

HOMES FOR UKRAINE: A GUIDE FOR HOSTS

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Purpose of this guide

This guide aims to provide information for those who are already hosting Ukrainian refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, or are planning to do so. This guide has been developed by a team of volunteers within [Ukrainian London](#) initiative and is being constantly updated.

The information draws on important work by organisations working with refugees from all around the world under similar schemes, including [City of Sanctuary](#), [VITA Network](#), and [The No Accommodation Network \(NACCOM\)](#).

This is not a definitive guide but tries to flag key issues to consider but also tries to capture existing resources in one place. For example, the [How2Uk](#) and [Asylum Welcome](#) websites are also good general resources on some questions you might have.

Feedback on this Guide:

Please send us your feedback on this guide (if you noticed any errors, or think we should add more details) via this email uk.for.ukrainians@gmail.com

Before your guests arrive

There are various practical steps you can undertake to prepare for your Ukrainian guests' arrival, from administrative matters to researching Ukraine and Ukrainian culture. You can also prepare your home for your guests by stocking it with certain items that will make them feel welcome.

Practicalities

- Before hosting you should **provide information** to your potential guests about yourself and your family. This includes the number of people in your household, and information on pets. Make sure they do not have any allergies, and also find out if they have pets.
- Consider **sending photos** of yourself and your home and the room(s) available to them. Photos of the local area may also be helpful. This can provide some reassurance to your guests, who may have no idea what to expect and are likely to be very nervous.
- **Prepare the room(s)** where they will be staying, ideally removing as many of your possessions as possible so that they can make themselves feel at home. At a minimum, you should remove any items you will need access to, so that you do not need to enter their room. If possible, provide some towels, sheets and toiletries for them, as they may not have such items at the time of arrival.
- If possible, also **prepare a storage space** for their possessions. Some people may come with several suitcases; others will have only a small bag. Also consider providing

designated space for food in the kitchen/fridge, as well as space to cook their own meals.

- Talk to your guests, if possible, to **understand whether they need anything** in advance—some local charities are providing goods for refugee arrivals. Establish what level of English they have, if any, and whether they have visited the UK before or know people in the country. If helpful, identify volunteer translators to help. There may also be free English courses on offer nearby. It would also be useful to find out what job they had in Ukraine.
- Check if you need to update your **home and contents insurance**. For example, some companies, such as [Aviva](#), do not require you to do so, saying that the refugee(s) will be guest(s).
- If they are bringing pets, please [make sure that they have all documentation required](#) to enter the UK for their pet. The animals will be quarantined for weeks if they lack documentation. If they have any questions, they may contact the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Telephone: 03000 200301, Email: PetTravel@apha.gov.uk; Website: www.gov.uk/apha

Local support networks

In most cities and towns, there are local coordinators helping to arrange support services, networking and other practical arrangements for Ukrainian refugees.

If you do not already know them, **make contact with your local group** to let them know you have a guest coming. Most of these are organised on Facebook by volunteers. You can join the nearest Facebook group, contact the organisers, and learn if there are any events planned for either hosts or refugees. If you don't know your local group, we suggest that you search Facebook for your local borough (if in London) or town or council.

These groups may be strongest outside London. Inside London, we recommend [Ukrainian Institute London's website](#), which has constantly updated links for social services, events, networks and other important information, as well as many volunteers to support the Ukrainian community in London.

Your Guests' Arrival in the UK

Meeting your guests

Your guests will probably not have any support navigating the UK's transport system upon arrival. If at all possible, meet your arrival at the earliest point in their journey that is feasible for you; if possible at the Eurostar station or the airport.

If it's not possible to meet them upon entry, then provide detailed instructions on how to navigate UK public transport, including maps and/or routes that you can link via Google Maps.

Free transport within 48 hours of arrival

The Eurostar and National Rail have said they will allow Ukrainians to travel for free:

- [Eurostar's travel is free](#) only from any Eurostar station to St. Pancras in London (not within France/Belgium/elsewhere). Please note pets are not allowed on these trains.
- **Most public travel options are free** for Ukrainians for 48 hours after their arrival. This includes all trains in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as the Tube, DLR and buses in London. To make use of this scheme, a person will need to show their Ukrainian passport and a boarding pass or ticket showing their arrival date in the UK. [This site has more information](#) (including in Ukrainian).

Traveling with pets

As noted above, pets are not allowed on the Eurostar, and airlines do not allow pets in the cabin. If your guests would like to keep their pets with them throughout their journey, the only option is to travel by car to the UK. (Some European airlines allow pets, especially Air France.)

Pet insurance

Your guests may also wish to consider insurance for their pets. [Petplan has announced](#) it would provide insurance to Ukrainians arriving in the UK for free.

Respecting new arrivals' needs

Trauma is covered more broadly below, but be aware that your guests will have travelled a long distance to get to the UK. Allow yourself to be guided by what they want to do upon arrival, but consider offering them options i.e. to explore the local area or rest at home. Avoid options that might overwhelm them, such as introducing them to lots of new people on day one.

Many Ukrainians have never been to the UK, and some may have never travelled abroad before. They may know very little about what their life will be like here. Help them ease into their new life. Help acquaint them with British culture where possible.

It is also common for people to be more energetic when they first arrive, but then to face a drop in energy after some time (days, hours, etc.). This may be because this is the first safe place the person has been in for weeks or months, and a lack of energy may be a normal response to this. Allow them to rest.

Media may be interested in the stories of Ukrainian refugees and might contact hosts regarding this. Some refugees may be willing to do this, but others may not. Be sensitive when discussing

this if it becomes relevant. Even if you decide as a host to provide information, it is considerate to consult your guest.

Navigating the UK

Navigating bureaucracy in a foreign language to access public services can be daunting. If you have the time, you could offer to assist your guest to fill in any necessary applications and forms, for example to register for a GP. There are a number of NGOs that assist migrants in accessing public services, such as the Work Rights Centre, that can also help with refugees.

- **Schools:** This [Government guide](#) (in Ukrainian) gives advice on applying for a school place and childcare. The Good Schools Guide (a guide covering independent schools) also has [a useful guide](#) to finding a school place in the UK. Your Local Authority will be able to provide information on local state schools with places available in the child's age group.
- **Other educational resources:** Reports [indicate](#) that Oak National Academy is translating some lessons/resources online into Russian and Ukrainian to assist childrens' transition.
- **Learning English:** adults coming to the UK on Ukrainian humanitarian sponsorship visa (Homes for Ukraine) or on Ukrainian family visa may be able to access free English lessons funded by the UK Government. This type of learning provision is called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and is funded up to level 2 (which is broadly an intermediate level). This learning is fully funded for learners who are unemployed or are on low income, and subsidised for everyone else. Your local ESOL provider is likely to be your local authority or a local college. If you are in London, you can find a provider near you [here](#).
- **GP Registration:** Doctors of the World has useful information on the NHS in [Ukrainian](#) and [Russian](#). If possible, you could offer to accompany your guests when they attend the GP surgery to register. You should encourage them to do this as soon as possible so that they can access medical services as required. [Some GP practices](#) are simplifying the procedure for Ukrainian refugees to register, and it is worth enquiring if there is any particular assistance on this.
- Other resources (covering legal advice and other matters) are available on [the City of Sanctuary page here](#).
- Many universities and colleges are offering Sanctuary Scholarship places to a certain number of Ukrainian (and other) refugees. If you have a person interested in studying, you may check the local university's website.

Trauma

Refugees from Ukraine will have experienced trauma, having either directly experienced conflict or been exposed to secondary trauma through their friends' and family's experiences. Their emotional reactions may be unpredictable; trauma comes in waves. Some people may be

irritable or emotional, while others may be distant or subdued. Children in particular will struggle to understand what has happened and why they have left their homes and families.

Your guest's experience could mean that talking about the war and broader politics linked to Russia's invasion is difficult and sensitive. It is good to take a steer from your guests on how far they might or might not want to discuss such issues but also requires some thought around framing questions you might have about where they are from and what they've experienced. Creating a safe and respectful environment when talking to them will help build trust. Keep in mind that exposure to television and news reports from Ukraine may also be distressing for your guests. Also be sensitive to posting photos you might take with them on social media.

The British Red Cross has information on signs of adult and child trauma in adults and [children](#), and provides information of organisations working to support individuals experiencing this. Please familiarise yourself with it and also consider sharing it with your guest so they can review it on their own. Other British Red Cross resources are [here](#). Some organisations are offering free or discounted counselling to refugees.

Work, Benefits and Bank Accounts

There will likely be delays in payments from the government to you and your guests. Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, and your guests are entitled to benefits, but neither of these will be immediate.

Some useful information on work and benefits for Ukrainian refugees can be found [here](#).

Payments to hosts

Hosts are entitled to £350 per month. It is currently not clear how quickly this will be paid. However, the [Government's FAQ site states](#) that hosting Ukrainians will not affect any discounts the hosts have on council tax (e.g. for being a single resident etc.). It will also not affect any benefits payments hosts may be receiving.

Interim payments and benefits for Ukrainians

The [Government's FAQ site states](#) that Councils are meant to provide a £200 interim payment to arriving Ukrainians, although the details of how this will be disbursed likely vary by council.

These funds are to support refugees whilst they apply for a National Insurance number and benefits (see below).

National Insurance number

Ukrainian nationals will need a national insurance number before they can apply for a job. They can apply for this here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>.

Benefits

Ukrainian refugees have the right to benefits on the same basis as British nationals. Ukrainians who are not employed or are on low incomes are entitled to Universal Credit. This can be applied for [here](#).

The [Work Rights Centre](#) provides free advice in Russian and Ukrainian on how to access these benefits. It is likely to take several weeks to get an NI number and then to register for benefits. Government information on access to benefits for Ukrainian refugees is [available here](#).

If your guests have children you should inform them that they are entitled to child benefit, and if possible assist them with making an application. The government states that it can take up to 16 weeks for an application to be processed, or longer if you are new to the UK, so an application should be made as soon as possible (payments are backdated). This can be [done here](#).

The benefits any individual will be able to receive will depend on his or her circumstances. In general, the current rates of benefits in England & Wales are:

- Maximum allowance for a single person under 25 years old: £257 per month (approx.)
- Maximum allowance for a single person over 25 years old: £325 per month (approx.)
- Additional benefit for a person caring for someone who is on disability benefits: £163 per month (approx.)
- Additional benefit for children: £237 per child per month (approx.)

(There are other rates in other parts of the country, e.g. Scotland or Northern Ireland, etc.)

There are additional benefits if you are renting housing privately, but this depends on where you are renting. You can search for different rates by postal code here:

<https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx>.

Refugees may also be eligible for pension credit if they are over the age of 66 and disability benefits if they have a long-term physical or mental health condition.

Citizens Advice has more information on universal credit on their website:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/universal-credit/>. This organization can support Ukrainians to claim universal credit once you have arrived. You can find their phone numbers here: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/help-to-claim/>. When you call, you can ask for a translator. They work 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Work

All Ukrainian nationals who come to the UK under the Homes for Ukraine scheme have the right to work. Hosts can assist Ukrainian refugees in trying to find work. Researching vacancies is a big help. The government has made it easier for [employers to hire](#) Ukrainians.

[Remote Ukraine](#) assists Ukrainians in finding remote working opportunities.

A [job opportunities](#) page has also been set up by [Ukrainian Institute London](#) and [United for Ukraine](#) volunteers. [Jobs for Ukraine](#) collates academic, scientific, arts, professional and freelance opportunities in multiple countries.

Bank accounts, communications and other resources

Note that your guests may have little or no money when they arrive in the UK and may be facing real financial hardship. Ukrainian nationals may not be able to access their bank accounts or convert money into sterling. As noted earlier, refugees will not receive benefit payments for several weeks after their arrival.

Natwest and RBS have introduced a special account for Ukrainian arrivals. More information about [Natwest can be found here](#); about [RBS here](#). There are information sheets in Ukrainian and Russian on these sites.

To open these accounts, Ukrainians will need to go to the branch. Depending on the level of English your guests have, you may wish to go with them to the branch, as it can be difficult to navigate this without sufficient language skills.

You may also want to help your guest(s) with acquiring a UK sim card. [Mobile company Three](#) offers any incoming refugees from the country will be able to visit any of Three UK stores to get a free 30-day [Pay As You Go](#) SIM card preloaded with unlimited domestic calls and texts, as well as [unlimited data](#) for use within the UK. [Vodafone](#) is offering a similar service but your guest will need to access this via a charity.

Helping guests identify local food banks or voucher options will be useful. Similarly find charities offering clothing or goods. For example, Boden [is offering](#) free clothes for children.

Cultural awareness on Ukraine

Rather than overwhelm, this section seeks simply to flag that an awareness of Ukraine's culture and recent history will no doubt help you in terms of conflict sensitivity but also understanding guests.

Russia-Ukraine relations: Russia and Ukraine have been locked in conflict since 2014. 2014 saw the Maidan protests (known as the 'Revolution of Dignity' in Ukraine); the fall of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich's government; Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in

response; and the start of a war between Ukrainian Armed Forces and Russian-backed ‘separatists’ in eastern Ukraine. Although Russia’s recent invasion of Ukraine is on a different scale to anything preceding it, having some knowledge of the background helps frame it.

Here are some things to consider watching/reading not only for historical, but also cultural, awareness:

- The documentary Winter on Fire (Netflix)
- BBC Analysis: ‘Why has Russia invaded Ukraine and what does Putin want?’
- Everyone Loses: The Ukraine Crisis and the Ruinous Contest for Post-Soviet Eurasia by Samuel Charap and Timothy J Colton
- In Wartime: Stories from Ukraine by Tim Judah
- Fiction by Serhiy Zhadan, Yevgenia Belorusets, Andrey Kurkov, or Oksana Zabuzhko
- The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation by Andrew Wilson
- Borderland by Anna Reid

Fact-check news: The Russian state in particular is promoting a false propaganda campaign to justify Moscow’s invasion. But disinformation is not just limited to the Russian state. Corroborate wherever possible.

Language: many people from Ukraine speak both Russian and Ukrainian, but the balance is not necessarily uniform. In the West, people tend to speak Ukrainian. In the East, people tend to speak Russian. Many are bilingual and don’t think about switching between the two. Yet, given events, language can be a more political and sensitive question for some people. If a Ukrainian person speaks Russian, it does not mean they support Russia. Identity issues are very nuanced and can be complex. If possible, find out about the specific region your guest is from, in particular to understand if military action took place or is taking place there. Also, trying to learn at least a few phrases in their language would be useful.

<u>English</u>	Ukrainian	Russian
Hello	Pryvit	Privyet
Welcome	Laskavo prosymo	Dobro pozhalovat
Thank you	Dyakuyu	Spasiba
Good morning	Dobryy ranok	Dobroye utro
Good evening	Dobryy vechir	Dobryy vecher

A useful tool for learning new words is Google Translate. It has a function where you can click the speaker emoticon below the word and it will say it out loud. If you are struggling to communicate, you could type short sentences in English and let your guest hear the Ukrainian translation.

Spelling: it's Kyiv (Ukrainian transliteration), not Kiev (Russian transliteration). It's never 'the' Ukraine - just 'Ukraine'!

Children & Routines

There are significant cultural differences in relation to child-rearing. For example, parents dress their children much more warmly (in snowsuits throughout much of the winter), and may expect inside temperatures in homes to be warmer than they typically are in the UK. Another example may be meal and bedtimes for children—many Ukrainian children do not go to bed until 10 p.m.

This is certainly not a comprehensive list of differences. It would be a good idea to discuss expectations, if possible, and/or routines (typical meal times, bedtimes, morning routines etc.).

Food

[Ukrainian chef Olya Hercules posted](#) a long list of foods to buy to make newly arriving refugees feel welcome. These include:

- Fresh dill
- Full-fat creme fraiche, or smetana (if you have a nearby Polish shop)
- Vegetables such as beetroot, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, onions, garlic, spring onions
- Unrefined sunflower oil
- Tinned tomatoes
- Good honey
- Sauerkraut
- Fermented cucumbers
- Twarog cheese (Polish shop)
- Toasted Buckwheat (Polish shop)
- Good rye bread (especially with coriander and caraway seeds)
- Some fluffy white bread or sourdough
- Good butter (unsalted)
- Emmental or gauda cheese
- Basmati rice
- Mushrooms (fresh & dry)
- Some mince (pork and beef)
- Good chicken
- Chipolata or other plain sausages

Please send us your feedback on this guide!

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