



RLSS UK West Region
in conjunction with DLRG Kaufbeuren, present...

International Lifesaving Exchange



This trip has been supported by an Instant Impact Grant from UK-German Connection.



International Exchange Diary



The International Exchange started in Bristol with lunch at a pizza restaurant just around the corner from the bus station. It was good job we'd decided to meet early because Rhi and Will had left their passports in their mum's car! One quick phone call later and the passports were reunited with their owners. The bus journey was long but uneventful, and we all made it safely to the airport. Aside from having some Marmite confiscated at

security, we made it through to the departure lounge unscathed...

The plane was delayed for an hour so we finally touched down in Munich at 10:30pm local time. We were relieved to find Christina and our drivers waiting. We piled into the back of four people carriers and began the journey to Pleinfeld. We eventually arrived at the ResQ cup campsite at 2am to find that DLRG Kaufbeuren had already pitched our tent for us (thanks guys) and even set up beds for us - luxury! Everyone was very excited so it took a while to get to sleep.



We got up at 7:30am the next morning to find a beautiful sunny morning waiting for us. After a quick breakfast our first event was the rescue-ball throw, which started at 9am. Sarah and Cat both showed a natural aptitude for the event with some very impressive throws.

UK team *Pimms O'Clock* came from behind in the run-swim-run event to secure a comfortable win over the *Water-Rats* team from DLRG Kaufbeuren. The UK *Wombles* tried hard in the Rescue Tube Rescue but eventually finished last in their heat against older & more experienced competition. At the lunch-time prize-giving we won a prize for the team which travelled the furthest (over 600 miles) to compete at the ResQ cup!

The first event after lunch was the inflatable boat race. Four team members scramble to launch an inflatable boat, jump aboard and paddle it around the buoy and back. Keen to get in on the action, Bex, Hannah and I co-opted Elliot and entered a team in a spare lane just for fun. I'm told that we posted the fastest time of the competition,



but since we weren't an official team we weren't eligible for a prize... We had a couple of hours before the combined rescue, so Robby Harsch arranged a high-speed power boat ride for the UK participants. Once the competition was finished for the day we got to know our partners from DLRG

Kaufbeuren by playing some team building games and tackling the Aqua Jogging together. Dinner was at 6pm followed by the prize-giving where the team from Kaufbeuren cleared up - getting a podium position in nearly every event! We finished the evening with a party - ResQ cup style: there was music, dancing, limbo and relaxing with our new friends.





The following morning we packed down the tents then went to the beach flags arena for the last event of the competition. Congratulations to Alfie who beat off 34 competitors to make it through to the last 12 of the beach flags competition!

With the competition over, we all piled into the people carriers for the 2 hour drive South to Kaufbeuren. We split up to meet our host families and find out where we'd be staying for the next few days. I know that a lot of UK participants were very nervous about staying with host families, but we needn't have worried -

everyone was made to feel really welcome. After dinner with our hosts we all met up to go bowling together and finished the evening watching fireworks over Kaufbeuren.

The next morning provided a welcome break for the youth leaders - we headed into town for breakfast whilst the young people headed off to school with their hosts. I think everyone was surprised by how different school life is in Germany. The young people remarked that the early starts, morning prayers, shorter days and lessons in silence were very different to most schools in the UK! It wasn't all relaxation for the youth leaders; we went shopping for BBQ food for the final night. After lunch we all met



up at the open-air swimming pool for some lifesaving training. The DLRG showed us some speed lifesaving events and we showed them how to do a competition rope-throw and a water-based incident.



After the training session we headed into Kaufbeuren to go to the Tänzelfest - a kind of week-long town fair. Although they'd held the carnival procession earlier in the week, there was still plenty to see at the fair ground. All the Germans wore their traditional clothes; we ate a superb dinner and then hit the fair-ground rides.

The following morning our German friends had to go to school, so we headed down to the town hall to meet the deputy mayor and learn about the history of Kaufbeuren. We learnt how a fraudulent clerk once tried to burn the town hall down to cover his



tracks. We also had a tour of the registry office and we heard all about German wedding traditions (including the custom of kidnapping the bride at the reception and demanding a ransom of beer)! After the town hall we went for a guided tour of the town, including the city walls and the nunnery. Our German hosts joined us for a picnic lunch in the park, then we loaded into the people carriers to visit Neuschwanstein castle. We walked through the grounds, and up to an amazing bridge suspended 200m above the gorge - beautiful views!



We spent our final night celebrating with our new found friends at a huge BBQ at the DLRG HQ. Everyone was invited - including the host families. We made a few presentations, played some games and enjoyed a delicious bring-and-share supper. I can't think of a better way to finish the exchange.



Bleary-eyed we got up at 5am the next morning to say our final goodbyes to our hosts and head off to the airport for the long journey home.

Thank you Christina, Christophe and everyone at DLRG Kaufbeuren! We look forward to welcoming you to the UK next year!

David Fielding



What were your expectations before the visit?

I expected the exchange to be a lot of fun and I wasn't disappointed! I was looking forward to swimming in the Brombachsee because I have never done a lifesaving competition in open water before. I was also looking forward to camping at the ResQ cup.

What did you do together with your partners?

My exchange partner and I both love football, so we played a few games whilst I was staying at his house.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I was surprised how easy it was to make friends with the German participants. I also enjoyed competing in the ResQ Cup because I've never taken part in an open water lifesaving competition before.

What surprised you most about the other country?

I hadn't expected the Germans to speak such good English. I was really impressed!

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I am friends with my exchange partner on Facebook and I hope to send e-mails to keep in touch ready for their visit to the UK next year.

What did you like best about the exchange?

I enjoyed making new friends and learning new lifesaving skills (like the German version of the recovery position).



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was looking forward to getting involved in lots of different activities. I was also looking forward to learning some German and making new friends.

What did you do together with your partners?

I went to a BBQ with my host family. Daniela and I also spent time talking together and watching Bridget Jones' Diary! I also went to school with Daniela and took part in her lessons.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

It was new and exciting – I've never done anything like this before! I enjoyed going to a German school and seeing how they differ from English schools.

What surprised you most about the other country?

The differences in culture and in the schools. Lessons are held in absolute silence and are very disciplined; they also pray in their first lesson of the day and start school at 8am!

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I am friends with Daniela on Facebook and I'm looking forward to seeing her next year when she visits the UK.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Meeting new people from the UK and Germany.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was looking forward to making German friends. I knew that travelling with friends from the UK would be a good laugh and that the whole trip would be an unforgettable experience.

What did you do together with your partners?

We went to see their horse and donkey, and watched German soap operas together. I also went to school with my exchange partner and took part in an aerobics lesson with 30 girls!

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I liked meeting new people and learning about the local history of Kaufbeuren. We met the deputy mayor and had a guided tour of the town.

What surprised you most about the other country?

They use English slang, for example when Pamela's dad asked us to put our seat-belts on, he told us to 'belt up'.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I've already sent my exchange partner some photos via Facebook and email.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Getting together as one big group – especially when we went bowling together - and the BBQ on the last night when all the host families were invited too.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was looking forward to making some new friends (both English and German) and learning to speak a bit of German.

What did you do together with your partners?

As well as competing together at the ResQ Cup, we went to school together, went bowling and trained alongside the DLRG in their open-air swimming pool. We also did some sight-seeing around Kaufbeuren.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I enjoyed making new friends and experiencing the culture. The food was very different to what I eat in the UK. The castle outside Kaufbeuren was pretty.

What surprised you most about the other country?

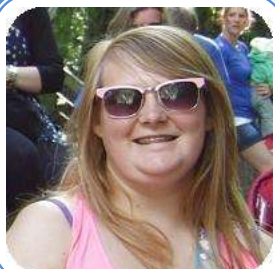
I thought that the country was similar to the UK, though some things were cheaper in the shops and religion seemed to play a bigger part in life than it does in the UK. I was surprised that the countryside was so green!

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I'll stay in touch on Facebook, and we'll see each other next year when the Germans come to the UK. I also hope to go back to Germany to visit one day.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Meeting new people and seeing the country. Everyone was really friendly. I also enjoyed the group activities with the Germans (especially the sightseeing).



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was nervous about sleeping in a tent and worried that I would get homesick. I was excited about the whole experience and the chance to make new friends.

What did you do together with your partners?

We talked a lot and played American Monopoly. I showed my partners some dances and we also listened to music.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I enjoyed chatting to all of our German friends. I really liked how everyone supported each other at the ResQ Cup, as well as when we were doing other activities together.

What surprised you most about the other country?

The schools in Germany were very different from the UK. Some days they finish school early, but some days they have to study from 7.55am until 5.15pm!

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

Via Facebook and email; maybe text messaging.

What did you like best about the exchange?

I liked how everyone was so friendly and how supportive they were! I also liked the fact that I have made so many new friends! I also liked the town festival – the fairground rides were epic!



What were your expectations before the visit?

I hoped to have some fun and learn some German, but I was worried that the Germans wouldn't understand me or that I wouldn't understand them!

What did you do together with your partners?

We did loads of activities together, including going to school together. I ate dinner with Anna's family, and met her cousins. I also taught her mum some English.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

The friendship we have now and getting to know Anna's family.

What surprised you most about the other country?

The houses are very different from the UK. They are very big and most houses are made from wood.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I'll stay in touch with Anna and all the German's on Facebook. I'm looking forward to seeing them again next year when they come to the UK.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Having fun together. Getting to know everyone – the other English participants as well as the Germans.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was hoping to make new friends and meet new people. I was looking forward to learning some German, and taking part in all the activities.

What did you do together with your partners?

As a group we went to the ResQ Cup together and did some lifesaving training. We also went to the Kaufbeuren fair, went bowling and had a picnic together. I spent time with Sophie's family playing cards.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

Meeting new people and experiencing their culture. I enjoyed learning some German words, and doing lifesaving training together. I liked helping the Germans with their English.

What surprised you most about the other country?

It was surprisingly similar to England although things were much cheaper and every drink was fizzy! People's houses are also very different to the houses in England because they are smaller and everything is light colours – white and lots of yellow and orange.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I'll stay in touch with Sophie on Facebook – I plan to keep chatting and e-mail all the Germans before we see them again next year when they come to England.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Meeting new English and German people. Seeing a new country and trying new foods. Spending time with the English group to prepare for the competition.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was looking forward to taking part in the lifesaving competition, but I didn't expect to do very well!

What did you do together with your partners?

Dominik showed me his car and workshop. We spent a lot of time driving around in his car.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I liked spending time talking about the things that we have in common. We both enjoy making things with our hands. Dominik told me all about his diving and other hobbies.

What surprised you most about the other country?

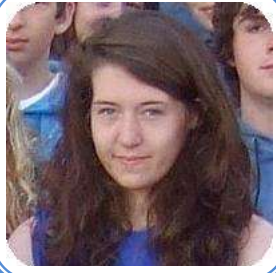
I was surprised by how well most people could speak English. I was also surprised by the differences in the look of the buildings and how things are set out, such as the size of the pavements and the size and style of the buildings.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

We'll stay in touch using the Facebook group, and their club is coming to England next year.

What did you like best about the exchange?

I liked it when everyone met up together as one big group, like when we went to the castle together, or when we played team-building games together.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was looking forward to spending time with my friends, but I was also worried that I wouldn't get on with my exchange family.

What did you do together with your partners?

I went to school with Gesa, ate meals together with her family, trained alongside DLRG Kaufbeuren and went to the BBQ with everyone.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I enjoyed getting to know their culture and about German life, for example the food was different to food in the UK and their school timetables were different.

What surprised you most about the other country?

The majority of the Germans spoke really good English. They eat different foods which I enjoyed trying.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

We'll keep chatting on Facebook, and planning their visit to the UK next August.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Making new friends from the UK and Germany.



What were your expectations before the visit?

To get involved in activities and learn new things. I hoped to make new friends and to learn some German.

What did you do together with your partners?

We talked about how life is in the UK and how it is different to Germany. We went on loads of group trips together. We talked about differences at school and about how different parts of Germany use different words for the same objects.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I got to learn about a different culture. They were really friendly and welcoming so it made all activities enjoyable.

What surprised you most about the other country?

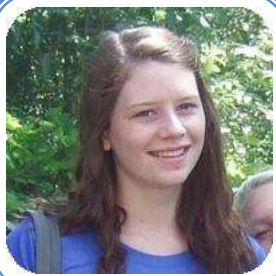
How early they get up to go to school and how many people speak good English.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

Through Facebook and emails. We are going to meet up again next year when they come to England.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Making new friends and going to Neuschwanstein Castle – the views were amazing and it was a relaxing way to spend time together.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was nervous about meeting the Germans. I was looking forward to the competition but I was worried that we would do badly! Overall I expected it to a really good, fun trip.

What did you do together with your partners?

As well as taking part in the ResQ Cup competition, I spent a lot of time with my host family. We went for a walk and ate dinner together; I went to German school with Annabelle. We also watched a film together and went shopping.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

I enjoyed getting to know all of the German participants and their families. It was a lot of fun seeing the different ways of living. The food was delicious, and their family seemed really close.

What surprised you most about the other country?

I was surprised how well everyone spoke English. I was also surprised by how good the food was – I hadn't expected to like it. I was also surprised by how early they go to school. Their recovery position is different from the UK recovery position too.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I am looking forward to next year when the Germans will be coming to visit us in the UK. We'll keep in touch by Facebook until then.

What did you like best about the exchange?

Meeting all the new people and seeing how they do lifesaving differently.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I was expecting the exchange to be a lot of fun. I was looking forward to meeting the Germans. I expected all of the other teams to be much better than us!

What did you do together with your partners?

We went to school together and went to a barbecue. I also met Stefan's extended family and had lunch with his grandparents.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

Making friends and learning a new language.

What surprised you most about the other country?

I was surprised that a lot of the stereotypes seemed to be true! When we went to the town fair, the Germans were drinking a lot of beer, lots of people had dressed up in their traditional dress and the men were all wearing lederhosen.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I plan to stay in touch with Stefan by Facebook and by sending e-mails.

What did you like best about the exchange?

I liked discovering the German culture and staying with the host family – it was a great way to sample real German life.



What were your expectations before the visit?

I am looking forward to spending time with my English friends and making new friends from Germany.

What did you do together with your partners?

We spent time with Pamela's family. We also watched German TV together and went to school. On the last night we had a huge BBQ with all of the UK and German participants, and the host families too.

What did you like best about working together with your partners on this project?

It was new and exciting – I've never done anything like this before. The speed boat trip on the lake was really exciting, and I enjoyed the open-water swimming.

What surprised you most about the other country?

I was surprised that the German's speak such good English; their schools are very different from the English schools too.

How do you hope to continue the contact with your partners?

I hope to stay in touch with the German participants using the Facebook group. We've already shared some photos from the exchange.

What did you like best about the exchange?

The activities were great fun and I enjoyed making new friends.



Hannah Collings – Youth Leader

What were the key joint and interactive activities between the young people from both countries?

We played some team building games after the ResQ cup competition to help the groups integrate. The celebrations at the ResQ cup were also a great way for the young people to relax and get to know each other. Mixing the different nationalities for the bowling social also helped. We also met and dined with our host families and trained alongside the young people from DLRG Kaufbeuren.

How did you bring the trip to life for the young people?

As the youngest youth leader, I was able to relate to the young people easily. I joined in with their conversations and talked about their hopes and concerns. I'm really enthusiastic about developing international relations and I tried to be positive about all of the different activities on offer and think about each activity from the young people's point of view to encourage them to fully participate.

What were the highlights of the visit?

The initial team bonding with the German group broke down barriers and really helped everyone feel like they belonged to the same group. Training with the other club and sharing different lifesaving techniques also helped us bond over our shared interest in lifesaving. By the BBQ on the final night, we'd overcome the language barriers and everyone was really relaxed around each other. I also loved staying with my host family – they really made me feel welcome.

What did the young people learn from the project?

That visiting new countries and meeting new people as individuals is fun and a beneficial experience. They overcame their concerns and made strong bonds.

What are your top five tips for other teachers or group leaders planning similar visits?

- Try to think from the participants point of view – if they are tired they will find it hard to get motivated
- Be prepared to help the young people overcome their initial shyness and get to know their exchange partners. Exchanging letters/e-mails/Facebook messages before the trip can help them to prepare, but it also helps if you can provide an example or help to develop initial exchange partner relations. Suggest questions that the young people can ask each other to get the conversations started.
- Team-building or group-bonding activities should be one of the first activities when you meet.
- Be aware that long days can be very tiring for the young people (and the youth leaders)!
- Strong organisation is imperative; make sure you have a detailed schedule of activities.

How do you hope to develop the link in the future?

We have invited the older Germans (18+) to visit the UK in March to take part in the British University National Lifesaving Championships. We have also invited everyone who took part in the exchange to visit us in the UK in August 2012 for the reciprocal exchange. We plan to maintain contact throughout the year through e-mail and Facebook.

What worked well during the planning and the exchange itself?

- Use of social networking was appropriate for the age group and helped build international links.
- Getting the kids involved in setting rules for the trip and making them aware of their responsibilities.
- Allocating exchange partners ensured the participants socialised outside their nationalities.
- Providing participants with a schedule of activities so that they know what is going to happen next.

What could we improve next time we run an exchange?

- Arrive earlier so that there is time for UK/German team-building before the competition.
- Improve the communication with the young people when they are staying with their host families so that they know what they need to bring for each outing.
- Adopt a more active approach to fundraising so that participants take more responsibility for raising funds. Run a dedicated fundraising planning session, or provide templates of previous ideas.
- Not everyone likes fizzy drinks, so make sure that a selection of non-fizzy cold drinks are available.



Liz Mapstone – Youth Leader

What were the key joint and interactive activities between the young people from both countries?

Taking part in the ResQ Cup alongside German teams was an amazing experience. We also did lots of sightseeing in Kaufbeuren and the surrounding area. The cultural activities included staying with host families and taking part in the Kaufbeuren Tänzelfest. We also found time to share our different approaches to lifesaving training with each other.

How did you bring the trip to life for the young people?

We held two team-building days before the trip and exchanged parcels with Kaufbeuren containing information about ourselves and life in the UK. We also ran some open-water training sessions in the UK to try out the ResQ cup events in advance. We set up a Facebook group to allow the young people to get to know each other before the exchange.

What were the highlights of the visit?

The highlight of the whole trip was the ResQ Cup competition. I really appreciated the support of the German officials (who made all of the announcements in English as well as German) and DLRG Kaufbeuren club members (who cheered for our team, helped us to understand the rules and showed us the best techniques). Of the cultural activities, my favourite was the Kaufbeuren Tänzelfest. There was an amazing atmosphere and it was great to see the Germans wearing their traditional clothes.

What did the young people learn from the project?

For some of the young people, this exchange has reignited their passion for lifesaving. I'm sure that this exchange will encourage some of the older attendees to continue lifesaving.

Before the trip, the UK participants were very nervous about meeting the Germans – they were worried that they wouldn't be able to communicate or that they wouldn't get on. Now they have learnt that despite the cultural and language differences we are all very similar!

What are your top five tips for other teachers or group leaders planning similar visits?

- Be organised
- Make sure that the group that you are taking are 'a group' - do some team-building events before you depart so that everyone knows each other and works as a team.
- Think carefully about how to integrate the German / English participants
- Think about the amount of sleep needed for younger people – whilst it's good to keep busy you also need enough time for rest and relaxation if everyone is going to get the most out of the exchange
- Minimise travel time to/from the host country.

How do you hope to develop the link in the future?

DLRG Kaufbeuren are going to visit the UK in Aug 2012, and we'll continue to use the Facebook group as a way to keep in touch and plan next year's exchange.

What worked well during the planning and the exchange itself?

- The open-water training worked well, though it would have been better if everyone had attended.
- The team of organisers and youth leaders worked well together.
- The fact that the UK organiser didn't have to organise the German element of the trip. Christina, the German co-ordinator, planned all of the transport, food and programme in Germany.
- The initial team-building day was a good way to get everyone excited about the exchange.
- The blog on the website was a good way to involve parents and pass on essential information.

What could we improve next time we run an exchange?

- Arrive earlier so that we meet, and get to know, the German participants earlier.
- Get more organised with fundraising.
- Make (and then use) a promotional film to show other club members.
- Make some of the team building compulsory.



Becky Sindall – Youth Leader

What were the key joint and interactive activities between the young people from both countries?

Competing at the ResQ cup, bowling, going to school with their exchange partners, taking part in the lifesaving training session, visiting the Tänzelfest, visiting Neuschwanstein castle and the group BBQ – phew!

How did you bring the trip to life for the young people?

We encouraged the young people to interact with their German counterparts and participate fully in all activities by leading by example. We initiated team games during quiet periods of the programme to keep young people occupied and interacting. We maintained an enthusiastic approach to joint activities throughout exchange programme.

What were the highlights of the visit?

For me the highlight of the trip was giving the young people the opportunity to compete in an open water competition - something that was completely new to them - and seeing them take on the challenges involved with a positive and enthusiastic attitude. I also enjoyed teaching “The Banana Song” to UK and German young people and then hearing it (repeatedly...) throughout the exchange. All the hard work was worth it when I overheard the participants saying how much they had enjoyed the exchange and did not want it to end as they did not want to leave their new friends!

What did the young people learn from the project?

The UK young people learnt some key German phrases and the German young people were able to practice and improve their spoken English. We learnt a great deal about German culture and day-to-day life (e.g. school, food, family life). The UK participants experienced their first open-water lifesaving competition and identified similarities and differences in the lifesaving carried out and taught by our respective organisations.

What are your top five tips for other teachers or group leaders planning similar visits?

- Run ice-breaker and team-building games as early in the programme as possible.
- Have a quick system for checking that everyone is present and numbering off.
- Keep participants busy to minimise arguments, bullying and homesickness.
- Give young people a degree of responsibility during planning stages and during the exchange itself so that they develop a sense of ownership for the project.
- Build up as much contact between the young people as possible before the trip leaves.

How do you hope to develop the link in the future?

We are already making plans for DLRG Kaufbeuren to visit the UK next year. Hopefully this will become a regular occurrence, with international exchanges between the UK and Germany in alternate years. We also hope to inspire other lifesaving clubs to set up international exchanges by demonstrating the success of these exchanges; and by offering assistance and experience to other clubs interested in setting up similar ventures.

What worked well during the planning and the exchange itself?

- Allowing young people to take on a level of responsibility (for example, briefing the team captains then asking them to cascade the information down to their teams).
- Team building games and ice-breakers to help young people get to know each other,
- Splitting the training session in two allowed both clubs to demonstrate the key training that they do.
- Using the time when the young people were at school to hold a youth leaders’ meeting to discuss any problems, plans and the future of the exchange.

What could we improve next time we run an exchange?

- Run ice-breaker and team building games earlier in the programme so that the UK and German participants get to know each other straight away.
- Aim to arrive earlier before the start of the competition – getting to the campsite at 2am before the competition started at 8am wasn’t ideal!
- Make integration of all young people into the group a priority from the outset.



David Fielding – Youth Leader

What were the key joint and interactive activities between the young people from both countries?

We exchanged parcels to introduce ourselves and tell the other country all about lifesaving and life in our country. We also chatted on Facebook before the trip. When in Germany we competed alongside each other at the ResQ cup and took part in a joint training session where we shared lifesaving techniques from our own countries. We took part in a variety of social activities (including bowling, swimming and a group BBQ on the last evening) and cultural activities (visiting the Tänzelfest, meeting the mayor of Kaufbeuren, a guided tour of Kaufbeuren, going to school with our hosts and visiting Neuschwanstein castle).

How did you bring the trip to life for the young people?

From the outset the young people were encouraged to be active participants in the trip – not just passive consumers. As far as possible, the young people were involved in all the decisions about the trip. Staying with host families was a great way to experience life in Germany first-hand, and the packed programme ensured that there was something for everyone to enjoy. Asking the young people to make a video-diary worked well.

What were the highlights of the visit?

The highlight of the trip was the BBQ on the last night – watching everyone having fun with their new friends. I know that some of the young people from the UK were really nervous about meeting the Germans, so to see them laughing, joking and getting along together was a great feeling. The ResQ cup was also an amazing experience. Everything was laid on for us, so we just needed to turn up and compete. As a youth leader it made the first two days very easy and relaxing.

What did the young people learn from the project?

The UK young people have really developed as lifesavers and as young adults. The trip has inspired them to get involved in their own lifesaving clubs - on the plane back from Germany they were comparing their own lifesaving clubs to the German clubs and making plans to run more competitions and socials in the same way that the German clubs do. They have also learnt that German teenagers are a lot like teenagers in the UK. It was great to watch the initial nerves disappear and see the two groups become really close.

What are your top five tips for other teachers or group leaders planning similar visits?

- Raising funds is easier if you're a single organisation with a constitution and up-to-date accounts.
- Buy a copy of the NSPCC leaflet "Safe Sport Away". Download a free copy of Volleyball England's "Trips Abroad" booklet, the DFEE "Handbook for group leaders" and the DFEE "Health and safety of pupils on educational visits". These contain everything you need to take young people abroad safely.
- Agree in advance who will pay for food, accommodation, trips etc. whilst you're in the host country.
- Be meticulous with your filing!
- Get to know each other in advance by exchanging parcels and chatting on Facebook.

How do you hope to develop the link in the future?

DLRG Kaufbeuren are coming to the UK next year, and we're already starting to plan the visit.

What worked well during the planning and the exchange itself?

- Christina (my German counterpart) had planned a full programme of activities in Germany.
- Tagging the exchange onto the ResQ cup instantly gave a focus for the exchange. It meant that we had 2 days of activity arranged for us.
- I think that we got the right balance of lifesaving / social / cultural activities.
- Staying with host families was great. Although some UK participants were nervous at first, it went really well. It helped us sample German life and, by putting the young people into a new situation, it helped them to develop confidence.

What could we improve next time we run an exchange?

- Make the UK team-building/training events compulsory so the UK group know each other in advance.
- Try not to arrive in Germany so late at night!