

# Finding a Safe Home:

What can we learn about solutions to refugee accommodation from the Ukraine response?



#FindingASafeHome  
@RedCrossPolicy

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Polina, a displaced Ukrainian woman hosted in the UK, prepares a Sunday lunch of Borscht (beet soup) and Chebureki (pork pastie) for her family and host, Tony.



# Glossary

- **Displaced person:** someone forced to move, within or across borders, due to conflict, violence, persecution, human rights violations, terrorism, natural disasters, the effects of climate change, development projects or a combination of these factors.
- **Refugee:** someone who is outside their country of origin and would be at risk of persecution if returned to their home country. The legal definition of refugee refers to a person who has had their asylum claim accepted by the government of the host state.
- **Person seeking asylum:** someone who has left their country of origin because of fear of persecution to seek protection in another country. A person seeking asylum has not yet been legally recognised as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.
- **Safe routes:** regular and managed routes which enable forcibly displaced people to safely travel to the UK to find protection and settle. These include resettlement, refugee family reunion, community sponsorship, and nationality-specific schemes such as the Ukraine visa schemes and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.
- **Resettlement:** the selection and transfer of refugees from the country where they initially sought protection to a third country that has agreed to admit them as refugees with permanent settlement status. Examples include the UK Resettlement Scheme and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (Pathway 2).
- **Refugee family reunion:** a safe route for those with refugee status or humanitarian protection to bring immediate family members to the UK.
- **Private sponsorship:** a route that facilitates the admission of displaced people and refugees to a new country. Sponsors identify and select the beneficiaries and are directly involved in their admission, reception, and integration. In this report, Homes for Ukraine is considered an example of private sponsorship.
- **Sponsors/hosts and guests:** the terms 'sponsors and hosts' refer to those who host Ukrainians in their homes for a minimum of six months. As they both sponsor displaced Ukrainians' visas in the UK and host them, this report uses the terms sponsors and hosts interchangeably. The term 'guests' is used to describe displaced Ukrainians staying at their hosts' homes.
- **Safeguarding:** protecting someone's health, wellbeing, and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. In the context of sponsorship, it refers to the measures aimed at preventing harms such as modern slavery, exploitation, child or domestic abuse from adults.
- **Matching providers and rematching:** matching involves pairing hosts and displaced Ukrainians through formal and informal methods. Formal matching is conducted by recognised providers working with the UK government, while informal matching occurs through means such as social media platforms. Rematching to a new host occurs when original hosting arrangements break down. It is a process conducted by local authorities, often in collaboration with voluntary and community sector organizations.
- **Person at risk of homelessness:** someone is legally defined as at risk of homelessness when she/he lacks a secure place to live or is at risk of losing their current accommodation within 56 days. All eligible households, including those on Ukraine visa schemes, are entitled to statutory homelessness assistance from local authorities, termed the 'prevention' or 'relief' duty.
- **Welcome accommodation:** a form of temporary accommodation offered by the Scottish and Welsh governments to displaced Ukrainians with no other accommodation arrangements upon arrival, until suitable longer-term accommodation is identified.
- **Local Housing Allowance (LHA):** rates used to calculate Housing Benefits for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates are based on private market rents paid by tenants in the area within which a person might reasonably be expected to live (a Broad Rental Market Area).

# Foreword

## Anna Kulish, Chair of Housing, Ukrainian Collective

Many of us fled Ukraine and took a journey to nowhere, arriving in a country in which some had never been before. We were welcomed at airports, train stations, and ferry terminals and were given immediate assistance and guidance. This is how the UK gave us a safe place to land.

Displaced people from Ukraine, who arrived on one of the visa schemes, have the right to work in the UK. They can also access various forms of financial support if they need it, such as Universal Credit, child benefits, and disability-related payments. I was fortunate enough to find employment just a few weeks after my arrival. This is how the UK gave us a sense of a stable tomorrow.

Ukrainian children coming to the UK on the Ukraine visa schemes can enrol in local schools from day one, and young people can apply for student grants on an equal footing with other UK residents. This is how the UK gave us a sense of uninterrupted growth. When matched with longer-term, more sustainable, and independent housing than initial accommodation, some of us were able to cook our own meals for the first time since arriving in the UK. This was a simple, yet profound pleasure that many take for granted – a warm meal of our choice, something we often hadn't cooked in months. This is how the UK gave us a sense of home.

This report offers an analysis of the successes of the Ukraine visa schemes, as well as areas for improvement. You will find valuable insights into the challenges encountered by displaced Ukrainian people, the support mechanisms available, and other solutions devised by various stakeholders involved in the delivery of the schemes.

One displaced Ukrainian who participated in the research for this report independently applied to all 65 housing associations in her city before being offered suitable accommodation. She is not even 25 years old. Independence is ingrained in the spirit of the Ukrainian people; this independence just needs some more empowerment and support from the UK government.

All the insights contained in this report show how displaced people can be housed more effectively and sustainably in the future, leaving a legacy for improving the UK's response to future displacement. That journey from Ukraine that seemed to go nowhere brought us to airports, train stations, and ferry terminals where we were welcomed. The UK turned out to be a safe place. A place to work, go to school and cook a warm meal again. That journey brought us home, far from our own.

### Two countries coming together



“ The canvas, painted by a displaced Ukrainian teenage artist, speaks of Ukraine – the country of my birth. The heart, boldly standing out with its blue and yellow hues, represents Ukraine's unyielding courage. The photograph of a Highland cow, an animal known for its rugged beauty and gentle nature is a symbol of Scotland – a country that has opened its arms to us. The necklace, with its porcelain swallow pendant made by a Ukrainian designer, symbolises the journey taken from one home to another. The bird, often seen as a symbol of freedom, reflects the journey of leaving one's homeland and the hope of soaring towards new beginnings. Together, these items tell a story of gratitude – a Ukrainian heart ever-thankful for the British lands that provide refuge and a fresh start for people who have been displaced. ”

*Focus group participant, Edinburgh*

# Executive summary

While their stories less regularly make the headlines, displaced people from Ukraine continue to face uncertainty about their futures.

Those forced to flee have faced many losses - their safety, family and friends, homes, possessions, and jobs. And with civilian infrastructure heavily damaged and destroyed, for many people returning to their homes in Ukraine is not an option.

As the conflict continues, it is vital that displaced Ukrainians are provided with immediate protection and longer-term support. Having a safe home is crucial to providing stability and helping displaced people rebuild their lives.

Yet too many Ukrainian people in the UK have experienced precarious housing and homelessness. British Red Cross research found that Ukrainians were more than four times more likely to experience homelessness than the general population.<sup>1</sup> Providing suitable housing has become a priority for policymakers in recent years with many Afghans also having struggled to access housing following evacuation from Kabul.

While there have been challenges, the welcome of over 200,000 people from Ukraine to the UK should be celebrated.<sup>2</sup> Significantly, the Welsh and Scottish governments' super sponsor schemes increased the UK's capacity for welcoming displaced people and several local authorities have overcome housing challenges by implementing new approaches to helping Ukrainians rent privately.

Despite these successes, the UK's wider policy context has recently been a source of considerable concern. The Illegal Migration Act (2023) effectively banned access to the asylum system for those arriving 'irregularly' and while that has been addressed, it still makes provision for a cap on arrivals under safe routes. At the same time delays (partly due to accommodation barriers) in the delivery of the Afghan schemes and the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) mean that the UK is failing to deliver protection for many people in need.<sup>3</sup>

This report summarises the findings from the British Red Cross's new research on the Ukraine accommodation response. Through a thorough analysis of existing literature and in-depth research to explore the first-hand experiences of displaced Ukrainians and professional stakeholders, we have gathered compelling examples of impactful initial and longer-term accommodation initiatives. We have also identified valuable lessons for how refugee protection can be strengthened - both now and in the future.

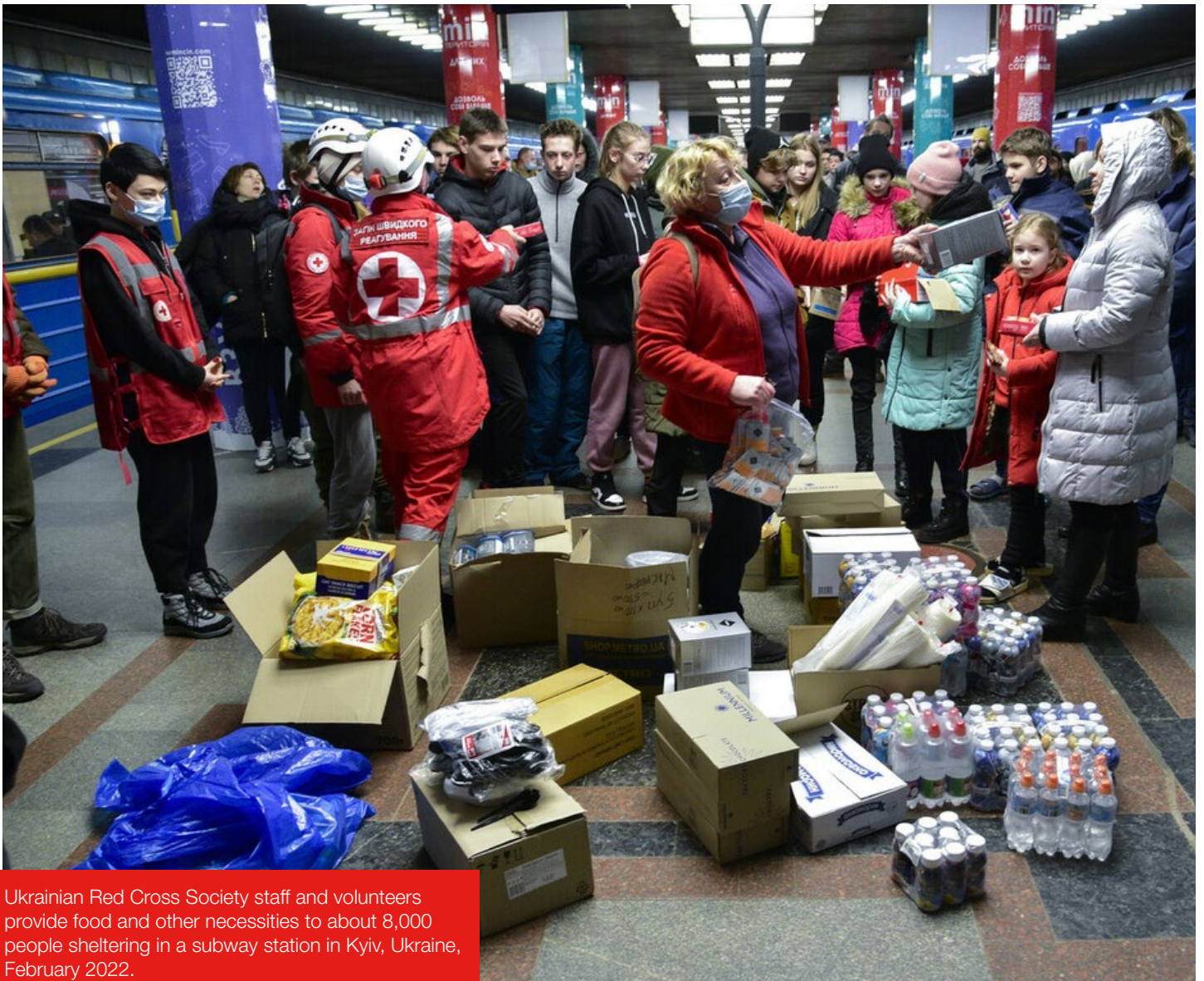
## Key findings

- **Displaced Ukrainians have experienced significant uncertainty.** This is partly due to the lack of a longer-term plan for accommodation in the UK and has been exacerbated by Ukrainians only having three years' leave to remain on their visas. Too many 'what ifs' have made it hard for people to plan ahead.
- **A clear link between emotional and physical safety.** People displaced from Ukraine said that emotional safety felt achievable only when their living arrangements were secure, they knew what to expect next, and they could plan for different scenarios.
- **Perspectives on welcome accommodation were mixed.** Analysis showed that while this approach was effective in addressing immediate need, spending a long time in these settings had a negative impact on wellbeing and autonomy.
- **Many Ukrainians had a positive experience on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, but there have been weaknesses in the approach to safeguarding and breakdowns in hosting relationships that have led to homelessness.**
  - Safeguarding challenges led to some instances of exploitation and abuse. Solutions included an

in-person and multi-agency approach to safeguarding support, as seen in Northern Ireland.

- Relationship breakdowns have been caused by insufficient training for hosts, cost-of-living pressures, and guests needing to stay longer than first anticipated due to a lack of other options. Effective solutions included offering training and 'thank you' payments to hosts and developing a plan for moving into longer-term accommodation.
- **Most people displaced from Ukraine have experienced challenges in accessing longer-term accommodation.** This is due to difficulties meeting the requirements of landlords, the high cost of living, and a lack of social and affordable housing options.
- **Many initiatives have successfully helped overcome accommodation challenges.** For instance, providing targeted support to help displaced people rent privately, such as rent deposit and guarantor schemes, and innovative funding solutions to increase housing stock.
- **Disparity in government support across schemes has had a negative impact on integration prospects.** This has particularly affected Ukrainians on the Family scheme, as local authorities have not received integration funding for this group.

Informed by the research findings as well as insights from the British Red Cross's service provision, this report makes recommendations for improving access to accommodation, as well as strengthening integration and safe routes for all displaced people who seek safety in the UK.



Ukrainian Red Cross Society staff and volunteers provide food and other necessities to about 8,000 people sheltering in a subway station in Kyiv, Ukraine, February 2022.

# Recommendations

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, there is an opportunity to improve the UK's response at the same time as building on what works to strengthen wider refugee protection. Policymakers should:

## 1. Improve the provision of accommodation by:

- **Protecting the safety and sustainability of sponsorship.** For instance, the UK government should work with local authorities to strengthen Homes for Ukraine by increasing the use of formal matching partners; ensure mandatory safeguarding checks take place during the visa application process; and facilitate training and support for all hosts.
- **Providing emergency accommodation support.** For instance, the UK government should ensure there is a contingency plan and funding to support local authorities when arrangements break down on both Homes for Ukraine and the Family scheme.
- **Preparing displaced people for independent living.** For instance, the UK government should work with devolved governments and local authorities to ensure Homes for Ukraine and other schemes include a clear transition plan from hosting arrangements into independent accommodation, with a notice period agreed between hosts and guests.
- **Using welcome accommodation only for the urgent delivery of places and with a clear pathway to suitable housing.** The Scottish and Welsh governments should prioritise helping displaced Ukrainians in welcome accommodation to move into independent housing; ensure remaining welcome arrangements use good quality accommodation; and review and adapt the super sponsor model to offer other displaced people protection e.g. through emergency resettlement.

## 2. Improve access to longer-term accommodation by:

- **Addressing barriers to the private rented sector.** The UK government, the Scottish and Welsh governments, and the Northern Ireland Executive should work with local authorities to consistently provide rent deposit and guarantor schemes, offer brokerage arrangements, and incentivise landlords to rent to Ukrainians and other displaced people.
- **Updating the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) annually.** The UK government can help displaced people on benefits to rent privately by preventing a gap between LHA rates and 30th percentile rents.
- **Increasing social and affordable housing stock.** For instance, by the UK government launching a fourth round of the Local Authority Housing Fund that can be used to provide accommodation for displaced people across safe routes.
- **Providing secure immigration status.** For instance, the UK government should open applications for the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme (UPE) by 31 August 2024, enabling Ukrainians to demonstrate to landlords that they have long-term leave to remain.

## 3. Improve integration and safe routes by:

- **Developing a national strategy for integration.** The UK government should consult on and develop a national strategy that agrees priorities such as accommodation and employment, promotes equal support for displaced people across the UK, and builds on work undertaken in the devolved nations.
- **Providing equal, multi-year funding across all schemes.** For instance, the UK government should commit to funding for the duration of Homes for Ukraine and the Family scheme and provide integration support and 'thank you' payments on the UPE.
- **Involving refugees in policy and practice.** The UK government, working alongside devolved governments and local authorities, should ensure Ukrainians and other displaced people are involved in developing and evaluating integration services and policies.



# 1. Introduction

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Of the close to 6 million displaced Ukrainians in Europe<sup>4</sup>, 200,000 people have found safety in the UK. This has primarily been through the Ukraine Sponsorship scheme (also known as Homes for Ukraine) and the Family scheme.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the recent closure of the Family scheme and the halving of leave to remain under Homes for Ukraine, arrivals across the UK remain significant – with a weekly average of around 379 arrivals between February and mid-June 2024.<sup>1</sup> This demonstrates the pressing need for Ukrainian people to access protection and sustainable support to thrive in their new communities.

The British Red Cross is the UK's largest provider of support to refugees and people seeking asylum and we have assisted close to 70,000 displaced Ukrainians in the UK. Through our services, we know that barriers to accessing stable accommodation include securing rent deposits and guarantors and work that pays enough for people to afford to rent. However, these barriers are not insurmountable, and this research undertaken on the Ukraine response has demonstrated notable good practice and learning in providing accommodation and integration support.

The UK has an opportunity to reflect on successful initiatives to strengthen protection for Ukrainians and other displaced people. Doing so can improve accommodation provision on safe routes such as the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the UKRS, as well as placing the UK in a stronger position to respond to future crises. As a priority, policymakers should invest in increasing the capacity of communities to welcome new arrivals and facilitate the sustainable growth of safe routes to respond to need.

This report begins by exploring the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and the policy response. It then sets out definitions and interpretations of integration and accommodation, informed by the analysis of people displaced from Ukraine. We review the provision of initial and longer-term accommodation, spotlighting accommodation solutions and making recommendations to policymakers on strengthening support. Lastly, based on this research, we propose guiding principles for the UK's future response to crises.

## 2. Aims and methods

This report examines the accommodation response to displacement from Ukraine.

The research aimed to:

- identify examples of good practice in accommodation provision.
- explore Ukrainians' firsthand experiences and the perspectives of professional stakeholders.
- highlight key learning that can contribute to the delivery of safe, secure and affordable refugee accommodation in the future.

The research drew on a qualitative methodology comprising three main phases, conducted between September and December 2023:

1. An evidence review of accommodation responses in the UK, selected countries in the European Union (EU) and Canada.
2. Fieldwork in the UK, including:
  - in-person focus groups with 35 people displaced from Ukraine. These were held in Sheffield, Edinburgh and London.
  - online interviews with 31 professional stakeholders involved in supporting displaced Ukrainians to access accommodation across the four nations of the UK.
3. The development of case studies of good practice in accommodation provision.

The British Red Cross commissioned Safe to Grow, with expertise in participatory and trauma-informed research, to design and carry out the research. See [Annex C](#) for an overview of the research methodology.



Tony sits at the table for Sunday lunch with Karyna and her daughter Mylana, who are being hosted in Tony's home in Derbyshire after being displaced from Ukraine.

## 3. Background

### Humanitarian crisis in Ukraine

Since February 2022, millions of people have fled their homes, thousands have died and been injured, and civilian infrastructures have been heavily damaged and destroyed. The conflict is expected to become protracted, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 14.6 million people inside Ukraine will need humanitarian assistance this year, including 3.7 million people internally displaced by the conflict.<sup>6</sup> The scarcity of necessities such as food, water and healthcare supplies, combined with constant shelling, have deeply affected the population's health. Meanwhile the millions of Ukrainians displaced globally must navigate uncertainty about the future at the same time as seeking to integrate into daily life in new communities.

### 3.1 Displacement from Ukraine

As the conflict escalated in February 2022, many countries, including the UK, offered swift protection to those leaving Ukraine. In the EU, the Temporary Protection Directive was triggered for the first time on 4 March 2022 to offer quick and effective assistance to those displaced. Two years on, 4.3 million non-EU citizens have received temporary protection status in EU countries<sup>7</sup>, and Canada has welcomed over 286,000 Ukrainians through a special pathway – the Canada Ukraine Authorisation for Emergency Travel (CUAET).<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile in the UK, the Ukraine visa schemes have provided safety to over 200,000 people.<sup>9</sup>

The response has been unique both in scale and design. By August 2022, more people had received temporary protection in the UK under the two main Ukraine visa schemes than the total who received protection under the country's asylum system and refugee resettlement routes combined between 2016 and 2021.<sup>10</sup> The devolved administrations have also played a prominent role in sponsorship, with the Scottish and Welsh governments acting as sponsors to over 20,000 Ukrainians who have arrived in the UK.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, over 30,000 people have extended their stay in the UK through the Extension scheme and in-country applications to the Family scheme.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.2 Policy context

#### 3.2.1 Access to safety

The bespoke response to Ukraine differed from routes such as asylum or resettlement, using a visa-led approach instead. Recent developments – such as the closure of the Family scheme and changes to sponsor eligibility requirements on Homes for Ukraine<sup>13</sup> – have significantly reduced the protection available to displaced Ukrainians. However initial good practice from these pathways, such as flexibility in processing<sup>14</sup> and an expansive definition of family<sup>iii</sup>, resulted in the provision of safety at scale. They could help deliver more accessible protection in the future and should be incorporated into the design of future responses.

The Scottish and Welsh governments made an additional offer linked to Homes for Ukraine – the 'super sponsor schemes'. Here, applicants applied directly to the Scottish or Welsh government. This option was intended to provide more equal access to safety, as well as removing the requirement for those leaving Ukraine to seek out a sponsor. Although arrivals exceeded estimations<sup>15 16</sup>, with implications for welcome arrangements (explored later in the report), building on the learning from this response could help provide safety for other displaced people.

Please see a mapping of the Ukraine schemes and funding in [Annex A](#).

### 3.2.2 Status and support

Ukraine scheme visa holders have had permission to work, access to public funds and three years' leave to remain. However, support has not been provided consistently across schemes. For example, through Homes for Ukraine and the super sponsor schemes, local authorities currently receive a tariff of £5,900 for each new arrival and hosts receive 'thank you' payments for providing accommodation. But hosting families and displaced Ukrainians on the Family scheme do not receive the same support.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, displaced Ukrainians do not have refugee status. Instead, they have temporary protection in the UK, which has made it harder to secure decent work and stable accommodation. The halving of the period of permission granted to new Homes for Ukraine applicants, from 36 months to 18 months, is likely to exacerbate these issues.<sup>18</sup> Although it is welcome that Ukraine scheme visa holders can apply for a further 18 months' leave to remain on the UPE<sup>19</sup>, the application process (currently due to open in early 2025) should be moved forward and a longer-term plan for protection prepared. This would better address the impact of uncertainty on people's lives.

### 3.2.3 Accommodation and integration

While the Ukraine response successfully delivered safety at scale, some new arrivals have experienced challenges with unsuitable accommodation, precarious housing and homelessness.<sup>20</sup> The UK and devolved governments have taken some steps to address these issues. For instance, the UK government has extended and increased 'thank you' payments to hosts and provided homelessness prevention funding to local authorities.<sup>21 22</sup> The Scottish government launched the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund<sup>23</sup> to bring empty properties back into use, as well defining a strategic vision for inclusion through 'A Warm Scots Future'<sup>24</sup> and the Welsh government has launched Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding Programme for the renovation of void properties.<sup>25</sup> However, homelessness figures for Ukrainians across the UK remain concerning. Further action is required to address barriers to the private rented sector, expand social housing stock, and provide Ukrainians with a secure basis from which to rebuild their lives.

This recent period of crisis response has also seen other displaced people facing challenges in securing suitable housing<sup>26</sup>, and a wider inconsistency in welcome and integration support for people in need of protection depending on the scheme or mode of arrival. The UK has no integration strategy and there is a need to agree UK-wide strategic direction, funding and co-ordination to strengthen refugee integration in the future.<sup>iv v</sup> Devolved governments have sought to define approaches for their nations, but in Northern Ireland and Wales up-to-date strategies are in development and should be finalised as a matter of priority.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2.4 Illegal Migration Act

There have also been significant developments in the wider policy context which affect both the rights of asylum seekers and the delivery of safe routes in the future. The Illegal Migration Act (2023) effectively banned access to the asylum system for those arriving 'irregularly' and while that has been addressed, it still makes provision for a cap on arrivals under safe routes from 2025.<sup>28 29</sup> Rather than setting a cap, the UK should invest in expanding the capacity of local authorities, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, and communities to deliver ambitious targets under safe routes. This should be in addition to creating new routes for people claiming asylum, such as humanitarian visas and reinstating access to the asylum system. Some of the accommodation solutions implemented in the Ukraine response could support the effective delivery of safe routes and help newly recognised refugees into housing too.

## 4. Definitions and interpretations

### 4.1 Integration and accommodation

Below, we define integration and set out the core requirements for making refugee accommodation suitable. These definitions draw on findings from the evidence review and focus group discussions with people displaced from Ukraine.

#### 4.1.1 Integration

While interpretations of refugee integration vary, in this report it is defined as:

- multifaceted with legal, economic, and social and cultural elements
- a gradual, two-way process that is dependent upon the efforts of the individual and welcoming community, and so is distinct from assimilation
- dependent on the context.<sup>30 31 32</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Safe, secure and affordable accommodation

Adequate housing is a human right that supports refugee wellbeing and integration.<sup>vi</sup> The key elements of the right to adequate housing include:

- security of tenure and adequate infrastructure, for example, energy for cooking and lighting
- a location that supports access to services and employment opportunities
- affordability
- habitability.<sup>vii</sup>

Achieving these core components can prevent the destabilising impact of frequent moves on displaced individuals, support better physical and mental health outcomes, and create the conditions for building social and professional networks. Conversely, extended stays in emergency or institutional settings tend to negatively impact integration outcomes.<sup>33 34 35 36</sup>

These core elements of adequate housing, as well as the characteristics that people displaced from Ukraine highlighted as important to them, inform the analysis for 'suitable accommodation' used throughout this report.

#### **People displaced from Ukraine: perspectives on safety and suitable accommodation**

In our focus group discussions, participants discussed in detail their experiences of safety and the aspects of secure accommodation that were important to them. Significantly, participants noted the links between their emotional and physical safety. They said that emotional safety felt achievable only when their living arrangements were secure, when they knew what to expect next and when they could plan for different scenarios. Other characteristics that participants thought were important to make accommodation feel safe included having a place that they could make their own and invite family and friends to; a place from which to build social networks; proximity to nature and green spaces; a trusted relationship with other residents; and accommodation which met health and safety standards.



*My first home baking in my new home*



*Pet. The next step of stable living*



*Waiting for a miracle*

*These photographs were taken and given a caption by displaced Ukrainians who participated in the focus groups in Edinburgh.*

*They reflect some of the main components of having a safe home, including the ability to cook independently, proximity to green spaces and a space habitable for children.*

## 4.2 Models of accommodation

This section provides a brief overview of the accommodation response to displacement from Ukraine and definitions of the different models of accommodation used.

A review of the evidence in Canada, the EU and the UK showed that many states responded with temporary, and often private, measures. More than half of EU and other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries relied on private citizens to host people displaced from Ukraine in their homes.<sup>37</sup> Since then, national and local governments have sought to provide access to longer-term accommodation and a secure basis from which displaced individuals can integrate.

The evidence shows that, while both emergency and initial accommodation offers were often effective in meeting immediate need, there were sometimes significant issues relating to the standard of accommodation, with a negative impact on wellbeing. The evidence also pointed to the barriers to accessing longer-term accommodation, and the need to further evaluate the efficacy of housing innovations that have been developed to overcome those challenges. Involving people displaced from Ukraine in this effort is critical.

Later in this report, we review different models of initial and longer-term accommodation provided to people displaced from Ukraine. We focus on the accommodation offered through the Ukraine Family scheme and the Ukraine Sponsorship scheme (including both Homes for Ukraine across the UK, and the super sponsor schemes in Scotland and Wales).

### 4.2.1 Initial accommodation

Initial accommodation is a temporary form of accommodation provided to people who may otherwise be homeless. It is a place to reside in the short-to-medium term after arrival, until more permanent accommodation is identified, and is expected to last for around six months. In this report, initial accommodation usually takes the form of hosting arrangements (whether with Homes for Ukraine hosts or family members), and welcome accommodation provided by the Welsh and Scottish governments. In some cases, initial accommodation arrangements may develop into longer-term stays, as has been the case in the Homes for Ukraine and super sponsor schemes.

The report also considers the use of **emergency accommodation**. This has been used when displaced individuals arrived to find problems with their accommodation or when arrangements broke down later.

### 4.2.2 Longer-term accommodation

Longer-term accommodation is more permanent than both emergency and initial accommodation. The term is used within the report to describe housing options such as the private rented sector or social renting.

## 5. Research findings

This section outlines the key findings from focus group discussions with people displaced from Ukraine and interviews with professional stakeholders.

### 5.1 Initial accommodation on the Family scheme and Homes for Ukraine

People fleeing Ukraine were able to access safety through the support of family members and the UK public. This section explores the provision of initial accommodation through the Family scheme and Homes for Ukraine. It sets out challenges, good practice, case studies and recommendations. We also briefly explore the use of emergency accommodation when arrangements have broken down.

#### 5.1.1 Accommodation on the Family scheme

For some people displaced from Ukraine, living with their family members was a positive experience. However a few did face challenges.

#### Challenges on the Family scheme

##### Overcrowding and family tensions

A few people displaced from Ukraine reported a lack of sufficient space in their families' homes. This often resulted in overcrowding, lack of privacy, and increased noise. One focus group participant recounted having to share the same bed with multiple family members, including children and grandchildren. These challenges put a strain on relationships, and sometimes led to arrangements breaking down. Hosting arrangements also broke down due to caring for additional household members, especially when families already had caring responsibilities.

##### Financial pressures and limited government support

“ I don't know about others, but for me, it's only this centre [voluntary and community sector organisation] that helps me. There is no one else to help. ”

Focus group participant, London

Focus group participants and professional stakeholders noted the financial pressures faced by UK-based Ukrainian families hosting additional family members in their homes. This was exacerbated by the lack of dedicated financial support from the government to hosts on the Family scheme, displaced Ukrainian guests or local authorities – unlike on Homes for Ukraine.<sup>viii</sup> It also meant that displaced Ukrainians on the Family scheme faced confusion as to their rights and entitlements, and some felt unsupported by local authorities and statutory bodies.

These challenges led some people on the Family scheme to move out prematurely from hosting arrangements with families, often without longer-term accommodation secured in advance. As a result, a few of the people we spoke to on the Family scheme had experienced multiple moves across different initial and temporary accommodation settings, facing forcible evictions and even the risk of homelessness.<sup>x</sup>

The diagram on the next page illustrates the accommodation journey experienced by Alina<sup>x</sup>, a focus group participant displaced from Ukraine who arrived on the Family scheme.

# Alina's Accommodation Journey

Alina arrived through the Family scheme

## INITIAL ACCOMMODATION 1:

Alina moved in with her son, his wife and child.

When her family could no longer accommodate her due to other caring commitments, Alina presented as homeless to the local authority.

## INITIAL ACCOMMODATION 2:

Alina moved into a hotel, where she lived for some time.

## RETURNED TO UKRAINE

In the absence of longer-term housing options, Alina returned to Ukraine, where she stayed for a few months.

## INITIAL ACCOMMODATION 3:

When the conflict escalated in Ukraine, Alina returned to the UK. She stayed with a friend for a few months, while searching for accommodation in the private rented sector.

## LONGER-TERM ACCOMMODATION 1:

Alina moved into a house of multiple occupancy in the private rented sector. She was given no contract, and experienced a range of issues including cold, damp, rats, and anti-social behaviour from neighbours. She also felt unsafe.

## LONGER-TERM ACCOMMODATION 2:

With support from her son, Alina secured a flat in the private rented sector and moved in.

### Alina's story

Alina arrived in the UK through the Family scheme to live with her son and his wife and child. However, she could not stay with her family in the long-term due to her family's caring commitments for their disabled child. After presenting as homeless to her local authority, Alina was moved into a temporary, emergency hotel room in the North-West, where she resided with people from Ukraine.

From this point, Alina spent several months in temporary and precarious accommodation arrangements, while searching for longer-term accommodation through both social housing and the private rented sector. She began searching for longer-term accommodation as soon as she moved into the emergency hotel, but she was unsuccessful due to the lack of options. This led to her going back to Ukraine, only to return to the UK soon after as it was not safe at home. After returning, she lived for several months at a friend's house while looking for a flat to rent. Even when she managed to find housing in the private rented sector, she did not have a positive first experience. She faced a range of issues, including feeling physically unsafe, poor-quality housing conditions and having no tenancy contract, leading to her eventually being evicted for raising concerns to her landlord. It was only through the support of her son that she was eventually able to secure a more habitable flat, also in the private rented sector. This was the sixth accommodation setting Alina had moved to in under two years.

When Alina initially applied for social housing, she felt unsupported by the local authority in navigating this process; and when looking to rent, she struggled finding properties that were affordable within her Housing Benefit budget, as well as in obtaining information about her rights as a tenant.



### The use of emergency accommodation

Those participating in this research told us that emergency accommodation had primarily been used when there were challenges with hosting arrangements immediately upon arrival. On Homes for Ukraine, emergency accommodation was relied upon when hosting arrangements broke down, often due to visas having been issued before the safeguarding and property checks by local authorities had been carried out. In a few cases, people displaced from Ukraine explained that they had not been able to contact their family on arrival, or that the arrangement had broken down. While all displaced Ukrainians are entitled to the same homelessness support as UK citizens, local authorities did not have dedicated teams to support those on the Family scheme (as on Homes for Ukraine).<sup>xi</sup>

Professional stakeholders highlighted that the challenges in supporting people on the Family scheme were mainly due to the lack of contingency funding from government for emergency accommodation, as well as a lack of wider support. This meant that some individuals were in emergency accommodation for several months. Funding emergency accommodation capacity and integration support fell on already stretched local authorities, which at times struggled to consistently help displaced Ukrainians across schemes. The British Red Cross has identified similar challenges in relation to refugee family reunion, as shown in its report 'Together at Last'.<sup>38</sup>

### Good practice on the Family scheme

Many professional stakeholders we interviewed from both local authorities and devolved government agencies pointed to creative solutions used to support displaced Ukrainians on the Family scheme. These included:

#### Local authorities providing equal financial support

“ Whether they're here on a Family scheme or Homes for Ukraine, they still need to be offered the same. I just can't claim any money for them [those on the Family scheme]. ”

Local authority interview participant

Various local authority participants we interviewed said they had been offering displaced Ukrainians on the Family scheme and their UK-based hosting families the same financial support as given to those on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Notably, this support was offered at the discretion of individual local authorities. This was only possible when funding was available from the Homes for Ukraine tariff or pre-existing resettlement funding, resulting in an inconsistent level of support across the country. Support offered included granting the same £200

interim payment to displaced Ukrainians, equivalent funds to 'thank you' payments to support hosting families with the cost of living, and the same equipment for children to help with their education costs (for example distributing an iPad or laptop).

#### Local authorities providing equal integration support

Some local authorities also reported offering equal wraparound integration support and advice on accommodation options for those on the Family scheme. This support included proactively involving those on the Family scheme in community events, outings and integration activities provided by the local authorities and funded through the Homes for Ukraine tariff, and signposting people to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes. It also included supporting displaced Ukrainians with advice and guidance to access housing in the private rented sector and referring people to support services provided by VCS organisations.

## Devolved nations' support to arrivals on the Family scheme

Devolved government representatives we interviewed also recounted making independent decisions to fund support to arrivals and hosts on the Family scheme in certain circumstances. In Northern Ireland the extension of the £200 interim payment to displaced Ukrainians on the Family scheme was cited as an example of providing arrival support equally across schemes. Similarly, the Welsh government allowed the rematching of displaced Ukrainians on the Family scheme to hosts on Homes for Ukraine, and provided them with 'thank you' payments. This form of rematching across schemes was allowed in Wales when displaced Ukrainians could no longer live with family members and relationships had broken down.<sup>39</sup>

## Wider implications

The inconsistencies in the support offered under the Ukraine schemes reflect a wider issue in the national refugee system, as displaced people receive different integration support depending on their mode of arrival and where they live in the UK. A national integration strategy could help address these issues by defining priorities, providing more equal funding, and strengthening co-ordination. This would benefit all displaced people and help local authorities, government agencies and VCS plan ahead.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.1.2 Accommodation on Homes for Ukraine

#### Two dressing gowns on one door



“ Two dressing gowns on one door. It represents Ukraine and the UK. It gives me the feeling that my host can trust me, and I can trust her. ”

Focus group participant, Sheffield

*This photograph was taken by a focus group participant in Sheffield to express the sense of mutual trust between herself and her host living together and sharing personal items and space.*

Both professional stakeholders and people displaced from Ukraine described displaced Ukrainians' experiences of accommodation with a host as generally positive.

When people had moved directly into hosting, this arrangement was described as beneficial for laying the foundations for integration. Hosting was cited as being useful in providing displaced Ukrainians with a safe place to reside, supporting them with recovering from experiences of conflict and displacement, and building new networks in their local communities.

**“We were living with our host family for one year and four months, we had an amazing experience because our sponsor, she’s an amazing lady. We’re still speaking with her, we’re all friends, she has an amazing son, so our experience was wonderful.”** Focus group participant, Edinburgh

## Challenges on Homes for Ukraine

Homes for Ukraine is a private sponsorship model, in which hosts are required to provide a minimum of six months' accommodation to displaced Ukrainians. It also allows for informal matching through social media channels. Although government funding is available to support displaced Ukrainians and hosts, research discussions highlighted that strengthening the initial scheme design could have helped with some of its challenges in implementation. For instance, a short-term hosting commitment, coupled with a lack of clarity over the length of hosting and the absence of a transition plan into longer-term accommodation, did not sufficiently prepare Ukrainians for independent living. This led to significant uncertainty. Many of these challenges should be understood in the context of the UK government having to rapidly design the response. However, learning from these experiences demonstrates how schemes can be improved now and in the future.

The section below looks in detail at some of the challenges which arose through exploring safeguarding risks, funding, and breakdowns in hosting arrangements. It also highlights the impact on displaced Ukrainians' safety, wellbeing and integration.

### Safeguarding risks

The absence of robust safeguarding measures was raised by a few professional stakeholders as a limitation in the design of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Since the scheme's implementation, the UK government has taken some steps to strengthen its approach to safeguarding. For instance, in July 2022 it mandated local authorities to conduct enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on sponsors when Ukrainian children arrived without parents or guardians.<sup>41</sup> It also subsequently allowed local authorities to conduct enhanced DBS checks at their discretion in wider cases of perceived vulnerability.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, while initially matching happened only through informal connections, in May 2022 the UK government published a list of VCS organisations serving as recognised matching providers.<sup>43</sup>

However, gaps in the government's approach to safeguarding remain. These include a continued over-reliance on informal matching and a failure to consistently apply safeguarding checks on sponsors before issuing visas, as explored below.

### Informal matching providers

**“We heard of a pretty dark situation with a home visit, ahead of someone arriving, revealing a lock on the outside of a bedroom door and cameras in a bedroom where a single young Ukrainian woman was going to be accommodated.”** VCS organisation interview participant

As most matches between hosts on the Homes for Ukraine scheme and displaced Ukrainians still appeared to happen informally<sup>xii</sup>, professional stakeholders were concerned that informal matching offered fewer safeguarding guarantees than the recognised providers verified by the UK government.<sup>xiii</sup> Almost all professional stakeholders, and a few people displaced from Ukraine, spoke of instances of exploitation, fraud and scamming experienced by Ukrainians who found their hosts on social media channels. For example, one professional stakeholder spoke of a displaced Ukrainian paying £5,000 for a hosting arrangement that was not real, despite visa applications being free on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. As seen in the quote, another VCS organisation representative spoke of a welfare visit to a host, where matching had happened via social media. During this visit there were clear signs of the space being set up for sexual exploitation before the arrival of a young Ukrainian woman.

### ***Lack of consistent checks on hosts before arrival***

Another reason underpinning safeguarding concerns on the scheme was that local authorities were not always able to complete checks on hosts before the Home Office issued visas to displaced Ukrainians.<sup>xiv</sup> This stemmed from the UK government's decision not to mandate local authorities to complete safeguarding checks before visas were issued, except in the case of children, so as to prioritise swift access to safety for displaced Ukrainians.<sup>44</sup>

Professional stakeholders we spoke to also identified co-ordination challenges between the Home Office and local authorities on timelines for approving visas. These were in part due to some initial problems with the Foundry case management system<sup>xv</sup>, including the absence of data-validation mechanisms, digital glitches with checks appearing as resolved when it was not the case, or the outcome of the checks not being recorded accurately.<sup>xvi</sup>

While these findings do not suggest that safeguarding issues are occurring in large numbers on the scheme<sup>xvii</sup>, they point to the need for the UK government to improve monitoring on Homes for Ukraine and future efforts. This would include working with local authorities to collect accurate data on the number of safeguarding checks, their outcomes, whether they have been conducted prior to visas being issued, and how long checks take.

### **Lack of clarity over long-term funding**

Many local authority representatives we interviewed would have preferred the UK government to communicate funding commitments for the duration of the scheme from the start. This would have helped with long-term planning. When the UK government announced its main funding commitments in the 2022 Spring Statement, 'thank you' payments to hosts were issued for one year only, and tariff funding for local authorities was introduced as one-off commitment for the first year of sponsorship.<sup>45</sup> 'Thank you' payments for a second and third year of hosting were not confirmed until December 2022<sup>46</sup> and November 2023.<sup>47</sup>

The local authority representatives we interviewed after the 2023 Autumn Statement said that the extension of 'thank you' payments to hosts for the third year of sponsorship was a source of relief. This measure was believed to prevent breakdowns in hosting arrangements, which were partly caused by financial pressures. Incentivising continued hosting was seen as reducing the immediate pressures on local authorities to find longer-term accommodation for displaced Ukrainians in the hard to access private rented sector.

### **Breakdowns in hosting arrangements**

Interviews with professional stakeholders and focus groups with people displaced from Ukraine demonstrated that hosting arrangements broke down (sometimes suddenly), and that some Ukrainians have even faced homelessness and a strong sense of uncertainty as a result. Some of the main reasons underpinning the breakdown of hosting arrangements are explored below.

#### ***Lack of sufficient training and ongoing support for hosts***

VCS organisations, local authorities and government agency representatives mentioned that many hosts had limited or no experience in providing support to displaced people traumatised by conflict before hosting. At the beginning of the response when high numbers arrived in a short period of time, local authorities did not have enough capacity to offer training and regular support to hosts. This led to hosts feeling alone and unsupported throughout the process, which in turn impacted on their ability to sustain arrangements over a long period of time.

#### ***Cost-of-living pressures and fatigue with hosting***

Financial pressures, exacerbated by the high cost of living, were considered as key factors in determining the length of hosting, and sometimes resulted in hosting ending earlier than anticipated.

Many VCS organisation representatives also mentioned a psychological fatigue with hosting setting in after a certain time. Fatigue arose from sharing one's home, managing cultural differences and helping people who were experiencing the impact of trauma. The timescale for such fatigue varied from host to host, which in turn affected the length of their commitment to host displaced Ukrainians in their homes.

## **The aftermath of hosting breakdowns**

### ***Rematching***

When hosting arrangements broke down, rematching to another host was used by local authorities as an immediate mitigation strategy to provide displaced Ukrainians with safe accommodation within the hosting model. However, interviews with professional stakeholders showed that rematching on was not always possible, mainly due to the availability or location of other hosts. If rematching was not available, displaced Ukrainians were usually offered emergency accommodation by their local authority. In some instances, the rematching process led to multiple moves between emergency and initial accommodation settings.

Rematching was not generally available on the Family scheme, except in specific circumstances in Wales as noted earlier. This contributed to risks of homelessness among that cohort.

### ***Lack of transition options from hosting arrangements***

Many professional stakeholders we interviewed said that extended stays in hosting arrangements often resulted from the lack of alternative options to move to longer-term accommodation in the private rented sector or social housing, rather than the needs of displaced Ukrainians or the wishes of hosts. They were also concerned that some hosts felt pressured to continue hosting due to the limited options for longer-term accommodation.

## **Impact on displaced Ukrainians**

### ***Risks and experiences of homelessness***

Breakdowns in hosting arrangements resulted in homelessness risks<sup>xviii</sup> for many displaced Ukrainians. As of 31 March 2024, out of 9,540 Ukrainian families who have been at risk of homelessness in England since February 2022, 6,330 were on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.<sup>xix</sup> Of these, 5,760 had been at risk of homelessness due to sponsor arrangements breaking down.<sup>48</sup>

A few of the displaced Ukrainians we spoke to had experienced homelessness firsthand. One woman displaced from Ukraine was left homeless overnight. She was made to leave her host's property at midnight with her belongings and had to sleep on a beach nearby. This focus group participant said she would like to see the government introduce a notice period which hosts would need to give local authorities if they changed their mind about hosting. This would give time to find alternative accommodation, which would in turn reduce the risk of homelessness.

### ***Uncertainty, waiting and change***

“ We need to have long-term accommodation [out of hosting] because it’s really stressful. The conflict is still going on, and we have no place there and no place here really, because we don’t know how long we’re going to be in accommodation where we are now. ”

Focus group participant, London

The lack of clarity over the length of hosting and the absence of a plan for transitioning to longer-term accommodation resulted in significant uncertainty for displaced Ukrainians. For individuals unclear about when they would be able to return to their home country, not knowing how long they would be able to stay with their hosts felt particularly stressful.

These uncertain times were also punctuated by long periods of waiting to access longer-term accommodation, which led to many displaced Ukrainians feeling that they were in limbo. A reported lack of support from local authorities in navigating access to longer-term accommodation from sponsorship arrangements further compounded these feelings.

### ***Lack of secure immigration status***

“ If I ensure that my status is secured to some point, I can qualify, I can get training, I can seek high-level employment (...) to build my career maybe, to plan education for my children. ”

Focus group participant, Edinburgh

Almost all displaced Ukrainians we spoke to shared that not knowing what would happen after their visas ended amplified this sense of uncertainty. With many visas due to end in spring 2025, and the extension not yet announced at the time of fieldwork, they expressed concerns over their sense of safety. Lack of certainty over their immigration status also reduced Ukrainians’ opportunities in the UK – particularly for career training and pursuing educational opportunities.

### ***“It’s all about what ifs”: the impact of change and uncertainty***

“ It’s all about what ifs, what if I moved tomorrow? Your every decision needs to be made based on what ifs, what if there is no visa in a year and a half, what if there is no house in, I don’t know, within social accommodation? What if I need to look for a private let, what if my sponsor ends our arrangement tomorrow because they can, right, can’t they, it’s all about juggling what ifs. ”

Focus group participant, Edinburgh

From our research with displaced Ukrainians across initial accommodation settings, we found that uncertainty, coupled with a sense of constant change<sup>xx</sup>, negatively impacted their integration and wellbeing.

The temporary nature of initial accommodation prevented displaced Ukrainians from putting down roots and planning their futures. They felt it left them juggling too many ‘what ifs’, thwarted their plans, and reduced their ability to invest in their lives and become self-reliant. Tiredness and fatigue were also expressed as side effects of change and uncertainty.

Uncertainty within the system, especially in terms of how long people were going to stay in initial accommodation, led to challenges for local authorities and VCS organisations in planning for longer-term and sustainable support.

## 5.1.2 Learning and good practice on hosting on Homes for Ukraine

### Training and information for hosts

Professional stakeholders considered training for hosts as essential to ensure hosting arrangements were sustainable over time. They also said that it contributed to improved wellbeing among displaced Ukrainians. Both pre-arrival training and ongoing support to hosts was regarded as beneficial. Participants from government agencies also felt that mediation sessions<sup>xxi</sup> provided by expert organisations were helpful in preventing hosting breakdowns. This was especially in situations where difficulties had arisen between hosts and displaced Ukrainians, but the relationship had not broken down.

#### Case study: Reset training, support and information to sustain hosting arrangements

As a government registered provider on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, Reset Communities for Refugees offers a bespoke matching and training service. By 1 April 2022, over 8,000 UK sponsoring households had registered for Reset's services, offering places for over 20,000 people displaced from Ukraine.<sup>49</sup>

#### Training for hosts prior to arrival and ongoing support

Reset requires prospective hosts to undertake an online training programme to help them create a positive hosting environment. At the time of fieldwork, Reset shared that over 4,200 potential hosts had attended the training since 2022.

Reset also provides optional monthly training sessions open to any prospective and existing hosts on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, even if they were matched through a different organisation. These include training on 'trauma-informed approaches to hosting' and 'planning for the end of hosting'. Since launching these monthly sessions at the beginning of 2023, Reset shared that it has had over 600 attendees by the time of fieldwork.<sup>xxii</sup> The sessions offer the opportunity for hosts to come together and talk about the commonality of their experiences, access advice, and build a network of support – identified as beneficial to sustaining relationships over time.

VCS organisation representatives we spoke to commented that, if undertaken consistently across the country, pre-arrival training for hosts could have prevented many host breakdowns and significantly reduced the need for emergency accommodation.

### Financial incentives to hosts

Professional stakeholders generally agreed that financial remuneration was effective in incentivising continued hosting, in addition to providing training and ongoing support. For example, local authority representatives we spoke to thought that the increase in 'thank you' payments from £350 to £500 after 12 months of hosting had made a difference to hosts. Similarly, some local authorities also used the Homes for Ukraine tariff funding at their discretion to extend 'thank you' payments to hosts beyond the £500 provided by the UK government.<sup>50</sup> For instance, in recognition of higher energy bills during winter, Bristol City Council chose to supplement 'thank you' payments to hosts with an additional £100 per Ukrainian guest from winter 2022, which were still being issued at the time of fieldwork. Council representatives we spoke to saw this measure as preventing potential future spend on emergency accommodation for displaced Ukrainians.

### Addressing safeguarding concerns through multi-agency support

#### **Case study: Ukraine Assistance Centres: a multi-agency approach to supporting people**

In Northern Ireland (NI), Ukraine Assistance Centres were established through a multi-agency approach and operated from April 2022 to October 2023. These centres provided a one-stop-shop of comprehensive support for Ukrainians displaced by the conflict and their hosts. To support the smooth running of the centres, the Department for Communities enlisted the partnership of the Red Cross, Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association and Volunteer Now. This partnership was formed during the Covid-19 pandemic to support the vaccine roll out.

The centres offered person-centred, holistic support for issues including healthcare, housing, education, welfare and benefits, and legal support provided by the Law Centre NI. They were also an important avenue for displaced Ukrainians to raise safeguarding concerns. This was thanks to the in-person support provided and the presence of statutory organisations which offered accessible advice. The strong relationships between professionals from different agencies in the centres also ensured a tailored and co-ordinated response. For instance, the centres addressed requests of support from displaced Ukrainians at risk of labour exploitation including in agricultural settings. In situations where exploitation was suspected, the Law Centre NI and South Tyrone Employment Programme (STEP) worked with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to secure alternative housing swiftly, as part of the government-led, multi-agency co-ordination protocols.

However, after operating for 20 months, the centres eventually closed due to the challenges faced by some participating organisations to sustain this multi-agency response. Although a Ukrainian Housing Clinic was established, some professional stakeholders we spoke to expressed concern that the centres' closure would mean that fewer safeguarding issues were identified. They stressed the importance of introducing more stringent safeguarding monitoring and checks to prevent this. One representative we interviewed from the NI government noted that support needs are continuously reviewed, and the centres could be swiftly reinstated if necessary.



## Overcoming the challenges of rematching and offering transition support

Professional stakeholders from local authorities that we interviewed spoke about how they have tried to expand the pool of available hosts to mitigate risks of homelessness and speed up rematching. This includes advertising to recruit more hosts, and following up on potential hosts through revisiting the expressions of interest list set up at the beginning of the scheme. This good practice developed by local authorities was also highlighted by a recent National Audit Office (NAO) investigation into Homes for Ukraine. The NAO's analysis also noted that the UK government had created contingency plans to support rematching and reduce homelessness in the winter of 2022-2023. These plans should be further developed in consultation with local authorities.<sup>51</sup>

## Recommendations

These findings highlight that although many Ukrainians had a positive experience of finding safety in the UK through Homes for Ukraine and the Family scheme, there are opportunities to improve the response. Policymakers should ensure that Homes for Ukraine is strengthened, a longer-term plan for accommodation prepared, and that a more equal and sustainable approach to integration is taken. This can be done by:

- **Protecting the safety and sustainability of sponsorship.** For instance, the UK government, working with local authorities, should strengthen Homes for Ukraine by: increasing the use of formal matching partners to meet demand for sponsors; ensuring mandatory safeguarding checks take place during the visa application process; and facilitating training and support for all hosts.
- **Providing emergency accommodation support and reducing the risk of homelessness.** For instance, the UK government should ensure there is a contingency plan and funding to support local authorities when arrangements break down on both Homes for Ukraine and the Family scheme.
- **Preparing displaced people for independent living.** For instance, the UK government, working with local authorities, should ensure Homes for Ukraine and other schemes include a clear transition plan from hosting arrangements into independent accommodation, with a notice period agreed between hosts and guests.
- **Providing equal, multi-year funding across schemes.** For instance, the UK government should commit to multi-year funding for the duration of Homes for Ukraine and the Family scheme and provide integration support and 'thank you' payments on the UPE.
- **Publishing strategies on integration.** The UK government should consult on and develop a national strategy that agrees priorities such as accommodation and employment, promotes equal support for displaced people across the UK, and builds on work undertaken in the devolved nations. The Welsh government and Northern Ireland Executive should respectively update and publish their integration strategies.

## 5.2 Initial accommodation: super sponsor schemes

As part of the design of the super sponsor schemes, devolved governments in Scotland and Wales provided initial accommodation, also known as welcome accommodation (see box below). However, research participants' assessment of this response was mixed. While most professional stakeholders and people displaced from Ukraine recognised the challenge of housing thousands of displaced individuals quickly, it was thought that longer stays became increasingly unsuitable with the passing of time. Spending several months in these settings was considered detrimental to the wellbeing, sense of independence and integration prospects of displaced Ukrainians.

This section explores the challenges in this area, drawing out examples of good practice and making recommendations for the future.

### 5.2.1 Initial accommodation offered via the super sponsor schemes

Welcome accommodation was mainly designed for arrivals on the super sponsor schemes but, in some cases, it was provided to those whose hosting arrangements on Homes for Ukraine had broken down.<sup>xxiii xxiv</sup> Length of time in welcome accommodation varied, with expectations of maximum stays ranging between three months (in Wales) and six months (in Scotland). However, as our research findings demonstrate, displaced Ukrainians have often spent longer in these settings.

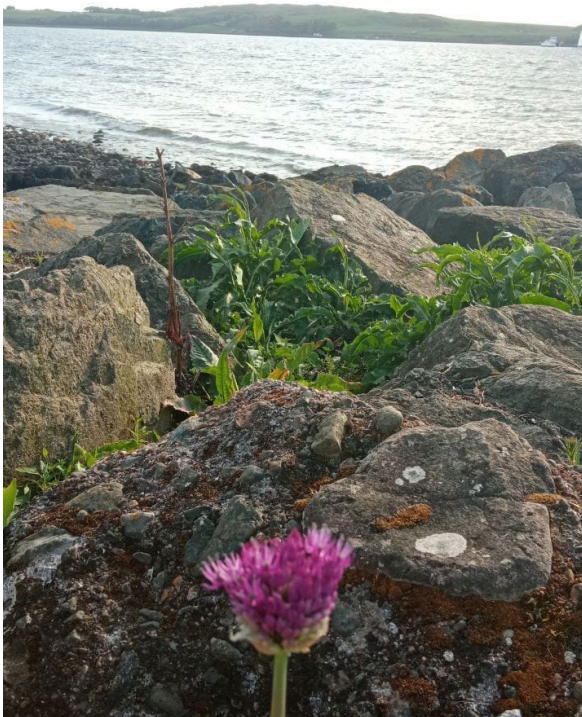
#### Scotland

Ukrainians were first supported through multi-agency welcome hubs.<sup>52</sup> These hubs helped with immediate needs and offered accommodation, mainly through hotels. However, supply was quickly stretched, and additional hotels, apartments and university campuses were used, as well as two ships in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Between July 2022 and July 2023, the ships hosted 2,465 people.<sup>53</sup> After decommissioning, the people living on the ships were moved mainly to hotels, with some entering the private rented sector or social housing.<sup>54</sup> As of 25 March 2024, there were around 1,130 welcome accommodation rooms occupied by displaced people from Ukraine.<sup>55</sup>

#### Wales

Twelve welcome centres in total were set up to meet demand.<sup>56</sup> Additional hotel and holiday park accommodation was obtained to match increasing demand. The Welsh government sought to address barriers to providing longer-term housing. By January 2024, four main welcome accommodation sites remained, housing 128 people, compared to 1,840 people housed across 32 welcome accommodation sites in October 2022.<sup>57</sup> The Welsh government planned for only two welcome centres to remain open in the year 2024 to 2025.<sup>58</sup>

#### Metaphor



“ This is my hope of finding myself in Scotland. ”

Focus group participant, Edinburgh

*This photograph was taken by a displaced focus group participant in Edinburgh to express the hope of starting a new life in safety in the UK.*

## 5.2.2 Challenges in welcome accommodation

### Unsuitability of welcome accommodation for longer-term stays

Challenges with the quality of housing in communal settings such as hotels, ships and parks became apparent during longer stays, particularly for families with children. For example, in focus group discussions, two people who spent five months on board the MS Ambition in Glasgow, stressed the cramped nature of the ship and the inability to host friends there. In these settings, displaced Ukrainians reported not having the facilities to cook or store food. This affected them, their children's health and wellbeing, and their sense of independence.

### Multiple moves between temporary accommodation settings

Many Ukrainians we spoke to said they had experienced multiple moves between temporary settings. This was partly due to unexpected levels of demand for contingency accommodation. One local authority participant in Wales spoke of a Ukrainian woman who was moved eight times across Airbnb accommodation, hotels and guest houses. This was attributed to the limited availability of longer stays in Airbnb accommodation during holiday seasons. Multiple moves were particularly common for bigger families, as it is harder to find larger-sized rooms in contingency settings.

These moves created significant stress and uncertainty for the Ukrainian people we spoke with, partly because it uprooted them from the communities in which they had started to rebuild their lives. Therefore, wherever possible, governments should seek to provide stability even during the reception phase, and prioritise housing displaced individuals from the start in areas where they can subsequently access safe, secure and affordable longer-term accommodation.

### Underlying lack of choice and information

**“ Reduced autonomy, because when you stay in the hotel nobody tells you for how long you're eligible to stay there. ”**

Focus group participant, Edinburgh

An underlying lack of choice and information on the types of available accommodation exacerbated these challenges. The displaced Ukrainians we spoke to had little idea of the expected timeframes for being moved, how often this was likely to happen, and the location of initial accommodation. They also reported challenges in accessing information on navigating services and processes, which left them unclear about their

entitlements and unable to properly settle in. While lack of choice was a common theme across initial accommodation settings, in welcome accommodation Ukrainians felt an even more acute lack of control over the different phases of their accommodation journeys.

When asked about the impact of this, participants displaced from Ukraine explained the negative effect on their sense of autonomy and independence, which in turn affected their overall wellbeing and ability to integrate into wider society.

In many instances, research discussions highlighted that individual circumstances had not been considered in decisions about where to place displaced people, and in moving them across different settings. Considerations about proximity to family, job opportunities and health services were particularly important for displaced families housed in rural and isolated settings.

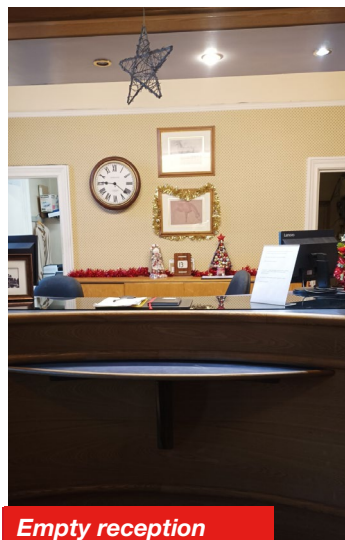
Some local authority participants in Scotland and Wales also spoke of limited communication between the devolved governments and the local authorities where the welcome accommodation was set up. Greater consultation with local authorities in deciding the location of welcome accommodation would have been helpful in ensuring that accommodation was set up in places where it would be easy to access services, employment opportunities and help with integration.

### Difficulties moving into longer-term accommodation

A common theme across all our research discussions was the difficulty of moving into longer-term accommodation. People displaced from Ukraine felt that they would have benefited from more support from local authorities in navigating this transition. In some cases, displaced Ukrainians felt unable to take up offers of longer-term accommodation. Reasons included concerns about proximity to employment opportunities and social networks (especially when moving area), and the affordability and quality of the longer-term accommodation proposed. The Welsh and Scottish governments have implemented policies to disincentivise longer stays in initial accommodation and encourage the transition into longer-term accommodation.<sup>xxxv xxxvi</sup> However, it is important that displaced Ukrainians are consulted on accommodation proposals, given time to think through their options, and offered independent accommodation, as opposed to further temporary placements.



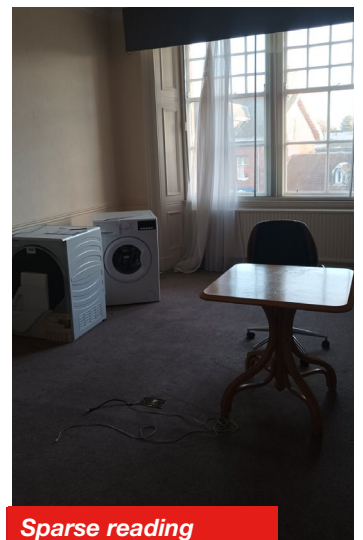
**Locked main entrance**



**Empty reception desk**



**Russian language-only instructions**



**Sparse reading room**

*These photographs were taken by a displaced Ukrainian who participated in the focus groups in Edinburgh. She had lived in initial, hotel accommodation with her three children for nine months. The empty reception desk, the notice with instructions in Russian language only, the locked front and side doors, the sparse reading room, and the lack of playing space for children were all cited by this focus group participant to illustrate the feeling of being unsafe in a hotel accommodation setting.*

### 5.2.3 Good practice in welcome accommodation

Despite these challenges, when intended as a short-term solution with clear pathways to longer-term accommodation, our research participants felt that welcome accommodation settings were beneficial, as long as they addressed immediate needs and provided a foundation for longer-term integration in the UK.

#### One-stop-shop immediate support in welcome hubs in Scotland

The Scottish government, working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), local authorities and a range of VCS organisations, established welcome hubs in Glasgow and Edinburgh.<sup>59</sup> The hubs provided initial welcome, advice and assessment of needs, including health, housing and hotel accommodation. Commenting on these welcome hubs, people displaced from Ukraine thought that they provided access to essential services from both statutory bodies and VCS organisations and were a useful source of support in the short term.

## Involving displaced Ukrainians in the welcome response

An aspect of good practice in welcome accommodation in Scotland was to include Ukrainian speaking professionals as part of the service response. One participant displaced from Ukraine, who worked in a VCS organisation on the *MS Ambition* chartered in Glasgow<sup>60</sup>, described the positive impact of her housing advice sessions. She reported that many Ukrainians made successful applications for social housing after attending her sessions. Having service providers who spoke the same language, understood cultural norms and had experienced displacement firsthand was considered instrumental in effectively communicating information, building trust and empowering displaced people to take action towards self-reliance. By recruiting individuals from the same nationality and language as displaced communities, local authorities and VCS organisations are likely to be more successful in promoting peer-to-peer support and effective communication.



### Case study: co-ordinating the support and accommodation response in Wales.

#### Team Wales approach

A co-ordinated approach to service delivery based on multi-sector collaboration, known as the 'Team Wales Approach', underpinned Wales' mobilisation of its welcome response.<sup>61</sup> The Welsh government worked closely with local authorities, NHS Wales, VCS organisations, landlords and housing associations, hosts, faith groups and local businesses. A key element of this approach was the establishment of governance structures across different levels of decision-making, which helped with information sharing and mitigating risks.

#### Multi-agency support in welcome centres

Multi-agency teams were established to manage the welcome centres in Wales. This involved frequent weekly meetings between Welsh government, local authorities, Public Health Wales and the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership.

One of the first welcome centres in Wales, a youth organisation called the Urdd<sup>62</sup>, was established due to relationships with key stakeholders built during the Afghan resettlement scheme.<sup>63</sup> These existing relationships gave multi-disciplinary teams the ability to quickly draw on each other's expertise, including applying lessons learnt from previous responses. For example, Welsh professional stakeholders spoke of building on previous experience liaising with landlords to rent to refugees in the Afghan and Syrian responses.

#### Developing systems to co-ordinate matching with hosts

The Welsh government worked with local authorities to establish an internal data-sharing system that made the location of all already existing host offers viewable to each local authority in Wales. This information was shared via a single source of data, the Homes for Ukraine data-sharing service, which was separate from data-sharing systems of the UK government. It enabled local authorities to search for host offers and expressions of interest, and to match and rematch people to suitable hosts.

### Learning for the future provision of welcome accommodation

- Minimise the use of contingency communal accommodation – such as hotels, B&Bs, guest house accommodation, chartered ships and mobile homes in holiday park accommodation – to house displaced individuals, especially families with children.
- Minimise moves between initial accommodation settings.
- If displaced people spend time in welcome accommodation centres, ensure there is a clearly communicated time limit of no longer than three months, and a clear pathway towards safe, secure and affordable housing that reflects individual needs.
- Consult with local authorities in deciding the location of welcome accommodation centres and ensure these provide:
  - adequate space and light, play areas for children, private entrances, access to WiFi, cooking and food storage facilities.
  - access to key integration services from statutory bodies and VCS organisations, including support with accessing longer-term housing and employment opportunities, registering for health services, and access to education for children.
  - easy access to local communities with shopping, employment, school opportunities and outdoor spaces.

## 5.2.1 Recommendations

These findings highlight that while welcome accommodation was often effective in meeting immediate need, there is learning to be built on for the future. Policymakers should ensure that future welcome arrangements meet the good practice standards set out above and that new arrivals have a clear transition plan into longer-term housing to support integration and wellbeing. The Scottish and Welsh governments, in co-ordination with local authorities, COSLA and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) should:

### **Use welcome accommodation only for the urgent delivery of places and with a clear pathway to suitable housing.**

- Ensure that displaced Ukrainians who are still residing in welcome accommodation are supported to move out of these temporary settings into suitable housing as a matter of priority and that remaining welcome accommodation meets good practice standards.
- Address the reasons underlying refusal of longer-term accommodation options and devise solutions to incentivise move-on opportunities through individualised case work and clear provision of information to displaced individuals.
- Review the super sponsor model for learning that can be built on and applied to offer other forcibly displaced people protection. For instance, through supporting the emergency resettlement of urgent cases under the UKRS.

## 5.3 Access to longer-term accommodation

Safe, secure, and affordable housing is an important aspect of ensuring refugee wellbeing and integration. However, in almost all the interviews and focus groups we held, participants highlighted the challenges in accessing such accommodation, especially in a context of wider housing constraints. This section outlines the challenges that were identified, the themes people displaced from Ukraine said were most important to them, examples of good practice and learning, and the key recommendations we have drawn from these findings.

**Happy renters**

*These photographs were taken by a focus group participant in Edinburgh to express her happiness in having found independent accommodation in the private rented sector, after 12 months of precarious housing.*

**“ We are finally happy renters after a year of constant moving. My daughter is very happy to have her own room after a year in temporary housing. She keeps her only toy from home and also loves her first one in Scotland. ”**

Focus group participant, Edinburgh

## Challenges

### Engagement with social housing

Across the UK, there is unmet need for social housing. This has had an impact on the provision of housing for displaced Ukrainians, as well as other refugee groups.<sup>64</sup> People displaced from Ukraine reported that accessing support from local authorities was more complicated at the point of moving on from initial accommodation. They described having to apply to multiple housing associations for social housing, and in some cases, needing to move areas, which they said was destabilising. In Scotland, people displaced from Ukraine spoke of applying to dozens of housing associations, with one participant applying separately to all 65 in Glasgow before being allocated a property. In interviews, local authority and government agency participants said they were conscious of implementing a fair approach to the allocation of social housing across groups in need.

Recent data from the UK government shows that 90 per cent of new social lettings in 2022/23 were allocated to UK nationals, four per cent were allocated to European nationals and six per cent were allocated to people from nations outside the European Economic Area (EEA).<sup>xxvii</sup> Not only should refugees be offered access to the same rights and entitlements as nationals<sup>xxviii</sup>, but future social housing policy must not contribute to misconceptions of displaced people as causing a strain on social housing supply or feed into divisive narratives that affect social cohesion. Instead, policymakers should seek to meet need by investing in social and affordable housing for the future.

## Engagement with the private rented sector

**“I’ve said before that there is no history, they just appeared here, so how can you know it’s safe to rent out to them, and they have no guarantors?”**

**Landlord interview participant**

People displaced from Ukraine said that it was difficult to meet the requirements of landlords ahead of renting. These requirements included providing a guarantor, references, UK credit history, proof of income and large up-front deposits and rental payments. People displaced from Ukraine and professional stakeholders thought that landlords perceived displaced Ukrainians as having an uncertain future in the UK due to the short-term nature of their visas, and uncertain employment status. This impacted on their willingness to rent to this group. Participants also expressed a limited understanding of how to navigate both the social and private rented sectors and said there was little information or support from local authorities to help them in doing so. Some of the challenges in accessing the private rented sector for Ukrainians have also been identified for other displaced people, such as newly recognised refugees and refugees welcoming family members through refugee family reunion.<sup>65 66</sup>

**“Even if you have money or are ready to spend all your money just to not be on the street, just for one room, you cannot find a room because you don’t have documents and you cannot, you have no guarantor or something like this. You have no history.”** Focus group participant, London

## Economic context

The UK response to displacement from Ukraine has also taken place in a context in which inflation and the cost of living have had an impact on the housing market.<sup>67</sup> For instance, research from the National Residential Landlords Association showed that an increase in mortgage interest rates could lead to landlords increasing rents.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA)<sup>xxix</sup> was frozen in April 2020, making it hard for people on benefits, including displaced Ukrainians, to rent privately. In April 2024, the LHA was returned to the 30th percentile of local rents, which was welcomed across the sector. However, without updating this annually, there is a risk that there will soon be another gap between 30<sup>th</sup> percentile rates and rents.<sup>69</sup> One interview participant who worked in the housing sector also highlighted that LHA rates were previously set at the 50th percentile<sup>xxx</sup>, and that returning to this measure would considerably increase the potential number of private properties that those on benefits could rent.

## Themes highlighted by people displaced from Ukraine

As set out above, participants described the link between their emotional and physical safety, saying that emotional safety only felt achievable when their living arrangements were secure; they knew what to expect next; and were able to plan for different scenarios. Difficult experiences, such as precarious housing and challenges accessing suitable housing, made them feel unsafe. Participants also said that independence was key, but that their living arrangements often undermined autonomy, with the situation often being out of their control. They spoke of experiencing uncertainty, and waiting a long time to hear about their housing options and whether or not accommodation was going to be made available to them.

### 5.3.1 New approaches to providing longer-term accommodation

Policymakers and practitioners have adapted and innovated their services to meet the need to provide longer-term accommodation. This section includes case studies illustrating how organisations have sought to address the challenges above and explores the perspectives of people displaced from Ukraine.

#### Increasing housing stock

Local authorities have used government funding to increase housing stock so that there are longer-term options available for displaced people from Ukraine and Afghanistan, at the same time as combatting



homelessness. When funding is allocated by government agencies for initiatives such as these, it is beneficial when implementation is supported with the allocation of revenue funding. Further rounds of the Local Authority Housing Fund could be applied across safe routes to offer a wider range of displaced people housing. Tailoring the funding so that local authorities are supported in adapting housing for those with medical needs could also enable the swifter arrival of vulnerable individuals.

For instance, Bristol City Council was allocated £1.25 million through the Local Authority Housing Fund in the year 2022/23.<sup>70</sup> Working with two housing associations, it is buying 20 houses to increase housing stock across the city for people who have been displaced from Ukraine and other refugees. In the future, these houses will be used for residents in need of housing.

### **Case study: use of the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund (ULTRF) in Scotland**

The ULTRF's purpose is to rehouse Ukrainians for a period of up to three years. Local authorities can apply to the Scottish government for funding off-the-shelf purchasing, new build, site purchase and the reprovisioning of properties not currently in use as social housing. As of 8 November 2023, 14 projects, providing a total of nearly 1,200 units, had been approved for funding to a value of almost £23 million.<sup>71</sup>

Research discussions showed the impact of these interventions. One example highlighted was Coatbridge and Wishaw Towers. In this instance, North Lanarkshire Council used its allocation of £5.9 million to refurbish 187 properties on a temporary basis – 59 in Birkshaw Tower in Wishaw and 128 in High Coats Tower in Coatbridge.<sup>72</sup> The towers were due for demolition, but the ULTRF enabled quick renovation which meant that people displaced from Ukraine could move on from initial accommodation, mainly from the two ships docked in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The council's resettlement team has also helped new arrivals integrate into the community, including setting up English language classes, providing employability support, and giving practical assistance with living in North Lanarkshire.<sup>73</sup>

The project was viewed positively by some professional stakeholders from Scotland. One focus group participant noted that a sense of community had grown between people on the ships and that this had continued when people had moved together to the towers. In our research, participants highlighted the improved integration which was made possible due to a greater sense of permanence. This stability has also helped displaced individuals access employment and helped children to settle into schools.

Similarly, Aberdeen City Council is using its ULTRF allocation of £6.1 million to refurbish and bring back into use 500 void properties across the city.<sup>74</sup> The council is seeking to provide housing to approximately 900 displaced people from Ukraine. As of March 2023, work has been completed on 373 of these properties, with 217 homes allocated to people displaced from Ukraine, rehousing a total of 434 people.<sup>75</sup> This intervention has enabled people in temporary accommodation such as ships, hotels and student accommodation from across Scotland to move into the newly refurbished properties. To support new arrivals in settling in, the council's resettlement team also delivered face-to-face information sessions and supplied written guides about the area.<sup>76</sup>

## A housing-led approach to integration

Bristol City Council has promoted a housing-led approach to integration for Ukrainians on Homes for Ukraine. This approach includes individualised support; help to navigate services; and once longer-term housing has been secured, access to ESOL classes and employability workshops to support self-reliance. Implementing a joined-up approach between the resettlement, homelessness and private housing teams, the council developed new approaches to reduce the risk of homelessness and increase the availability of longer-term accommodation.

In the first instance, Bristol City Council sought to sustain hosting arrangements, and then developed two further responses: first, developing a lodging model and second, incentives for landlords in the private rented sector.

### Case study: models to support access to longer-term accommodation in Bristol

#### The lodging model

Bristol City Council works with hosts and Homes for Ukraine guests to help them transition from hosting to lodging arrangements. The aim of this approach is to support a more equal relationship between host and guest, where the guest becomes a lodger who pays rent – either through Universal Credit payments or income from employment. The council provides a landlord/lodger licence agreement to ensure all parties are safeguarded.

At the time of fieldwork, eight people/families in the city have transitioned into lodging arrangements with their previous host. This has provided a longer-term solution to their housing needs and enables lodgers to increase independence and develop a rental history for the future.<sup>77</sup>

#### Incentivisation of landlords

Through innovative use of the Homes for Ukraine tariff, Bristol City Council has provided a range of incentives to landlords in the Bristol area to increase availability of move-on support for people displaced from Ukraine and secure tenancies in the private rented sector.

These include the Homes for Ukraine tenancy scheme for landlords. Under this scheme, the council supports landlords by setting up the tenancy, acting as a point of contact for tenants and providing a security deposit. Landlords also receive a £1,000 thank you payment, six months' rent payment in advance, and up to £2,000 for repairs and maintenance. Meanwhile, tenants are supported to purchase furniture and other items. The council has also provided similar support for displaced Ukrainians and landlords for a room in a shared house in the private rented sector and space in a house in multiple occupation (HMO).

In undertaking this work across the three schemes, to date, the council has secured rentals below the LHA rate with over 60 landlords, providing access to secure and affordable housing for many people.

During focus groups discussions, participants highlighted that they would have benefited from more support in overcoming challenges to accessing the private rented sector. There is scope for other local authorities to build on good practice such as the interventions in Bristol to respond to this. Participants felt that many displaced Ukrainians could afford the private rented sector if they were supported with some of the access requirements such as having a guarantor, deposit, and up-front rent. Indeed, some participants wanted to see local authorities or VCS organisations act as guarantors for them. While the UK government has published guidance recommending this approach<sup>78</sup>, and local authorities in Scotland and Wales can act as guarantor<sup>79,80</sup>, research findings and insights from the British Red Cross's operational response indicate that support is not provided consistently across the UK.



### **Case study: collaboration between the voluntary and private sectors**

Opora, a VCS organisation in the UK, supported an initiative to help displaced Ukrainians access the private rented sector in Kettering, by working with a private developer to offer flats to rent to people displaced from Ukraine. The flats were rented at LHA rates and without the requirement for a rental deposit or prepayment of rent up front. Safety checks were also undertaken by the local authority.

Opora's role was to bridge relationships between the private developer and potential tenants for the flat. It did this by promoting the opportunity via Opora's digital channels, the Ukrainian social group in Kettering and the local authority. It also collected expressions of interest and connected the potential tenants to an estate agency acting on behalf of the private developer. Eighteen Ukrainian people have now been housed in the flats in Kettering, on a long-term basis. However, the project found that potential tenants did not always feel in a position to complete the rental process and would have benefited from tailored support to help navigate their options. Issues potential tenants faced included:

- being concerned about moving to a new area and starting their integration journey again
- lacking confidence in being able to afford bills and expenses
- flats not being large enough for families
- uncertainty about other options such as social housing, staying with hosts or returning to Ukraine.

## Support to displaced people in navigating longer-term accommodation

Most people displaced from Ukraine in focus groups thought that more information was needed to help them navigate the housing system and understand which public authorities and VCS organisations to go to for help. Often it seemed that information was found out informally, for example through friends, with some participants reporting being 'lucky' to have found certain things out. During discussions, people displaced from Ukraine identified the type of information and support that would be helpful in supporting future welcome and integration projects. This included:

### Casework support

Tailored and individual approach that can respond to each person's unique set of circumstances and needs

Help with understanding rights and responsibilities for tenants and landlords, broader rights and entitlements (for example, education, employment and health) and access to legal advice

Support with complex processes, such as help to register with utility companies and to understand how bills are paid in the UK

Support with biometric residence permits

Access to employment opportunities (for example, advice on addressing qualification equivalence, accessing English classes, interview preparation)

### Information provision

Guidance on housing, employment, education, benefits, emergency services and childcare options and activities, as well as signposting to services

Information about second-hand furniture suppliers and how to access support to buy furniture and household appliances

All information to be available in Ukrainian and English

## 5.3.2 Recommendations

These findings demonstrate the challenges that displaced Ukrainians have experienced in accessing longer-term accommodation, and reviews solutions that have helped address this issue. By investing in support to access the private rented sector and developing innovative approaches to increasing social and affordable housing, policymakers can overcome these barriers both for Ukrainians and other displaced people. Future initiatives should be designed in partnership with displaced communities and ensure that there is tailored support to navigate the housing market and to access other integration services. This can be done by:

- **Providing secure immigration status to address uncertainty which has a significant impact on displaced people's lives.** For instance, the UK government should open applications for the UPE by 31 August 2024. This would also help Ukrainians demonstrate to landlords that they have long-term leave to remain.
- **Addressing barriers to the private rented sector.** For instance, the UK government, the Scottish and Welsh governments and Northern Ireland Executive, should work with local authorities to consistently provide rent deposit and guarantor schemes, offer brokerage arrangements, and incentivise landlords to rent to Ukrainians and other displaced people.

- **Updating the LHA annually.** The UK government can help displaced people on benefits to rent privately by preventing a gap between LHA rates and 30th percentile rents.
- **Increasing social and affordable housing stock.**
  - The UK government should launch a fourth round of the Local Authority Housing Fund that can be used to provide accommodation for displaced people across safe routes. Local authorities should be given three years to spend the fund and its implementation should be supported with revenue funding.
  - The Scottish and Welsh governments should make provision for further funding under the Ukraine Longer-Term Resettlement Fund and the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme to increase housing capacity for welcoming displaced people in the long-term, and enable local authorities to spend this flexibly across responses.
- **Involving refugees in policy and practice.** The UK government, devolved governments and local authorities, should ensure Ukrainians and other displaced people are involved in developing and evaluating integration services and policies. Both policymakers and practitioners should also work with displaced communities on tailored information provision.



Tony plays with Makar (18 months old) and Mylana (8 years old). Both children are being hosted in Tony's home after being displaced from Ukraine.

## 6. Guiding principles for future response

Reviewing the emergency response to Ukraine has shown promising practice and learning in accommodation provision and integration that can act as a guide for the future. It can also contribute to increasing the overall resilience of the refugee protection system for crisis response and the strengthened delivery of safe routes. This section identifies core themes for consideration in the design of future responses.

### 6.1 Secure status and access to rights

A consistent theme identified through the research was the impact of uncertainty on Ukrainians' integration prospects and their ability to secure longer-term, independent accommodation. This indicates the significance of providing durable protection and access to rights that support inclusion. By ensuring new arrivals can plan ahead and demonstrate long-term leave to remain to landlords and employers, the government would place displaced people in a stronger position to rebuild their lives. It is also important that displaced people are supported in accessing fundamental rights such as the right to work and family reunion.

### 6.2 Multi-year funding and strategic co-ordination

Research discussions highlighted how uncertainty around funding had contributed to challenges for local authorities in co-ordinating the response. By committing to funding for the full duration of a scheme, and communicating this from the start, the government can aid local authorities and other providers in planning for the longer-term integration of displaced people. This can help local authorities in managing the humanitarian response alongside existing commitments. There is a benefit to ensuring consistency of support to local authorities across schemes, and building in contingency planning where schemes experience implementation challenges. For instance, by providing support for emergency accommodation to prevent displaced people experiencing homelessness. Planning for funding should also sit within a wider strategic framework that identifies priorities for integration and defines a co-ordinated approach across the UK.

### 6.3 Mandatory safeguarding and training for hosts

Safeguarding concerns, and the lack of consistent and mandatory measures to combat them, have been a limitation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. To ensure that displaced people are protected from lack of safety and the risk of exploitation, all responses should ensure that mandatory safeguarding checks have taken place prior to the arrival of displaced people. Future sponsorship schemes should use formal matching providers. There is also scope to build on the example of multi-agency approaches to anticipating and addressing safeguarding risks as seen through the Ukraine welcome assistance centres in Northern Ireland. Hosts and guests should also be provided with training and support throughout hosting arrangements.

### 6.4 Plan for longer-term accommodation

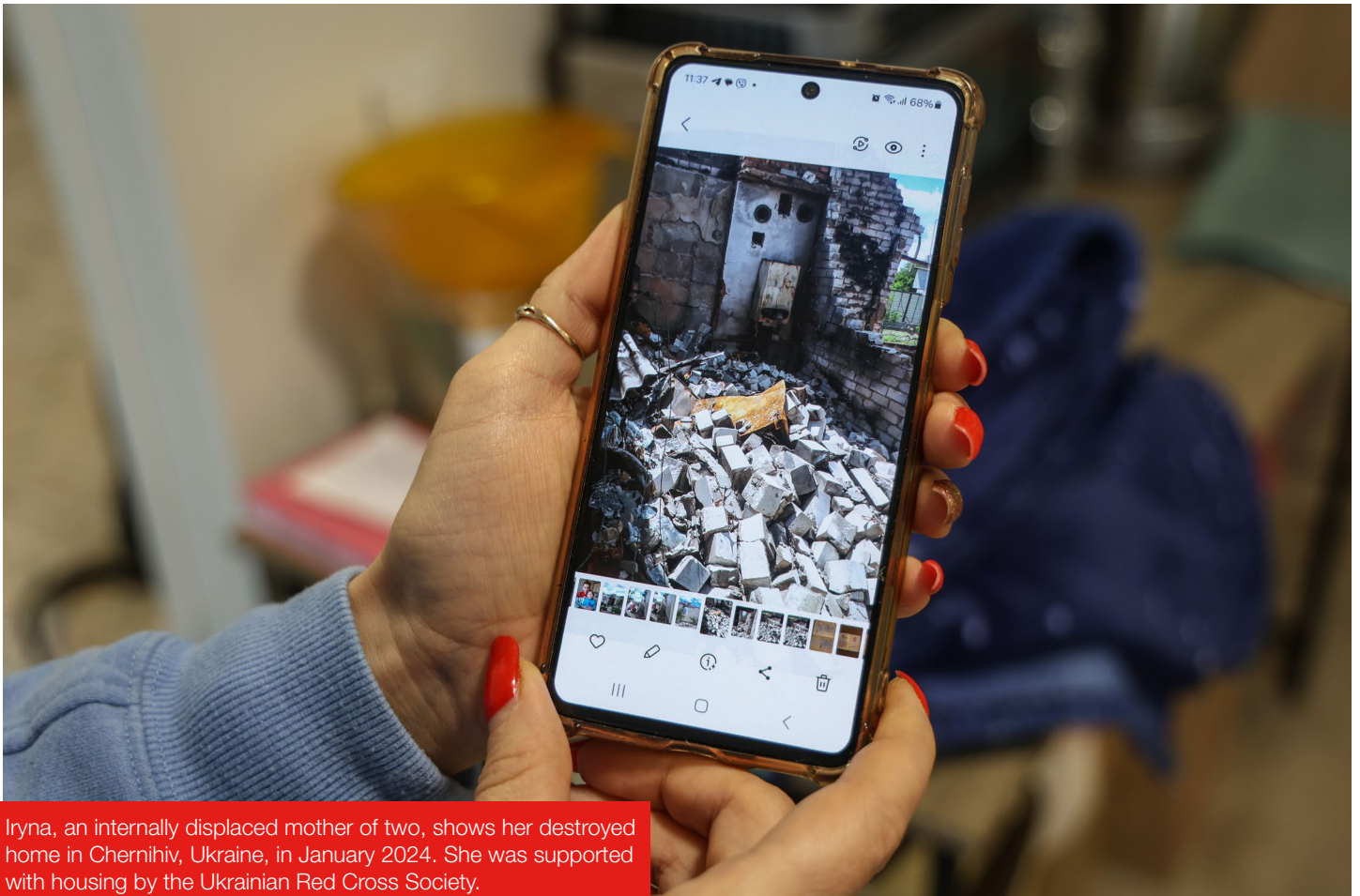
The research has shown that displaced Ukrainians in initial accommodation arrangements would have benefited from more structured support with the transition to longer-term, independent accommodation and wraparound case work support. When initial accommodation measures are used in the future, developing a longer-term housing plan is critical. This could be done by local authorities in consultation with displaced individuals and VCS soon after arrival. The plan should clearly outline timeframes for placements in initial accommodation, set out independent accommodation options and support in accessing these, for example by addressing barriers to the private rented sector. Providing clarity from an early stage can also help mitigate the impact of uncertainty and related effects on wellbeing for displaced people.

## 6.5 Involvement and communication with displaced people

The research findings demonstrated a need to improve involvement and communication with Ukrainians in the design and implementation of the response. While the initial phase was designed at pace, policymakers and practitioners should seek to engage Ukrainians in further iterations of the schemes for example, the UPE; build in substantive opportunities for this group to review the impact of interventions; and work with representatives of the community on communication. In the future, displaced people should be brought into the design of crisis response efforts from an early stage, and be involved in monitoring and evaluation to help identify where good practice lies and where it can be replicated for the future.

## 6.6 Role of devolved governments

During the Ukraine response, devolved governments took on an enhanced role in offering swift access to safety. For instance, the super sponsor role of the Scottish and Welsh governments helped simplify the arrival process and, arguably, provided more equal access to protection than the private sponsorship route through Homes for Ukraine. It also considerably increased the UK's capacity to welcome displaced individuals. The research demonstrated that while there are important lessons for strengthening how initial accommodation is provided, by drawing on the willingness and experience of devolved governments, there is the potential to offer swifter access to safety to more refugees in the future. This could support arrivals through other safe routes to access protection more quickly. Reviewing and adapting the super sponsor approach could help deliver an emergency mechanism for resettlement under the UKRS and places under the ACRS, for instance. It could also strengthen the UK's preparedness for emergencies in the future.



Iryna, an internally displaced mother of two, shows her destroyed home in Chernihiv, Ukraine, in January 2024. She was supported with housing by the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.

## 7. Conclusion

Having fled to safety in the UK, too many Ukrainian people are facing precarious housing. This has a significant effect on their physical and emotional wellbeing, and their prospect of integration. Finding a safe home has proved a challenge for other displaced people too, such as Afghans.

The British Red Cross welcomes the UK and devolved governments' commitment to the Ukrainian people and the generous support of the UK public. We are proud to have played a part in this initiative. However, with the conflict in its third year, there are opportunities to improve the UK's support system for displaced Ukrainians and other refugees, no matter where they are from.

This research, informed by an evidence review and fieldwork with people displaced from Ukraine, highlights the need to strengthen the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Reinforcement is vital to ensure its safety and sustainability. In addition, efforts are needed to reduce the barriers that prevent refugees from finding homes in the private rented sector. Implementing a more equal and long-term approach to integration that can support all displaced people is also critical.

There are solutions to accommodation challenges. This research highlights initiatives and good practice from across the UK in offering safety to the Ukrainian people. Many of these could be replicated to the benefit of all refugees and strengthen the system for future crisis response. Doing so would support the UK in delivering on its domestic and international responsibilities. It would also enable local communities to offer safety, and benefit from the diverse contributions and resilience of refugees as they rebuild their lives in the UK.



Tony shares a fruit pie with Karyna, whom he has been hosting with her family in his home since their displacement from Ukraine.



## Annex A: Mapping Ukraine schemes and funding

	Homes for Ukraine	Super sponsor schemes – Wales and Scotland (paused)	Ukraine Family scheme (closed)	Extension scheme	Ukraine Permission Extension scheme (to be opened)
Description	Enables Ukrainians to come to the UK if they have a named sponsor (host) under the scheme who agrees to offer accommodation for an initial period of six months.	<p>Enabled Ukrainians to come to the UK with the Scottish or Welsh governments as their sponsor.</p> <p>This was equivalent to the Homes for Ukraine private sponsorship route.</p> <p>The scheme was paused in June 2022.</p>	<p>Enabled applicants to join family members or extend their stay in the UK.</p> <p>The scheme was closed in February 2024.</p>	<p>Enabled applicants to stay in the UK if you were Ukrainian or the close family member of a Ukrainian national.</p> <p>The scheme closed for most new applications in May 2024 but is open for children who are born in the UK to apply for permission to stay.</p>	<p>This is due to open in January 2025, to allow eligible applicants under the Ukraine visa schemes to apply for a further 18 months' permission to remain in the UK.</p>
Implementation	Background checks on sponsors are conducted by the Home Office as part of the visa application process. Local authorities are responsible for DBS checks and checks on the accommodation and living arrangements after the applicant arrives in the UK.	The Scottish and Welsh devolved governments provided emergency accommodation welcome centres before matching with hosts or other types of longer-term accommodation.	Family members arrived independently in the UK, with no checks required on either sponsors or living conditions.	Individuals apply to stay in the UK.	TBC.
Integration and initial accommodation funding	<p>To compensate and incentivise continued hosting, sponsors are given a 'thank you' payment of £350 per month, which increases to £500 per month after 12 months of hosting. Guests arriving from Ukraine receive a one-off payment of £200 on arrival (for each person in the family).</p> <p>Local authorities have been allocated a one-off tariff of £10,500 per person arriving under Homes for Ukraine. This was reduced to £5,900 in January 2023 for adults, remaining at £10,500 for dependent children. While the tariff can be used flexibly, it was expected to be used for safeguarding checks, homelessness assistance and community integration.</p>	<p>As with Homes for Ukraine, local authorities received £10,500 per person arriving. This was also reduced to £5,900 in January 2023 for adults, remaining at £10,500 for dependent children.</p> <p>Sponsors, local authorities and the devolved governments were also eligible for the thank you payment of £350 per month, which increases to £500 per month after 12 months of hosting.</p>	There was no specific funding available to those on the Family scheme.	There is no specific funding for the Extension Scheme.	TBC.

<p>Preventing homelessness and providing longer-term accommodation</p>	<p>UK and devolved governments have released funding to address homelessness and to expand accommodation capacity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UK: Local Authority Housing Fund for local authorities in England. This is to be used to buy housing stock, build new homes, convert existing non-residential properties, and refurbish dilapidated housing or empty homes. There have been three rounds of funding so far.<sup>81</sup></li> <li>- UK: Homelessness Prevention Fund. This has been allocated across the UK, relative to the proportion of Homes for Ukraine arrivals. The purpose of the fund is to address homelessness among Ukrainians, but local authorities can also use the fund to address wider pressures.<sup>82</sup></li> <li>- Scotland: Ukraine Longer-Term Resettlement Fund. This is a fund of £50 million launched by the Scottish government in September 2022 initially to improve properties that are currently void, and subsequently also allowed local authorities to buy new properties.<sup>83</sup> The Fund has been extended by a further year in 2024/25.</li> <li>- Wales: Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme. This was launched in July 2022 by the Welsh government for local authorities and registered social landlords to renovate void properties and remodel existing properties into quality accommodation.<sup>84</sup></li> </ul>				
<p>Total arrivals / extensions of stays</p>	<p>125,544<sup>xxxi xxxii</sup></p>	<p>Scotland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 21,043 arrivals sponsored by the Scottish government on the Super Sponsor scheme.<sup>85</sup></li> </ul> <p>Wales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3,313 arrivals sponsored by the Welsh government on the Super Sponsor scheme.<sup>86</sup></li> </ul>	<p>58,000<sup>87</sup></p>	<p>33,200<sup>xxxiii</sup></p>	

## Annex B: Projects approved under the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Applicant	Local Authority	Project/Works	Units	Funding Approved (£m)
North Lanarkshire Council	North Lanarkshire Council	Improvement of void multi-storey flats in 3 blocks at Coatbridge and Wishaw	200	5.9
North Ayrshire Council	North Ayrshire Council	Improvement of void low-rise flats in Saltcoats	30	0.538
Aberdeen City Council	Aberdeen City Council	Improvement of void homes in various locations across the City	500	6.1
New Gorbals Housing Association Phase 1	Glasgow City Council	Improvement of void multi-storey flats	24	0.837
West of Scotland Housing Association	Glasgow City Council	Improvement of void tenemental flats	15	0.689
Perth and Kinross Council	Perth and Kinross Council	Improvement of void tenemental flats	8	0.084
Dundee City Council	Dundee City Council	Improvement of void homes in various locations across the City	54	0.450
Oak Tree Housing Association	Inverclyde Council	Improvement of void low-rise flats in Greenock	17	0.151
River Clyde Homes Phase 1	Inverclyde Council	Improvement of void tenemental flats in Port Glasgow	14	0.255
NG Homes Phase 1	Glasgow City Council	Improvement of void tenemental flats in various locations within the City	114	3.9
Argyll Community Housing Association	Argyll and Bute Council	Improvement of void low-rise flats in Helensburgh	24	0.418
New Gorbals Housing Association Phase 2	Glasgow City Council	Improvement of void multi-storey flats	28	0.980
Stirling Council	Glasgow City Council	Improvement of void homes in various locations across the council area	40	0.720
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>1,168</b>	<b>£22.8m</b>

# Annex C: Research methodology

## Phase one: evidence review

From September to November 2023, Safe to Grow conducted a systematic review of available evidence on accommodation responses to displaced Ukrainians in the UK, Canada, Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic.<sup>xxxv</sup> The review also explored existing evidence on the links between accommodation and refugee integration to understand how accommodation provision can best support refugee integration. 236 sources were reviewed, including journal articles, policy and research reports, and online news articles and blogs. These were analysed thematically using the qualitative analysis software NVivo. This review helped identify the most common types of accommodation, the main challenges and effective solutions in helping displaced Ukrainians into longer-term accommodation, and found existing gaps in the evidence.

## Phase two: fieldwork in the UK

Between November and December 2023, data was collected in the UK through two main methods:

### 1. Focus groups with people displaced from Ukraine

Focus groups were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian people accessing accommodation in the UK. Discussions explored the elements of accommodation that made displaced people feel safe, the challenges they encountered in accessing secure housing, the support they found beneficial, and the overall impact of different accommodation settings on their wellbeing and integration. In total, nine in-person focus group discussions were held with 35 displaced people from Ukraine who had arrived in the UK on one of the Ukraine visa schemes since March 2022. People displaced from Ukraine were broadly split into three groups, attending sessions in three areas of the UK: Sheffield, Edinburgh and London. Each group met for three discussion sessions of 120 minutes each, held two weeks apart over the duration of the fieldwork. This approach enabled relationship building with the researcher and helped create a safe space for all participants to share their experiences with the group, as well as offering time for reflection in between the sessions.

#### Photo activity

As part of the focus groups, participants were invited to engage in a photo activity designed by the researcher. This involved taking photos of their current accommodation settings and everyday surroundings over the course of the fieldwork using their mobile phones, or a disposable camera provided by the researcher. Participants then shared and discussed what the photos meant to them in the last focus group session. This activity was designed as a different way to express how the spaces where people displaced from Ukraine spent most of their time were serving their needs and aspirations in settling into a new life in the UK. Eight participants engaged with the photo activity across three focus groups. Photos were shared by participants only through their mobile phones and collectively discussed in focus groups. Some of these photos are included in this report to illustrate people's experiences of making a new home in the UK.

#### Recruitment and sampling

Participants were recruited with the help of the Ukrainian Welcome Centre in London, the British Red Cross refugee support team in Yorkshire and the Ukrainian Collective and SRC in Edinburgh, which all already supported people displaced from Ukraine and played a crucial role in bridging communication between Safe to Grow and focus group participants.

### 2. Interviews with professional stakeholders

31 interviews lasting one hour on average were undertaken online with professional stakeholders involved in supporting displaced Ukrainians to access accommodation across the four nations of the UK.

Professional stakeholders were recruited through the British Red Cross, Safe to Grow, refugee sector organisations and housing networks. Sampling criteria were used to recruit participants from different nations of the UK and from a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies related to the provision of accommodation to people displaced from Ukraine. These included stakeholders from local authorities and local government associations, devolved government agencies, Strategic Migration Partnerships, VCS organisations, landlords and landlord associations. Interviews examined stakeholders' views and perspectives on the various accommodation responses to people displaced from Ukraine across the UK, reflecting on innovation, good practice and solutions for accessing longer-term accommodation, and how these responses could be improved and replicated for other groups of displaced people.

### Phase Three: Case study development

The third phase of the research involved the development of case studies of good practice in the provision of accommodation across the UK. These examples emerged from the evidence review and interviews conducted with professional stakeholders. The examples contained in the case studies aim to illustrate promising interventions that have overcome challenges in accommodation provision for displaced Ukrainians, and which have the potential to be further replicated for other groups of displaced people in the future.

**Table 3:** Details of focus group participants

Focus group location	Total number of participants across the three focus groups	Number of participants attending each focus group	Age of participants	Gender of participants	Visa scheme under which the participants arrived in the UK	Type of accommodation in which participants are currently residing	Number of family members living together (including focus group participants)	
Sheffield	11	Focus group 1	10	3 x 18 – 25 1 x 26 – 35	6 x Female 5 x Male	2 x Sponsorship scheme 9 x Family scheme	1 x Initial 10 x Longer-term	2 x living on own 3 x living with 4 people 2 x living with 5 people 4 x living with 7 people
		Focus group 2	7	5 x 36 – 45 1 x 46 – 55				
		Focus group 3	7	1 x 56 – 65				
Edinburgh	8	Focus group 1	8	2 x 18 – 25 1 x 26 – 35	8 x Female	7 x Sponsorship scheme 1 x Family scheme	2 x Initial 6 x Longer-term	2 x living on own 2 x living with 2 people 2 x living with 3 people 2 x living with 4 people
		Focus group 2	8	3 x 36 – 45 2 x 46 – 55				
		Focus group 3	8					
London	16	Focus group 1	12	1 x 26 – 35 3 x 36 – 45	14 x Female 2 x Male	6 x Sponsorship scheme 9 x Family scheme 1 x Extension scheme	11 x Initial 5 x Longer-term	6 x living on own 6 x living with 2 people 4 x living with 3 people
		Focus group 2	7	5 x 46 – 55 4 x 56 – 65				
		Focus group 3	11	3 x above 66				

# Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> This figure for a weekly arrival average across the time period (29 February - 18 June) was calculated using arrival data published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Please note the research for this report was undertaken prior to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' name changing. For further information, see Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). 'Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority.' Retrieved from: [Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority)

<sup>ii</sup> The Ukraine Family scheme enabled Ukrainians' immediate family members, extended family members and immediate family of an extended family member to join them in the UK. This contrasts with the more restrictive definition of refugee family reunion which offers protection only to immediate family members. For further information, see Home Office (2024) 'Ukraine Family scheme'. Retrieved from: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ccc3c21d9395001294665e/Ukraine+Family+Scheme+Guidance.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-reunion/instruction/family-reunion-accessible#considering-refugee-family-reunion-applications>

<sup>iv</sup> For more information, see Commission on Integration (2024) 'From arrival to integration: Building communities for refugees and for Britain.' Retrieved from: [https://refugeeintegrationuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CIR\\_Report-1.pdf](https://refugeeintegrationuk.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CIR_Report-1.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Also see, International Rescue Committee (2023) 'From Harm to Home: How the UK Government can strengthen refugee resettlement and integration.' Retrieved from: [https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/%28Final%20for%20online%29%20From%20Harm%20to%20Home%20-%20How%20the%20UK%20government%20can%20strengthen%20refugee%20resettlement%20and%20integration\\_0.pdf](https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/%28Final%20for%20online%29%20From%20Harm%20to%20Home%20-%20How%20the%20UK%20government%20can%20strengthen%20refugee%20resettlement%20and%20integration_0.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> Adequate housing was recognised as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in Article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 11.1 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2024) 'The human right to adequate housing'. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>

<sup>vii</sup> The full list of components is security of tenure; availability of services; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. OHCHR (2024). 'The human right to adequate housing'. Retrieved from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>.

<sup>viii</sup> For an overview of the disparity in government support to those on the Family scheme compared to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, see also British Red Cross (2023). 'Fearing, fleeing, facing the future: How people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine are finding safety in the UK', p. 6, 12-13. Retrieved from: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-speak-up-for-change/how-people-displaced-by-the-conflict-in-ukraine-are-finding-safety-in-the-uk>

<sup>ix</sup> According to the most recent statistics from DLUHC, as of 31 March 2024 out of 9,540 Ukrainian families at risk of homelessness in England, 1,930 arrived on the Family scheme. 'Homelessness management information – Ukrainian nationals: England 24 February 2022 to 31 March 2024'. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-management-information-ukrainian-nationals-england>

<sup>x</sup> Alina attended the focus groups in London and shared her accommodation experiences. Her real name has been changed to protect her anonymity.

<sup>xi</sup> Local authorities in the UK have statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all residents defined as at risk of homelessness, including displaced Ukrainians. Someone who lacks a secure place to live, or is at risk of losing it within 56 days, is legally considered at risk of homelessness.

<sup>xii</sup> Our research discussions revealed that most matches on the Homes for Ukraine scheme still happened informally at the time of fieldwork. In an October 2023 survey, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) also found that 33 per cent of hosts on the Homes for Ukraine scheme reported meeting their Ukrainian guests through social media and 21 per cent, having been introduced by a friend, neighbour or colleague. This is compared to 23 per cent of hosts using a formal matching service. For further information see ONS (October 2023). 'Experiences of Homes for Ukraine scheme sponsors, UK: 10 to 21 August 2023'. Retrieved from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/experiencesofhomesforukraineschemesponsorsuk/10to21august2023>

<sup>xiii</sup> In Scotland and Wales where most displaced Ukrainians had arrived on super sponsor visas, professional stakeholders said that matching to hosts was conducted directly by local authorities. This enabled greater scope for conducting safeguarding checks before the arrival of displaced Ukrainians.

<sup>xiv</sup> In the design of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, there is a division in safeguarding responsibilities between the Home Office and local authorities. The Home Office is responsible for undertaking basic security checks on sponsors before issuing visas. Local authorities are tasked with carrying out safeguarding checks on sponsors and other adults in the households, these include enhanced DBS checks; checks on the suitability of the property and in-person welfare checks once displaced Ukrainians have arrived. For further information, see National Audit Office (2023). 'Investigation into Homes for Ukraine scheme', p. 34. Retrieved from: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/investigation-into-the-homes-for-ukraine-scheme.pdf>

<sup>xv</sup> 'Foundry' is the digital case management system used between DLUHC, the Home Office and local authorities to share information on sponsors and displaced Ukrainians on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Local authorities are required to upload the outcomes of their safeguarding checks on the Foundry digital case management system.

<sup>xxvi</sup> For further information, see Vicol, D.O., and Sehic, A. (2023). 'On the frontline: London councils' responses to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine', pp. 18-20. Retrieved from: <https://www.workrightscentre.org/media/1292/on-the-frontline-london-councils-response-to-the-humanitarian-crisis-in-ukraine.pdf>

<sup>xxvii</sup> The National Audit Office (2023) found that, as of September 2023, out of around 66,000 checks completed, 2,516 safeguarding checks were marked as failed (four per cent). However, it also highlighted that DLUHC does not hold comprehensive data on cases of displaced Ukrainians arriving before all safeguarding checks were completed. National Audit Office (2023). 'Investigation into Homes for Ukraine scheme', p. 35. Retrieved from: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/investigation-into-the-homes-for-ukraine-scheme.pdf>

<sup>xxviii</sup> We use the expression 'homelessness risks' to denote risks, and experiences of homelessness as measured by the UK government. DLUHC measures Ukrainian homelessness by publishing the cumulative number of Ukrainian households who have been owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty from local authorities in England at any one point since 24 February 2022. Local authorities submit this data on a voluntary basis, and many local authorities do not submit this data regularly.

<sup>xxix</sup> These are the most recent publicly available statistics published by DLUHC as of 15 June 2024.

<sup>xxx</sup> In this context, experiences of change refer mainly to multiple moves between initial and emergency accommodation settings. Based on the experiences of people displaced from Ukraine, different manifestations of change can include change of geographical area and new local authority systems and processes to learn about; change in support networks, which makes it difficult to build lasting friendships; change in local authority and VCS support staff, which makes it hard to build relationships with professionals and access consistent and clear information; change of schools for children and education for adults which disrupts their education and networks of support and friendships; change of jobs and employment options, which affects incomes and overall stability.

<sup>xxxi</sup> These mediation sessions mainly consisted of providing a space for Ukrainians and their hosts to discuss the difficulties they were facing in their relationship in the presence of a third party acting as a mediator.

<sup>xxxii</sup> There is potential overlap between hosts attending multiple sessions. The count of 600 therefore reflects attendees and not individuals.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Across both Scotland and Wales, eligibility for welcome accommodation is mostly limited to those arriving on the super sponsor scheme and, in some exceptional cases, to people on other visa routes. In Scotland, from 8 January 2024, eligibility for welcome accommodation has narrowed to those who arrived in Scotland with a Scottish super sponsor visa and, in exceptional cases, to people on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. For more information, see Scottish Government (2024) 'Super Sponsor Scheme and Homes for Ukraine: guidance for local authorities'. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/super-sponsor-scheme-and-homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-local-authorities/pages/welcome-hub/>.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> In Wales, welcome centres were mainly envisaged for those on the super sponsor scheme. However, where there was capacity, exceptions included cases where there are safeguarding concerns and a lack of alternative hosting options; where individuals have close relatives in Welsh welcome accommodation who are Welsh super sponsor beneficiaries; and in the case of children of Welsh super sponsor beneficiaries on the Ukraine Extension Scheme. For more information see Welsh Government (2024). 'Homes for Ukraine: local authority guidance'. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.wales/homes-ukraine-local-authority-guidance#100583>

<sup>xxxv</sup> In Wales, if displaced Ukrainians refuse two suitable accommodation offers, they are required to pay an administration charge per week to help fund the cost of finding move-on accommodation. For more information, see Welsh government (2023). 'Refusing move-on accommodation: Frequently asked questions'. Retrieved from: <https://sanctuary.gov.wales/super/refusals>.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> In Scotland, if both options of accommodation are refused, displaced individuals can remain in welcome accommodation for a maximum of 180 nights from the date they first entered the accommodation or a maximum of 60 nights from the date they refused the second housing option offered (whichever is longer). For more information, see Scottish government (2023). 'Scotland for Ukrainians: A guide for displaced people'. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-for-ukrainians/pages/arrival-in-scotland/>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Figures based on lead tenants. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). 'Social housing lettings in England, tenants: April 2022 to March 2023'. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/social-housing-lettings-in-england-april-2022-to-march-2023/social-housing-lettings-in-england-tenants-april-2022-to-march-2023>

<sup>xxxviii</sup> This is based on analysis of the Refugee Convention by Freedom of Movement in 2024. Article 21 of the Refugee Convention states: "As regards housing, the Contracting States, in so far as the matter is regulated by laws or regulations or is subject to the control of public authorities, shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory treatment as favourable as possible and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances." Retrieved from: <https://freemovement.org.uk/new-consultation-on-denying-migrants-access-to-social-housing/>

<sup>xxxix</sup> Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates are based on private market rents being paid by tenants in a Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA). This is the area within which a person might reasonably be expected to live.

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<sup>xxx</sup> Before April 2011, LHA rates were based on median rents of properties of the same size in each local area, determined by government rent officers. The median (or 50th percentile) rent is the value at which half of rents are higher, and half of rents are lower. House of Commons (2023). 'Local Housing Allowance (LHA): Help with rent for private tenants.' Retrieved from: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn04957>

<sup>xxxi</sup> This figure aims to show the number of arrivals via private sponsorship through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme across the UK. It was calculated by using the total number of arrivals on the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme in the UK provided by Home Office transparency data, minus the total number of arrivals sponsored by Scottish and Welsh governments under the Super Sponsor schemes provided by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities visa data by country, upper and local authority. See respectively: Home Office (2024). 'Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data'. Updated 13 June 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>

<sup>xxxii</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority. Updated 6 June 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority#full-publication-update-history>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Includes some arrivals under the Family Scheme (in-country applications). See Home Office (2024). 'Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data'. Updated 13 June 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>

<sup>xxxiv</sup> This data was last updated by the Scottish government on 8 November 2023. For further information see: Scottish government. (2023). 'Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund: List of approved projects'. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/ukraine-longer-term-resettlement-fund/pages/list-of-approved-projects/>

<sup>xxxv</sup> The choice of focusing on Canada, Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic was made in light of the following considerations: (i) these are all countries that all are featured in the top ten countries receiving displaced people from Ukraine according to data from UNHCR; (ii) they include neighbouring countries (Poland), countries of both transit and destination (Poland and Czech Republic) and countries of destination alone (Germany and Canada); (iii) they include G7 members and countries with comparable sized economies to the UK (e.g. Germany and Canada). Therefore, these are relevant countries for drawing comparisons and apply learning to the UK context.



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