



Open Arms for Ukrainians

Information for Hosts

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About this document

This document has been compiled largely from information provided by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, along with some information from a variety of local volunteer and charity organisations.

This document will be regularly updated as more information becomes available.

Who are we

Open Arms is an umbrella organisation for volunteers, charities and the local Council that provide support for guests fleeing from violence in Ukraine and their hosts.

What do we do

We offer practical information, advice and support for those seeking refuge in and around Windsor and Maidenhead from the conflict in Ukraine and for their hosts.

How to contact us

You can access us via our website <https://www.openarms.charity/> or contact Jonathan jonathan@openarms.charity or Nigel nigel@openarms.charity directly.

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N.B. This document reads in conjunction with information on the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead website key advice pages <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/community-and-living/ukraine-crisis/ukraine-support> provides useful links to all the relevant agencies. It also refers on to the national guidance published on GOV.UK: Guidance Welcome: a guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK.

1. Pre-arrival Information

1.1. Committing to Hosting

Welcome to everyone thinking about, or preparing to host, Ukrainian refugees. You are doing something which is incredibly important in the face of such appalling circumstances, very worthwhile and potentially very rewarding. However, it is a substantial commitment, and not every placement we are aware of has worked out well, so we are starting this document with some simple thoughts about what you are planning to do. It is better to drop out now than to find that, within weeks, you have bitten off more than you can chew.

- You are inviting someone unknown to you into your home for a minimum of six months. How will this affect your normal life - in terms of your ability to visit or be visited by family, for example? Or what will you do at Christmas? Will you feel comfortable going away?
- Will you and your guest(s) have private places you can both withdraw to at the end of the day? Sharing a kitchen is relatively easy, but how will you feel about sharing your living room? Can you provide somewhere reasonably comfortable for them to relax in as well as sleep?
- Do you have the time and commitment to face the initial two to three weeks when your guest(s) will need support to find their way round our impenetrable benefits system and other systems?
- What arrangements will you make about food? Most hosts are initially cooking for their guests while they adjust to their situation – this provides a potentially enriching experience as you develop a relationship and learn about each other's lives. How do you envisage the longer term?

N.B. You may find section 7 of this document helpful: it gives advice on cultural sensitivities you may face.

None of us can be certain that we will hit it off with our guests, and Open Arms along with other organisations are here to help with any difficulties you may have, we will work with the Royal Borough to ensure things go smoothly. We are not trying to put you off! Most of our hosts and their guests report positive experiences, and in the event a relationship breaks down, there is support available from the borough and we will do all we can to help - including if necessary, trying to find someone else to re-house your guest.

1.2. Making a Visa Application

Some tips:

- do read the government info. You can save it as you go, so take your time.
- consider making the application on behalf of your family. (Not pretending to be them!)
- if you have dual nationality or have been a national of another country, consider making your other half (if applicable) the sponsor.

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- you need one application per family member including minors (*we to query requirements for pets*)

Sponsors will need to provide your passport details and a PDF copy of your passport to upload, plus the passport details of any adults living in your home. You will be asked how long you have been at your current address, any changes of name including maiden name, and previous/other nationality and dates (if applicable)

The applicants will each need to provide:

- their address in Ukraine
- passport details and pdf copies to upload at the end
- place of birth and birth certificate for children (if they have them) to upload
- Proof that they were living in Ukraine 01/01/22 if they have it
- Phone contact details
- details of all children (obviously) and their father, even if he is not coming, for childrens' applications, ideally you will need to provide a letter signed by both parents to give permission to take the child to the UK.

Most Ukrainian passports have English translation; however, the full address and postcode needs to be supplied (not on passport). Not everyone can supply a utility bill to prove they lived in Ukraine on 31st Dec 2021, but it doesn't seem to be important. Those without passports will be directed to a local passport office via the application process.

The application form asks for the applicant and the sponsor's phone and emails, then asks which one they should use as the main point of contact. The system is flexible - If the applicant does not have great English, you can nominate yourself for contact for visa questions, but nominate the applicant for notification that a visa has been approved, and for any ongoing communication in the UK.

Finally, make sure you have the 'uploaded' notification on the TLS website. A good safety check is - if you try to load any further docs or make changes to an application, the system locks you out and this is not possible once your application is submitted, there is no email to confirm it has sent.

1.3. Pre-arrival preparations

To reassure your family, who are likely to be apprehensive, *Homes for Ukraine* suggest that before they arrive you should

- provide information about yourself, your family and any pets, perhaps sending photos of yourselves and the room(s) available to them.
- ask if they have any allergies or pets. If bringing pets, they will need all the documentation required to enter the UK for their pet, or the animals will be quarantined for weeks. Pets are not allowed on Eurostar, and airlines do not allow pets in the cabin. For those wanting to keep their pets with them throughout their journey, the only option is to travel by car. (Although some European airlines, such as Air France, allow pets)

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- prepare their room(s), removing as many of your possessions as possible. Make sure you remove any items you will need, so that you do not need to enter their room.
- if possible, provide towels, sheets, slippers and toiletries, as they may not have these when they arrive (Ukrainians always take their outdoor shoes off when at home, and will typically wear slippers around the house).
(Other agencies have suggested leaving these items in their room: toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, comb/hairbrush, soap, moisturiser, and hand cream, and if appropriate nappies, sanitary towels, nursing pads, baby care products, shaving items, and basic medicines like painkillers and anti-diarrhoea tablets, as many of these items are deeply personal, and your guests may be too embarrassed to ask for them).
- if possible, prepare a storage space for their possessions, and perhaps designated space for food in the kitchen/fridge, and space to cook their own meals.
- if possible, buy one or two Continental Europe to UK plug adapters, so that your guests can charge phones and use other appliances as soon as they arrive.
- Talk to your guests, if possible, to understand whether they need anything in advance.
- Establish what level of English they have, if any, and if they have visited the UK before.
- Check if you need to update your home and contents insurance. Some companies, do not require you to do so, saying that the refugee(s) will be guest(s).

1.4. Written welcome pack

Refugee agencies suggest preparing a written pack of information, not least because they have been under huge stress and may not take in everything in the first days with you. This should include things you need to establish about how you plan to live together, to avoid misunderstandings. You can translate this into Ukrainian using google translate. You might want to include:

- A written welcome and offers of help
- Keys for every guest
- Maps – many people will use their phones, but a free local paper map is available from the libraries or the customer services team.
- Information about the [Open Arms](#) coffee mornings and back up support here, and reference to the Government welcome packs for Ukrainians.
- Some basic advice on shopping – the market, supermarkets, etc.
- Notes on basic house facilities – washing machine, dishwasher, where to find cleaning equipment, iron and ironing board, etc
- recycling arrangements
- and any little “house rules” which need to be established to avoid misunderstanding or irritations for both sides.

1.5. Travel arrangements

It is best to meet your guest at the earliest point that they enter the UK, preferably at the Eurostar station or the airport. If this is not possible, they will need detailed instructions on how to navigate UK public transport, including maps and/or routes that you can link via Google Maps.

Eurostar and National Rail have said they will allow Ukrainians to travel for free within 48 hours of their arrival. Eurostar's travel is free only from any Eurostar station to St. Pancras in London (not within France/Belgium/elsewhere). 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, as well as the tube, DLR and buses in London. Your guests will need to show their Ukrainian passport and a boarding pass or ticket with their arrival date in the UK.

Ferry tickets: at least one family have travelled here by car, driving all the way from Kyiv. Their hosts managed to arrange free ferry tickets with DFDS which was fantastic and went very smoothly. See ukraine@dfds.com or travel.sales@dfds.com with the name of the travellers and the car registration and they will email tickets out the same day.

1.6. Background on Ukraine

As part of your preparation for welcoming your guests, you may want to read up on some Ukrainian history and traditions. There are excellent books by a Kyiv-based publishing house available to download for free:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=5390482984317856&set=gm.692272092209556>

1.7. Arrival and afterwards

Some tips from a local host:

- There are government welcome stands for Ukrainians in all the major airports and arrival points. The one at Luton at 8am was not staffed, being little more than a yellow and blue board, and was not visible from the arrivals gate. It was easier to stand, with a sign, near the arrivals gate to find my family.
- My teenage guest had to ask me what he should call me – for him, it was obviously not normal to address me (aged 67 and in his eyes an “elder”!!) just by my Christian name.
- There were several Ukrainian families arriving, at least some of whom were refugees. Most women hugged their Ukrainian guests on arrival – I had been very unsure as to whether this would be acceptable, but it was very natural for me and the children’s Mum to do. Men stayed back and shook hands! I would say, just trust your instinct in the moment.
- You need to notify Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead by email on welfareteam@rbwm.gov.uk as soon as your refugees have arrived. This triggers their initial £200 payment. You should receive a form seeking bank details etc to

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secure your Thank you £350 money. Not everyone has been receiving this, and you may need to chase it up, using the same email address.

Some comments from hosts regarding the £350 payment:

Other councils have a different system in place and are making payments irrespective of the five checks being made, so be prepared for a slight delay, we have asked the borough to relook at this.

- Be prepared for frustrations in dealing with all the bureaucracy. Top priority is getting the checks completed, we understand there is a delay, the borough is prioritising these as quickly as possible. 'Remember we are all working exceptionally to support our guests, just bear in mind that the borough staff have to process the applications and kind words can mean so much.'
- Banks are still a nightmare (see below) and it is easier to start the application for Universal Credit or Child Benefit when you have a bank account (although it is possible to do so with Universal Credit, using the host's or a friend's account number.....) you can get support from Citizen Advice Bureau East Berkshire Tel: [0808 278 7914](tel:08082787914)
- My biggest issue has been finding things for my teenage guests to do in the first days here, while their Mum and I wrestle with the practicalities.
- Translator apps on phones have been brilliant in enabling practical conversation and to allow them to ask all sorts of questions about life in the UK. If we are typical, expect plenty of curiosity! They are direct and straightforward in their questions. The translators have also enabled entertaining and amusing conversations at the dinner table, which we hugely value, and have undoubtedly helped us all to relax together. Ultimately, though, it is a good idea to avoid or at least reduce reliance on the translator as soon as possible, as it will help language development.
- We had said we would cook at first until they were ready to do so. We found that our Mum benefitted from cooking for us soon after her arrival, even though she was not immediately able to shop without help. We think it has given her some normalcy and enabled her to contribute here, when so much of her life must seem out of her control. We may ultimately eat separately, but now we find eating together at least once a day is valuable for us all.
- Banks are still a nightmare (see below) and it is easier to start the application for Universal Credit or Child Benefit when you have a bank account , you can get support from Citizen Advice Bureau East Berkshire Tel: 0808 278 7914

THERE ARE CERTAIN BANKS THAT WILL OPEN BASIC ACCOUNTS TO MAKE IT EASIER TO GET UNIVERSAL CREDIT.

2. Phones, computers and Ukrainian TV

2.1. Wifi

Your family will want to know your wifi information: if you are preparing a welcome pack, this will be top of their list.

2.2. Adaptors

A two-pin to three-pin adaptor will be needed urgently, if only for charging phones. An international adaptor, (for example, the Masterplug visitor to UK Travel Adaptor) is available from Argos (pack of three £9.99) or a single one from Curry's for £4.99.

2.3. SIM cards

The advice generally given is that our guests will need UK SIM cards to complete application forms so this is a top priority (although it is actually possible to complete the Universal Credit application form initially using the host's bank account details). Vodaphone supplied SIM cards are available via the Red Cross but they are currently experiencing substantial delays due to the huge demand. You will need to phone 08081 963651 within 10 days of your guests' arrival.

Mobile company **Three** is currently offering any incoming Ukrainian refugees 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.

2.4. Computers

Some hosts have found that residents have been very generous when asked for old or unwanted laptops. It is recommended that they should be Windows 8 or 10 as Windows 7 requires the installation CD to reset it back to factory settings, and most people won't have this anymore: additionally, Microsoft are no longer providing further security patches and updates for Windows 7.

Your local libraries are designated safe spaces and offer useful resources to help you. Your guests can have computer access, borrow books, and find information about local community groups including information on English Classes delivered by our Community Learning Adult Services and IT classes delivered in house.

2.5. Accessing Ukrainian TV

There are various options – some free, some with subscriptions. You are advised to check with your guests before spending any money – they may not want to watch TV, they may prefer to just watch programmes in English to help them learn the language more quickly, or they may be happy with what they can find on the internet.

Your guests may already know how to access Ukrainian TV on-line. If not, the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) has a page with links to TV and radio streaming sites. On their website, click on news/Ukrainian media links.

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If you have Netflix, you will find that some programmes do have subtitles and/or dubbing available in Ukrainian.

Mediacast is a company offering 60 Ukrainian channels. According to their website, they have developed apps for popular platforms such as ROKU, Android, Samsung Smart TV, DuneHD and MAG. You pay by monthly subscription after a 5-day free trial. They have also recently introduced a Free Plan, which includes 15 Ukrainian TV channels and 10 radio stations. Immediately after registration, you will get unlimited access to these media resources. If unable to download the App to your tv, you will probably need to purchase a streaming stick to access Mediacast.

3. Banking, Money and Benefits

The advice from most sources is that a bank account is needed to make an application for benefits, so this is a top priority. However, the Job Centre appears to be conducting the verification process in one visit, then arranging for your guest to return to see their work coach, and it is possible to arrange for the second security check to take place during this second visit. It is certainly worth arranging a visit to DWP in the first instance.

3.1. Banking

Many High Street banks are not being helpful, and it has so far proved easier to apply for online banking. **Monzo** has been recommended by several hosts, with bank cards said to arrive within days.

Homes for Ukraine report that **NatWest** and **RBS** have introduced a special account for Ukrainian arrivals. There are information sheets in Ukrainian and Russian on their websites. To open these accounts, your guests will need to complete a form (available online) and then go to the branch. It all looks good until you realise that NatWest at least indicate that it will take 7 – 10 days for the account information to be confirmed and cards sent out. It is disappointing when you want to get so many things up and running.

3.2. Royal borough guest payment Scheme

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are providing cash make a £200 interim payment, unlike some authorities that are providing vouchers. Hosts must notify the borough at the point their guests actually arrive to trigger this and should do this immediately: they are then sent the details of how the money can be collected, which is usually at the town hall. We understand that this can cause some frustration if you live in Ascot or Windsor, however, the cash is held in a safe within the town hall and cannot be secured at alternative venues.

A recent arrival has reported delays in the funds. This was due to the Easter bank holiday and the banks were closed, we have resolved this matter and it will not be an issue going forward. However, any future concerns or enquiries can be dealt with by emailing welfareteam@rbwm.gov.uk

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Hosts should also note that they should receive a form requesting information to enable the borough to release you thank you payment of £350 a month. You should receive your first payment once all five checks have been completed and these will be a month in arrears.

3.3. Emergency advances

The DWP/Job Centre offer an emergency advance as Universal Credit takes 5-6 weeks before payments are made. You are likely to be called into the Job Centre as a security check on completing your Universal Credit claim and can raise this then if required. The advice is that this is also where National Insurance numbers are sorted out, but the Maidenhead Job Centre indicated that it is quicker for the application to be made online. They were quick to stress that there is no pressure on anyone fleeing Ukraine to rush into work and have in general been very supportive.

3.4. Benefits

Ukrainian refugees have the right to the same benefits as British nationals. Those who are not employed or are on low incomes are entitled to **Universal Credit**. Dependent on their circumstances, they may also be eligible for **Disability Benefits** and **Pension Credits**.

You can get full information on the website pages [GOV.UK: Guidance Welcome: a guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK](#), which can be accessed via a link on the RBWM advice for Ukrainians pages.

The Work Rights Centre provides free advice in Russian and Ukrainian on how to access these benefits.

On completing your application online, you will be called into the local Job Centre to confirm your identity. Do not be surprised if, at this initial meeting, nothing further happens, and you will instead be offered a further meeting to meet the work coach assigned to the claimant.

3.5. Child Benefit

Guests with children are entitled to Child Benefit, which has to be claimed separately from Universal Credit. 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). You can download a Child Benefit form from this website:

www.gov.uk/child-benefit/how-to-claim

3.6. Support

The Citizens Advice website can support Ukrainians to claim universal credit (you can ask for a translator when you call).

There are also lots of other charities that can support the families these include Baby Bank, Foodshares and [Open Arms](#). There are many charities that provide a wide range of universal support and these can be accessed from our [communities](#) page or from our support with the [Here to Help](#) pages. Other services like the [Slough Refugee Support](#), [Cowshed](#) and [School Drive](#) can also be accessed. There is also lots of useful information on the Safeplaces website that host and families will find useful

<https://www.safeplaces.org.uk/member-schemes/windsor-and-maidenhead/>

3.7. A Guide to likely rates

As a general guide, 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 carer for someone who is on disability benefits: £163 per month (approx.)
- Additional benefit for children: £237 per child per month (approx.)

There are additional benefits if you are renting privately, dependent on where you live.

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

3.8. Insurance

Although most insurers have agreed that insurance policies will remain valid if you take in Ukrainian refugees, and there will be no increase in premiums, nonetheless hosts should ensure that they notify their House insurers. Many, possibly most, policies already have exclusion clauses for theft etc if they arise because of having guests of any type, and these exclusion clauses will continue to apply in this case too.

If you bring your vehicle with you, this will need to be taxed within six months and any car insurance within 12 months. You can access information on the DVLA website

<https://www.gov.uk/vehicle-tax>

4. Work and Applying for a National Insurance Number (NINO)

4.1. Finding Work

Ukrainians arriving under the Homes for Ukraine scheme have the right to work, and the government has made it easier for employers to hire Ukrainians.

The Job Centre

The Job Centre in RBWM has been highly praised by those who have used it. They are happy for Ukrainians and/or their hosts to drop in for help and advice (and, in fact, you cannot book an appointment with them until you have a NINO). They can be found at 3 Park St, Maidenhead SL6 1SP or phone 0800 169 0190.

You are likely to be called into the Job Centre to provide a security check once your Universal Credit application is received. Be prepared that this interview may not introduce you to your guest's work coach, and that you will instead be offered another meeting to discuss work and support with them.

4.2. Other Work-related Services

While the Job Centre is the obvious place to start the search for work, there are a number of specific sites which have been set up for Ukrainians:

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- *Remote Ukraine* assists Ukrainians in finding remote working opportunities.
- A job opportunities page has also been set up by the *Ukrainian Institute London* and *United for Ukraine volunteers*.
- *Jobs for Ukraine* collates academic, scientific, arts, professional and freelance opportunities in multiple countries.

You can also search for work using the government site [GOV.UK: Find a job](#). This is a national online linking service which can be searched simply by inputting the type of skills you can offer and the area where you wish to search (it can be accessed via a link on the Wiltshire key advice for Ukrainians pages).

To stay safe, during their job search and flexible work, it may be a good idea to encourage your guests to visit [Jobs page](#) for information and advice on the boroughs website.

4.3. Obtaining a National Insurance Number (NINO)

When your guest completes the online application for Universal Credit, they will probably be told that they will need to go to a local Job Centre (this will be arranged for you). The normal advice is that the Job Centre 'work coach' will later help them apply for a National Insurance Number (NINO), which takes about 2-6 weeks to arrive in the post. The Job Centre is recommending that the claimant makes their NINO application online, as it is quicker than going via the Job Centre. See www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number

There is conflicting advice on whether it is possible to work prior to receiving your NINO. Homes for Ukraine indicates that Ukrainian nationals will need a national insurance number before they can apply for a job, and that this will be issued automatically when they receive their Biometric Residence Permit or apply for Universal Credit. However, the government website says:

If you do not already have a National Insurance number, you only need to apply for one if you're planning to work. You can start work without a National Insurance number if you can prove you have the right to work in the UK. You must also be looking for work or have an offer to start work in the UK. If you have already started working you can still apply. You're not eligible to apply if you:

- *have a [biometric residence permit \(BRP\)](#) which has a National Insurance number printed on it*
- *are only applying for a National Insurance number because you want to apply for benefits or a student loan*

The application can be done online at www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number. It is free.

Message from Emma Hinde: 'Many hosts have reported that this can be done prior to the guests arrival but once their visa has been approved.'

It appears that applying for your NINO online is probably the quickest route to obtaining a National Insurance Number.

5. Passports and Biometrics

It is likely that your guests' passports will only have been stamped for 6 months, not 3 years, and you should check with your guests to confirm their status. This can be addressed by applying for a biometric residence permit (BRP), via an online form at www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits/replace-visa-brp

Once the online form has been accepted, you will be required to book an appointment at a regional centre to take fingerprints and a digitised facial image. The nearest centre is in Southampton, and it is currently (5th May) fully booked throughout May with no facility to book ahead into June. However, an alternative centre in Bath did have vacancies at this point.

A note from Open Arms 'It's worth noting that cards are often being sent out very quickly after the appointments. We have guests worrying that it is not for the full 3years:

The BRP is only valid until 31 December 2024, i.e. a few months short of the promised three years.

There is an administrative reason for this. Everyone with immigration permission lasting beyond the end of 2024 nevertheless has a BRP with an expiry date of 31 December 2024. This is the date that the Home Office plans to transition everyone off physical permits and onto a digital status instead (as is already the case with EU citizens granted permission under the EU Settlement Scheme).

Someone granted permission beyond that date will still be able to remain for the full three years. They will just prove their status using the new [digital status](#) system after 2024.

In other words, the expiry date of the residence permit is not necessarily the expiry date of your immigration permission.'

In theory, there is no rush to do the biometrics. However, they must have been completed before the six-month period ends, and there is a time limit applied once the application has been submitted. Given there already appears to be pressure on the system, it is perhaps worth beginning this once the first rush of form-filling has been completed.

The Red Cross notes that: "*depending on what visa or immigration status you have been given to enter the UK, you may need to access immigration advice from a qualified immigration adviser about extending this or making a different kind of application in future. Legal aid can help meet the costs of legal advice and representation but is only available for certain types of applications and for people who cannot afford to pay for a solicitor privately. You can search for a solicitor in the UK on <https://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/> by entering "Legal Issue & Changing Countries" and entering your postcode, town or city. Or for a legal representative regulated by the UK's Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) through the 'Find an Immigration Advisor' search function via this webpage. You can also email ukraine@freemovement.org.uk explaining your situation and requesting free immigration advice*".

6. Signing on with a GP and dentist, and other medical information

6.1. Doctors

Your guests should sign up with a local GP in the normal way. They will be asked to fill out a registration form and bring identification and proof of their address if possible (ID and proof of address are not a requirement for registering with a GP).

If you need more detailed information on how to do this, you can find it at the website [GOV.UK: Guidance Welcome: a guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK](#) , which can be accessed via a link on the Wiltshire key advice for Ukrainians pages.

Some GP practises seek considerable information about the applicant's health history and current state of health. Some include a section on current mental health, such as "have you experienced a feeling of hopelessness in the last two weeks". It is clearly not appropriate to ask these questions of your guest under the circumstances: a covering letter from you to the doctor can provide confirmation of address and an explanation as to why this has been left blank.

6.2. Dentists

It can be difficult to find an NHS dentist. You can access this advice from the government site which will help find a National Health Dentist in this area. <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/how-to-find-an-nhs-dentist/>

If your guest tells the dentist that they are receiving benefits, check-ups and necessary treatment will be free (however, getting dental treatment before receiving Universal Credit can result in charges).

6.3. Covid and Other general points

It is worth checking whether your guests have had a covid vaccination. You may find that they have already had one or more, but that it took place some time ago. They may be surprised to hear that we recommend further jabs. Most organisations suggest checking whether your guest needs a further vaccination through the GP, but Jill's experience was that the surgery required her to phone 119, and that they in turn indicated that guests should simply turn up at their local walk-in centre. It is apparently helpful if your guest takes their newly acquired NHS number, which you can get from your GP.

In the UK, paracetamol, rest, and plenty of water is considered appropriate treatment for most colds and flus. In Ukraine, many medicines are sold without a prescription, including antibiotics, and your guests may be surprised that that these cannot be bought over the counter here.

7. Cultural Sensitivity and mental health

7.1. Cultural Sensitivity

Advice from [HealthProm](#) suggests:

- on arrival, give your guests the opportunity to recover from the stress they have experienced. Wait for them to initiate a conversation about personal matters, and do not ask probing questions about their family or the situation in Ukraine.
- Give them the opportunity to be alone, with the opportunity to lock their room with a key if it is possible, especially at night. Perhaps leave various snacks in their room for the first few days, as they may be embarrassed to go into the kitchen (water, juice, fruit, cereal bars).
- They may not speak English at a sufficient level, particularly older people, and stress can make it harder to remember information or speak a different language. Try to write key information down, and use a translator application on a phone.
- As they have moved under such difficult circumstances, they may show a lack of independence and a high degree of confusion. They may well need to have many issues explained regarding life in the UK, even issues which may seem very basic.
- They are likely to find it difficult to navigate all the various forms needed to receive assistance, to place children in schools, to register with the GP etc. In Ukraine, most of these services still involve in person visits to the authorities, and they may be suspicious placing this information online. Official websites should be provided from an external source, so that they know they can safely put their information into such services.
- Region and religion: many factors will affect their ability to adapt and navigate life in the UK. The level of religiosity is higher among the rural population, with many religious rites and traditions in the west of Ukraine. However, while 91% are Christian (Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Protestants), many believers do not attend church or observe church traditions.

Health Prom also suggests that key information should be provided about UK services. We are currently working to develop information in a number of areas.

Finally, they draw attention to some specific cultural difference we may experience:

- Ukrainians typically like to have windows with curtains and privacy screens to ensure privacy, wear slippers at home, and differentiate between their clothes to be worn at home and outside.
- They are accustomed to higher temperature in the home, so it is sensible to provide blankets, heating pads or bottles, if possible until they get used to new conditions.
- We should explain about saving water, and how to use two taps. Ukrainians typically filter their water before drinking, and do not think tap water is appropriate for drinking, so it may be good to note that tap water is safe to drink here.

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- Children tend to be dressed much warmer all year around than British children and need to be given time to get used to the local climate.
- Ukraine does not have a national recycling system and are unlikely to know how to sort their rubbish, or where to leave it on which day. It may be appropriate to provide details of the website where the prevailing regional recycling systems are explained.
- If they are to live in private accommodation, it should be explained that utilities are provided by independent service providers, and that they should compare prices to find the best deal.
- “Small talk” does not play a part in Ukrainian interactions. They may not know what to say in a conversation about the weather, or, if asked how they are, they are likely to tell you truthfully how they are, not avoiding sensitive issues as people may do in the UK. Or they may seem surprised that you are asking a question they regard as personal.
- It is also not as common to thank people or apologise as frequently – this does not imply rudeness; they are simply used to speaking more straightforwardly about issues.
- They can be alarmed by strangers smiling or holding eyes with them in the street, as this is not typically done in Ukraine.
- It is probably worth avoiding discussing Ukrainian politics. Before the war, there was a very clear division of who voted for whom in the presidential elections, and this may still be painful for most Ukrainians.
- LGBT: almost half of Ukrainian citizens disapprove of the LGBT community, according to a survey in 2021 (42 - 47% were against, about half were neutral, and only 7-8 percent positive). It would be helpful to tactfully explain the UK anti-discrimination laws.
- Bereavement and mourning traditions: during the 40-day mourning period, the community has memorial feasts on the third, ninth, and fortieth days after the death, when special services are ordered in the church. They also have feasts on the six-month and one-year anniversaries of the death.

7.2. Mental Health Support

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. Homes for Ukraine suggests that hosts should familiarise themselves with it and consider sharing it with their guest so they can review it on their own. Some organisations are offering free or discounted counselling to refugees.

We have information on our website for mental health support, this information can be found on the borough site. <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/community-and-living/public-health/ageing-well/looking-after-your-mental-health>

There is lots of support for young people and families across Berkshire which can be found on the Berkshire Health Foundations Website <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/>

8. Language Lessons

8.1. Language training

Adults coming to the UK on the Ukrainian humanitarian sponsorship visa (Homes for Ukraine) or on the 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). This learning is fully funded for those who are unemployed or are on low income.

Community Learning Adults Skills Service (CLASS)

The borough has a contract with CLASS where ESOL classes and many other courses can be accessed. The Community Learning and Skills Service (CLASS) offer English lessons via the English to

Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. Details on the website: www.slough.gov.uk/community-learning-skills/course-information/5.

Anyone needing to speak to a CLASS advisor can go to Maidenhead Library every Tuesday 10am - 4pm and Wednesday 1pm - 4pm.

If anyone wants to book a slot for them to be assessed in order to enrol on an English, ESOL, maths or digital skills course they just have to either email lifelonglearning@slough.gov.uk or call 01753 476611 (leave a message with your number if no picks up and you will be called back).

Berkshire School of English provide FREE ESOL classes <https://berkshireschoolofenglish.co.uk/>.

Advice from hosts – ***the organisation hasn't returned the call when a message has been left, we have fed this back to the council and we should be able to update this information once we have clarity.***

Ukrainian learners can enrol onto courses and if they come through on the family or sponsor scheme, they by-pass the eligibility criteria of having to be in the UK for a least 3 years before joining a course. If a Ukrainian person is pre-entry – Entry 3 ESOL there are fees attached but if they are on certain benefits, they receive a discount.

If a learner is going to be on a Functional English, maths or digital skills course which is Entry 3 – Level 2 then the course is free.

The Ukraine Institute of London

The Ukrainian Institute of London will be offering free language lessons online for Ukrainian new arrivals from the start of May; they are waiting to determine demand before issuing more information. See <https://ukrainianinstitute.org.uk>.

9. Schools and Childcare

9.1. Early Years

For pre-school age children, there are nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. More details can be found in the [Early years](#) and childcare section of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead website. Your local nursery may be able to tell you if you can get help with fees.

9.2. Schools

Schools places information can be found on the boroughs website

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-admissions>

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead does not offer additional language tuition, believing that children will quickly learn the language if thrown in the deep end.

If your child doesn't speak much English yet, don't worry. Although things may seem strange and confusing at first, teachers, pupils and other staff will be welcoming, and kind and they will soon begin to learn. One way you can help support your child is by making sure they carry on using their first language because children who are good at one language find it easier to learn another."

Basic information on every school, including the OFSTED report, is available on the government website, while the individual school websites give varying degrees of information about the school.

9.3. Post 16 Admissions

Post 16 admissions are dealt with directly by schools, sixth form colleges, FE colleges or training providers. For information on choices available at age 16, including a link to all the providers, visit Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's website.

<https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/schools-and-education/school-transport/schoolcollege-transport-post-16-students-without-statement-or-ehcp>

9.4. Other Educational Resources

Community Adult Learning and Skills Service website <https://www.rbwm.gov.uk/home/jobs-and-careers/volunteering/community-learning-and-skills-service> you can also register to volunteer with CLaSS, they also run the [volunteering](#) programme on behalf of the borough.

You can have your say and find out more information about various other community projects from the [RBWM Together](#) website.

10. Shopping on a restricted budget

Helping guests identify local food banks or voucher options will be useful.

Food

Information on the [Maidenhead](#) Foodbank and [Windsor](#) Foodshare can be accessed, including the Maidenhead Larder being opened by the [Brett Foundation](#).

Clothing

Access to clothing and other support can be accessed at <https://www.thebabybank.org/> The organization support families, young mums, and individuals.

Pet insurance

Your guests may also wish to consider insurance for their pets. Pet plan has announced it would provide insurance to Ukrainians arriving in the UK for free.

11. Life in the borough and Leisure Activity

11.1. Churches

All the churches in borough have provided a warm welcome to refugees from across the world, and the warmth of feeling has been evident for Ukrainian refugees.

Recently, we found out that some Ukrainian refugees at least are taught that they must make confession monthly and only then can they receive communion. We are trying to find a solution to this, and to providing a regular service in Ukrainian.

There are coffee mornings held in the churches throughout such as All Souls South Ascot, Windsor and St Mary's Church in Maidenhead.

11.2. Leisure Activity

You may find it difficult to help keep your guests active in "down-times". This is particularly true with newly arrived teenage children. There are lots of activities that are being held a number of the boroughs [leisure centres](#).

A note from Open Arms 'We can support guests to access information on who have arrived and be able to make introductions to people with similar age teens, Open Arms can also support you to create small support networks, getting to know the guests and introducing you to others who they may have things in common with or creating meaningful connections. EG, one guest creates amazing craft items and teaches this. We have introduced her to Norden Farm where she will be running some classes longer term.'

11.3. Free eBooks and audiobooks

To provide Ukrainians with a range of free reading, listening, learning and entertainment opportunities, multimedia content provider Odilo has launched a free app for both Android

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and iOS. The app includes 3000 e-books and audiobooks in a variety of genres, including 1,700 Ukrainian titles and 500 in English. There is material for both children and adults.

- Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=es.odilo.ukraine>
- iOS: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/ukraine-unlimited-learning/id1615037168>

Note: Some on-line feedback suggests that the app can be slow to load and have technical problems, which Odilo claim to be addressing.

11.4 Libraries

Your local libraries are designated safe spaces and offer useful resources to help you. You can have computer access, borrow books, and find information about local community groups and services, events and activities.

Libraries help individuals needing support with IT related matters.

Maidenhead Library – Accessibility morning and IT Support, Thursdays 9.30am -11am drop in. Tel: 01628 796969

Dedworth Library – every Thursday 10am - 12.30pm drop in. Every Saturday 10.30am – 12pm, IT drop in. Tel: 01753 868733

Windsor Library – Accessibility morning and IT Support, Wednesdays 12pm - 1.30pm. Appointments only. Tel: 01753 743940

Eton Wick Library – Thursdays 2.30pm – 6.30pm. Bookable IT appointments or drop in. Tel: 01628 683890

Loanable tablets equipped with data are available to borrow. There is a Loan Agreement borrowers need to agree to before the devices are issued. There are also in-house tablets that customers can use in the library.

For more information (including opening times and locations) visit: [Libraries | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead \(rbwm.gov.uk\)](#)

11.5 Accessibility Membership for Ukrainian Guests

Maidenhead Library currently offer a dedicated time slots for people with disabilities and carers to attend the library for any tailored support they may require, this service will be offered to all guests and hosts. When you attend the library, you will be given the "accessibility" membership status so that you can have the full range of benefits. [Accessibility Library card scheme | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead \(rbwm.gov.uk\)](#)

Open Arms and fully committed to working with RBWM and other wider organisations to keep this document current and relevant.