



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Homes for Ukraine: guidance for local authorities

Advice on how public bodies can support the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

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Overview and purpose

Wales is the first ever 'Nation of Sanctuary'. As people from Ukraine arrive in Wales we want to ensure that they are supported with a full wrap-around service that ensures their safety, sanctuary and access to public services to support them.

Local authorities have a critical role to play in the support for people from Ukraine arriving in Wales, and are uniquely placed to support local communities to offer these people the warmest possible welcome on their arrival.

This guidance aims to provide information for local authorities on their roles in the delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Wales in relation to individual sponsors. The guidance will be updated as new information emerges.

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The UK Government has created two new visa routes for people from Ukraine: the **Ukraine Family Scheme** and the **Homes for Ukraine Scheme**.

This guidance focuses on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (the Scheme) for people fleeing Ukraine who do not have familial ties with anyone in the UK, and outlines the role of local authorities across Wales in supporting the Scheme.

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

Scheme guidance for individual sponsors has been published which will also be regularly updated. The Welsh Government's **Sanctuary** website provides welcome information for people arriving from Ukraine, including links to a range of other services. It is envisaged that local authorities will include further information on their own local services on their websites.

Background

The UK Government designed the Homes for Ukraine scheme to enable people to offer accommodation for a minimum of six months and for that offer to be matched to people from Ukraine wanting to come to the UK. The sponsor and person from Ukraine need to connect outside the system and nominate each other during the application process. An organisation called **RESET** has been commissioned by the UK Government to help facilitate links between people from Ukraine and sponsors who have no prior connections.

The Scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and also to their immediate family members (for example spouse/partner and children under 18) who may be of other nationalities, to be sponsored to come to the UK.

Applicants can apply from Ukraine or from any other third country.

The number of people who can access the Schemes is uncapped. People from Ukraine will be able to live and work in Wales for up to three years and access

benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.

Checks

Those arriving under the Scheme will have met standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa. Sponsors and all adults in sponsors' households will also be subject to initial Police National Computer (PNC), criminal records and Warnings Index checks by the Home Office.

We are aware that PNC checks will only identify individuals who have been subject to arrest, remand, conviction or warning markers. The Welsh Government are working with Police partners in Wales to establish whether we can secure information from the PND (Police National Database) that will identify whether any information is held on an individual, including warnings and intelligence that would cause us concern about their suitability to act as a sponsors.

Local authorities will be required to undertake basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for all adults in the sponsor household. In cases where the incoming arrivals include children and/or vulnerable adults, an enhanced DBS with barred lists check will be required promptly for each adult in the sponsor household. Wherever possible, these should be completed before people start living in a sponsor's household. However, this may not always be achievable.

Sponsors in Wales can be of any nationality, with any immigration status, provided they have at least six months' leave to remain within the UK and pass the background checks.

Accommodation

Sponsors must provide accommodation for a minimum of 6 months. Sponsors can also receive an optional 'thank you' payment of £350 per month for up to the first 12 months of sponsorship. This payment is limited to one monthly payment per residential address, regardless of the number of individuals sponsored.

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Payments will stop when the sponsorship ends, or after 12 months whichever occurs first.

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

Wrap-around support

There is the potential for a significant number of people to find sanctuary in Wales and we want to make sure local authorities, other public services and the third sector are fully involved so we can ensure all the wrap-around support is in place for people fleeing the conflict.

Where people come to Wales through individual sponsorship arrangements, data will be obtained from the UK Government systems and shared with local authorities as soon as possible. The Welsh Government will work with local authorities, local health boards and other partners to ensure support and services are available.

Application process and phases

The Scheme will be rolled out in phases. Initially, individual members of the public can sponsor someone from Ukraine who meets the eligibility criteria for this Scheme. In later phases, the Welsh Government, organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple people.

On 14 March 2022, [people from Ukraine could register their interest online](#). Potential sponsors (individuals and organisations) could also register their interest in sponsoring someone.

In addition, from 25 March 2022, the Welsh Government will become a super sponsor and able to directly sponsor people to come to the UK (see phase 2 below).

Phase 1: individuals sponsoring named individuals

On Friday 18 March 2022, a Home Office form opened for visa applications. Sponsors at this stage must be specific individuals.

In this phase, either the person coming from Ukraine or a sponsor will be able to complete a single application for a visa. The form will ask the person completing it to name both parties. A separate form must be completed for each person from Ukraine, even if one sponsor is taking in a number of people.

Sponsors and people coming from Ukraine will find each other and match themselves externally. There is no single route to matching, and both could use a number of channels to find a match. They could for example already have a relationship in place with a friend in the UK/Ukraine, they could be friends of friends, or could find a sponsor or individual through a non-governmental organisation (NGO), charity, or other channel.

The process is as follows:

1. Sponsor and person coming from Ukraine find each other and agree to a match.
2. Either the sponsor or the individual fills out the single visa application form online using both parties' details.
3. Passport numbers (alongside completion of eligibility questions and other personal details) for both individuals and sponsors will be required to complete the application online. The individual will also need to upload a scan of their passport. If they do not possess a passport, they will be required to travel to a visa application centre to process their biometrics.
4. After the application is submitted, security checks are done on both the sponsor, all other adults in the sponsor's household, and the person arriving from Ukraine.
5. Once both sponsor and person arriving from Ukraine have passed the checks, the Home Office will issue the individual with a permit to travel.
6. The individual can then travel to the UK and coordinate their arrival with the sponsor.

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

The Welsh Government is undertaking further work on the safeguarding process around individual sponsors and the adults in their households.

Phase 2: Welsh Government as super sponsor

From 25 March 2022, the Welsh Government will become a super sponsor under this scheme, able to directly sponsor people to come to the UK. This will be through a structured arrival and integration process in Wales. The Welsh Government is working with a range of partners including local authorities and other public, voluntary and private sector organisations to source Welcome Centres across Wales. From these, the intention is that people from Ukraine will then go on to medium and longer term accommodation, including through the individual ‘hosting’ offers from people in Wales.

Separate guidance will be prepared on the role of local authorities in relation to people entering Wales through this route.

Phase 3: Organisations as sponsors

In later phases organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple people.

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

Role of sponsors

Sponsors are required to:

- provide suitable accommodation for a minimum of 6 months

- stay in regular contact with the person they are sponsoring prior to their arrival to help organise and coordinate their arrival in the UK, where possible meet them on arrival, and facilitate transfer to their accommodation. Note: Arrival Hubs are also being put in place to provide immediate support on arrival if people require it (see section below)
- signpost the person to public services and assist them with tasks such as registering with a local GP surgery.

Further information on the role of sponsors is set out in the [Scheme guidance for individual sponsors](#).

Role of local authorities

Local authorities have a number of important functions in supporting Ukrainian people coming to Wales.

For the Homes for Ukraine scheme, local authorities will be expected to offer the categories of support listed below.

Initial reception

The Welsh Government is working with local authorities to establish Arrival Hubs at particular ports of entry and across Wales to support any short-term arrival needs. The local authorities in these areas will work with the [Wales Strategic Migration Partnership](#) and the [voluntary sector](#) to develop reception arrangements, and may request support of Local Resilience Forums.

These arrangements would include basic meet and greet arrangements as well as the ability to provide immediate humanitarian assistance (which could include small amounts of emergency cash support, separate to the pre-Universal Credit support for example, the interim payment detailed below).

From 20 March 2022, the UKG announced a scheme that enables people from Ukraine arriving in the UK to be eligible for a single onward journey via national

rail, bus, light rail, and coach. This will be free of charge to anywhere in England, Scotland and Wales.

In addition, in Wales, Transport for Wales (TfW) has established a six-month scheme to enable people from Ukraine to travel free on any TfW services, after showing their passport to conductors and station staff.

Also, a free bus scheme, called 'Welcome Ticket', will also be available to people coming from Ukraine, providing unlimited free travel on the majority of local bus services across Wales and those operating to England if they start or finish in Wales. The 'Welcome Ticket' scheme is a voluntary scheme in which bus companies volunteer to participate and will initially run for six months as from 26 March 2022. A list of the scheme's full 'Terms and Conditions' as well as 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ's) and a list of participating bus companies will be made available on the Welsh Government's website.

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

Data sharing

The Welsh Government is receiving data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) about sponsors/people who have applied for visas (including the accommodation address). The Welsh Government is providing local authorities with regular updates on sponsors and approved applicants via a secure file transfer. Queries on the data received should be sent to data@gov.wales.

Safeguarding checks

We have a shared duty of care to ensure that people arriving in Wales from Ukraine are protected from risk of abuse or neglect. We also have responsibilities to safeguard people in households where people from Ukraine will live.

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Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote the wellbeing of adults and children at risk and reserve the right to check in on individuals and inspect accommodation once they have arrived. The sponsor guidance makes clear that prospective sponsors will be subject to accommodation and safeguarding checks.

The checks outlined must be conducted as soon as possible after the local authority has been alerted that a visa application has been made. Best endeavours should be used to conduct the checks before arrival, recognising that this will not be possible in all circumstances. Local authorities must make at least one in-person visit either before or shortly after a person has arrived, to confirm that the accommodation is suitable and the person is well and that there are no serious safeguarding, or welfare concerns.

As no rent is payable for accommodation under the scheme, we therefore do not expect local authorities to require such accommodation to obtain a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) license (per the HMO definition in the Housing Act 2004, S.254 (2)(e)). Local authorities must also undertake basic DBS checks on all adults in the sponsor household. In households where there are incoming arrivals who are children and/or vulnerable adults, an enhanced DBS check with barred lists check will be required for all adults in the sponsor household.

Read the [guidance on safeguarding and modern slavery](#).

Unaccompanied children

Some unaccompanied children will arrive in Wales as unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). We are working with the Home Office to establish arrangements for the resettlement of children from Ukraine. We will update local authorities when more information becomes available. Arrangements are already well established and [guidance and practice advice is available](#).

Some unaccompanied children will arrive in Wales to stay with family members who already live here. Private fostering arrangements may apply. We will discuss this further with local authority Children's Services partners.

Local authorities are reminded that they are able to seek advice via [Children And Families Across Borders CFAB | UK Branch of International Social Services](#).

Interim payment

The local authority where the sponsor accommodation is located should provide an interim payment of £200 per person for subsistence costs. The £200 payment is factored into the tariff (see 'Funding for local authorities') and does not need to be repaid. Local authorities will have discretion within the tariff to top-up or further support people with interim or additional payments.

Provision of education

Local authorities are required to provide school places for children of school age. Local authorities will be paid additional funding to support with this, further details are set out below.

Childcare

[Help with childcare costs](#) is available from both the UK and Welsh Government. Local authorities should provide advice on available family support services through their Family Information Service.

Service referrals

All families arriving from Ukraine will be able to register with a GP and access mainstream health services – this includes mental health services. Health support for those arriving in Wales will be provided in line with the [Welsh Government 2018 Guidance for Health Boards on the Health and Wellbeing of Asylum Seekers and Refugees](#). Where necessary, local authorities should work with local health boards to signpost advice and referral pathways to specialist public health services as appropriate, for example for vaccinations

(including the Covid-19 vaccination) or screening.

Advice on further support services such as initial stabilisation, counselling and mental health support, adult social care, and children's services should be provided as needed. The Welsh Government has translated materials into Ukrainian and Russian to support the mental health and initial stabilisation of those arriving from Ukraine, which are being published on the [Traumatic Stress Wales](#) website. [The Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) has also published specific support materials to help with stabilisation during the initial resettlement phase.

[The CALL Mental Health Helpline](#) is also available to support those arriving in Wales and their families. CALL has access to Language Line and can be used when someone would prefer to access help in a language other than English and Welsh.

Work and Benefits

Local authorities should support people to access local Jobcentre Plus appointments for benefit assessments and job-seeking. The UK Government laid legislation that come into force on 21 March 2022 to exempt people who come into the UK from Ukraine from having to satisfy the habitual residence test and past presence test (which requires a person to live in the UK for three months before they can claim certain benefits). This legislation covers all the main welfare benefits, such as universal credit, pension credit and housing benefit, personal independence payment, child disability living allowance, carer's allowance, and attendance allowance. Legislation has also been laid to ensure people from Ukraine can access Child Benefit from the day they arrive in the UK.

Emergency accommodation

There may be some cases where the sponsor/guest relationship breaks down and the individual is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Local authorities' statutory homelessness duties will apply in this instance. People may also arrive and be unable to immediately reach their sponsor accommodation or Welcome Centre and require to be housed overnight in emergency accommodation. Local

authorities will be expected to provide appropriate emergency accommodation, or find alternative accommodation locally, working with their Local Resilience Fora.

We recognise the existing pressure on temporary accommodation across Wales and would not expect those fleeing Ukraine to be prioritised above those others in temporary accommodation through our 'no-one left out' approach. If there is sustained demand for emergency accommodation which exceeds local provision then local authorities should raise with the Welsh Government through the Relationship Managers working with local authority homelessness teams. The issue of provision of emergency accommodation, and longer term accommodation options, will continue to be explored in partnership with local government.

Community integration

Local authorities will play a key role in supporting the integration of people from Ukraine into their local communities. This will be particularly important in areas of the country that might not have strong links with the Ukrainian diaspora. A Ukrainian links reference group has been established and will be a useful source of support.

Integration support might include the organisation of community events, the use of community champions and interfaith networks, increasing local authority contact/interaction with Ukrainians, access to translation services and working with local voluntary sector organisations and faith groups to help signpost advice and support.

Administering payments to sponsors

Sponsors will be eligible for an optional 'thank you payment' of £350 per month, as long as the sponsorship arrangement exists, for up to 12 months in total. There will be a maximum of one monthly payment per address paid in arrears, regardless of the number of people being hosted, and regardless of size or

location of the property, including determining how local authorities will be notified when the sponsor arrangement ends.

Local authorities will administer these ‘thank you’ payments to sponsors. This payment will be tax free and should not affect the sponsor’s entitlement to benefits or local authority tax status. Payments must not be released to sponsors until property checks have been completed. The [Homes for Ukraine Guidance for Sponsors](#) in Wales includes guidance on expectations on accommodation as an annex, which local authorities will wish to be aware of. We will continue to work closely with local authorities on the delivery of these payments.

Wider support

Local authorities should consider whether they could support, or work with the third sector to support, sponsors in helping the person or family they are sponsoring to settle in. This could include assisting those who are eligible to access financial support, opening a bank account, finding work, and registering with a GP and dentist.

Funding for local authorities

The UK Government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person, including those community health services local authorities normally commission, for the first year, to support families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities, which will be administered in Wales by the Welsh Government. The UK Government has not been specific whether there will be funding beyond the first year.

The expectation is that local authorities will also administer the ‘thank you’ payments at the £350 per sponsoring household per month rate (which are in addition to the £10,500). The Welsh Government will ensure local authorities receive the appropriate amount of funding for these payments, but expect councils to cover administration costs.

Additional funding will be provided to local authorities to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine, again for the first year initially, on a per pupil basis for the three phases of education at the following annual rates:

- early years (ages 2 to 4): £3,000
- primary (ages 5 to 11): £6,580
- secondary (ages 11 to 18): £8,755.

This includes support for children with special educational needs (SEN).

We expect local authorities to use this funding to meet all of their associated costs (both for providing council services and for administering payments). We recognise, however, that a small number of local authorities may incur additional essential costs above and beyond what could reasonably be regarded as normal expenditure and not available through other mainstream funding mechanisms. We are prepared to consider the case for further funding and are prepared to initially consider claims for such costs on an exceptional basis only, but will carefully monitor these cost implications.

Further details on how the funding will operate will be shared shortly.

Future supplementary guidance

The guidance set out above will be updated and expanded with further detail as the Welsh Government works with local authorities on the detail of their role in the schemes to support people from Ukraine being hosted in Wales.

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