

# UK Ukraine visa support

2023 Update

This annex on temporary protection complements and should be read together with the [AIDA Country Report on the United Kingdom](#).

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## Response to the displacement of Ukrainian nationals

### A. General

Following the full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the UK introduced a variety of visa schemes to allow people fleeing to enter and settle in the country.

#### Main legislative acts relevant to Ukraine visa schemes

There are no legislative acts directly relevant to the Ukraine visa schemes.

#### Main implementing administrative guidelines and regulations relevant to temporary protection

Title (EN)	Web Link
Immigration rules: HC 395	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4c9ecn34">https://tinyurl.com/4c9ecn34</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 1220, 29 March 2022 ----- <i>This inserted Appendix Ukraine to the rules, which contained the details of the three available schemes.</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yv9cuaey">https://tinyurl.com/yv9cuaey</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 17, 11 May 2022 ----- <i>Immigration Rules (made some amendments to Appendix Ukraine)</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4wdtfvh3">https://tinyurl.com/4wdtfvh3</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 511, 20 July 2022 ----- <i>Extension of Ukraine sponsor scheme to unaccompanied children</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/4at5jdtk">https://tinyurl.com/4at5jdtk</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 719, 18 October 2022 ----- <i>Amended eligibility for the Ukraine extension scheme</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yuyh39c9">https://tinyurl.com/yuyh39c9</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 1160, 9 March 2023 ----- <i>Definition of grandparent and partner for the purposes of Appendix Ukraine was amended</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/3aja6a4m">https://tinyurl.com/3aja6a4m</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 1496, 17 July 2023 ----- <i>Extension of deadlines to apply to Ukraine scheme</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/27utbk4w">https://tinyurl.com/27utbk4w</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 1780, 7 September 2023 ----- <i>Introduced validity requirements to applications for the Ukraine scheme</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/365nwffr">https://tinyurl.com/365nwffr</a>
Statement of changes to the immigration rules: HC 556, 19 February 2024 ----- <i>Immediate closure of the Ukraine Family Scheme, halving length of leave granted and restricting eligibility for Homes for Ukraine</i>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/yc8973dm">https://tinyurl.com/yc8973dm</a>

The United Kingdom's Ukraine visa schemes available to support persons displaced were as follows:

❖ Ukraine Family Scheme

This scheme is for Ukrainians and their family members seeking to join someone in the UK to whom they are related (including extended family members and their spouse/partner). The UK based member must be a UK citizen, settled, EEA pre-settled status or a beneficiary of refugee status/Humanitarian Protection. It was launched on 4 March 2022. No financial support is provided to host family members. Those arriving in Northern Ireland are entitled to a one off cash payment of £ 200 (EUR 233).<sup>1</sup> There is a three-year visa for those coming to the UK with access to all public funds. There is no fee for the visa, applications can only be made from outside of the UK. Applicants must have been residing in Ukraine on or immediately before 1 January 2022.

❖ Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)

The four nations of the UK all fundamentally have the same system with some differences but the same eligibility for visa/checking of hosts/eligibility for the main public services. Again a three-year visa is provided. Those arriving in the UK receive a £ 200 (EUR 233) payment to fill the gap until welfare benefits/work are available. Hosts receive £ 350 per week (EUR 408) as a 'thank you' payment for the first 12 months, this is increased to £ 500 (EUR 582) after the first year. Payments are available for the length of the leave granted to the person, usually three years.<sup>2</sup> The local authority is required to check and approve accommodation with further checks if a child is being hosted. Local authorities receive £ 10,500 (EUR 12,231) for each person who arrived before 1 January 2023 and £ 5,900 (EUR 6,893) for each person who arrived after 1 January 2023,<sup>3</sup> out of which they pay the initial £ 200 (EUR 233) but not the £ 350 (EUR 408) weekly payment (this is reimbursed by central government).<sup>4</sup> In December 2022, an additional £ 150 million (close to EUR 175 million) of funding was announced for local authorities across the UK to support Ukrainians where the current hosting arrangement could not continue. A further £ 500 million (over EUR 582 million) was announced for local authorities in England to obtain housing across all protection schemes.<sup>5</sup>

There is no fee for the visa, applications can only be made from outside of the UK. Applicants must have been residing in Ukraine on or immediately before 1 January 2022.

❖ Ukraine Extension Scheme

This is for Ukrainians and/or family members of Ukrainians who arrived in the UK with permission to enter (or stay) in the UK from 18 March 2022 to 16 November 2023. The exceptions are if they were in the UK with permission immediately before 1 January 2022 and that permission has since expired, or if they are a child born in the UK to parents who qualify. Applications to the scheme must be made before 16 May 2024.<sup>6</sup> Those in Northern Ireland are entitled to a one-off cash payment of £ 200 (EUR 233).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NI Direct, 'Ukrainian cash support scheme', <https://tinyurl.com/ju7ryc5y>.

<sup>2</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Paying sponsors: Homes for Ukraine', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y66mwh7>.

<sup>3</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Funding for councils: Homes for Ukraine', last updated 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yjjnfe77>.

<sup>4</sup> Home Office, 'Homes for Ukraine: council guides', last updated 3 April 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/45OjZrN>.

<sup>5</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'New over £650 million support package for Ukrainians sees increased 'thank you' payments for longer-term hosts', 14 December 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3WC1T84>.

<sup>6</sup> Home Office, 'Immigration Rules Appendix Ukraine Scheme', last updated 11 March 2024, available at: <https://bit.ly/3WG13XV>.

<sup>7</sup> NI Direct, 'Ukrainian cash support scheme', <https://tinyurl.com/ju7ryc5y>.

- ❖ Any other support made available since September 2022

None of the Ukraine visa support schemes provide a pathway for permanent settlement status. In February 2024 the government announced that in early 2025 people with existing leave under the three schemes would be able to make a free application to extend their leave for an additional 18 months.<sup>8</sup>

There is no cap on numbers for any of the schemes. ‘Super sponsor’ schemes established by the Welsh and Scottish governments, which required no individual to apply to sponsor/host were both closed to new applications in June and July 2023 respectively.

### Visas granted

Protection under the visa support schemes generally extends to immediate family members who were part of the family before 1 January 2022 or born after that date.

The schemes are only open to Ukrainian nationals although their family members do not need to be nationals themselves.

Ukraine schemes						
Scheme	Applications		Grants		Arrivals	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Ukraine Family Scheme	80,172	26,784	62,338	9,672	44,300	12,000
Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme	176,162	44,124	147,368	32,095	110,500	30,300

Source: Home Office, ‘National statistics – Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK’, 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu2pbcss>.

In addition to the above, 31,182 extensions have been granted since the scheme began.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, in 2022 and 2023, the following visas were granted to Ukrainians:

Visa Type	2022	2023
Other (excluding Ukraine Visa schemes), Family and Dependents Joining or Accompanying	603	526
Study	697	601
Visitor	19,696	33,457
Work	8,751 (of which 7,798 were temporary workers)	3,537 (of which 2,040 were temporary workers)

Source: Home Office, ‘National statistics – Statistics on Ukrainians in the UK’, 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3u7nj58>.

<sup>8</sup> Home Office, ‘Ukraine Permission Extension scheme information, last updated 28 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/kp4dr8aw>.

<sup>9</sup> Home Office, ‘National statistics – Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK’, 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu2pbcss>.

There are no significant numbers of Russians arriving in the UK after the conflict started, with 72,897 Russian nationals being granted visas to come to the UK in routes including visitor, student, worker and family, as well as under the European Union Settlement Scheme since the period April to June 2022 to the end of December 2023. From Moldova there have been 9,335 nationals, and from Belarus 12,032 who have been granted a visa to come to the UK.<sup>10</sup>

## B. Qualification for Ukraine Family Scheme visa

This scheme closed on 19 February 2024, prior to this the requirements were set out at Appendix Ukraine Scheme of the immigration rules.<sup>11</sup> This route was for Ukrainians and their family members seeking to join someone in the UK to whom they are related (including extended family members and their spouse/partner). Thus:

- ❖ The main applicant must have been coming to join a family member in the UK (see below);
- ❖ The main applicant must be Ukrainian (family members accompanying the main applicant do not need to be) and have been living in Ukraine on or immediately before 1 January 2022.
- ❖ Applications could be made from outside of Ukraine but could also be made after arriving in the UK as long as other eligibility requirements are met.

The UK based family member had to be a UK citizen, settled, EEA pre-settled status or a beneficiary of refugee status/Humanitarian Protection. The 'UK family member' had to be a:

- ❖ spouse or civil partner
- ❖ unmarried partner (who must have been living together in a relationship for at least 2 years)
- ❖ child who is under 18
- ❖ parent (if applicant is under 18)
- ❖ fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner

Applicants may have also been joining a 'UK extended family members', who included a:

- ❖ parent (if the applicant is over 18)
- ❖ child who is over 18
- ❖ grandparent
- ❖ grandchild or your partner's grandchild
- ❖ brother or sister
- ❖ aunt or uncle
- ❖ niece or nephew
- ❖ cousin
- ❖ mother-in-law or father-in-law
- ❖ grandparent-in-law
- ❖ or brother-in-law or sister-in-law

Non-Ukrainian nationals residing in Ukraine and displaced by the war could only benefit from the visa scheme if they are immediate family members of an applicant who is Ukrainian, and not extended family members.

In support of their application, applicants had to provide evidence of nationality – either a passport (applicants with a valid passport did not have to separately provide biometrics before arriving in the UK) or other evidence such as a Ukrainian national identity card, a combination of official documents – for example, a photo driving licence and birth certificate or an emergency certificate issued by a Ukrainian authority since March 2022. Such documents were not mandatory but applicants were informed that it will assist the application to have them.<sup>12</sup>

Applicants are entitled to remain in the United Kingdom for three years as part of the Ukraine Family Scheme and have access to all public funds. No financial support is provided to host family members..

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<sup>10</sup> Home Office, 'Entry clearance visa applications and outcomes detailed datasets, year ending December 2023', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhnwfr>.

<sup>11</sup> Immigration rules in force at 18 February 2024 (archived), available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3y4sp23v>.

<sup>12</sup> UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office, 'Apply for a Ukraine Family Scheme visa', last updated 31 January 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qk1quY>.

For the Family visa scheme, 26,784 applications were made, with 9,672 grants and 12,000 arrivals in 2023.<sup>13</sup>

### C. Qualification for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme visa (Homes for Ukraine)

The details of the scheme are set out at Appendix Ukraine Scheme in the immigration rules.<sup>14</sup> The purpose of this scheme is to match people fleeing Ukraine and seeking to enter the UK with UK households willing to act as sponsors. It can allow people fleeing Ukraine with no family in the UK to benefit from a visa.<sup>15</sup>

Applicants must be Ukrainian, or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national who has been granted permission under, or is applying to and qualifies for, the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. Moreover, they must:

- ❖ have been residing in Ukraine on or immediately before 1 January 2022 (including those who have now left Ukraine);
- ❖ be outside of the UK;
- ❖ have an eligible UK-based sponsor; alternatively, applicants can choose the Scottish or Welsh Government as their sponsor.<sup>16</sup>

Sponsors must be British citizens or be settled (have permanent residence). They must not have a criminal record. Sponsors are asked to make the accommodation available for six months, although in practice some agreements have ended before this time period.<sup>17</sup>

The accommodation offered must be approved by the local authority. Local authorities must approve the arrangement.<sup>18</sup>

For individual sponsor arrangements the rules are the same in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In addition, Wales and Scotland announced their plans on 13 March 2022<sup>19</sup> to open 'super sponsor' schemes which meant an individual fleeing Ukraine could apply to be sponsored and the governments of those countries would match them to accommodation. However, the schemes were both paused within the same year; in June (in Wales)<sup>20</sup> and July (in Scotland).<sup>21</sup>

In support of this application, the evidence required includes evidence of eligibility on nationality and recent residence in Ukraine if not arriving directly. For children travelling alone, consent of parents/guardians (notarised by officials of guardianship service or Ukraine consulate) is required.

If the people being sponsored are to share the accommodation with the host, the local authority must conduct safeguarding checks as part of the approval process. For all households to which this applies,

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<sup>13</sup> Home Office, 'National statistics – Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu2pbcss>.

<sup>14</sup> Home Office, 'Immigration Rules Appendix Ukraine Scheme', last updated 11 March 2024, available at: <https://bit.ly/3WG13XV>.

<sup>15</sup> UK Government, 'Apply for a visa under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)', last updated 13 April 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/3R4L0Ap>.

<sup>16</sup> UK Government, 'Apply for a visa under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)', last updated 13 April 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/3R4L0Ap>.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Eligibility, safeguarding, DBS and accommodation checks: Homes for Ukraine', last updated 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5dynp4ej>.

<sup>18</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Eligibility, safeguarding, DBS and accommodation checks: Homes for Ukraine', last updated 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5dynp4ej>.

<sup>19</sup> Scottish Government, 'Ukraine refugee sponsorship', 13 March 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3IH1cEL>.

<sup>20</sup> Welsh Government, 'Super Sponsor', available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yja2s4j5>.

<sup>21</sup> Scottish Government, 'Visa sponsorship for Ukrainians coming to Scotland' last updated 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5t4dzucn>.

the local authority will facilitate a basic check by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) of all members of the household aged 16 or over.<sup>22</sup>

- ❖ If the guests include children, an enhanced DBS check (including a check of the children's barred list, which is a list of people who are prohibited from working with children) will be undertaken, for all those who are 16 or over in the sponsor household who are not related to the guest.
- ❖ If the sponsor is applying to host a child who is not travelling with or joining their parents/legal guardian, enhanced DBS checks will be carried out before their arrival into the UK.
- ❖ If the local authority decides, while undertaking other checks, that an adult guest requires additional support due to age, disability or illness then the local authority may ask for an enhanced DBS check (including a check of the adults' barred list) to be undertaken on any such members of this household.

As with other programmes the visa for the Ukraine sponsorship scheme was valid for three years, however on 19 February 2024 this was reduced to 18 months.

144,124 applications were made to the Ukraine sponsorship scheme in 2023, with 32,095 grants and 30,300 arrivals.<sup>23</sup>

#### D. Qualification for Ukraine Extension Scheme visa

The details of the scheme are set out at Appendix Ukraine Scheme in the immigration rules.<sup>24</sup> Those eligible for the Ukraine Extension Scheme include:

- ❖ Ukrainians who previously held permission to be in the UK and that permission expired on or after 1 January 2022 or who held permission to be in the UK on or between 18 March 2022 and 16 November 2023 – the permission does not need to cover the whole period;
- ❖ Non-Ukrainians who are immediate family members of a Ukrainian national are the only third country nationals eligible.

There are no other specific visa options aimed at Ukrainians available to displaced persons who otherwise do not qualify for the Ukraine Extension Scheme. Applications must be made before 16 May 2024.

Evidence of the previously held visa is required in support of the application.

If applying as an immediate family member (spouse, civil partner, partner, child) evidence of relationship with the Ukrainian national is required.

31,182 extensions have been granted since the scheme began.<sup>25</sup>

It should be noted that Ukrainians holding seasonal worker or temporary HGV/pork butcher worker visas automatically had their visas extended to the end December 2022 therefore did not need to apply to the extension scheme immediately.<sup>26</sup>

As with the other two schemes, leave is granted for three years.

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<sup>2222</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: Homes for Ukraine, 13 September 2023, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdxx3tt9>.

<sup>23</sup> Home Office, 'National statistics – Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu2pbcss>.

<sup>24</sup> Home Office, 'Immigration Rules Appendix Ukraine Scheme', last updated 11 March 2024, available at: <https://bit.ly/3WG13XV>.

<sup>25</sup> Home Office, 'National statistics – Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu2pbcss>.

<sup>26</sup> Home Office, 'Home Secretary announces visa concessions for Ukrainians', 24 February 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3N1XyYA>.

## E. Access to visa support schemes

### 1. Admission to territory and practical challenges

There are no reports of people fleeing from Ukraine being refused entry at the United Kingdom border although admissions tables show that in the first quarter of 2022, 337 Ukrainian nationals were stopped at the border and subsequently left the UK (72 at juxtaposed controls and 19 at UK ports). In the last quarter of 2023 there were 119 such refusals.<sup>27</sup> There were reports of people waiting long periods for visas to be issued, including people in France.<sup>28</sup> Border officials have the power to grant leave to enter into the UK when travelling across the border but there are no statistics indicating the numbers of Ukrainians who have benefitted from this.

Initially the rules required all applicants to register their biometrics at a visa application centre outside of the UK. This requirement was dropped (from 15 March 2022)<sup>29</sup> for holders of Ukrainian passports.

Applications to the three schemes are considered by the Home Office.<sup>30</sup> The Homes for Ukraine scheme requires an application from outside of the UK. When an application is agreed, the applicant is granted entry clearance through the issuing of a visa or in some circumstances a 'permission to travel' letter issued by the Home Office. Once in the UK, the visa holder is required to register biometrics if they have not done so as part of their application and subsequently collect their Biometric Residence Permit.<sup>31</sup>

No fees are required to apply.

Discretion allows border officials at any port or at the land border with Ireland to grant entry clearance in the form of leave outside of the rules,<sup>32</sup> although it is not widely advertised.

Generally, rules require that applications are made before leave expires to maintain existing entitlements while waiting for a decision,<sup>33</sup> so applications for the extension scheme should be made before the current visa expires. Visas for Ukrainians already in the UK were automatically extended until the end of December 2022.

The visa decision making is a non-devolved matter (UK government controlled) so the issue of delays affected people applying to each of the four nations. Reports in the media<sup>34</sup> and debates in parliament included some acknowledgment of this by government.<sup>35</sup> Public statistics are more generic but as of February 2024 were reporting a three week processing time for applications made under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.<sup>36</sup> A government committee reported that there were problems with delays again in 2023

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<sup>27</sup> Home Office, 'Immigration system statistics data tables: Returns detailed datasets, year ending December 2023', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhnwfr>.

<sup>28</sup> The Guardian, 'Ukrainian refugees: frustration grows over long wait times for UK visas', 25 March 2022, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/j2rnd67b>.

<sup>29</sup> UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office, 'Home Secretary update on support for Ukrainians', 10 March 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/43qYkDG>.

<sup>30</sup> Home Office, *Ukraine Scheme – Version 4.0*, 11 March 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3BXtze9>.

<sup>31</sup> Home Office et al, 'Move to the UK if you're coming from Ukraine', last updated 22 February 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/43e2vTI>.

<sup>32</sup> Article 7(1) of the Immigration (Leave to Enter and Remain) Order 2000, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/zrrbns6w>.

<sup>33</sup> Section 3C, Immigration Act 1971, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5yw7yub7>.

<sup>34</sup> See for example Diane Taylor, 'Homes for Ukraine hosts protest over Home Office visa delays', 25 April 2022, *The Guardian*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3N1XOqw>; Mark Easton and Callum May, 'Ukraine refugees: Patel apologises for UK visa delays', 8 April 2022, *BBC News*, available at: <https://bit.ly/3WG5W31>.

<sup>35</sup> UK Parliament, 'Hansard - Homes for Ukraine: Visa Application Centres', 28 April 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3MGmgwd> and UK Parliament, 'Hansard – Ukraine Refugee Visas', 31 March 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3qfsdsq>.

<sup>36</sup> UK Visas and Immigration, 'Visa processing times: applications outside the UK', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://bit.ly/3IHRFNC>.

and that 63% of applications took more than the 15 day target in July 2023, compared with 19% in June 2022.<sup>37</sup>

There is no right of appeal in any of the three specific visa schemes. Refused applicants may present unlimited subsequent applications.

## 2. Legal assistance

In England and Wales there is no provision of free immigration advice funded by government even where an applicant has insufficient funds. Only asylum advice is publicly funded and that applies to people in the UK only.

A group of lawyers established a pro bono project.<sup>38</sup> The Scottish government funded a project to provide free legal advice for Ukrainians seeking to apply to live in Scotland.<sup>39</sup>

Northern Ireland is part of the UK schemes although information about the action taken if people cross the border from the Republic of Ireland (largely unstaffed) with no prior leave to enter the UK, is issued by the UK government.<sup>40</sup>

The only free legal advice for visa schemes is via the pro bono project above, which has limited value if applicants are not aware of its existence.

## 3. Information provision and access to NGOs

The government's online information is provided in English, Ukrainian and Russian.

When the scheme for unaccompanied children opened in July 2022 specific guidance was published,<sup>41</sup> as well as a welcome guide for children themselves.<sup>42</sup>

Information is provided from a mixture of NGO and government advice. Some government advice signposts to NGO information but there is relatively good, translated information aimed at Ukrainians compared to other migrants. There are a number of difficulties generally with regard to information for asylum seekers at different stages of the asylum procedure but it is not clear at the moment which would be applicable specifically to Ukrainians.

The main relevant border crossing point is the Irish border which is largely unstaffed. No information appears to be available at ports specific to the schemes as the intention is for people to apply before arriving at the UK border.

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<sup>37</sup> Public Accounts Committee, 'Homes for Ukraine: Risk of homelessness in scheme likely to increase, PAC report warns', page 6, 23 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2m53b977>.

<sup>38</sup> Ukraine Advice Project UK, 'Free UK immigration advice for people fleeing Ukraine', available at: <https://bit.ly/3IL3hPS>.

<sup>39</sup> Scottish Refugee Council, 'Ukraine Advice Scotland', available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2d7dtj8m>.

<sup>40</sup> UK Visas and Immigration and Immigration Enforcement, 'Right to work checks: an employer's guide', last updated 28 March 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/45teQoC>.

<sup>41</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for sponsors (children and minors applying without parents or legal guardians)', last updated 20 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2znavf3j>.

<sup>42</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Homes for Ukraine: welcome guide for Ukrainian children under 18', last updated 19 February 2024, available at: <https://bit.ly/45Doh56>.

## F. Guarantees for vulnerable groups

For vulnerable groups there is only one specific process for unaccompanied children applying to be sponsored/hosted by someone who is not a parent or guardian. This application must be accompanied by specific consent forms and be approved by the local authority in whose area the sponsor lives.<sup>43</sup>

In June 2022, an announcement was made that the visa applications by applicants under 18 who were not accompanied or joining a parent/guardian, which had all been put on hold for these reasons, would begin to be processed.<sup>44</sup> New applications were permitted from 10 August.<sup>45</sup>

Mental health support and support for torture survivors and traumatised beneficiaries is mainly provided by NGOs although some of it is funded by government.<sup>46</sup> The government in England signposts to support from organisations such as Barnardo's.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office, 'Apply for a visa under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)', last updated 13 April 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/3INCfHQ>.

<sup>44</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department for Education, 'Homes for Ukraine scheme to begin processing applications from unaccompanied children', 22 June 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/43tBjA8>.

<sup>45</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for sponsors (children and minors applying without parents or legal guardians)', last updated 16 January 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/42cAquP>.

<sup>46</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 27 September 2023, 'Support for under-21s from Ukraine, Afghanistan & Hong Kong', available at: <https://tinyurl.com/en5u5mtk>.

<sup>47</sup> Department for Education, 'Resources to help support children and young people arriving from Ukraine', updated 28 September 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/43t34Ja>.

# Content of Protection under Ukraine Visa Schemes

## A. Status and residence

### 1. Residence permit

#### Indicators: Residence permit

1. What is the duration of residence permits granted to beneficiaries of the Ukraine visa schemes?  
3 years
2. How many residence permits have been issued under the Ukraine visa schemes in 2023?
  - ❖ Ukraine Family Scheme  
26,784 applications had been made, with 9,672 grants and 12,000 arrivals
  - ❖ Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme  
44,124 applications had been made, with 32,095 grants and 30,300 arrivals
  - ❖ Ukraine Extension Scheme  
31,182 extensions have been granted since the scheme began.<sup>4849</sup>

There have been no reports of difficulties accessing Biometric Residence Permits (BRP) after arrival in the UK. The process is explained in information on the government's official website.<sup>50</sup> Depending on whether biometrics were given as part of the application, beneficiaries either collect their BRP or register to give biometrics, after which a BRP will be produced. This must be done within six months of arrival in the UK.

All schemes offer a three-year visa.

All beneficiaries have access to work and public funds. There is no requirement to pay the surcharge (as most visa beneficiaries do) to access the NHS.<sup>51</sup>

### 2. Access to asylum

Outside of the three visa schemes that persons displaced by the war may benefit from Ukrainians can claim asylum if they are present in the UK. No special arrangements have been made to process such claims. Government statistics show an increase in asylum claims in 2022 peaking with 472 initial asylum applications made by Ukrainians in the first quarter of 2022. There was a sharp rise in between the outbreak of the Russian invasion and the opening of the visa extension scheme but after that numbers dropped and in 2023 136 Ukrainians applied for asylum. Also in 2023 there were 649 grants of asylum made to initial applicants, 293 claims were deemed withdrawn, and 13 applications were refused.<sup>52</sup>

## B. Movement and mobility

There are no restrictions on freedom of movement within the UK.

<sup>48</sup> Home Office, 'National statistics – Safe and legal (humanitarian) routes to the UK', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mu2pbcss>.

<sup>49</sup> Home Office, 'National statistics – How many people do we grant protection to?', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/6dmb7mfe>.

<sup>50</sup> UK Visas and Immigration and Home Office, 'Apply for a visa under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) – After you've applied', last updated 13 April 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/3INCfHQ>.

<sup>51</sup> Minister of State at the Department of Health and Social Care, 'Outcome of the review of the NHS Charging Regulations exemption from Ukrainians', 24 October 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3oyyxef>.

<sup>52</sup> Home Office, 'Immigration system statistics data: Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement detailed datasets, year ending December 2023', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdhnwfr>.

There have been no reported issues for people wishing to temporarily return to Ukraine as the visa is not issued under a protection route.

## C. Housing

### 1. Sponsorship scheme / Homes for Ukraine

#### Indicators: Housing

1. For how long are persons granted a sponsorship visa entitled to stay in a UK household?  
Sponsors were asked to agree that the person/s sponsored could stay for a minimum of six months but there is no guarantee.<sup>53</sup>
2. How many displaced people are benefiting from the Ukraine sponsorship scheme?  
As of 11 March 2023, 224,500 applications had been made, with 181,600 grants and 144,700 arrivals<sup>54</sup>

The government surveyed sponsors in August 2023 and published experimental statistics which showed that around half (48%) of hosts had provided accommodation for 12 months or more. Almost all (99%) believed that their guests needed help to access private rental accommodation or to make other independent living arrangements. 31% of hosts reported bias or discrimination against Ukrainians by landlord or estate agencies.<sup>55</sup>

There is no guaranteed entitlement for length of stay. Sponsors are asked to commit to six months' minimum stay although this is not enforced.<sup>56</sup> Sponsors of unaccompanied children are asked to commit to the entire three years or until the child reaches 18 years of age.

Under the 'super sponsor' schemes in Scotland and Wales the government could identify accommodation of the beneficiary, whereas the overall scheme required the offer (and acceptance) of accommodation by an individual host before the visa is issued. Both super sponsor schemes have remained suspended since June 2022 (Wales)<sup>57</sup> and July (Scotland).<sup>58</sup>

Beneficiaries of the sponsor scheme and family scheme may turn to a local authority for assistance if the placement is no longer able to provide appropriate accommodation for them. A report by the National Audit Office found that data was not being recorded on how many people on the scheme were likely to become homeless soon or had already been homeless.<sup>59</sup> The government provided additional funding to local authorities to prevent homelessness, for example by providing temporary accommodation.<sup>60</sup>

Private accommodation is assessed for suitability by the relevant local authority. A 'thank-you' payment of £ 350 per week (EUR 408) is paid to the host for the first year, which then increases to £ 500

<sup>53</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Ending your hosting arrangements, and helping your guest with their next steps: Homes for Ukraine', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9tttmd>.

<sup>54</sup> Home Office, 'Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) and Ukraine Extension Scheme, accessed 20 March 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3tss6ahj>.

<sup>55</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Experiences of Homes for Ukraine scheme sponsors, UK: 10 to 21 August 2023', 4 October 2023, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/27v2ax7n>.

<sup>56</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Ending your hosting arrangements, and helping your guest with their next steps: Homes for Ukraine', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9tttmd>.

<sup>57</sup> Welsh Government, 'Super Sponsor', available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yja2s4j5>.

<sup>58</sup> Scottish Government, 'Visa sponsorship for Ukrainians coming to Scotland' last updated 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5t4dzucn>.

<sup>59</sup> National Audit Office, 'Investigation into the Homes for Ukraine Scheme', 17 October 2023, available at: <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/investigation-into-the-homes-for-ukraine-scheme/>.

<sup>60</sup> Public Accounts Committee, 'Homes for Ukraine: Risk of homelessness in scheme likely to increase, PAC report warns', pages 12-13, 23 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2m53b977>.

(EUR 582).<sup>61</sup> Hosts were asked to commit to a six-month minimum stay but this is not enforced.<sup>62</sup> Some NGOs have been approved as suitable to 'match' sponsors and hosts;<sup>63</sup> this was established following reports of irresponsible and inappropriate matching often using social media.<sup>64</sup>

Concerns have been raised by a governmental committee about the risk of homelessness among Ukrainians, particularly where the sponsor arrangement breaks down or ends.<sup>65</sup> Another report has looked at experiences of exploitation by those who came to the UK under the Sponsorship scheme, and how housing insecurity has contributed to this.<sup>66</sup>

## 2. Family visa scheme and extension scheme

Those granted leave in these two categories are able to rent privately as well as access social housing and homelessness assistance.<sup>67</sup>

### D. Employment and education

#### 1. Access to the labour market

Visa beneficiaries are permitted to work in the UK.

Some employers made statements welcoming Ukrainians<sup>68</sup> and developed specific schemes.<sup>69</sup> The UK government assisted with information and some matching.<sup>70</sup> In March 2024 a new scheme was launched providing skills training from top technology companies for Ukrainians in the UK.<sup>71</sup>

Persons granted visas are entitled to equal treatment to nationals with regard to employment. Data for the period March 2022 to December 2023 shows the number of Ukrainians who had been issued with a National Insurance Number (required to work and claim benefits in the UK) since March 2022 and who then started paying tax through employment, broken down by age, gender and region. At the end of December 2023 there were 52,250 Ukrainians working and this comprised 37,850 females and 14,400 males. The largest age group was 35 to 44 years old of whom there were 20,350. The region with the highest number of employed Ukrainians at the end of December 2023 was London with 12,750.<sup>72</sup>

There are no specific exemptions from qualification recognition for Ukrainians.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Paying sponsors: Homes for Ukraine', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y66mwth7>.

<sup>62</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Ending your hosting arrangements, and helping your guest with their next steps: Homes for Ukraine', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2p9tttmd>.

<sup>63</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Recognised Providers: Organisations who can help UK citizens become sponsors', 6 May 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3N2Cxti>.

<sup>64</sup> Rajeev Syal, 'Stop matching lone female Ukraine refugees with single men, UK told', 13 April 2022, *The Guardian*, available at: <https://bit.ly/43vyMp5>.

<sup>65</sup> Public Accounts Committee, 'Homes for Ukraine: Risk of homelessness in scheme likely to increase, PAC report warns', 23 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2m53b977>.

<sup>66</sup> Focus on Labour Exploitation, 'From exploitation risks to mitigations: looking back locally on the implementation of the UK's Ukraine schemes', 21 March 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2upxn68h>.

<sup>67</sup> Shelter, 'Housing rights of people displaced by the war in Ukraine', accessed 21 March 2023, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5da65ftd>.

<sup>68</sup> HR World, 'Four in five businesses welcome applications from Ukrainian refugees', 6 April 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3IKotWe>.

<sup>69</sup> Financial Times, 'UK companies join scheme helping Ukrainian refugees find jobs', available at: <https://bit.ly/3WGoQH7>.

<sup>70</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Guidance for businesses offering work to people coming from Ukraine', 6 May 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3MXL5oJ>.

<sup>71</sup> GOV.UK, 'UK-Ukraine TechBridge launches skills training for tech careers', 14 March 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/33b48ddk>.

<sup>72</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Analysis of Ukrainian nationals entering employment in the UK', 29 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yj8vdppn>.

<sup>73</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 'Guidance for businesses offering work to people coming from Ukraine', 19 February 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/563zchw5>.

## 2. Access to education

Access to education up to age 18 is provided under the terms of the visa under the same conditions as nationals.

In **England** data was published in October 2022<sup>74</sup> showing that 20,500 children had been offered a school place. Although the data was from a limited number of local authorities, it was also shown as a percentage of applications made to those local authorities (92%).

Data is not available from the other nations.

There are no limitations to accessing education in law. Resources have been developed for the purpose of assisting children to access education<sup>75</sup> and funding is provided to local authorities in England.<sup>76</sup> Information for those wishing to access the Ukrainian curriculum are signposted towards the document produced by Ukraine's Parliament.<sup>77</sup>

The law provides access to education and vocational training for adults/ young people but differences in provision occur according to local factors e.g. availability of ESOL classes.<sup>78</sup>

Beneficiaries of the visa schemes can access higher education as 'home students' i.e. equal eligibility to UK citizens) in all nations of the UK.<sup>79</sup>

Regional variations can apply to ease of access to education post 18, particularly as some beneficiaries may be hosted in areas with little specialist provision.

## E. Social welfare

The law provides access to public funds including access to social welfare, in all four nations.<sup>80</sup>

The law was changed to exempt Ukraine visa scheme beneficiaries from the 'habitual residence test' which can restrict access to those arriving in the UK from overseas for the initial months of their residence.<sup>81</sup>

The Department for Work and Pensions administers Universal Credit and other financial assistance. Housing is granted through local authorities.

Language limitations and unfamiliarity with systems can impede access although it is notable that there is much more advice aimed specifically at Ukrainians including translated information, than for other non-UK nationals. Sponsors and hosts are also encouraged to assist.

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<sup>74</sup> UK government, 'School placements for children from outside of the UK', 13 October 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ovkfer>.

<sup>75</sup> Department for Education, 'Resources to help support children and young people arriving from Ukraine', 28 September 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/43t34Ja>.

<sup>76</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department for Education, 'Homes for Ukraine education and childcare grant conditions of funding', 24 February 2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/3N1ZYGE>.

<sup>77</sup> Child.Wales, *Information education sources for Ukrainian children*, March 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3MZXlnJ>.

<sup>78</sup> GOV.UK, 'Find an ESOL class outside London', accessed 19 March 2024, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5cu4szjs>.

<sup>79</sup> House of Commons Library, 'Support for students from Ukraine in UK higher education', 20 December 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/43tqrSS>.

<sup>80</sup> e.g. Welfare Reform Act 2012, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ymac7dmz>.

<sup>81</sup> The Social Security (Habitual Residence and Past Presence) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/48vsh27z>.

There is no information on the number of persons granted visas under the Ukraine schemes who had accessed different forms of social welfare as of 31 December 2023.

## F. Health care

Persons granted support under the Ukraine visa schemes have access to all health care in England other than assisted conception services.<sup>82</sup>

Access is the same as nationals in whichever country the beneficiary resides e.g. everyone living in **Wales** has free prescriptions. Dental charges have been waived for Ukrainians displaced and living in **Scotland**.

Gaps in health provision e.g. waiting times for treatment, timely access to mental health support, vary across regions<sup>83</sup> and whilst displaced Ukrainians may face additional barriers, additional help e.g. the establishment of mental health helplines and translated information<sup>84</sup> are examples of good practice.

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<sup>82</sup> Minister of State at the Department of Health and Social Care, 'Outcome of the review of the NHS Charging Regulations exemption for Ukrainians', 24 October 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3oyyxef>.

<sup>83</sup> Community Health Services Waiting Lists, accessed 19 March, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdxcbhmy>.

<sup>84</sup> NHS inform, 'A guide to NHS Scotland Services for displaced persons from Ukraine (Ukrainian)', last updated 6 April 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/45yBiga>; NHS England, 'Meeting the initial health needs of people arriving in the UK from Ukraine', last updated 6 October 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3MD9FK9>.