

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a grey floral-patterned t-shirt, sitting on a bed. She is looking towards a young child with light hair, who is sitting on the floor next to her. They are both looking out of a window. The window shows a view of a brick building and greenery outside. The lighting is warm, suggesting sunlight coming through the window. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

Fearing, fleeing, facing the future:

how people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine
are finding safety in the UK

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Executive summary

161,400 people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine have arrived in the UK through two bespoke visa schemes, the Ukraine Family Scheme, and the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme ('Homes for Ukraine'), as of 7 February 2023. People all across the UK have demonstrated the power of kindness by opening their homes to people fleeing the conflict, and many continue to accommodate people successfully. However, there have been various shortcomings in the UK's response, which need to be urgently addressed for the benefit of hosts and arrivals alike.

The British Red Cross has supported tens of thousands of people displaced from Ukraine arriving in the UK over the last twelve months. This spotlight draws on this substantial operational insight, as well as publicly available data, to highlight areas within the UK's response which need further attention. These include:

Creating parity between the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine

Supporting people displaced by the conflict into longer term housing

Addressing the impact of the rising cost of living on hosts and arrivals

Investing in better data and evidence to monitor and evaluate the UK's response

Ensuring learnings are used to inform current and future policy responses to displacement, including resettlement, family reunion and asylum.

Introduction and policy background

The armed conflict in Ukraine escalated twelve months ago resulting in a humanitarian crisis on a scale not seen in Europe in decades. Since 24 February 2022, over 8 million people have left Ukraine and fled to other countries in Europe, and nearly six million people are internally displaced within Ukraine.¹ As of 7 February 2023, 161,400 of those who have fled Ukraine have arrived in the UK, and as the conflict continues, additional people continue to arrive each week.²

As the largest independent provider of support to refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK, the British Red Cross understands the challenges that people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine arriving in the UK are facing – and most importantly, the policies needed to help people overcome them. Although a key focus of our response has been in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, we've also helped tens of thousands of people who have arrived in the UK from Ukraine.³ We work across all four nations of the UK, tailoring our support

according to the local context. We have helped displaced people to reunite with family members and have established a dedicated phone line for Ukraine-related queries, answered 70,764 calls, provided £2.7 million in emergency financial assistance to 60,339 people, and distributed 19,160 SIM cards.⁴

We have also provided information in Ukrainian, Russian and English, as well as an information pack to support people displaced by the conflict to arrive safely and settle into their new life in the UK. This includes essential information on how to access housing, healthcare and benefits, as well as wellbeing resources.⁵

This spotlight is informed by this significant operational insight and enriched by anonymous case studies of some of the people we have supported across the UK in the past year.

As of 7 February 2023

8,054,405
people have fled to **Europe**

As of 7 February 2023

161,400
have arrived in the **UK**

How the UK responded to people displaced from Ukraine

Unlike refugee resettlement schemes of the past and the current asylum-seeking process, many of the men, women and children have been welcomed into people's homes across the four nations of the UK. The generosity and compassion of the UK public should be celebrated. The UK has announced two schemes through which people displaced from Ukraine (and their family members) can obtain a visa to come to the UK.

The Ukraine Family Scheme was launched on 1 March 2022. The scheme allows applicants to join UK-based family members. To be eligible, you must be Ukrainian or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national who is applying to the scheme. People arriving under this scheme in the UK are able to:

- Live and work in the UK for up to three years.
- Access healthcare, welfare, education and other public services.

In Northern Ireland, they also:

- Receive a £200 interim payment (per person) to help with the cost of food and essentials provided by The Executive Office.



The Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme ('Homes for Ukraine') launched on 14 March and opened for applications from 18 March. The scheme allows Ukrainian nationals and their family members to come to the UK if they have a named sponsor who can provide accommodation for a minimum of six months. This scheme is open to all Ukrainian nationals who are currently outside the UK and were resident in Ukraine before 1 January 2022.

People arriving under this scheme are able to:

- Live and work in the UK for up to three years.
- Access healthcare, education, welfare and other public services.
- Access wraparound integration support provided by the local authority, including community integration through ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) provision and casework support.
- Receive a £200 interim payment (per person) to help with the cost of food and essentials provided by the local council.

Additionally, sponsors through this scheme have the option of receiving a £350 'thank you' payment per month, increasing to £500 a month after a person has been in the UK for 12 months.⁶

In addition to these two schemes, Ukrainian nationals who had temporary permission to stay in the UK on or between 18 March 2022 and 16 May 2023 (the permission does not need to cover the whole period) can apply to the **Ukraine Extension Scheme**, which opened for applications on 3 May 2022. As of 23 January 2023, 15,600 applications under this scheme had been granted.

People arriving through the Ukraine Visa Schemes have been granted three years' leave to remain. One year since the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, we need to be thinking now what happens at the three-year point. Longer-term planning is required to ensure people are supported to continue to receive protection in the UK if the need remains.

Council tax

The UK government introduced regulations to protect sponsors in England who pay council tax from increased bills as a result of hosting people who arrived through Homes for Ukraine (for example, people will not lose their single person discount).⁷ People who offer a property they do not live in to arrivals through Homes for Ukraine will receive a 50 per cent discount on council tax bills. This discount does not apply to people hosting family members who arrived through the Ukraine Family Scheme, nor does it apply to people who arrived through either scheme who are not living with hosts in the community, including people renting privately.

In June, the Welsh Government introduced regulations to the same effect.⁸

In March 2022, the Scottish Government introduced regulations that protect sponsors hosting people who arrived through both Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family Scheme from increasing council tax bills. In addition, anyone who arrived through either scheme is exempt from paying council tax if they are not living with hosts in the community.⁹

There are no discounts on rates in Northern Ireland for people who arrived through the Ukraine Visa Schemes or for their hosts.

As of 6 February 2023

114,400 arrivals through **Homes for Ukraine**

46,900 arrivals via **Ukraine Family Scheme**

7,700 in-country applications granted to **Ukraine Family Scheme**

15,800 visas extended through the **Ukraine Extension Scheme**¹⁰

Local authorities

Until December 2022, local authorities received a tariff of £10,500 per person on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, reduced to £5,900 in January 2023. Under the Ukraine Family Scheme, local authorities receive no additional funding.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced £150 million additional funding for local authorities across the UK to help support visa holders' guests to move into their own homes, and reduce the risk of homelessness. It was also announced that local authorities in England will get a new £500 million fund to acquire housing stock for those fleeing conflict (including but not limited to those from Ukraine and Afghanistan) to reduce homelessness.¹¹

In Northern Ireland, 823 people have been recorded as arriving via Homes for Ukraine or the Ukraine Family Scheme by 7 February 2023.¹² However, this figure is a known undercount. This is due to people arriving into the Republic of Ireland and entering Northern Ireland via the Common Travel Area. Unlike in England, Wales and Scotland, people arriving in Northern Ireland through the Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme are also entitled to the £200 interim payment on arrival. This is only available to those arriving through the Homes for Ukraine scheme in other nations.

	Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine Scheme)	Ukraine Family Scheme	Ukraine Extension Scheme
Right to work and can live in the UK for up to three years	✓	✓	✓
Access to healthcare, education, welfare and other public services	✓	✓	✓
£200 interim payment per person	✓	✗*	✗*
Wraparound integration support	✓	✗	✗
Hosts receive monthly 'thank you' payment	✓	✗†	✗
Council tax discounts protected	✓	✗	✗

* Except in Northern Ireland, where each person receives a £200 interim payment (per person) to help with the cost of food and essentials provided by The Executive Office.

† Except in Wales, where any host who formally takes in a Ukraine Family Scheme family via the local authority will receive a monthly 'thank you' payment. Original sponsors of family members through the Ukraine Family Scheme who accommodate guests will not receive the monthly 'thank you' payment.

Super sponsorship Schemes

In March 2022, Scotland and Wales announced Super Sponsor Schemes, allowing applicants to select the Scottish Government or Welsh Government as their sponsor, receive a visa and travel immediately, without the need for private sponsorship arrangements to be found first.

Participation in the Super Sponsor Schemes resulted in unexpectedly high numbers of applications and arrivals in Scotland and Wales. The Welsh Government had initially committed to sponsoring up to 1,000 people, but received 5,352 applications.¹³ Due to exceptionally high application rates and a shortage of suitable accommodation, the Welsh Government suspended this scheme on 10 June 2022. The Scottish Government followed suit on 13 July, having received 38,385 applications.¹⁴ When the scheme launched in March, the Scottish Government committed to welcoming 3,000 people, and it reported the

highest number of total applications, visas issued and arrivals per head of the population of any of the four nations.^{15 16}

Both governments are still accepting people whose visas were already approved prior to the suspension of the schemes. However, since October, the Scottish Government has been asking many of those yet to arrive under the Super Sponsorship Scheme to consider alternative options, due to a lack of accommodation.¹⁷ Those arriving on the Super Sponsor Scheme have been initially accommodated in temporary welcome accommodation, including in hotels and on cruise ships, with the aim to then match and place people with hosts in the community. Out of the 32,485 people sponsored through the Super Sponsor Scheme, 18,917 had arrived as of 7 February 2023, although it is not known how many people who were granted a visa still intend to travel.

Across the UK, the public's generosity towards those who are displaced by the conflict in Ukraine has been unprecedented, and should be celebrated. In the first day, more than 100,000 people had registered interest in hosting through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.¹⁸ However, this spotlight will also highlight shortcomings in the UK's response and concerns for the future of people displaced from Ukraine, which need to be urgently addressed.

Recommendations

1.

There should be parity between the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine scheme:

- DLUHC and the Home Office should ensure that those hosting people who arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme receive the same monthly 'thank you' payment to support their continued hosting.
- The Council Tax Regulations should be further amended so that hosts on the Ukraine Family Scheme are protected from increasing council tax bills.
- DLUHC and the Home Office should further explore and monitor the impact of reduced tariffs for local authority funding for new arrivals through Homes for Ukraine, and no tariff funding for people arriving through the Ukraine Family Scheme.

2.

People displaced by the conflict in Ukraine should be supported to access longer term housing:

- DLUHC should increase the monthly 'thank you' payment immediately for all hosts, no matter the scheme, instead of waiting until after people have been in the UK for 12 months, to address rising cost of living pressures.
- DLUHC should clarify details and allocation of the £150 million one-off funding (to support people on the Ukraine schemes into longer term accommodation), so local authorities can address growing housing needs.
- DLUHC should proactively work with devolved governments and the Local Government Association (LGA), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) to share best practice and support local authorities to rapidly develop ways to support people at risk of homelessness into the private rented sector. This should include supporting local authorities to implement rent deposit schemes, and ensuring eligibility criteria does not exclude people displaced from Ukraine.
- DLUHC and the Home Office should deliver on the government's commitment to allow people who arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme to be rematched with hosts who offer their homes through Homes for Ukraine.

3.

Rising costs of living to support hosts and people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine must be addressed:

- DLUHC should increase monthly 'thank you' payments in line with the increasing cost of living to incentivise hosts.
- DLUHC should also extend the interim payment to everyone arriving on the Ukraine Family Scheme in all four nations of the UK, to financially support people waiting for their first Universal Credit payment.

4.

The UK's response to people displaced by the Ukraine conflict in the UK should be monitored and evaluated through better data and evidence:

- The Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Irish Executive should publish data on homelessness among people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.
- DLUHC and the Home Office should work with local authorities in all four nations, to identify people who have arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme and publish data on numbers, whereabouts and demographics.
- DLUHC should monitor the integration outcomes of people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine on all UK Ukraine Visa Schemes.

5.

The UK's response to people in the UK displaced by the conflict in Ukraine should be evaluated, and learnings used to inform current and future policy responses to displacement, including resettlement, family reunion and asylum.

Key data

As of 3 October 2022

2,852,395
in Russian Federation

As of 7 February 2023

8,054,405 arrivals across **Europe**

As of 7 February 2023

161,400 arrivals in the **UK**
out of a total **217,900 visas** issued.

46,900 arrivals via the
Ukraine Family Scheme.

114,400 arrivals
via **Homes for Ukraine.**

83,801 arrivals have
reached **England** out of
102,504 visas issued.

23,282 arrivals have
reached **Scotland** out of a
total **37,964 visas** issued.

6,437 arrivals have
reached **Wales** out of a
total **8,762 visas** issued.

823 arrivals have reached
Northern Ireland out of a
total **2,027 visas** issued.¹⁹

As of 5 December 2022

5,914,000
internally displaced
within **Ukraine**

Jobs

65% did not work
in the same sector
they had in Ukraine.

56% of adults were
working in the UK, a
significant increase from
20% in June 2022

17 October to 7 November 2022²⁰

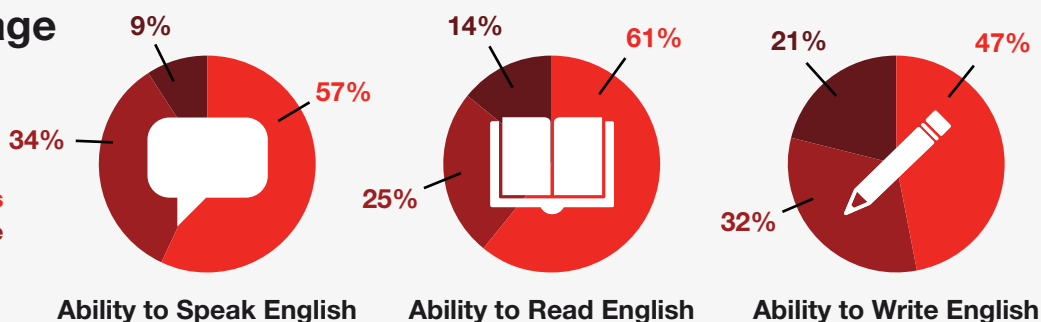
17 October to 7 November 2022²⁰

English language

62% have used an **English-language course** at least once. **94%** accessed it for **free**.

English Language Proficiency:

- Fair amount/most things
- Simple sentences/a little
- Few words/none




Accommodation

17 October to 7 November 2022²⁰

 **55%** said their current living arrangement was **paid for by a sponsor/charity**.



Between 24 February 2022 and 27 January 2023, **4,295 Ukrainian households** have been **at risk of or experienced homelessness** in England.

 **19%** were **paying for their accommodation** themselves, a significant increase from **6%** in June 2022.ⁱ



Double the proportion of **Homes for Ukraine hosts** said the rising costs of living were **impacting their ability to provide support** 'very much' (**18%**) in November 2022, compared to July 2022 (**9%**).

British Red Cross response

As of 9 February 2023:

£2.7 million distributed

60,339 people supported with **cash-based assistance** (38,254 adults and 22,085 children)ⁱⁱ

19,160 SIM cards distributed

70,764 calls answered through the **Ukraine support line**

Our existing **refugee support services** have also supported **2,028** people from Ukraine in the last year. The majority of these enquiries (**41%**) have related to **destitution and emergency provisions**.

ⁱ 15% said the local authority or council was paying for their accommodation, 12% said their friends or family members were paying. The remaining respondents said their living arrangement was paid for by an unspecified 'other' (7%) Respondents were able to choose more than one response option for this question.

ⁱⁱ The British Red Cross provides £50 per person displaced by the conflict in Ukraine (up to a maximum of £300 per family) in emergency financial support in their first two weeks in the UK.

Analysis

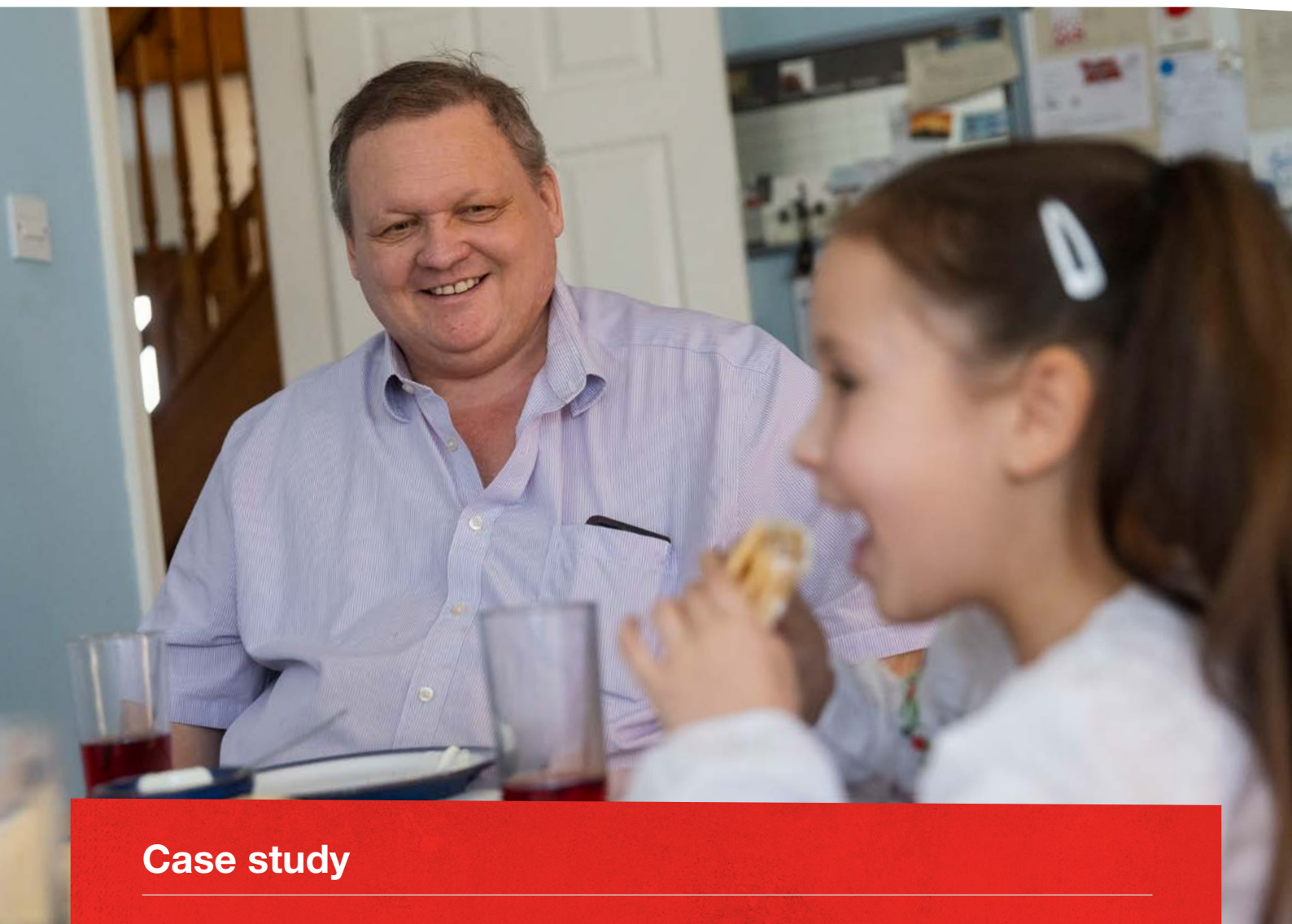
Ukraine Visa Schemes

Both the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Ukraine Family Scheme should be celebrated as a unique and vital response to the millions of Ukrainians forcibly displaced in the last year. Ukrainians who come to the UK under these two schemes receive a visa, giving them the right to remain for an initial period of three years, the right to work and access to public funds and public services, including schools and healthcare. This is intended to support people to settle into their new communities and rebuild their lives.

The schemes have shown the level of generosity of people in the UK towards forcibly displaced people. Hosts on both the Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme have opened up their homes to Ukrainians in need of protection. It would have been impossible to accommodate so many people, at such short notice, without this generous act.



Photo: © Fabio De Paola / BRC



Case study

Tony, who lives in the Midlands, England, is hosting four Ukrainian family members in his home through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. He registered his interest in hosting in spring 2022 as he was inspired by stories from his late father, who was evacuated from London during the Blitz in World War Two.

Tony was linked to the family of four in autumn 2022. The family were originally from the south-east of Ukraine and includes a grandmother, a mother and her young daughter and baby boy. Tony was first introduced to the British Red Cross support for Ukrainians at the Ukrainian Centre in Derby. A British Red Cross representative informed Tony about the cash assistance and his guests were able to register and receive support from the Red Cross in less than a week. Tony reflected on the positive impact he experienced from hosting.

“The help is twofold; it goes both ways. It has made my house a home again. Hosting this family has kept me busy as I’m divorced and on my own. And it has given my life a purpose and I’ve enjoyed it.”

While Tony explained he does not begrudge the costs, he reflected that the rising cost of living has impacted him deeply now he is living with a family of four. Despite his bills and grocery costs having increased drastically, Tony is grateful that he is in a comfortable position and can afford these additional costs. He expressed his concerns, however, for other hosts that may struggle to support families after just a few months.

Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the government funded wraparound support of £10,500 per person issued to local authorities (reduced to £5,900 in January 2023), an advance payment of £200 to arrivals, and £350 per month, per household to approved sponsors (increasing to £500 after the guests have been in the UK for 12 months). It had not been clear how long this financial support for hosts would continue until mid-December 2022, when DLUHC announced this funding would be extended from 12 months to two years.

In addition, in April 2022, the Council Tax Regulations were amended, so that people arriving through the Homes for Ukraine scheme would be disregarded for council tax purposes, to prevent increasing council tax bills for their hosts.²¹

However, despite accounting for nearly a third of total arrivals by 7 February 2023ⁱ, there is significantly less support available to people arriving in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme and their sponsors. People hosting family members through the Family Scheme do not receive any monthly ‘thank you’ payments and are not protected from increasing council tax bills. Local authorities do not receive a tariff for people on the Family Scheme, and people on the Family Scheme do not receive £200 interim payment from the local authority when they arrive, except in Northern Ireland where this is provided to people arriving on all schemes by The Executive Office.

Case study

Natalia had lived in the UK for 12 years when she sponsored her mother, sister and two young nephews in spring 2022 through the Ukraine Family Scheme. Natalia paid for her family to travel from Ukraine to the UK via Romania and Italy. It had been Natalia’s priority to get her family out of Ukraine, but she did not have the space to host them. Fortunately, she was able to find accommodation for them through a community Facebook group, where a private landlord offered his property to her family, initially without a deposit and for free. He later started charging rent, although well below market value, and now needs the property back, so has asked the family to vacate this spring. Natalia has found it very challenging to find accommodation for her family. Her family cannot afford private rented accommodation, and, at the same time, they are not eligible to be matched with hosts on the Homes for Ukraine scheme because they came via the Ukraine Family Scheme.

Natalia’s family arrived in the UK with one small suitcase. They had to wait seven weeks to receive their first Universal Credit payment due to difficulties opening a bank account with no proof of address. In the interim, Natalia had to replace all the belongings they were forced

to leave in Ukraine, including school supplies for her nephews. She is currently trying to find private rented accommodation for her family near the school one of her nephews attends, where he is in his final year of primary school preparing for SATS in the summer. A local estate agent has advised that she will need to pay six months of rent upfront to secure a property, which is unaffordable.

Both her mother and sister were working full time in Ukraine. They are keen to work but are struggling to find a job. Her mother worked for 25 years as a teaching assistant at a school, but as she does not speak English, she has so far been unable to find work. She has tried to find cleaning jobs, but all the shifts start early in the morning when there are no buses. In Ukraine, her sister worked as an accountant but has been unable to find work in this field. Natalia has found a six-week course for her to obtain the necessary qualifications to get a job in childcare. Natalia is grateful for the support of her community, but feels Universal Credit is not enough for her family to live on, particularly trying to pay for rented accommodation. They need support to find housing and pay for bills, but Natalia is unable to support her family with all the challenges they face while still working full-time.

ⁱ Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Scheme combined, not other immigration routes

The differential support – provided to people sponsoring and hosting family members through the Ukraine Family Scheme – seems to be based on an assumption that people are hosting close family members, as opposed to people hosting strangers through Homes for Ukraine. However, the British Red Cross has supported people arriving through the Ukraine Family Scheme sponsored by family members they do not know well or where relationships are already strained, including one case where a mother and her children were sponsored by her ex-partner's brother. Additionally, there is often not enough space for people when they arrive, with entire families occasionally needing to stay in one room.

Case study

A family of five – two parents, a grandparent and two children – arrived to the north-west of England through the Ukraine Family Scheme in autumn 2022. They were signposted to the British Red Cross by the local authority when they arrived. At the time, they were living with their sponsor, who already had a large family all residing in their relatively small home. Initially, the host had been financially supporting them. However, with no financial support like the 'thank you' payments seen on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, they were unable to sustain this.

The family had applied for Universal Credit at the time of referral but were still awaiting the initial payment after two months. The sponsor had also been assisting the family to find private rented accommodation, but most places were unfurnished, and the family had no means to obtain furniture. Eventually, the sponsor paid for the family to obtain a two-bedroom unfurnished private rented property, which meant that all family members had to sleep on the floor. The British Red Cross continues to support the family to access more appropriate accommodation and to obtain furniture.

Then Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, informed Parliament on 6 July 2022 that Family Scheme arrivals could transfer to the Homes for Ukraine scheme so they could access sponsor accommodation if necessary. However, no further announcements on this have been made, and there is still no mechanism to move them to a sponsor under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.²²

Changes to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, announced in December 2022, introduced an increase in the monthly 'thank you' payment to people hosting through the scheme and £150 million through one-off funding, to help people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness.

Super Sponsor Schemes

Case study

Scotland has been an active participant in previous refugee resettlement schemes and encouraged integration of refugees. This includes through the Syrian Vulnerable People's Resettlement Scheme, the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and, more recently, the UK Resettlement Scheme and programmes to support people fleeing from Afghanistan. While the Super Sponsorship Scheme for Ukrainians maintains this commitment towards supporting displaced people, feedback from local government colleagues in Scotland has been that the programme has proved challenging to support and manage.

It is acknowledged that the scheme has facilitated many people to escape the conflict in Ukraine. However, partners we spoke to reflected that it was not necessarily established with the sorts of parameters with which resettlement should be managed, and does not have an integrated and joined-up accommodation strategy in place. As such, local authorities described their role as firefighting and reacting to external circumstances, rather than strategically implementing a policy which is joined up with the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy (a joint strategy between Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Scottish Refugee Council), other humanitarian programmes and ongoing homelessness work.

Arriving outside the Ukraine Visa Schemes

The Ukraine Visa Schemes are uncapped so there is no limit on the number of people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine who can seek safety in the UK. This makes it different from other resettlement schemes, including the Afghan Resettlement Scheme, where the number is capped at 20,000 people over five years.

However, there are some reported cases of people arriving in the UK without a visa, including in Northern Ireland.

The Republic of Ireland has separate immigration, resettlement and asylum policies. Since 2017, Ukrainian nationals with a biometric passport have had visa free access to the European Union. Once within the EU they are able to access temporary protection. By 11 December 2022, 67,448 Ukrainian nationals had arrived in the Republic of Ireland.²³

An unknown number of Ukrainians have crossed the border into Northern Ireland, via the Common Travel Area, where travel is not covered by the methods used to record entry to other parts of the UK.

Data published weekly by DLUHC on the number of people arriving through the Ukraine Visa Schemes acknowledges a known undercount in the Northern Ireland 'Arrivals into the UK' data.²⁴ People arriving in Northern Ireland in this way do not have a visa, and as a result, face significant barriers accessing support. Approximately three quarters of casework for Ukrainian nationals by Red Cross refugee support in Northern Ireland is for people who have arrived with no visa.

Case study

A Ukrainian national arrived in Northern Ireland during summer 2022 on neither Homes for Ukraine or the Ukraine Family Scheme, and claimed asylum. After a few months they sought support from the Red Cross, as they had not yet applied for Home Office asylum support.

With the support of Law Centre Northern Ireland, this person made the decision to withdraw their asylum claim and apply for a 6-month UK Entry stamp, which would then allow them to apply for the Ukraine Extension scheme visa. However, due to an administrative fault with the online application process, they were barred from submitting an application as despite being a Ukrainian national, they were born outside the country.

Following legal support and advocacy, their extension visa was approved. The Red Cross was able to support them with a referral to a foodbank, a free SIM card and emergency cash payments while they waited for their first Universal Credit payment. This was delayed, due to the absence of a national insurance number and a bank account, which the Red Cross supported them to obtain.

This Ukrainian national expressed that they had a difficult time seeking support, with no sponsor to guide them and no access to the financial support provided by the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Recommendations

There should be parity between the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine scheme:

- DLUHC and the Home Office should ensure that those hosting people who arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme receive the same monthly 'thank you' payment to support their continued hosting.
- The Council Tax Regulations should be further amended so that hosts on the Ukraine Family Scheme are protected from increasing council tax bills.
- DLUHC and the Home Office should further explore and monitor the impact of reduced tariffs for local authority funding for new arrivals through Homes for Ukraine, and no tariff funding for people arriving through the Ukraine Family Scheme.

Accommodation

The response to people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine departed from existing resettlement and asylum processes for providing accommodation. Although community sponsorship has existed under the Afghan resettlement schemes, this is the first time it has been possible for individuals to sponsor people, including family members, in need of protection. The majority of displaced arrivals from Ukraine are being hosted by their sponsors through either the Family Scheme or the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

When the two schemes were launched in March 2022, people were asked to host for an initial minimum period of six months. However, the conflict in Ukraine is ongoing and there is an urgent need for alternative long-term accommodation options for people on these schemes across the UK.

Case study

Nastia arrived in the UK with two friends in the summer of 2022 through Homes for Ukraine and continues to be hosted by her sponsors in the south-east of England. She feels very lucky that she gets along so well with her host family. She works as a freelance illustrator but has found it increasingly difficult to make enough money alongside trying to settle in the UK.

Nastia undertook a month of English classes at her local college in the summer, and then twice-a-week in the autumn. Her English was good before she arrived in the UK and she is now fluent. She finds attending college good for her social life and has now attended three

different classes at the college, including recently starting an art course where she can learn new skills and socialise.

“I can picture in my head the moment the family met us in the airport, it is a very positive memory. They’re amazing people and they take care of us. We feel like loved and welcomed guests; we have a lovely time together. As soon as we arrived, they took us out into local nature and I try and explore when I have the chance. I’ve been to Seven Sisters twice and both times were amazing.”

Accommodation in Scotland

As of December 2022, 6,840 people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine were in welcome accommodation in Scotland; 4,425 people were occupying hotel rooms and 2,415 people were staying on two chartered passenger liners.^{25 26} While efforts have been taken to improve the experience on board, the majority of rooms on one ship are windowless²⁷, the ships are situated in isolated docks and there is no guarantee on timescales for people staying on board.²⁸ Every effort should be taken to minimise the use of

these institutional settings and ensure people are placed in appropriate accommodation, which meets their needs and supports integration as soon as possible.

Despite the difficulties experienced by people staying on ships, other parts of the UK are considering the use of cruise ships for housing refugees and people seeking asylum²⁹, with the experience of vessels in Scotland being referenced in media reports.

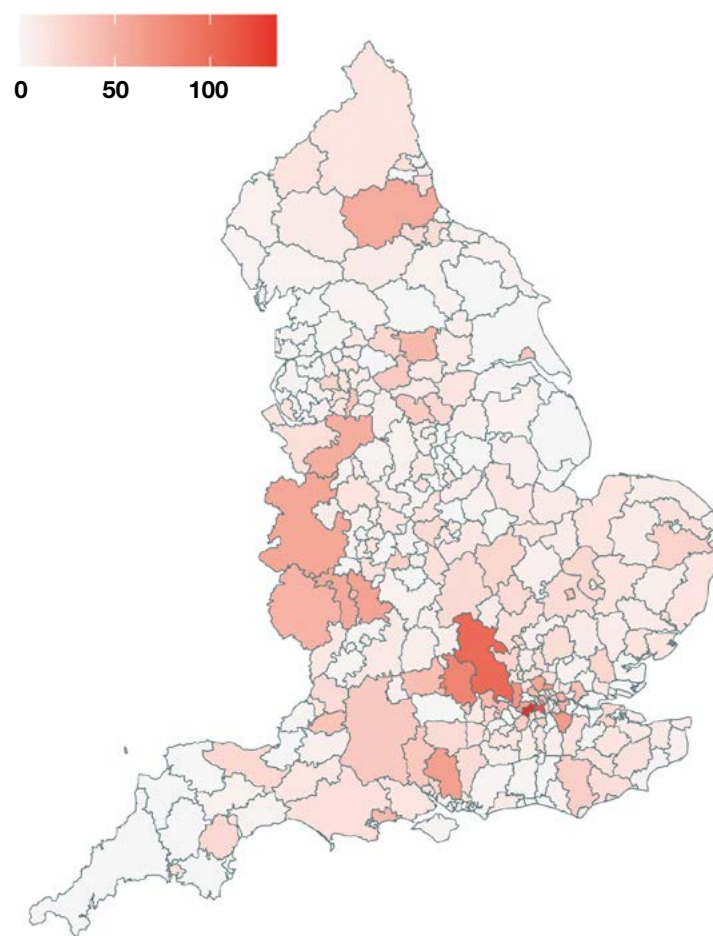
Homelessness

Between 24 February 2022 and 27 January 2023, there were 4,295 households at risk of or experiencing homelessness in England (meaning they were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty by a local authority). This was based on data from 71 per cent of English local authorities, so the true figure will be higher. 2,985 of those households include children, and 1,325 are those who arrived on the Family Scheme.³⁰ There is no data published on homelessness in devolved nations. Between October 2022 and January 2023, there has been a 97 per cent increase in Ukrainian households experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Between 24 February 2022 and 7 February 2023, homelessness in England has been concentrated in the east and south-east of England, with 60 per cent of all Ukrainian households at risk of or experiencing homelessness living in those regions. One in four of these households are based in London. 67 per cent of households in temporary accommodation are in London, east and south-east of England.

The factors resulting in people displaced from Ukraine being at risk of homelessness are multifaceted. The impact of the cost of living, explored below, changing circumstances for hosts and guests, inappropriateness of accommodation, failure to be re-matched with other hosts, all underpinned by the fact people were initially asked to host for only six months, contribute to a precarious housing situation.

Number of Ukrainian households at risk of homelessness

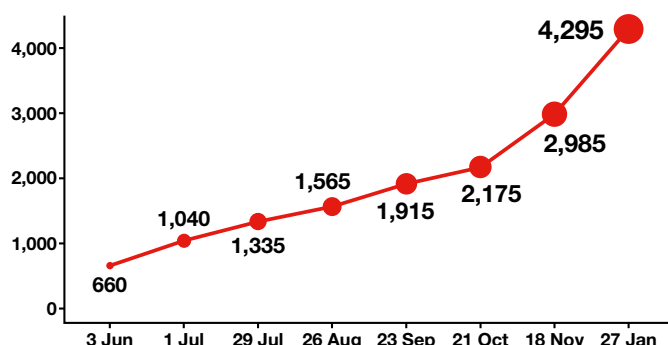


4,295 households at risk of or experiencing homelessness since 24 February 2022

2,985 households include **children**

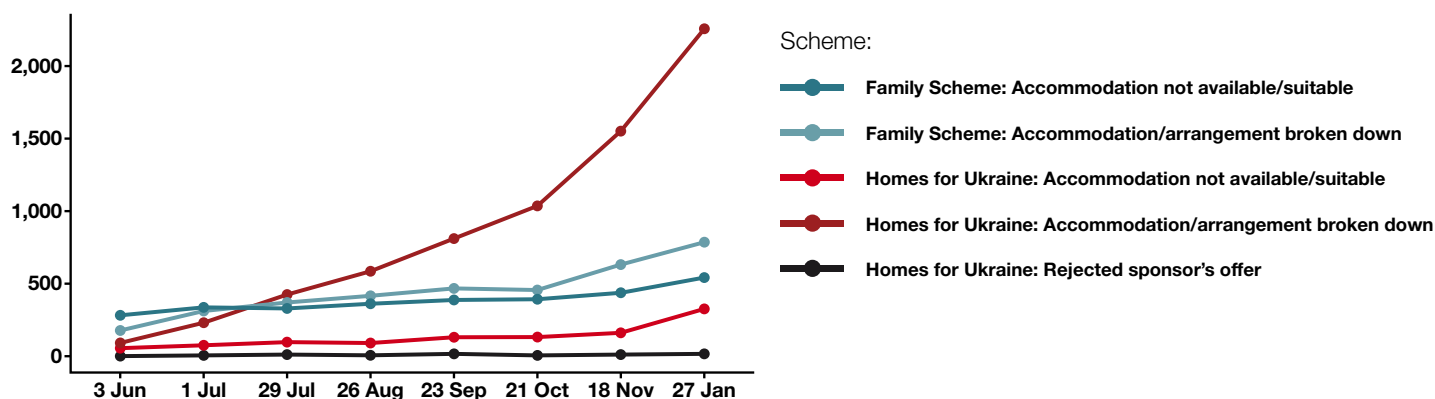
1,325 households are on **Ukraine Family Visa Scheme**

Ukrainian households at risk of or experiencing homelessness



People arriving on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme increasingly face homelessness

Number of Ukraine refugee households at risk of homelessness on the Family Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme



British Red Cross analysis of DLUHC data

Relationship breakdown between hosts and guests

There are many positive experiences of hosting and being hosted by sponsors, and a majority of the people who arrived through Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family Scheme are living with hosts in the community. However, we have supported many people on both the Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine scheme in urgent need of alternative accommodation after a relationship breakdown with hosts. Out of the 4,295 Ukrainian households owed a prevention relief duty in England between 24 February and 27 January 2023, 3,042 were due to accommodation or arrangement breakdown across both Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme.³¹

It is not always possible to rematch people on the Homes for Ukraine scheme who become homeless. In these instances, where someone is at risk of homelessness, local authorities have a statutory duty to accommodate people.ⁱⁱ Some councils are doing this through supporting people into private rented accommodation (explored in more detail below). We have spoken to local authorities who told us the demographic makeup of Ukrainian households on both visa schemes is

typically a family of four to six people, including grandparents and children, and that there is less housing available in some areas for this number of people. A Freedom of Information Act request by The Independent found that of the 134 district councils in England that provided data, 668 Ukrainian households (1,618 people) have been accommodated in hotels since March 2022. In addition, 406 households have been placed in temporary accommodation, including local authority housing.³²

The one-off £150 million funding pot for local authorities announced in December 2022 can be used to support Ukrainians and others at risk of homelessness. For local authorities in England, the UK Government expects the new £500 million fund to acquire housing stock for those fleeing conflict, including from Ukraine and Afghanistan, to provide up to 4,000 homes by 2024.³³

ⁱⁱ Local authorities have duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all homeless applicants who are eligible based on their immigration status. Someone with leave under the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine or the Extension Scheme is eligible for homelessness assistance.

Appropriateness and availability of accommodation

As of 27 January 2023, 865 Ukrainian households were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty due to accommodation not being available or suitable on arrival. Nearly two thirds (540) of these were households on the Ukraine Family Scheme. Prospective sponsors on the Homes for Ukraine scheme are subject to accommodation and welfare checks, which ensure the property has an empty room and adequate space and complies with necessary safety requirements.³⁴ By contrast, accommodation provided through the Ukraine Family Scheme is not inspected.

People who arrive and find their accommodation to be unsuitable must present as homeless to the local authority if they are unable to access private rented accommodation. The British Red Cross has supported people on the Ukraine Family Scheme who arrived to accommodation which was not suitable for their needs.

People who arrived through the Homes for Ukraine scheme are encouraged to find a new sponsor through a “re-matching” process if they are not able to stay with their host. There have been a number of renewed calls to encourage people to become hosts or to continue their sponsorship period, including increasing the monthly ‘thank you’ payment after 12 months, as well as a number of initiatives to introduce potential hosts to guests.³⁵ However, there is currently no mechanism for those on the Ukraine Family Scheme to be re-matched except in Wales.

Case study

A Ukrainian national arrived in north-west England in autumn 2022 on the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme but was unable to remain in the sponsor’s home as it was unsuitable. They moved in with friends for ten days, but this was precarious as there was no tenancy agreement and they had to move out shortly afterwards. They then moved into a hostel, but this quickly became unaffordable. Although they had applied for Universal Credit, they did not have a bank account so faced significant delays receiving the first payment. They were not eligible for the £200 interim payment because they arrived through the Ukraine Family Scheme.

With no accommodation or money, they approached the British Red Cross for support. They were referred to a homelessness charity who supported them to make a homelessness application to the local authority. They subsequently spent two months in a night shelter before being hosted temporarily by a host in the community.

The British Red Cross supported this person to open a bank account, access legal advice, provided emergency financial support and connected them with the local Ukrainian community. They were eager to find work and so the British Red Cross also made a referral for support to find employment.

The British Red Cross experienced difficulties working with the local authority to support this individual. The local authority believed they did not owe a homelessness duty as the individual arrived through the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme and so should be staying with their family. The local authority also stipulated someone needed a local connection to be eligible for homelessness support. The British Red Cross resolved this confusion clarifying that people displaced by the conflict can apply for homelessness support irrespective of which Ukraine Visa Scheme they arrived through.

Access to the private rented sector

Access to private rented accommodation could provide displaced Ukrainians on both visa schemes with a longer-term housing solution, if the sponsorship arrangement is no longer viable. The government's guidance provides a link to a booklet that explains the private rented sector in England, but although this is available in Ukrainian and Russian, it is a generic document and not specifically aimed at people who have been displaced.³⁶

Case study

Veronika, 24 years old, left her home in Ukraine in February 2022 and came to the UK through the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme sponsored by her aunt in Blackpool. After working as a cleaner immediately after she arrived, Veronika secured a job at the British Red Cross refugee services in Leeds. With a firm offer of employment under her belt, Veronika was then faced with the challenge of finding somewhere new to stay in Leeds. Because she came to the UK on a family visa, Veronika wasn't able to switch to the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme.

"I was hoping that this would be the simple solution," she says. "But I realised that this wasn't going to be possible for me. I tried to find a host that might be willing to put me up for free, or offer reduced rent, but I couldn't find anyone."

Once Veronika realised she wasn't going to be able to get a sponsor she set about searching for private rentals in Leeds.

"I came to Leeds for a week. Every day I went to different parts of the city to speak to agencies and landlords. On one of these days, I had 10 meetings set up in the morning but by the time I got there only two of the rooms were still available and most landlords wanted big deposits that I didn't have."

"There is no understanding of how the system works and what needs to be done. I didn't know why landlords wouldn't answer me online until I realised that I needed to fill out a

high-quality profile on housing search sites, put a photo, describe information about myself, and so on. There is also no information about scams and my friends have fallen for the tricks of scammers more than once, they paid a deposit in advance and lost all their money.

"This all creates a lot of stress, I did not expect it to be so difficult, especially as I speak English. It is even harder for those that don't."

After a lengthy search, Veronika finally found a room in a shared six-bedroom house.

"In Ukraine I had a spacious apartment," she said. "Here all I have is a small room. But it is my own room and I am safe. I reassure myself that this is just temporary and that one day I will be able to return home. For now though I am grateful that I finally found somewhere to live, as it isn't an easy process for Ukrainians."

Veronika is proud to work for the British Red Cross.

"People often come to the British Red Cross as a last resort, when no one else can help them. I come across very difficult stories every day, Ukrainians who have experienced grief and loss. I try to be helpful and cheerful. I put a smile on my face and I listen to what they have been through. I share their grief and at the same time I try to solve their practical problems. Anything I can do to make them a little happier."

An Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey published in December 2022 found that 69 per cent of Homes for Ukraine hosts had guests looking to move into private accommodation. However, most (81 per cent) reported barriers when helping their guests look for private rented accommodation.

67% could not **afford to rent privately**

64% could not **provide a guarantor**

57% could not **afford a deposit** and other up-front payments

54% could not **provide necessary financial documents**

51% could not **provide valid references**

43% had **no suitable properties** in the area³⁷

Without a UK-based guarantor, references from previous landlords or deposits, it can be difficult for people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine to access the private rented sector. Although people on both schemes have the right to work and can access public funds including Universal Credit, we have supported many across the UK struggling to afford to rent longer term accommodation. Some local authorities provide support to cover upfront costs, such as the deposit and first month's rent for their residents at risk of homelessness. In most instances however, the criteria excludes displaced Ukrainians from accessing this support, despite having recourse to public funds. Most do not meet the long-term residency and local connection criteria needed to be eligible for these schemes.ⁱⁱⁱ

There is a general lack of guidance or practical solutions on private rental options, including how local authorities and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) can support people to acquire private rented accommodation, which would promote greater independence, dignity and access to long-term sustainable housing. It would also likely save local authorities money, given the high costs associated with providing temporary accommodation, including hotels.

A rent deposit scheme – the local authority provides the tenancy deposit and sometimes the first month's rent. Eligibility criteria varies from place to place, and in most areas, these schemes are restricted to people who have a local connection to the local authority area, thus excluding many who have arrived through the Ukraine Visa Schemes.

A rent guarantee/bond scheme – the local authority provides the landlord with a written guarantee that the scheme will cover unpaid rent or damage, known as a bond, instead of a cash deposit. Any rent unpaid or damages incurred would then need to be paid out through the bond by the local authority.

ⁱⁱⁱ Many local authorities with rent guarantee schemes in the UK have eligibility criteria. These vary between councils. Most state that a person must be homeless or at risk of homelessness and have no known history of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour. Some also stipulate that a person must have a local connection, for example have family living in the area or be working within the local authority area, which needs to be proven.

Case study

As of 17 January 2023, 314 people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine had arrived in Perth and Kinross through Homes for Ukraine and the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme. This is the third highest of local authorities in Scotland by number and the highest number per capita at 207 per 100,000 population. There is no data on arrivals through the Ukraine Family Scheme.

The council has actively engaged with the private rented sector for over 10 years and has an in-house letting agency which runs a chargeable service. As a result, the agency is well connected to council services such as welfare rights, environment services, and council tax. The council chose to run this service separately from social housing as it found this did not work well in practice. They noted that the approach needed in the private rented sector is very different as you need to manage the relationship between the landlord and tenant. The council was able to expand this service to accommodate Ukrainians and

did not need to build new relationships with local landlords. Instead, they produced a package for landlords to incentivise them to rent to Ukrainians. Perth and Kinross has the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation per 100,000 population as of March 2022.³⁸

In addition to building on well-established systems, the council took a proactive approach in supporting hosts and guests through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The council have regular conversations with guests and hosts about long-term accommodation options, believing that making both parties aware of alternative options can prevent relationship breakdown between hosts and guests, as well as maintaining stronger support links even when the guests have moved out. The council has been able to take this approach due to a well-developed housing first model.

Local authorities across the UK will have varying levels of experience of providing rent deposit schemes and rent guarantee schemes. Although the demographics and needs of each area will be different, local authorities should work together to share best practice and learn from each other's challenges.

In addition, in December 2022, DLUHC announced the Local Authority Housing Fund for councils in England. This will provide capital funding to English councils facing the most significant housing pressures as a result of arrivals from Ukraine. This fund will also be used to provide homes for up to 500 Afghan families currently living in hotels.³⁹

Recommendations

People displaced by the conflict in Ukraine should be supported to access longer term housing:

- DLUHC should increase the monthly 'thank you' payment immediately for all hosts, no matter the scheme, instead of waiting until after people have been in the UK for 12 months, to address rising cost of living pressures.
- DLUHC should clarify details and allocation of the £150 million one-off funding (to support people on the Ukraine schemes into longer term accommodation), so local authorities can address growing housing needs.
- DLUHC should proactively work with devolved governments and the Local Government Association (LGA), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), to share best practice and support local authorities to rapidly develop ways to support people at risk of homelessness into the private rented sector. This should include supporting local authorities to implement rent deposit schemes, and ensuring eligibility criteria does not exclude people displaced from Ukraine.
- DLUHC and the Home Office should deliver on the government's commitment to allow people who arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme to be rematched with hosts who offer their homes through Homes for Ukraine.

Impact of cost of living

The rising cost of living has resulted in people across the UK facing multiple difficulties. Those who are already vulnerable could slip further through the cracks, while financial pressures could see others move from stability towards a much more precarious situation.

Impact on people displaced from Ukraine

Hosts and guests alike are being impacted by the increasing cost of living. Data published by the ONS in November 2022 found that half of respondents experienced difficulties taking up work in the UK. This survey includes people who arrived through Homes for Ukraine and the Ukraine Family Scheme.

There are concerns that Universal Credit does not sufficiently cover the cost of essentials needed to rebuild their lives in the UK.

However, this is not something which applies only to people arriving from Ukraine. YouGov polling on behalf of the Trussell Trust in January and February 2022, found that more than half of adults claiming Universal Credit report they are going without at least one of the essentials they need to keep warm, fed and clothed. One in three had been unable to afford adequate food, meaning they had more than one day in the last month where they didn't eat at all or only had one meal.¹⁴¹

The British Red Cross has provided cash-based assistance to 60,339 people arriving from Ukraine and conducted a survey of recipients of this support to evaluate its impact. Out of 2,515 respondents, financial support was identified as the most important necessity when arriving in a new country (33 per cent).⁴² According to the survey by ONS published in November 2022, only around 60 per cent of visa holders reported having enough money to support themselves and their dependents for the next three months, although this is a significant increase from 37 per cent in June 2022.⁴³ The British Red Cross has supported many destitute people displaced by the conflict to access foodbanks, and referred them to other charities to get clothes. 41 per cent of enquiries to British Red Cross refugee support between 24 February 2022 and 26 January 2023 were for destitution and emergency provisions.

56% of adults were **working in the UK in November 2022**, a significant increase from **20% in June 2022**

50% experienced **difficulties taking up work in the UK**

Main challenges were:



English proficiency (56%)



Qualifications not being valid in the UK (33%)⁴⁰

Case study

British Red Cross in the north-east of England supported a family of four, two parents and two children, who arrived in the UK in autumn 2022 through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The local authority referred them to the Red Cross for financial support as they waited for their Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) to be issued, without which they could not access welfare benefits. The family faced a number of delays with receiving their BRPs on their arrival in the UK, waiting a few months to receive all the necessary documentation. The Red Cross helped the family to access a local foodbank and to obtain clothing, blankets, and bedding from a charity, as well as providing them with cash-based assistance.

¹ Total sample size was 1,506 UK adults claiming Universal Credit. Fieldwork was undertaken between 24 January – 15 February 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Great British adults claiming Universal Credit (aged 18+). All figures are the Trussell Trust's own analysis of data collected online by YouGov.

People applying to the Ukraine Visa Schemes who provided biometrics via the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app (or provided biometric information in person at a Visa Application Centre (VAC) outside of the UK), are able to collect their BRPs at a Post Office soon after they arrive in UK.^{ii 44} If a visa holder has not provided biometrics prior to arriving in the UK, they will receive a 'permission to travel' letter and a six-month entry stamp upon arrival. Within six months, visa holders need to

provide biometrics at a VAC in the UK and then wait for a BRP to be issued. This can take up to three months, during which time the person is not eligible to work or apply for Universal Credit.⁴⁵ Even when people submit biometrics in advance, delays can arise where guests have a change of address at short notice. The ability of people to access financial support while waiting for a BRP needs urgent attention.

Case study

The Welsh Government have found it a challenge to support larger families arriving through resettlement schemes to rent privately and avoid destitution. In the UK, in April 2013 a benefit cap was announced that limits the total amount of benefit a person can receive and this impacted families arriving through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). This issue persists and impacts the subsequent resettlement of Afghans and Ukrainians. Local authorities across Wales have been supporting resettled families into the private rented sector, however in many cases these have become unsustainable without local authorities continuing to subsidise rents in the long-term, and the families have become

destitute unable to afford the rent. It is right that there is no cap on the size of families being resettled, but the Welsh Government believes work is needed to ensure large families do not become destitute on these schemes.

The Welsh Government also noted that in addition to the benefit cap impacting larger families, market rent usually exceeds the local housing allowance rate for all on Universal Credit. Access to the private rented sector is very challenging for those unable to work. This includes people who need to learn English or Welsh before entering the labour market.

Risk of exploitation

In April 2022, the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner published a report on the associated risks of human trafficking and exploitation with the conflict in Ukraine. In the foreword, the former Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Dame Sara Thornton, writes that the conflict "presents real and significant risks of human trafficking and exploitation, and there is a need for the UK's response to be targeted, trauma informed and adequately resourced to provide the support needed to Ukrainian refugees."⁴⁶ The British Red Cross Anti-Trafficking and Safeguarding teams have witnessed debt bondage, with working conditions not as expected and the host claiming costs associated with travel – and people being forced to work for a landlord for free in exchange for accommodation. Although these cases have been small in number, we know through our experience in supporting survivors of trafficking that it can take years for people to seek support. Risks of exploitation among people displaced from Ukraine in the UK should be monitored and urgently addressed.

ⁱⁱ Visa holders who have already provided biometric data via the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app can collect their BRPs 28 days from the date of the decision letter, which confirms the visa has been granted. Visa holders who provided biometrics at a Visa Application Centre outside the UK can collect their BRP around 10 days after they received a decision on the application.

Case study

The British Red Cross supported a Ukrainian national and their elderly parent, who has health problems, who arrived in south-east England through the Homes for Ukraine scheme in autumn 2022. After a few weeks their host asked them to leave where they were staying, and so they contacted the British Red Cross for support. The mother and daughter required assistance in applying for welfare benefits, obtaining their BRPs, applying for national insurance numbers, opening bank accounts and accessing financial support.

Due to the pair arriving on a later date than was stated on their visa application, their BRPs were returned to the Home Office, causing significant delays in being able to access their entitlements and resulting in additional financial pressures. The mother's health condition required medication, however, despite being registered with a GP, they were unable to

book an appointment after a number of appointments had already been cancelled with no warning. While waiting for their Universal Credit to be awarded, they were also unable to obtain the free prescriptions they needed.

The family had received the initial £200 welcome payment and food vouchers from the local authority and used this money to repay travel costs from Ukraine. They were placed in temporary accommodation by the local authority, but this was an unsuitable single room that lacked basic amenities.

The British Red Cross supported the family to get replacement BRPs, apply for welfare benefits and to open bank accounts. The team also provided them with financial support while they waited for the first Universal Credit payment and continues to advocate for more suitable accommodation for both of them.

Impact on hosts

The rising cost of living is impacting hosts' ability to continue accommodating people displaced from Ukraine. Although visa holders on both schemes have access to public funds (as explored above in relation to accessing longer term accommodation in the private rented sector), Universal Credit is not enough for many people displaced by the conflict to find homes in or near their host areas, where they now have community links.⁴⁷

In the latest survey by ONS published in December 2022, when Homes for Ukraine hosts were asked if rising costs were affecting their ability to provide support on the scheme, 18 per cent reported 'very much', compared with 9 per cent in July 2022.⁴⁸

95% of hosts reported having additional **utility costs**

58% reported additional **transport costs**

62% reported additional **costs on bedding and toiletries**

33% reported **difficulties or delays** receiving monthly **'thank you' payments**



There is less information available about the Ukraine Family Scheme, but as neither sponsors nor guests through this scheme receive the financial assistance available to local authorities through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the cost of living impact is likely to be significant.

Impact on local authorities and integration

Local authorities were provided with a per person tariff grant of £10,500 for each person who arrives through Homes for Ukraine until 31 December 2022. For each arrival through Homes for Ukraine after 1 January 2023, this tariff grant is reduced to £5,900. According to DLUHC, the purpose of the tariff grant is to support local authorities to provide wraparound support for individuals and families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. However, unlike other resettlement schemes, there is no per person tariff funding provided beyond the first year.

Case study

The Welsh Government is still working to understand what the changes to funding (announced in December 2022) mean in terms of the level of support that can be provided. The Welsh Government attribute successful response to supporting Ukrainians partly down to learning from, and expanding, existing resettlement schemes. For example, Housing Justice Cymru has been supporting people hosting through Homes for Ukraine and applying learning from a pre-existing scheme, funded by the Welsh Government, supporting hosts accommodating people refused asylum but who are aiming to appeal or submit a fresh claim. From experience with previous

resettlement schemes, the Welsh Government knows that resettled populations still have integration needs after the first year, and so they were surprised when it was confirmed there would be no tariff funding available beyond year one. This is out of step with most resettlement schemes which offer a three-year or five-year funding tariff. They stressed that many local authorities have put in place teams to support Ukrainians to integrate, and are now questioning how they will be able to continue funding that necessary work.

For the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), the government announced a core local authority tariff totalling £20,520 per person over three years. £10,500 is provided in the first year, reducing to £6,000 and £4,020 in years two and three respectively. This matched the tariff for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).

DLUHC guidance published in January 2023 acknowledges that low English language skills are the main barrier to employment and integration.⁴⁹ DLUHC encourages local authorities to use the per person tariff, which is not ringfenced, to fund education and skills

support, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. Since this tariff funding is only available for people arriving through Homes for Ukraine, it is not applicable to people arriving through the Ukraine Family scheme. DLUHC is yet to confirm if the new £150 million one-off funding for year two will be administered and how it should be spent.

People from Ukraine aged 19 and over (and their family members settled in the UK under both the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Ukraine Family Scheme) can access ESOL and Level 3 free courses for jobs through the adult education budget, as they are exempt from the three-year residency requirement.

Recommendations

Rising costs of living to support hosts and people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine must be addressed:

- DLUHC should increase monthly 'thank you' payments in line with the increasing cost of living to incentivise hosts.
- DLUHC should also extend the interim payment to everyone arriving on the Ukraine Family Scheme in all four nations of the UK, to financially support people waiting for their first Universal Credit payment.

Data collection and publication

The data on people who have arrived in the UK from Ukraine through the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme is limited across all four nations. There is no available data on where people are living in the UK, or the demographic breakdown of people who arrived through this scheme.

Case study

Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire (VASLan) supports third sector organisations, social enterprises and volunteers in South Lanarkshire, Scotland. They recognised that people arriving through the Family Scheme were entitled to less support but have no way of identifying them.

VASLan know who is staying in the hotels but have no data on people hosted through the Family Visa scheme.

VASLan notes that organisations are keen to help but it is not possible to determine how their support needs can be met by the voluntary and community sector.

The lack of data on people who arrived through the Ukraine Family Scheme makes it challenging to meet people's needs. In many cases, it is only if a hosting arrangement breaks down, and someone presents as homeless to the local authority, that a council becomes aware of their presence in the area.

In addition, data on housing and homelessness among people from Ukraine living in the devolved nations is limited. However, there is evidence all nations are experiencing difficulties sourcing accommodation. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland do not publish data on homelessness among people displaced from Ukraine regardless of the scheme.

The lack of good quality data in devolved nations makes it challenging to understand the scale of the issue, inform the next stages of the scheme, or design future schemes.

Case study

The Welsh Government has found its ability to support people who arrived through the Ukraine Family Scheme has been limited due to a lack of available data. The Welsh Government commissioned the British Red Cross to help people on the Ukraine Family Scheme reunite with family members displaced by the conflict, but this service has been impacted by a lack of available data.

Before May 2022, people applying through the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Ukraine Family Scheme had to provide the address of a local

Post Office to collect their BRPs. This changed in early May so that people arriving through the visa schemes were able to provide this digitally. The Welsh Government says it suspects that Ukrainians would have listed a Post Office close to the address of their sponsor to collect their BRPs. Although this data will not be complete, the Welsh Government believes it would be useful to give a better idea of where Ukrainians arriving through the Ukraine Family Scheme are.

Recommendations

The UK's response to people displaced by the Ukraine conflict in the UK should be monitored and evaluated through better data and evidence:

- The Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Irish Executive should publish data on homelessness among people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.
- DLUHC and the Home Office should work with local authorities in all four nations of the UK, to identify people who have arrived in the UK through the Ukraine Family Scheme and publish this data.
- DLUHC should monitor the integration outcomes of people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine on all UK Ukraine Visa Schemes.

What have we learnt so far?

The UK's response helping people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine has been exceptional in several ways. It is imperative we learn from these novel approaches and apply learnings to the design of our future schemes, whether that be our resettlement, family reunion, community sponsorship or asylum processes.

Opening up our homes

It is the first time since the Second World War that UK residents have opened their homes to people, often strangers, fleeing conflict at scale. While community sponsorship schemes have existed, the scale does not compare. Only 700 refugees were sponsored by community groups in the first five years of the Home Office's Community Sponsorship Scheme established in 2016.⁵⁰ In contrast, during its first day, more than 100,000 people had registered interest in hosting through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Resettlement at scale and pace

The UK has also managed to resettle a comparatively large number of people in need of protection at pace. In just one year, 161,400 people came to the UK safely via the Ukraine Visa Schemes, compared to just 20,319 people in seven years via the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme for people fleeing the conflict in Syria and 12,296 people via the Afghanistan resettlement schemes to date.^{51 52} At the end of September 2022, 143,377 people were waiting for an initial decision on their asylum claim, with two thirds of those waiting for longer than six months. In contrast, people applying for a visa through the Ukraine Visa Schemes typically waited less than three weeks for their application to be processed.⁵³

Expansive family reunion

The Ukraine Family Scheme also adopts a much less restrictive definition of 'family' than the UK's existing refugee family reunion routes. This has meant that family members beyond children under 18, such as siblings, parents, grandparents, nieces and nephews have been able to seek protection here.

Safe routes

The international response to people displaced from Ukraine shows what is possible when so many safe routes to seek protection are created. While not perfect, millions of people fleeing Ukraine have been able to access protection in the UK, EU and beyond safely. This means far fewer people have had to risk their lives taking dangerous journeys to seek asylum. Notably, no Ukrainians were recorded as crossing the English Channel in the year ending September 2022 (the latest statistics available).⁵⁴

Access to employment, public services and wider support

Beyond numbers and pace, and unlike those who claim asylum in the UK, people from Ukraine have had an immediate right to work and access to mainstream benefits. In many cases, they have also had access to wraparound support, such as community integration and casework support. The numbers of working age adults displaced from Ukraine who have now entered employment was 56% in November 2022, up from 20% just a few months before.⁵⁵ Understanding the implications of these rights and support on people's ability to integrate and contribute to society could help shape future schemes so that they benefit both our UK communities and those in need of protection.

Areas for action

However, while there is much to be celebrated about the Ukraine Visa Schemes, the one-year mark provides an opportunity to reflect on the UK's response and there have been various shortcomings in our response, which need to be urgently addressed. Given the response's exceptional nature, it is not surprising that there have been faults in its design. In the last year, over 4,000 Ukrainian households have experienced or been at risk of homelessness in England, and numerous issues have been identified, from relationship breakdowns to funding pressures to difficulty moving into the private rented sector. There is also uncertainty about what will happen after the three years' limited leave to remain expires.

⁵¹ 5,982 grants of Indefinite Leave to Remain through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) launched April 2021. ⁵² 6,314 grants of Indefinite Leave to Remain through Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

This report has set out practical ways to overcome some of these challenges in the short term but also recommends we apply these learnings to future responses to mass displacement caused by conflict so that we have a smarter blueprint to respond quickly and effectively.

Recommendation

The UK's response to people in the UK displaced by the conflict in Ukraine should be evaluated, and learnings used to inform current and future policy responses to displacement, including resettlement and asylum.

Key learning: Strengthening community infrastructure to respond to future crises

Local places have reflected on the importance of having existing strong cross-sector relationships to effectively support people displaced from Ukraine. Ways of working established in previous crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, offer valuable learning. In Wales, the Welsh LGA and Welsh Government reflected that the same teams who worked together during the Covid-19 response were working together again to support people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine. They continued meeting weekly and did not need to dedicate time to building new relationships, as they already had experience of working closely together.

Case study

In Northern Ireland, a multi-agency response was quickly put in place to support people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine and their sponsors. Ukraine Assistance Centres have been operating across Northern Ireland since 11 April 2022, providing a range of services for people's immediate needs, including housing, healthcare and welfare support. To ensure the smooth running of the centres, the Department for Communities enlisted the partnership of the Red Cross, Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association and Volunteer Now. This partnership was formed during the Covid-19 pandemic to

coordinate volunteer support at vaccination centres across Northern Ireland during the vaccine mass roll out.

Volunteers provide person-centred support at the centres, ensuring attendees are welcomed, given orientation support and their individual needs are met. Together volunteers from the three organisations provided 3,426 hours of voluntary support by the end of 2022. The centres have been crucial in providing accessible, holistic support to help people displaced from Ukraine resettle and begin rebuilding their lives in their new communities.

The role of the voluntary sector has also been essential in the response to people displaced from Ukraine. The British Red Cross has provided some form of support to 60,339 people who have arrived in the UK from Ukraine, working in partnership with many other voluntary and community organisations. Engaging the voluntary and community sector, as well as people who have been displaced, is key to translating learning from the Ukraine Visa Schemes to future planning and wider policy on displacement.

Conclusion

It is difficult to overstate the scale of suffering and destruction brought on by the conflict in Ukraine. Yet, through the devastation, we have also witnessed the power of kindness at a time when people need it most. Across the UK, people have opened their homes to people displaced from Ukraine, helping them to integrate and settle in the UK. As one British Red Cross Ukraine National Support Line volunteer said: “You can’t change the past, but you can give refugees a safe haven.”

Many people displaced by the conflict continue to live with their sponsors and have found work and connected with their new communities. The UK’s response to this crisis demonstrates the level of support for those fleeing crises where there is visibility and political will. The UK’s priority a year ago was to rapidly help people from Ukraine seek safety. But, a year on, we must also ensure those very same people can live meaningful lives here in Britain.

To achieve this, we recommend immediate action in five areas:

- **Create parity between the Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine.**
- **Support people displaced by the conflict into longer term housing.**
- **Address the impact of the rising cost of living on hosts and arrivals.**
- **Invest in better data and evidence to monitor and evaluate the UK’s response.**
- **Ensure learnings are used to inform current and future policy responses to displacement, including resettlement, family reunion and asylum.**

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Report design: Zoe Foster, British Red Cross

For more information

advocacy@redcross.org.uk

[redcross.org.uk](https://www.redcross.org.uk)

[@RedCrossPolicy](https://twitter.com/RedCrossPolicy)

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