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Guidance

Homes for Ukraine: guidance for councils

This initial guidance on the Homes for Ukraine scheme outlines the role of councils across England in supporting the scheme. Additional advice will be published for councils in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland shortly.

From:

[Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities)
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Applies to England

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Overview and purpose

Councils have a critical role to play in the success of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and are uniquely placed to support local communities to offer Ukrainians the warmest possible welcome to the UK.

This initial guidance on the Homes for Ukraine scheme outlines the role of councils across England in supporting the scheme. Additional advice will be published for councils in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland shortly. We are working with councils and Devolved Administrations to produce further versions of this guidance in the coming days (see final section for details on future guidance topics).

This guidance does not cover displaced persons coming in via the Ukraine Family Scheme.

There is separate guidance for sponsors, and a welcome pack for guests of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Definitions

“Sponsor” or “sponsors” refers to an individual, group or organisation who has been approved to accommodate an individual or household from Ukraine under the “Homes for Ukraine” sponsorship scheme.

“Guest” or “guests” refers to an individual or household previously resident in Ukraine, prior to 1 January 2022, who have secured a visa under the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme, which enables them to be housed by a sponsor.

Background and eligibility

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and also to their immediate family members (for example spouse/partner and children under 18) who may be of other nationalities, to be sponsored to come to the UK. Applicants can apply from Ukraine or from any other third country. Phase One of the scheme allows individual sponsors to named Ukrainians. <https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk> (<https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/>)

The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward.

Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support. Those arriving need to meet standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa. Sponsors and all adults in sponsors' households will also be subject to initial Police National Computer (PNC), criminal records and Warnings Index checks by the Home Office. Councils will be required to undertake basic DBS checks for all adults in the sponsor household; and in cases where the incoming arrivals include children and/or vulnerable adults, an enhanced DBS with barred lists check will be required promptly on all adults in the sponsor household.

Sponsors in the UK can be of any nationality, with any immigration status, provided they have at least six months' leave to remain within the UK and pass the background checks. They can live in any part of the UK. Sponsors must provide accommodation for a minimum of six months. Sponsors can also receive an optional 'thank you' payment of £350 per month for up to the first 12 months of sponsorship. This payment is limited to one monthly payment per residential address, regardless of the number of individuals sponsored. Payments will stop when the sponsorship ends.

Sponsors should not charge rent. They will not be expected to cover the costs of food and living expenses, although they may wish to offer this, especially in early weeks while guests are finding their feet in the UK.

The scheme will be rolled out in phases. Initially, individual members of the public can sponsor a guest from Ukraine who meets the eligibility criteria for this scheme. In later phases organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple guests. Further details are set out below.

Application process and Phases

On Monday 14 March, an online registration page opened on:

<https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/> (<https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/>). Potential sponsors (individuals and organisations) can register their interest in sponsoring a guest.

Phase One – Individuals sponsoring named guests

On Friday 18 March, a Home Office form opened for visa applications. Sponsors at this stage must be specific individuals.

In this phase, either a guest or a sponsor will be able to complete a single application for a visa. The form will ask the person completing it to name both parties.

Sponsors and guests will find each other and match themselves externally. There is no single route to matching, and both the sponsor and guest could use a number of channels to find a match. They could for example already have a relationship in place with a friend in the UK/Ukraine, they could be friends of friends, or could find a sponsor or guest through an NGO, charity, or other channel.

The process is as follows:

1. Sponsor and guest find each other and agree to a match.
2. Either the sponsor or the guest fills out the single visa application form online using both parties' details.
3. Passport numbers (alongside completion of eligibility questions and other personal details) for both guests and sponsors will be required to complete the application online. The guest will also need to upload a scan of their passport. If the guest does not possess a passport, they will be required to travel to a visa application centre to process their biometrics.
4. After the application is submitted, security checks are done on both the sponsor, all other adults in the sponsor's household, and the guest.
5. Once both sponsor and guest have passed the checks, the Home Office will issue the guest with a permit to travel.
6. The guest can then travel to the UK and coordinate their arrival with the sponsor.
7. Specific councils will provide welcome arrangements for guests, with additional immediate support provided to guests where it is required (see initial reception role of councils below).

A lead sponsor will be needed for each household. For example, where a couple has applied to sponsor, one of them should be designated as "lead sponsor".

We are undertaking further work on the safeguarding process around individual sponsors and the adults in their households and this will be shared in the next version of the guidance. More detail is given in the section on the role of councils below.

Future expansion of the scheme

The scheme will subsequently be expanded to enable organisations and community groups to sponsor multiple guests. We are undertaking further work on the safeguarding process around group sponsors.

We will update and reissue this guidance with further information on future phases in due course.

Role of sponsors

Sponsors are required to:

- Provide suitable accommodation for a minimum of 6 months.
- Stay in regular contact with their guest prior to their arrival to help organise and coordinate their arrival in the UK, meet them on arrival, and facilitate transfer to their accommodation. Note: councils will still be required to provide general reception arrangements and immediate support on arrival if guests require it (see section below).
- Signpost the guest to public services and assist them with tasks such as registering with a local GP surgery.

Further information on the role of sponsors is available online.

Role of councils

Councils have a number of important functions in supporting the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Councils will be expected to offer the categories of support listed below. Further details on each of these will be issued shortly:

- **Initial reception.** Relevant councils have been asked to establish reception arrangements at particular ports of entry to support any short-term arrival needs. These councils will likely work with Strategic Migration Partnerships and the voluntary sector under standard reception centre arrangements, and (only if a significant multi-agency response is required) they may call on the coordination support of Local Resilience Forums. These arrangements should include basic meet and greet arrangements as well as the ability to provide immediate humanitarian assistance (which could include small amounts of emergency cash support – separate to the pre-Universal Credit support i.e., the interim payment detailed below).

From Sunday 20 March, guests arriving in the country will be eligible for a single onward journey via national rail, bus, light rail, and coach. This will be free of charge to anywhere in England, Scotland and Wales. Further information is available at: <https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/ukraine> (<https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/ukr-travel.aspx>).

Councils should also consider the provision of social care staff to respond to any safeguarding concerns that may be flagged by Border Force.

- **Data sharing.** Unitary and county councils will receive the necessary data from DLUHC about sponsors/guests who have applied for visas (including the accommodation address). County councils can pass this data on to the relevant district councils. Data will also be passed to the Devolved Administrations for their areas. DLUHC is exploring how to provide councils with live data on expected arrivals and will work with councils directly on this, with an update being provided in subsequent guidance.
- **Safeguarding checks.** Councils have a statutory duty to promote the welfare of adults and children at risk and reserve the right to check in on guests and inspect accommodation once they have arrived. The sponsor guidance makes clear that prospective sponsors will be subject to accommodation and safeguarding checks. The checks outlined below must be conducted as soon as possible after the council has been alerted that a visa application has been made. Best endeavours should be used to conduct the checks before the arrival of the guest(s), recognising that this will not be possible in all circumstances. Councils must make at least one in-person visit either before or shortly after a guest has arrived, to confirm that the accommodation is suitable and the guest is well and that there are no serious safeguarding, or welfare concerns. Please note that, as no rent is payable for accommodation under the scheme, we therefore do not expect councils to require such accommodation to obtain an HMO license (per the HMO definition in the Housing Act 2004, S.254 (2)(e)). Councils must also undertake basic DBS checks on all adults in the sponsor household. In households where there are incoming arrivals who are children and/or vulnerable adults, an enhanced DBS check with barred lists check will be required for all adults in the sponsor household.
- **Interim payment for guest.** The council where the sponsor accommodation is located should provide an interim payment (in line with other resettlement schemes) of £200 per guest for subsistence costs. The £200 payment is factored into the tariff (see 'Funding for Councils') and does not need to be repaid by the guest. Councils will also have discretion within the tariff to top-up or further support guests with interim or additional payments. Working age guests will be able to apply to receive Universal Credit and will be able to apply for advance payments where eligible. Pension age guests will have access to State Pension Credit and Housing Benefit provided they meet eligibility criteria.
- **Provision of education.** Councils are required to provide school places for children of school age. Councils will be paid additional funding to support with this. Further details are set out below.
- **Service referrals.** Where necessary, councils should provide advice and referrals to specialist public health services as appropriate e.g., mental health services, adult social care, and children's services. DLUHC will provide further advice on this in due course.
- **Work and Benefits.** Councils should support guests to access local Jobcentre Plus appointments for benefit assessments and job-seeking.
- **Homelessness assistance.** There may be some cases where the sponsor/guest relationship breaks down and the guest is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Councils' statutory homelessness duties will apply in this instance. DLUHC will provide further advice on this in due course.
- **Community integration.** Councils will play a key role in supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities. This will be particularly important in areas of the country that might not have strong links with the Ukrainian diaspora. Integration support might include the organisation of community events, the use of community champions and interfaith networks, increasing local authority contact/interaction with Ukrainians, access to translation services and working with local voluntary sector organisations and faith groups to help signpost advice and support.
- **Administering payments to sponsors.** Sponsors will be eligible for an optional 'thank you payment' of £350 per month, as long as the sponsorship arrangement exists, for up to 12 months in total. There will be a maximum of one monthly payment per address paid in

arrears, regardless of the number of guests being hosted, and regardless of size or location of the property. Councils will administer these 'thank you' payments to sponsors. Payments must not be released to sponsors until property checks have been completed. Further guidance on property checks will follow in due course. We will allocate funding for these payments, but we expect councils to cover administration costs from the tariff including costs of fraud prevention. This payment will be tax free and should not affect the sponsor's entitlement to benefits or council tax status. We will continue to work closely with councils on the delivery of these payments.

Funding for councils

The government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 for Ukrainian nationals is for the first year. We will review funding for future years in due course.

This funding will be un-ringfenced, with a number of conditions attached, and will match the tariff offered under the first year of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), although the role of councils will be different. For example, councils will not be asked to source initial accommodation under this scheme as this will be provided by the sponsor.

Councils will administer 'thank you' payments at the £350 per sponsoring household per month rate. We will allocate additional funding for these payments, but we expect councils to cover administration costs within the tariff.

The government is also providing additional funding to councils to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under this scheme. The Department for Education (DfE) will allocate funding on a per pupil basis for the three phases of education at the following annual rates:

- Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
- Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580
- Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755

These tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We expect councils to use the tariff to meet all of their associated costs (both for providing council services and for administering payments). We recognise, however, that a small number of councils may incur additional essential costs above and beyond what could reasonably be regarded as normal expenditure and not available through other mainstream funding mechanisms. We will therefore consider claims for such costs on an exceptional basis only.

Further details on funding, including the conditions, will be published shortly.

Data

The application form will ask for details on the location of the proposed accommodation for the guest so that details can be passed to councils and the Devolved Administrations. The data transfer steps are as follows:

1. The sponsor and guest's data are submitted to the Home Office via the visa application process.

2. This data (which will include the address of the sponsor) is then passed to DLUHC and allocated to the relevant council. This will then be visible to the council.

3. The visa application will then be processed by the Home Office.

Note: councils will be prompted to contact sponsors and guests, ensure accommodation is suitable and to conduct safeguarding checks.

Future guidance

The initial guidance set out above will be updated and expanded with further detail in the next week as Government agrees with councils the detail of their role in the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Future guidance will likely cover outstanding detail on the role of councils in most aspects of this phase:

- Checks
 - Pre-arrival and post-arrival checks
 - Accommodation checks
 - Address validation checks
 - Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
- Wraparound support
 - Safeguarding
 - Process for accessing public services
 - Providing local council tax support
 - Post 16 education, employment and training
- Administration of funds
 - Initial cash allowance for guest
 - Operation of 'thank you' payment system
 - Tier of local government that receives the £10,500 funding.
- Fallback accommodation
 - Re-matching role
 - Move-on accommodation
- Data
 - Process for receiving data about new arrivals
 - Management information submission requirements

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Invasion of Ukraine

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