



**UK government
schemes for
Ukrainians
and life in
the UK guide**

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This guide was produced by the British Red Cross. The information provided is accurate at the time of publishing. Immigration rules change often, and the UK government schemes may be updated and, further information added. **Access the government website for the latest updates.**

Background

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are the largest humanitarian network with a presence in 192 countries. Our mission is to alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, and uphold human dignity, especially during armed conflicts and other emergencies.

This guide was created to provide information about the United Kingdom government support schemes for Ukrainians fleeing the conflict.

British Red Cross

British Red Cross (BRC) has been a lifeline for people in crisis for over 150 years. The British Red Cross Services for Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Survivors of Trafficking is the largest independent provider of support to refugees, asylum seekers, and survivors of trafficking in the UK. In 2021, BRC supported almost 30,000 refugees, asylum seekers, vulnerable migrants, and their dependents. We help refugees adjust to life in the UK, providing emergency provisions for those facing severe hardship and giving orientation support and specialist advice to those settling into an unfamiliar place.

UK Government Schemes for Ukrainians

The UK government has announced schemes to support Ukrainian nationals to come to the UK. The Ukrainian family visa scheme has closed on the 19th of February. The Homes for Ukraine scheme also known as Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme is open to Ukrainians and their family members who want to travel to the UK.

You may wish to seek immigration legal advice before completing your application or after arriving in the UK. The Ukraine Advice Project provides free legal information on UK visas and refugees rules. You can contact a solicitor online via [Ukraine Advice Project UK \(advice-ukraine.co.uk\)](https://advice-ukraine.co.uk).



Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Who can apply?

The Homes for Ukraine scheme allows Ukrainian nationals and their family members who were residents in Ukraine before 1 January of 2022 to apply to come to the UK and stay with a UK -based sponsor. Sponsors can live anywhere in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and must be British or Irish Citizens or be 'settled in the UK' (which means having the right to live in the UK permanently) on the date of the guest's visa application if that application is submitted after 3pm on 19 February 2024.

The Home Office guidance states that to apply to the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme you must be Ukrainian, or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national who is applying to the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. Immediate family members include spouse or civil partner; unmarried partner (you must have been living together in a relationship for at least 2 years); child who is under 18; parent (if you are under 18) and fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner.

Are children eligible for the scheme and can they travel without a parent or a legal guardian?

Yes, the Home Office says that children who are currently outside of the UK can use the scheme to reunite with their parent or legal guardian who is currently living in the UK, if they are the child's sponsor. The scheme is also open to children under 18 who are not travelling with or joining their parent or legal guardian, known as 'eligible children' (where sponsor eligibility and parental or legal guardian consent requirements are met).

Find out more on [Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for parents or legal guardians \(children and minors applying without parents\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-parents-or-legal-guardians-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents)

The website is also available in Ukrainian and Russian.

Ukrainian [Житло для України - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-parents-or-legal-guardians-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents)

Russian [Жилье для Украины - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-parents-or-legal-guardians-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents)



How can I find a sponsor?

The UK government has a list of voluntary and community sector organisations running schemes which provide support for and help match people coming from Ukraine with sponsors in the UK. These organisations can help you find a sponsor and provide more information about what it's like to be sponsored in the UK. They are not immigration advisors and cannot guarantee to find you a sponsor in the location of your choice.

You are strongly advised to find a sponsor that you know personally or through the government list. Currently these are the regulated providers in the UK published on the UK Gov website:

- Citizens UK (via USPUK) <https://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/refugees-and-migrants-welcome/communities-for-ukraine/>
- Reset <https://resetuk.org/about/ukraine>
- World Jewish Relief <https://www.worldjewishrelief.org/ukraine-faqs>
- Love Bristol <https://www.lovebristol.org/ukraine-project>
- Refugees at Home <https://www.refugeesathome.org/>

You can access the up to date government list on [Recognised Providers: Organisations who can help guests from Ukraine find sponsors in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recognised-providers-organisations-who-can-help-guests-from-ukraine-find-sponsors-in-the-uk)

The page is also available in Russian and Ukrainian.

Ukrainian [Офіційні постачальники послуг: організації, які можуть допомогти гостям з України знайти спонсорів у Великобританії - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recognised-providers-organisations-who-can-help-guests-from-ukraine-find-sponsors-in-the-uk)

Russian [Официальные поставщики услуг: организации, которые могут помочь гостям из Украины найти спонсоров в Великобритании - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recognised-providers-organisations-who-can-help-guests-from-ukraine-find-sponsors-in-the-uk)

I already have a sponsor, what should I do next?

Home Office guidance states that, if you have an eligible sponsor, you or your sponsor can complete an application for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) visa. One application is required per individual.

Find out more about eligibility and how to apply on [Apply for a visa under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine)

The page is also available in Ukrainian and Russian.

Ukrainian [Подання заяви на отримання візи за Українською спонсорською схемою \(«Дім для українців»\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine)

Russian [Подача заявлений по Украинской спонсорской схеме \(«Дом для украинцев»\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine)

How long will I stay with my sponsor?

Home Office guidance clearly states that the sponsor's commitment is to provide accommodation for at least six months. If the Ukrainian guest is under 18 and not travelling with or intending to join a parent or legal guardian in the UK, accommodation and support should be provided for three years or until they turn 18 and the sponsorship has lasted for a minimum of 6 months.

What will happen if the relationship with my sponsor breaks down?

Your specific rights and entitlements are NOT linked to the UK sponsor who assisted you to come to the UK. If your relationship with the UK sponsor breaks down, you cannot lose your visa and entitlements. Local Authority will advise you on your options and support to find alternative accommodation.

Do I need to pay to apply for the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine)?

According to the UK Government it is free to apply to the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine). You do not need to pay the immigration health surcharge or biometric enrolment fee for this scheme.

How long can I stay in the UK?

You will be able to stay in the UK for up to 3 years if you have applied before the 19th February 2024. If you complete the application after 19th February 2024, you will be able to stay in the UK for 18 months.

People arriving under this scheme will have the right to work, study, access national health system, go to school, rent or buy a property.

The information above is based on Home Office guidance and, you can find out more information on [Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for guests - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine)

The page is also available in Ukrainian and Russian.

Ukrainian ["Житло для України": посібник для гостей - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-ukrainian)

Russian ["Жилье для Украины": руководство для гостей - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-russian)

British Red Cross Travel Assistance Support

British Red Cross will be offering travel assistance for individuals fleeing the conflict in Ukraine in line with our current refugee family reunion travel assistance service. The service is only available to individuals outside of Ukraine and open to unaccompanied minors, families where 3 or more family members will be travelling or in circumstances where individuals are unable to make suitable arrangements due to specific vulnerabilities or medical needs. Travelling family members must hold valid visas for travel to the UK under either Ukraine Family or Homes for Ukraine schemes. To find out more about the service please email UkraineTravelAssistance@redcross.org.uk.

Life in the UK

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom comprises Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. The country population is 67 million. English is the official language and it's spoken in all regions of the UK. Welsh is also widely used and taught in Wales and there are other recognised regional languages such as Scots Gaelic, Scots, Irish/Gaelic and Cornish.

The UK is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural country committed to the values of freedom, liberty, the rule of law, and mutual respect, where people from all backgrounds live and work together.

Religion

The largest religion in the UK is Christianity, with 33.2 million people (59% of the population). The second largest religion is Islam, with 2.7 million people (5% of the population). Around a quarter of the UK population practise no religion. You can easily find places of worship, groups like the [Inter Faith Network for the UK](#) may help you to find a place of worship such as a local church, mosque or Buddhist temple. The [Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London](#) can provide information on Ukrainian Catholic churches across the UK.

Driving in the UK

You must have both a full driving licence and in date motor insurance to drive a vehicle on UK roads. If you have a full driving licence issued in Ukraine, you may use this licence to drive small vehicles (such as motorcycles, cars, and vehicles up to 3500kgs or with up to 8 passenger seats) for up to three years in the UK. The licence must cover the vehicle being driven and must still be valid. To continue to drive after this, you must obtain a provisional driving licence and pass a UK driving test before the 12 months ends. Find out more about more about driving in the UK [Driving licences - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



Jobcentre Plus

The local [Jobcentre Plus](#) is a government-funded employment agency and social security office that helps people to find employment. Jobcentre Plus provides free employment advice service, access to training opportunities and signposting to trusted partner organisations for specialist support. They also deal with benefits for people who are unemployed or unable to work because of a health condition or disability. Jobcentre Plus has public computers to help you in your job search and offices can be found in most cities and some towns across the UK.

When you arrive in the UK you will register with Jobcentre Plus and will be allocated a work coach. You will meet your work coach regularly and they will give you support to build your skills and explore different job options and training opportunities. If you are disabled, a disability advisor can support you and help you access the correct support and suitable employment.

Your rights at work

Everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work. Men and women have equal rights and duties. You have the right to work in a safe environment and be free from threats, violence and harassment from your employer, colleagues, or customers. Employers must respect the needs of employees as long as it does not interfere with the work they are employed to do. It is illegal to discriminate against anyone applying for a job or in the workplace because of gender, race, religion, being married or in a civil partnership, disability, age, sexual orientation, or being pregnant.

Minimum wage

Every employer must pay their employees a minimum amount per hour. From April 2022 those minimums are listed here however these might change in the future:

- age 23 and over - £10.42
- age 21 to 22 - £10.18
- age 18 to 20 - £7.49
- under 18 or Apprentice £5.48

Working hours

You can usually work a maximum of 48 hours a week on average. If you are under 18, you cannot work more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week.

You should always keep your ID documents (for example your ID or passport) – your employer does not have the right to keep them. When you get a job, you should also get a job contract or a job agreement. The terms and conditions of your work will be in your contract. Make sure you read this carefully, with an interpreter, if necessary, before you sign.

Employment status

In the UK, we have 3 main types of employment status:

- Employees get all employment rights subject to some conditions (for example, some rights need you to have been working continuously in the same job for a certain amount of time to qualify) and have responsibilities towards your employer.
- Workers get certain core employment rights (minimum wage or national living wage, holiday pay and protection against discrimination), but have more flexibility over when, how much, and where they work.
- Self-employed workers have no employment rights but have complete flexibility in deciding how and when they work.

Find out more about employment status in the UK [Employment status: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/employment-status-overview)

Get your professional qualification recognised in the UK

If you have a professional qualification, you will need to have this qualification officially recognised if you want to work in a profession that is regulated in the UK. It will need to be recognised by the appropriate regulator for your profession. You will need to do this even if you are doing temporary or one-off work. The UK Centre for Professional Qualifications (UK CPQ) is a free service that can provide you with information to help get your qualifications recognised in the UK.

Find out more information if a profession is regulated and the entry requirements on UK CPQ website <https://cpq.ecctis.com/>.

Healthcare

The UK has a government-sponsored universal healthcare system called the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS consists of a series of publicly funded healthcare systems in the UK. It includes the National Health Services (England), NHS Scotland, NHS Wales and Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland.

A general practitioner, commonly known as a GP, is the first doctor you will usually visit for routine health problems in the UK. A GP can offer medical advice, provide a diagnosis, and prescribe medicines. They might be your first point of contact for many physical and mental health concerns. If you are feeling anxious, depressed or like you cannot cope then you should tell your GP so that they can provide you with mental health support. The GP practice is also responsible for coordinating and managing your long-term healthcare and they can refer you if you need more specialised hospital services.

Everyone has a right to register with a GP and you do not need proof of address, immigration status, ID or an NHS number (you may be asked to provide ID but it is not a requirement).

We strongly recommend that you register with a GP as soon as possible after you arrive. You can also register temporarily if you expect to be in an area for more than 24 hours but less than 3 months.

Find out more about registering with a GP:

England: [How to register with a GP surgery - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery)

Northern Ireland: [Your local doctor \(GP\) | nidirect](https://nidirect.nhs.uk/your-local-doctor-gp)

Scotland: [Registering with a GP practice - Ukrainian | Translations \(nhsinform.scot\)](https://nhsinform.scot/registering-with-a-gp-practice-ukrainian-translations)

Wales: [Sanctuary | Health and well-being \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/sanctuary-health-well-being)

Emergency Contacts

Health

Call 999 emergency number if someone is seriously ill or injured, or their life is at risk. If you have a serious accident that requires immediate medical treatment you need to go to the nearest hospital that has an Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department.

If you need medical advice when your GP surgery is closed or have an urgent health problem and are not sure what to do, you can call 111 for telephone health advice. When you contact emergency and non-emergency services you can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Police

In case of emergency, you can call the police. **Call 999** if:

- a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed
- someone is in immediate danger or harm
- property is in danger of being damaged
- a serious disruption to the public is likely

Call 101 for non-urgent enquiries to the police.

Paying for prescriptions

There is normally a small charge for prescriptions in England, which you will be asked to pay when you collect your medication at the pharmacy. However, prescriptions are provided free of charge if you meet certain requirements. There is some variation in what prescriptions are provided depending on where in the UK you are living, but in general, your prescription will be free if you are:

- age 60 or over
- age 16 or under
- age 16 to 18 and in full-time education
- pregnant (or have had a baby in the previous 12 months)
- an inpatient receiving care in an NHS hospital
- living in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales

This list is not exhaustive, free prescriptions may also be available if you have certain specified medical conditions or a continuing physical disability.



Education

The education system in the UK is divided into four main parts, primary education, secondary education, further education, and higher education. Education for children is free and they must legally attend primary and secondary education which runs from about 5 years old until the student is 16 years old. In the UK there are catchment areas for schools, which are made up of the area around the school. You will need to meet with the school and fill out forms before your child can start school.

In most of the UK, the school year starts in September and ends in July for the summer holidays. In Scotland the school year starts in August and ends in June. During the school year school holidays occur every six weeks and last between 1 and 2 weeks. The school week runs from Monday to Friday. The school day is usually from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. but may vary between schools.

You can find information online on how to apply for further education, apprenticeships, online courses, funding and volunteering opportunities.

- England, The National Careers Service www.nationalcareers.service.gov.uk
- Scotland, My World of Work www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train
- Wales, Careers Wales www.careerswales.gov.wales
- Northern Ireland, NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/careers
- National Higher Education Courses <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- Apprenticeships <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>
- Free online courses: Skillshare; LinkedIn Learning; Coursera; EDX; Khan Academy; Udemy

Learning English

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes are offered in colleges and community centres and libraries across the UK. You can find classes that run during the day and in the evenings.

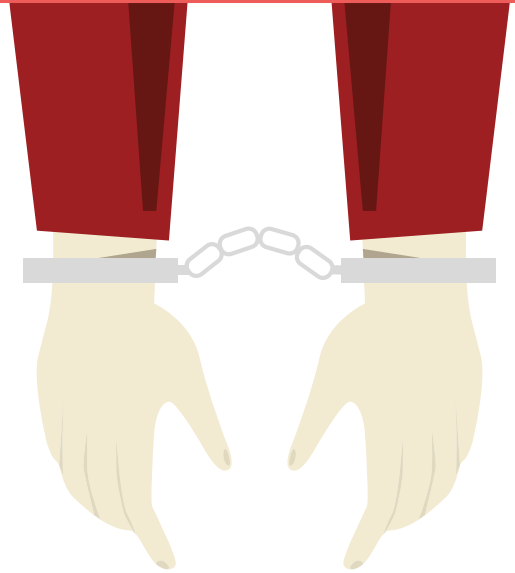
Colleges' ESOL courses have certificates that lead to formal qualifications, and are important for accessing further education and training. You may have to wait some time to start these courses depending on when you arrive and because these courses may have long waiting lists.

Community ESOL courses are provided in most cities. While these courses can sometimes be easier to access, depending on the location and level of demand they may or may not have a waiting list. Local Authority where you live should have the list of all ESOL classes available in the area.



Modern slavery and human trafficking

Modern slavery and human trafficking is a global issue that can affect people of all ages, gender and races and includes a range of different forms of exploitation. Exploitation takes place when someone earns money by forcing someone else to do things under bad circumstances. This force can be subtle, like deception, threats or a debt which needs to be repaid. Therefore, people do not always see themselves as victims of exploitation. There are many types of exploitation: examples include being forced to work, for example in catering, agriculture, prostitution or begging. We also refer to exploitation when someone is forced to engage in criminal acts, such as growing or selling drugs; to work in a household under very bad conditions or to sell his or her organs.



People escaping conflict can often find themselves at greater risk, it is very important that you and your family remain safe. Find out more about safety tips for families escaping conflicts and anti-trafficking advice at [Help for Ukrainian Refugees in the UK | British Red Cross](#)

People arriving in a new country may also be at greater risk if they do not speak the language, do not have a social support network and are looking for ways to earn an income. For more information on staying safe in the UK and how to seek support if something goes wrong visit Stay Safe in the UK-STOP The TRAFFIK <https://www.stophetraffik.org/landing-page/stay-safe-uk/>

If you or you believe someone else, is currently experiencing human trafficking then please contact the following organisations:

- Poland – La Strada Poland Helpline: (+48) 22 628 99 99
- Hungary – National Hotline: (+36) 06 80 / 20 55 20
- Moldova – La Strada Moldova: (+373) 0800 77 777
- Romania – Hotline against Trafficking: (+40) 0800 800 678
- Slovakia – Slovak Crisis Centre DOTYK: (+421) 903 704 78
- UK – Modern Slavery Helpline: (+44) 08000 121 700
- Montenegro- National SOS: (+382) 116 666

Domestic Abuse

‘Domestic abuse’ is a term used in the UK to describe any violence or action used to exercise or gain control and power over a partner or family member. It is a crime in the UK. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional and financial abuse. For example, it is against the law to hit your partner or children, but it is also illegal to control your partner’s movements, who they talk to, their access to money or their freedom to visit friends.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk 0808 2000 247 provides advice and help any time, day or night, confidentially. They can refer you to accommodation and specialist services.

Keeping children safe

In the UK you are legally responsible for the protection, care, development, and wellbeing of your children. It is your job to keep them safe from harm and danger. It is an offence to leave children on their own if it puts them at risk. Babies, toddlers and young children should never be left alone. Generally, children under 16 should not be asked to look after younger children, and children who are 16 or older should not look after other children for long periods or overnight.

It is illegal to smack or hit children in Scotland and Wales. In other parts of the UK, it is illegal to smack or hit a child if you cause an injury or leave a mark on them. You could get in legal trouble for punishing your child through hitting or smacking either with your hand or with an object, as this could be seen as abuse.

Information about parenting using different ways to change children's behaviour, rather than physical discipline or smacking can be found here: learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/positive-parenting

Further information

British Red Cross provides a range of supporting services for Ukrainians arriving in the UK, including advocacy, destitution support and family tracing. Find out more and visit Red Cross Help for Ukrainian national's page <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee/help-for-refugees-from-ukraine>

British Red Cross has produced videos resources about Life in the UK that cover three main questions for new arrivals:

How can I get help in the UK?

What do I need to know about life in the UK?

What do I need to know about having my child in the UK?

You can access the above videos in Ukrainian and Russian here: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-support-refugees/digital-empowerment-of-refugee-women/digital-empowerment-resources---ukraine>

Annex A. British Red Cross Refugee Support Services Map

[RSRFLAT Locations v1.2 \(arcgis.com\)](#)



Annex B. British Red Cross Refugee Support Contact Details

British Red Cross Refugee Support				
Country	Region	Area covered	Telephone Contact details	Email
England	East Midlands	Lincolnshire	01164 790 900	RSEastMidlandsUkraine@redcross.org.uk
		Leicestershire		
		Northamptonshire		
		Derbyshire	01332 525 423	
		Nottinghamshire		
	East of England	Hertfordshire	0300 023 0805	EastEngUkraineEnquiries@redcross.org.uk
		Cambridgeshire		
		Luton		
		Peterborough		
		Essex		
		Norwich		
	London	London	0131 338 5701	ukraineresponselondon@redcross.org.uk
	North East	Newcastle upon Tyne	0191 2737961	Refugeesupportnortheast@redcross.org.uk
		Stockton	01642 607 230	
		Sunderland	0191 510 8753	
	North West	Liverpool	0151 702 5067	ramp@redcross.org.uk
		Manchester	0161 888 8932	GMRS@redcross.org.uk
		Preston	01772 707 300	GMRS@redcross.org.uk
	South East	Gravesend	0300 333 5393	Southeastrs@redcross.org.uk
		Milton Keynes		
		Reading		
High Wycombe				
Portsmouth				
Canterbury				
South West	Bristol	0117 941 5040	refugeeservicebristol@redcross.org.uk	
	Plymouth	01752 831 619	plymouthrefugeesupport@redcross.org.uk	
West Midlands	Birmingham	0121 766 5444	RSWestMids@redcross.org.uk	
	Coventry			
Yorkshire and Humber	Hull	01482 499 834	refugeesupporthull@redcross.org.uk	
	Sheffield	0114 242 7385	refugeesupportsy@redcross.org.uk	
	Leeds	0113 201 5267	RefugeeSupportWY@redcross.org.uk	

Annex B. British Red Cross Refugee Support Contact Details

British Red Cross Refugee Support			
Country	Area covered	Telephone Contact details	Email
Northern Ireland	Belfast	029 9032 3055	RSNorthernIreland@redcross.org.uk
Scotland	Glasgow	07590 445 367	refugeesupportglasgow@redcross.org.uk
Wales	Newport	01633 720 010	RSWalesUkraine@redcross.org.uk