

CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

3rd Meeting, 2023, Session 6

26 January 2023

Ukraine

1. Between March and June 2022, the Committee scrutinised the humanitarian response in Scotland to the war in Ukraine, with a focus on the resettlement of displaced people from Ukraine across Scotland. It also held a roundtable on [links with and support for Ukrainian culture](#) in November 2022.
2. The Committee has agreed to hold a further series of evidence sessions to follow-up on its earlier work on Scotland's humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine. At this meeting, it will take evidence from—
 - Andrii Kuslii, Consul and Head of the Consulate, Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh
3. At future meetings, the Committee will hear from COSLA and local authorities, and the Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine.
4. This will give the Committee the opportunity to receive an update on and scrutinise the current progress of the ongoing process of resettlement and the operation of visa schemes.
5. A briefing from SPICe is attached at **Annexe A**.

CEEAC Committee Clerks
January 2023

SPICe

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture

3rd Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), 26 January

Supporting displaced people from Ukraine in Scotland

Visa schemes for displaced Ukrainians

The Committee will be aware that Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted in large numbers of Ukrainians being displaced, both within Ukraine and across Europe. The [United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates](#) that 5.59 million Ukrainians had been displaced within Ukraine and 7.83 million across Europe by December 2022.

In response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis, the UK Government established three visa schemes for displaced Ukrainians:

- a [Family Scheme](#) for those with family members in the UK;
- an [Extension Scheme](#) for those who held a valid UK visa on or after 1 January 2022; and
- a [Sponsorship Scheme](#) through which displaced Ukrainians are sponsored by hosts that offer them accommodation for at least six months. The Scottish Government [acted as a supersponsor](#) for the scheme but applications have been [paused since 13 July 2022](#).

The UK Government [provides data on the number of displaced Ukrainians with UK visas under the Family and Extension schemes](#), but no Scotland-specific information is available. By 17 January 2023, 64,400 Family Scheme visas had been issued and 15,500 visas had been extended through the Extension Scheme.

The UK Government does [provide data on the number of arrivals of displaced Ukrainians through the Sponsorship Scheme](#) with a Scottish sponsor. By 17 January 2023, 37,449 displaced Ukrainians had been granted visas with Scottish sponsors of which 22,782 had travelled to the UK. This means that 14,667 displaced Ukrainians hold a visa through the Sponsorship Scheme but have not yet travelled. Of those that have arrived in the UK with Scottish sponsors, 18,557 were sponsored by the Scottish Government and 4,225 by individual hosts directly. However, displaced

Ukrainians with a Scottish sponsor are not required to stay in Scotland once they have arrived in the UK, so these figures may not reflect the actual numbers of displaced Ukrainians currently in Scotland.

Scottish Government review of the Sponsorship Scheme

The Scottish Government [paused its supersponsor scheme](#) in July 2022, primarily citing accommodation capacity issues, and said that it would revisit its position after three months. Since then, Neil Gray, Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine, has given updates to the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Government's efforts to create additional capacity and speed up the matching process by which displaced Ukrainians in temporary accommodation are allocated longer-term accommodation.¹ [On 1 November 2022](#) he reported on the conclusions of the [Scottish Government's review](#) of the supersponsor scheme in a Ministerial Statement to Parliament. The review states:

“Even when taking into consideration a pause to applications from July, Scotland still reports the highest number of total applications, visas issued and arrivals per head of the population of any of the four nations [...]. A considerable achievement far beyond our initial commitment.”

However, the review confirms the need to reduce the length of time displaced Ukrainians are staying in temporary accommodation and to increase the availability of longer-term accommodation. In addition to confirming a range of sources of funding, it sets out:

- [16 interventions aimed at improving the operation of the scheme](#), including efforts to improve the matching process, increase access to the private rented sector, and strengthen employability support; and
- A list of [seven criteria for reopening the scheme](#), which centre on accommodation capacity, mitigating pressures on local authority services, and plans for meeting the costs and challenges associated with reopening.

The rest of this briefing provides an overview of key challenges in the delivery of support for displaced Ukrainians in Scotland, primarily based on [data made available by the Scottish Government](#). In addition, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) conducted two UK-wide surveys in October and November 2022, [one of 3,148 displaced Ukrainians](#) and [one of 8,770 individual sponsors](#).

Key Issues

Accommodation

The Scottish Government provides accommodation for displaced Ukrainians it sponsors where required. This can be temporary 'Welcome' accommodation or longer-term accommodation which is available for at least 6 months. The ensuing

¹ Such updates were given on [8 September 2022](#), and [1 November 2022](#).

pressure on the availability of both temporary and longer-term accommodation [was identified as the main reason](#) for the pausing of the scheme in the Scottish Government's review. To create temporary accommodation capacity, the Scottish Government [chartered two passenger ships](#) to provide Welcome accommodation.

As of 7 December 2022, [the Scottish Government estimated](#) that around 6,840 people were in Welcome accommodation – 4,425 in hotel rooms and 2,415 on the passenger ships. The Scottish Government also provides data on the number of displaced Ukrainians who have been [matched into longer-term accommodation](#). However, it caveats that the number of matches recorded [does not provide a complete picture](#) of the number of displaced Ukrainians in longer-term accommodation. By 7 December 2022, around 3,545 displaced Ukrainians were recorded as having been matched with and arrived in longer-term accommodation. The data also shows that around 4,340 individuals were still to be matched by the national matching service. The Scottish Government used to provide data on the number of property and disclosure checks needing to be carried out on potential hosts but has stopped including this information since its [December 2022 data release](#).

Concerns have been expressed to the Committee and during Parliamentary Debates about the number of displaced Ukrainians in temporary accommodation - in particular on the passenger ships - and the length of time it is taking to match them into longer-term accommodation.² In response, the [Scottish Government set out plans](#) to speed up the matching process and create additional longer-term accommodation capacity in September 2022. This included [announcing a £50 million 'Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund'](#) for local authorities to refurbish properties not currently in use in addition to [previous resettlement funding for local authorities](#).

In the [ONS survey of individual Homes for Ukraine sponsors](#), 63% of hosts indicated that they were planning to provide accommodation for 12 months or less. Given that the numbers of Ukrainians arriving in the UK through the Sponsorship Scheme [peaked in May 2022](#) and displaced Ukrainians are continuing to be matched with hosts, significant numbers of displaced Ukrainians could be needing alternative accommodation over the next year. Answering questions following the Ministerial Statement on 1 November 2022, [the Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine said](#) that local authorities will be working to offer rematches or help displaced Ukrainians access other accommodation options. [The UK Government confirmed](#) in January 2023 it will continue to pay hosts £350 a month for displaced Ukrainians who have been in the UK for less than a year and an increased payment of £500 a month for hosting those who have been in the country between 12 months and 24 months.

² As expressed in this Committee's letter to Neil Gray based on [evidence it heard](#) from stakeholders. Questions about accommodation for displaced Ukrainians were also asked at [Portfolio Question Time on 26 May 2022](#), a [Ministerial Statement on 8 September 2022](#), a meeting of the [Social Justice and Social Security Committee on 29 September 2022](#), a [Ministerial Statement on 1 November 2022](#), and [Portfolio Question Time on 16 November 2022](#).

The ONS [survey of displaced Ukrainians](#) included questions about accommodation. When asked whether they experienced barriers to renting privately, 45% of respondents said they had, most commonly citing:

- not having a guarantor or references (59%);
- not being able to afford to rent (51%); and
- not being able to afford a deposit (41%).

The Scottish Government's review of the Supersponsor Scheme includes [proposals for improving access to the private rented sector](#), including specialised housing advice, piloting a deposit guarantee scheme, and considering a national 'headleasing' scheme to incentivise private landlords offering accommodation. No timescale for these measures has been set out so far.

Education

The Scottish Government [publishes data on the number of children of displaced Ukrainians enrolled in Scottish schools](#). As of 25 November, 3,060 displaced children from Ukraine were recorded as enrolled in schools across Scotland, with the largest numbers in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The [ONS survey of displaced Ukrainians](#) asked about enrolment of children in UK schools. 20% of respondents with dependent children said that they had experienced difficulties registering their children at school. Respondents with dependent children were also asked about English language support at school. 21% of respondents with school-age children and 32% of respondents with pre-school age children said their children needed language support but it was not available.

Answering questions following the Ministerial Statement on 1 November 2022 about funding for schools to cover the need for educational support for the children of displaced Ukrainians, [the Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine noted that](#) while funding is available from the UK Government for pupils who came to the UK through the Sponsorship Scheme, no additional funding is available for those who have come to the UK in other ways, including through the Family Scheme. He further stated that '[welcome provision' funding](#) to local authorities that has been provided by the Scottish Government can be used for educational support.

Employability

The [ONS survey of displaced Ukrainians](#) found that there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who were employed, 56% up from 19% in June 2022. However, 50% of respondents said that they had experienced difficulties in taking up work in the UK. The most common reasons given were that respondents' English skills did not meet job requirements (56%), and that their qualifications were not recognised or valid in the UK (33%).³

³ Questions about barriers to employment were asked at the [Ministerial statement on 1 November 2022](#).

The Supersponsor Scheme review conducted by the Scottish Government [identifies a greater emphasis on employability](#) as one of the interventions that would improve the operation of the scheme in the short term. Its plans include *“Improved coordination with councils, third and private sectors, Skills Development Scotland and DWP to ensure arrivals can seek out and secure employment, including through job fairs.”* No timescale for these measures has been given so far.

Today’s evidence session

Today’s evidence session provides an opportunity for members to discuss with the Consul how he thinks displaced Ukrainians are settling in Scotland and whether he has views on barriers to employment or the provision of accommodation and education. Members may also want to explore the Consul’s observations on the experience of displaced Ukrainians in Scotland. Further, the Committee may wish to ask what role community groups are playing in supporting displaced Ukrainians in Scotland and whether more can be done.

Annie Bosse, Researcher, SPICe Research

19 January 2023

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot