

## **Ukrainian Refugees Cultural Sensitivity Sheet - Base Guidelines:**

### **First arrival:**

- Upon arrival, give them the opportunity to recover from the stress they experienced – some of their relatives may have remained in Ukraine, or lost their lives or homes. If the individual does not initiate a conversation about personal matters, give them the opportunity to be alone and do not ask probing questions about their family or the situation in Ukraine.
- To ensure privacy - give them the opportunity to lock the room with a key, especially at night. Ukrainians traumatised by the Russian invasion. They need time to comprehend new life circumstances. It would also be sensible to leave various snacks in the room for the first few days, as they may be embarrassed to go into the kitchen (water, juice, fruit, cereal bars).
- Not all of them will speak English at a sufficient level – particularly members of the older generation may not know even basic phrases. Stress can also make it difficult to take in and remember information or speak in different languages. It makes sense to write key information down, this will also help them with the spelling. For people dealing with refugees who do not speak Russian or Ukrainian, it may be useful to have a translator application on a phone to hand, with a Ukrainian keyboard option.
- As they have moved to a foreign and unfamiliar country under violent and traumatic circumstances, they may show a lack of independence and a high degree of confusion. Individuals will need to be dealt with sensitively, and have many issues explained regarding life in the UK, even issues which may seem very basic.
- It will most likely be difficult for them to navigate all the online forms needed to receive assistance, to place children in schools, to register with the GP. In Ukraine, most of these services still involve in person visits to the authorities, and they may be suspicious placing this information online. Official websites should be provided from an external source, so that they know they can safely put their information into such services.

### **Region and religion**

- Intersectional identity issues must also be considered, for example, whether the individual came from a small or large city, a rural or urban area. These factors, as well as age, education, and region - will affect their ability to adapt and navigate life in the UK.
- The degree of religiosity varies depending on the region of residence and the type of settlement (city/village). The level of religiosity is higher among the rural population, and there are especially many religious rites and traditions in the West of Ukraine. According to statistics, 91% of the population are Christian religion (Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Protestants). However, this high percentage does not indicate strong religiosity, half of those who call themselves believers do not attend church, do not pray, do not know, and do not observe church traditions. It may be necessary to provide a list of churches by region, denomination, and particularly provide the contact details of Ukrainian and Russian speaking churches.

### **Key information about UK services:**

- Transport: a comprehensive guide to transport should be delivered, depending on the region where they will be living, where they can use cash and card, and how they might get discounted transport cards or options. If they will need to provide ID for any of these forms of travel card (i.e. an oyster card with a picture, a railcard) it is good to provide this information in advance, as they may feel protective over their personal information and security.
- If they have children – it must be explained how the education system works, when summer holidays must take place, how often the children usually get homework, how they can get them registered and how their children will be assessed.
- Illness and visiting the doctor - in the UK, paracetamol, rest and plenty of water is suggested as a treatment to most colds and flus. In Ukraine, lots of medicines that suppress symptoms are sold without a prescription, including antibiotics, and they may be surprised to find out that that these cannot be bought over the counter here.
- Similar food products to what they are used to can be bought widely in Polish stores across the UK, and these should be recommended if they are seeking Ukrainian produce.
- If they come with pets, it is important to explain all the requirements for pet owners in the UK

### **Home comforts and differences:**

- Ukrainians typically like to have windows with curtains and privacy screens ensure privacy, wearing slippers at home, and to differentiate between their clothes to be worn at home and outside.
- Air temperature in apartments/houses - Ukrainians are accustomed to higher

- temperature in the home, provide blankets / heating pads / bottles, if possible, on time to get used to new conditions.
- Explain about saving water, how to use two taps. Ukrainians typically filter their water before drinking, and do not think tap water is appropriate for drinking – it may be good to note that tap water is safe to drink here.
- Children tend to be dressed much warmer all year around than British children, they need to be given time to get used to the local climate.
- Ukraine does not have a national recycling system, and they are unlikely to know how to sort rubbish, or where to leave their rubbish on which day. This should be explained, and the website where regional recycling systems are explained provided for them.
- If they are to live in private accommodation, it is necessary to explain that utilities are provided by independent service providers, and that they may have to compare prices to find the best deal.

## **Interpersonal differences**

- “Small talk” does not have a part to play in Ukrainian interactions – they may not know what to say when a conversation begins about the weather, or, if someone is asked how they are, they are likely to tell you truthfully how they are, not avoiding sensitive issues as people may do in the UK – or they may seem surprised that you are asking a question that is regarded to them as personal.
- It is likewise not as common to thank people and apologise as frequently – this does not imply rudeness, they are simply used to speaking more straightforwardly about issues.
- They can be alarmed by strangers smiling or holding eyes with them in the street, as this is likewise not typically done in Ukraine for those with whom you are not already an acquaintance.
- It is not worth discussing political issues and the leadership of the country - before the war in Ukraine, there was a very clear division of who voted for whom in the presidential elections – though the war has smoothed out some of these contradictions through a common priority, this topic is still painful for most Ukrainians.

## **Food**

- Many dishes are prepared from potatoes and cabbage. The most famous vegetable dish is borscht. Onions and garlic are widely used in Ukrainian cuisine. Dumplings are also a national Ukrainian dish. Also very popular is the preparation of dishes from cereals, they are most often prepared as a separate dish (garnish, the name "kasha"). The most popular are buckwheat and wheat porridge.
- Meat dishes are considered festive. Along with chicken, beef and lamb, pork are widely used in Ukrainian cuisine. Pork lard (salo) is very popular among Ukrainians. Lard with bread can be an independent meal - cold salted or smoked.

## **LGBT**

- Almost half of Ukrainian citizens disapprove of representatives of the LGBT community and childfree. This is evidenced by the results of a survey conducted by the Rating sociological group in 2021 (between 47 and 42 percent of the Ukrainians are against the LGBT community). At the same time, about half of the citizens have neutral feelings towards such people, and only 7-8 percent are positive. It should be explained to people the anti-discrimination laws in the UK.

## **Bereavement and mourning traditions**

- During the 40-day mourning period, the community has memorial feasts on the third, ninth, and fortieth days after the death. On these days, special services are ordered in the church. They also have feasts on the six-month and one-year anniversaries of the deceased's death.