She works with learners of different ages at a school in Kyiv that caters for primary and secondary levels.



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The realisation of the situation came only during the course. When you are in the same circumstances as everyone else, you don't feel that something is wrong. You try to look for solutions and adapt.

# Kateryna's story

## Background

On 24 February 2022, the day of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and first bombings of Kyiv, Kateryna and her family had to move from the capital to a western region of Ukraine that was considered to be safer. Her school, like many others in Ukraine, switched to distance learning.

Ukrainian teachers and learners, like many people around the world, had already gained some experience of working remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, remote working during the full-scale invasion of the country was much more complicated and challenging.

Many learners and their families had been displaced to other regions of Ukraine or were seeking refuge abroad.

They were unable to participate fully in classes and were dealing with unstable internet connections or electricity outages. On top of this, of course, the lives and the safety of people came first. Every time the air raid siren sounded in any learner's area, they would need to stop the lesson immediately and head for shelter.

At the time, Kateryna, her colleagues and learners carried on 'normally'. Only with time would they begin to recognise how the constant sense of danger had affected them and how the seeds of doubt had been sown, affecting their confidence in their future. Feelings of helplessness and constant tension were everywhere, even if Kateryna tried to ignore them.

# Kateryna's story

## The change

Kateryna joined her first Teaching and Learning in Difficult Time course with the British Council in February 2023. It gave her the opportunity to change her own perception and face up to issues that she otherwise would not have addressed. She found herself making positive changes in her own behaviour, and taking action to help her learners change their behaviour too. More than anything, she says, the course improved the quality of her work during these critical times.

After successful completion, Kateryna decided to stay with the programme as a trainer for other Ukrainian teachers who were facing the same challenges and experiencing a similar mental state during the full-scale invasion.

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We thought we knew how to be resilient, but it is only a pretence of resilience. Inside, we were all very vulnerable and needed support. I remember an activity at the first workshop where we noted the effects of trauma on our bodies on the mental and physical levels to understand how students feel and whether they are traumatised.

It turned out that most of the teachers were traumatised themselves. The realisation that we ourselves are experiencing the effects of trauma gave us the impetus to help ourselves and to understand our students and learn how to help them.

# Kateryna's story

## The success

**Kateryna is now back in Kyiv. She is teaching her learners in person, at school.**

The course has opened a new perspective for her on the problems her learners were having with motivation, concentration, behaviour and communication. It equipped her with practical skills and strategies for effective teaching and learning, enabling her to adapt and continue providing education in challenging circumstances.

After participating in the Teaching and Learning in Difficult Times programme, Kateryna completed **Scaling up to Skills and Well-being in Teacher Learning Opportunities (SWITLO)** project training and **became the leader of Teacher Activity Group** at her school in Kyiv.



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The new knowledge and skills I acquired during the course were very useful in teambuilding, creating a safe environment for learners so that their basic needs were met before we started the learning process. The skills of voice control, tone and use of correct language in class worked best personally for me. Learners feel respect and interest, and realise that the teacher is on their side.

As a result, it changes their attitude in class and to learning in general.

# Next steps

## Scaling up to Skills and Well-being in Teacher Learning Opportunities (SWITLO)

Addressing the requests from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the course participants' feedback we **scaled up Teaching and Learning in Difficult Times** and developed **SWITLO**, a new project focused on community support and learning from each other, that enables us to train more teachers across the country. The British Council's aim to establish **1,500 communities of practice – Teacher Activity Groups (TAGs) – across Ukraine**. TAG activities offer great opportunities for professional development. We hope that they will become **sustainable spaces for teachers' professional growth** and continue to support the resilience of Ukrainian teachers through these challenging times and beyond.





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