

National welcome guides

The government has produced a welcome guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK. This is available in English, Ukrainian and Russian,

See: www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk

Emotional and wellbeing support for guests

Barnardos has set up a Ukrainian Support Helpline to provide a holistic support service.

Ukrainian refugees can get in touch if support is needed with:

- Therapy with a qualified psychotherapist – delivered via the phone or online, with access to interpreters
- Advice on a range of issues e.g., housing, accessing key health services, education, employment and more via our trained helpline support workers
- Practical support - access to digital devices to ensure families stay connected to loved ones during this worrying time, as well as stimulating toys for children, vital baby items and more

All services include access to interpreters in Ukrainian and Russian.

The free helpline is available Monday – Friday 10am-8pm and Saturday 10am-3pm on 0800 148 8586

Other useful resources

Somerset County Council - www.somerset.gov.uk/ukraine/refugee-resettlement

Citizens Advice - information and advice on all topics www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Charis refugees – Taunton community refugee support www.charisrefugees.org

Help for Ukraine Somerset – an overview of everything going on in Somerset

www.helpforukrainesomerset.co.uk

Homes for Ukraine guidance

For up to date information about the Homes for Ukraine scheme and links to essential info, see: www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions

Homes for Ukraine — impact on benefits

Sponsors/hosts will be paid £350 per month in arrears as a 'thank you payment'. One payment per residential address regardless of the number of guests. Payments can be made for up to the 12 months of sponsorship and also a £200 interim payment for guests along with other support.

Not to be confused with the Ukraine Family Scheme, where someone applies to join a UK-based family member. Homes for Ukraine is intended for those 'seeking sanctuary with no family ties to the UK'.

Will the £350 'thank you' payment be classed as income for my benefits?

No.

The government has confirmed that the payments will be classed as local welfare provision. This will allow it to be disregarded as income for all means-tested benefits.

Note: There is nothing to prevent thank you payments becoming capital if you decide to save it up. If savings take you over your benefit capital threshold it could impact your entitlement.

If I take in a guest will I lose my Severe Disability Premium (SDP)?

No.

In its guidance the DWP confirms:

'As the Ukrainian national and their family members, if applicable, are living temporarily with the host they are not considered to be normally residing with them. This means that the host will not lose their entitlement to the severe disability premium.'

'Temporarily' has not been defined and it is unclear if it will apply should the guest stay *beyond* 6 months. So it is important for you to check this with the department paying your benefit.

If I take on a guest will this mean I am no longer subject to an under occupancy deduction ('spare room subsidy/bedroom tax') for the room(s) they'll occupy?

No.

The DWP guidance states that the scheme would not alter how many bedrooms a claimant is entitled to, so the bedroom tax will continue to apply.

This will also mean that private sector tenants cannot get a larger Local Housing Allowance (LHA) because of the guest(s).

Will having a guest add a non-dependant deduction to my benefits?

No.

As above, the DWP have said that due to the temporary nature of the scheme, the guests will not be considered as 'normally residing' with the hosts, and so no non-dependant deduction applies.

It is not clear exactly what they consider as 'temporary', for example if it will apply should the guest stay beyond 6 months. So it is important for you to check this with the department paying your benefit.

My benefits are reduced due to the benefit cap. Will taking in a guest stop this from happening?

No.

If a benefit cap is in place that will continue to apply as the guests will not be considered as 'normally residing' with the hosts.

Can the guests claim benefits in their own right?

Yes.

Those arriving under the scheme will have recourse to public funds.

Legislation has also been made so that those fleeing the invasion can claim benefits and be exempt from:

- the Habitual Residence and Past Presence Tests (HRT and PPT)
- the 3-month residence requirement for Child Benefit (the 'living in' test)

This also applies to non-Ukrainian citizens, such as UK citizens who were there at the time.

The only requirements are that the claimant:

- was in Ukraine immediately before the 1st January 2022
- left Ukraine due to the invasion
- has a right to be in the UK (e.g. under a visa)

If I give money to the guest, could I be seen to have deprived myself of my capital?

There is nothing to say that it couldn't be deprivation, so the normal test would apply and it is a possibility.

What about Council Tax Reduction? Will this impact my single-person discount, be considered income or give me a non-dependant deduction?

Maybe.

Council Tax regulations have been amended to ensure that you will keep your council tax single-person discount if you sponsor and host a Ukrainian household in your home.

However, it's not possible for local council tax support (also known as council tax reduction) schemes to be changed after the start of the financial year.

Councils are expected to use discretionary payments to make sure that sponsors don't have to pay more council tax as a result of the offering their homes for the scheme.

What if I need to leave the scheme early, will I be overpaid and will I need to pay it back?

Maybe.

If hosts need to end their participation in the scheme early, you should let the council know as soon as possible. As the payment is made in arrears, overpayments are not likely to occur, but if they do then they may be recoverable.

How does this compare to the Ukraine Family Scheme?

If a family member takes someone into their home under the Ukraine Family Scheme, they will not receive the £350 payment.

In a message to stakeholders the DWP have indicated that these family members will also be treated differently for other benefits tests, including being treated as non-dependant. If you are in this situation and unsure what support you can get, contact Citizens Advice.

Welfare benefits - for Ukrainian guests

The government has changed the law from 22/3/2022 to allow Ukrainian refugees to claim benefits as soon as they come to the UK, as well as access tailored job support. This includes:

- Universal Credit – working age living cost help (inc. children, rent etc)
- Personal Independence Payment – working age disability benefit
- Pension Credit – pension age (66+) living cost help
- Housing Benefit – pension age (66+) help with a rent liability
- Attendance Allowance – pension age disability benefit



- Carers Allowance – for someone providing 35 or more hours of care to someone in receipt of a disability benefit
- Child Benefit – for families with responsibility for a child.
- Disability Living Allowance – under 16s disability benefit

Full details on who is eligible for each of the above benefits can be found on our website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits

Help to Claim Universal Credit

Our help to claim advisers can help with the early stages of a Universal Credit claim. They can:

- check Universal Credit eligibility
- help with the Universal Credit application
- prepare for the first Jobcentre appointment
- check the first payment is correct

Our advisers are available between 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday on free-phone 0800 144 8 444 (interpreters available).

Support from the Department for Work and Pensions

The DWP has set up a new 'essential benefits information' for Ukrainians. Click the banner at the top of this web page: www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/

Interpreters are available to help with phone applications, and local Jobcentre staff are delivering additional face-to-face assistance to those who need it – including tailored support to find work and advice on benefit eligibility.

Opening a bank account

In order to receive benefits a bank account is needed.

We are an independent advice charity so cannot recommend a particular bank account to use. However, many banks have updated their services to provide easier access to bank accounts with guidance in Ukrainian and Russian, such as:

Royal Bank of Scotland - www.rbs.co.uk/ukraine-refugees

Natwest - www.natwest.com/ukraine-refugees

To apply for an account, you will need:

- to be 18+
- a temporary UK resident
- hold either a valid Ukrainian passport or Ukrainian national ID card
- have a valid visa

Immigration

Immigration advice in the UK is legally regulated activity, anyone giving immigration advice must be registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. Anyone not regulated to give immigration advice is committing a criminal offence.

Ukrainian citizens and individuals who are fleeing Ukraine can get free immigration advice from the Ukraine Advice Project UK which has been set up by a group of volunteer lawyers and legal professionals. The project offers a free service that connects Ukrainian citizens with qualified and regulated lawyers who can provide basic legal advice on UK immigration. For more info www.advice-ukraine.co.uk

The group can also provide advice on:

- whether you need a visa
- what to do if you have family in the UK
- work or study visas
- visitor visas
- claiming asylum

To request advice from the Ukraine Advice Project, contact projectu@dlapiper.com with details of your circumstances and the type of advice you need. They will try to connect you to a lawyer as soon as possible, but this may take some time because they have received a very large number of requests. Make sure to check your email spam or junk folder for a reply. Advice is only available in English. If you do not speak English, you will need a friend or family member to translate for you.

For Ukrainians living in the UK, there is step by step guidance on how to bring family members from Ukraine to the UK on our website as well as options for someone from Ukraine whose visa is ending. See www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration

Templates for translations of Ukrainian documents

The Home Office may ask for proof of relationship for people applying on the Ukraine Family Scheme, amongst others. Whilst they may accept that applicants have good cause not to have documents like birth, marriage and divorce certificates, they prefer to have translations if the documents are available.

The Institute of Translation and Interpreting has produced model templates for these and applicants can simply transfer the details into the right boxes.

They might also be helpful for proving relationships to access benefits after arrival in the UK. Visit: www.iti.org.uk/ukrainian-crisis