

Update for those supporting refugees from Ukraine – 24 March 2022

During the pandemic we have written to community volunteers, members and parish council colleagues on a regular basis with information that we believed would be useful in your efforts to support your local community. We now want to be able to provide similar guidance to those groups who are considering supporting refugees from Ukraine (whether through direct sponsorship or providing the wraparound support to refugees who arrive in your community) and will be sending weekly or fortnightly updates as needed. Please note that we will continue to collate information relating to local Support for Ukraine on our [Support for Ukraine webpage](#).

Council support for communities welcoming refugees from Ukraine

There is still some detail that is unclear in relation to which local authority will undertake which elements of support. In this update you can see the information that we do have, as well as information on who to approach if you need support.

As has been the case during the pandemic, if hosts or community groups need questions answered, or help to solve a local issue, [please email our Communities team](#) who will try to help.

We are currently seeking further clarity on:

- Access to additional funding for community groups supporting refugees
- Access to legal support for refugees
- Access to interpreting services
- Which Council will be undertaking safeguarding checks of host families
- How and when welfare checks will be undertaken on the homes offered
- What process will be put in place in case of a breakdown in relations between a sponsor and a guest/family to ensure housing can be provided
- How hosts can support guests to access health and education services (although more information is provided below).

Feedback

During the pandemic, it was invaluable to hear from our local community groups and volunteers to share best practice with other volunteers in the district and we would like to do the same thing as we welcome refugees from Ukraine. Currently there is only a small Ukrainian population in our district but we would like to start by communicating with them and helping them to make connections.

Emerging case studies

We have already seen in a number of our communities a phenomenal response to the emerging refugee crisis and wanted to share one such case study. If your community is likely to coordinate a similar response, please let us know what support you think you are likely to need from us. We are here to help.

Open Arms in Shelfords/Stapleford (OASISS)

The community in Great Shelford, Little Shelford and Stapleford is working to establish how many people are likely to offer accommodation to Ukrainian refugees in their area, in order to plan the support needed, and to be able to invite the wider community to offer help even without being able to provide accommodation. The community group aims to help link refugees with local residents offering accommodation, but initially is putting out a request for information to ascertain how many local people are signing up to the Government scheme to offer accommodation.

The idea is that through a coordinated community approach, they will be able to provide the refugees in their community with “an immediate support network as they face the challenges of settling into a new environment and the sadness ahead that many may have to deal with if this war continues with more soldiers and citizens killed.” The organisers asked those planning to offer accommodation to answer the following questions:

1. How many people can you accommodate? Single adult; More than one adult; Adults with children (if so, how many children); No preference
2. What space can you offer (considering pressure on bathrooms and kitchens when you consider available bedrooms)? Rooms in a property with access to shared facilities; a self-contained annexe/ an empty property; single room/s; double room/s
3. Would the space you offer be suitable for the very elderly or for someone with a disability in terms of access?
4. Are you able to commit to six months? If not, how long are you able to commit to providing space in your home? This could be, for example, relief accommodation for other hosts or as interim housing.
5. Do you mind telling us if you have a current DBS in place? We know that checks (quite rightly) will be part of any scheme.

Routes to the UK

Please always [check the Government's website for the latest UK visa support for Ukrainian nationals](#).

Government schemes to settle refugees from Ukraine

1. [The Ukraine Family scheme](#). The Government has introduced special rules to make it easier for Ukrainians to bring family members from Ukraine to safety in the UK; this is called being a 'sponsor'. It will cost nothing to sponsor family members, it doesn't matter how much the sponsor or the guest earns or whether or not they can speak English and family members don't have to get a medical test to show they are free of certain notifiable diseases such as Tuberculosis (TB). [Citizens Advice has](#)

[some useful guidance here](#). If the host family is unable to provide accommodation, guests can [approach the Council for support](#).

2. **[The Homes for Ukraine scheme](#)**. Ukrainians who are fleeing Ukraine but who don't have a family connection in the UK can also be sponsored by an individual/ family/ charity/ community or faith group or business. In this case the Government expects that the sponsor is able to provide accommodation, free of charge, to the specific named Ukrainian individual/family for at least six months. [Sponsors can apply through the Homes for Ukraine scheme here](#). Charities such as [Reset](#) are helping to match sponsors with those fleeing Ukraine. For those leaving Ukraine, it is free to [apply for this visa](#) and applicants do not need to pay the immigration health surcharge or biometric enrolment fee for this scheme. Ukrainians can stay in the UK for up to three years. For further information please [visit the Government's Frequently Asked Questions](#). Hosts are expected to stay in touch with their guests prior to arrival, help them travel to the accommodation if needed, and to signpost them to essential services such as registering with a GP or finding a school place.

3. **[Ukrainians already in the UK are able to extend their visa to stay](#)**.

Sponsorship Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will providing accommodation mean that I am classified as subletting (because of the £350 payment from Government)?

No, you will not be classified as subletting.

Q. Do I need to tell my mortgage provider that I am providing accommodation through these schemes?

You should contact your mortgage provider to double check. They may ask you to sign a disclosure.

Q. Will receiving the £350 affect my Benefits entitlement?

No, the Government has advised that this will not affect your Benefits entitlement.

Q. Will providing accommodation affect my entitlement to Benefits, for instance if my guest is able to earn an income?

No, you cannot charge the guest rent, and the £350 is classified as a gift. The Department for Work and Pensions has said it is ensuring that those who have stepped up to sponsor a Ukrainian individual or family do not see their household benefit entitlements affected as a result.

Q. Will my home be checked?

The Council's Environmental Health or Housing colleagues will be conducting safety checks on accommodation.

Q. Will hosts be checked?

Yes, DBS (a criminal record) checks on all adults (over 18) living in the property will also be undertaken – we do not yet know the process for this.

Transport

The Rail Delivery Group is offering free travel to Ukrainian nationals travelling to the UK on National Rail services. Passengers will need to show a Ukrainian passport and a boarding pass or ticket

showing their arrival into the UK. The offer is valid across all train operators in England, Scotland and Wales, and they will have 48 hours from arrival in the UK to complete their journey. They will also be able to use London Underground and Docklands Light Railway services if their journey requires them to travel between London national rail stations. Find out more on the [National Rail website](#). We hope to include more information at a later stage about travelling locally in and around South Cambridgeshire.

Ukrainian nationals entering the UK with their pets

The Government has put in place [support for people fleeing Ukraine and entering the UK with their pets](#). Using an emergency licence, people fleeing Ukraine can bring their pets to the UK with any quarantine costs being met by the Government. The Animal and Plant Health Agency is providing quick licence approvals and quarantine arrangements to avoid creating additional burdens or delays. The Government will also be covering their vaccination, microchipping and quarantine costs, recognising that many individuals from Ukraine will not have been able to complete the full health preparations required for their pet on arrival.

I want to help, but can't offer accommodation

In the coming weeks we hope to see many more practical ways in which residents can help support local efforts, once we have a better picture of how many refugees are likely to arrive in the district, and where they will be accommodated.

If you would like to volunteer to support refugees, please [email our Communities team](#). The team will keep a list of willing volunteers. Please provide your location, as well as any skills you have such as speaking Ukrainian or Russian. Please be aware that we may share these details with your local community group leader. In time, we may be able to provide information about how to support with meals, interim accommodation, and helping refugees to settle in to your community. We will update our website when we have more information about this.

In the meantime, some information about [how to offer support](#) is available on our website – such as through donations to charitable organisations working on the ground in and around Ukraine.

Access to services

Our understanding is that people arriving under the two Government schemes set out above will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education and English language tuition.

It is important to remember that people arriving through these schemes may have been traumatised by the war and having to leave loved ones behind. Some may need support to process what has happened from mental health practitioners. Others may have physical medical concerns that have arisen or that have gone without treatment. It will be important that hosts are able to help signpost new arrivals to the right support systems and we will update our website when we have more information about this.

Mental health

Barnardo's has set up a Ukrainian Support Helpline to provide a holistic support service to anyone fleeing the conflict in Ukraine. Barnardo's free helpline (0800 148 8586) is staffed by English, Ukrainian and Russian speakers to offer support to children and families arriving in the UK from Ukraine. The helpline is open Monday to Friday (10am to 8pm) and Saturday (10am to 3pm). Callers will be able to get help and advice on a range of issues. You can also [email the team](#) or [find out more on the Barnardo's website](#).

Physical health: free access to NHS healthcare

Ukrainian refugees will be [guaranteed free access to NHS healthcare](#) on a similar basis as other UK residents including the offer of COVID-19 vaccines and medical screening. This covers any NHS treatment that started on or after 24 February (the date the full-scale Russian invasion began) and includes NHS dentistry. When we have further information related local NHS providers, we will update our website. In the meantime please visit www.nhs.uk.

Benefits

Ukrainian refugees will be able to [access Benefits](#) on a similar basis as other UK residents. You can [find out more about Universal Credit on the Government's website](#). Universal Credit is a monthly payment to help with living costs, which people may be eligible for if they are on a low income, out of work or cannot work.

Ukrainians will also be eligible for Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Personal Independence Payment, Child Disability Living Allowance and Carers Allowance, and Attendance Allowance. [Please see the Government's statement here](#).

Help for refugees who are at risk of homelessness

If someone is at risk of becoming homeless – for instance if a relationship between a guest and a host breaks down – it is important to act as soon as possible. [Please contact our team](#). Additionally, if someone has become homeless, they need to contact our team for advice and support.

Housing costs

If a refugee/refugee family can't afford to pay rent, they can apply for assistance with housing costs via [Universal Credit](#) although this can take up to six weeks to come through and might not cover all of the rent. Our [Housing Advice team](#) can work with families to support them to remain with family or to secure alternative accommodation. If help is needed to pay a rent deposit, or rent in advance, [contact our Housing Advice team](#).

Employment support

The Government has confirmed that Ukrainian refugees are able to work in the UK for up to three years. If you already have a guest or one is arriving imminently who is keen to find work, please email openforbusiness@scamb.gov.uk. Our Business Support Team is collating information about local job opportunities, including for those people who either don't speak English or have limited English and they will be happy to try to match guests with work placements in the coming weeks and months. You may wish to [signpost guests to the local Job Centre](#) for support. As we know more, we will update our website.

Education

The Government has committed to providing full access to schools. The County Council is the local authority responsible for education. When we have information about how any referrals for school places should be made, we will update our website. If you are welcoming a family with children in the immediate future, please let us know by emailing duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk so that we can coordinate with colleagues at the County Council.

Map of local food banks and food hubs

Should individuals or families be in need of food (whether as a one-off or more regular support), please [direct them to the Foodbank page on our website](#). This shows a map of different types of foodbanks or food-hubs in the area with opening hours and information about how to access support. Council staff can provide food bank vouchers – please email duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk for information.

If you run a business and would like to offer support

If you run a business in South Cambridgeshire and would like to offer your support, please [email our Business Support team](#). The team will coordinate offers and match them to the emerging need as people start to settle in the district. You may want to offer food boxes or other items that are identified as being needed; or perhaps you'd like to publicise job vacancies to help new arrivals find suitable work.

Is your business affected by the crisis?

You may have other questions about the effect of the war in Ukraine on your business – from rising fuel costs, or links to Russia in your supply chain, to cyber security (for instance, have you checked whether your business can continue to run if you experience a loss of IT - would you lose network access or the use of your business telephony)? Please email the team with any specific queries or take a look at our [Business Support web pages](#), where you can also sign up to our monthly Business Support e-newsletter for the latest guidance and support.

Bill

Bill Handley

Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, Health and Wellbeing

South Cambridgeshire District Council