

CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2023, Session 6

9 February 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 agreed to hold a further series of evidence sessions to follow-up on its earlier work on Scotland's humanitarian response. This has given the Committee the opportunity to receive an update on and scrutinise the current progress of the ongoing process of resettlement.
3. In recent weeks the Committee has heard from the Head of the Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh on some of the issues being experienced by displaced Ukrainians in Scotland, and from local authorities on their role in resettlement.
4. At this meeting, the Committee will take evidence from—
  - Neil Gray MSP, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine;
  - Kirstin McPhee, Head of Ministerial Support and Correspondence, Ukraine Resettlement Directorate, Scottish Government;
  - Will Tyler-Greig, Interim Deputy Director, Policy, Engagement and Finance Division, Ukraine Resettlement Directorate, Scottish Government.
5. The following papers are attached—
  - **Annexe A:** Briefing from SPICe
  - **Annexe B:** Written update from JustRight Scotland
  - **Annexe C:** Written update from the Scottish Refugee Council.

CEEAC Committee Clerks  
February 2023

**SPICe**

**The Information Centre**  
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

## **Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture**

### **5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), 9 February** **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
- 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. 65,500 Family Scheme visas had been issued and 15,700 visas extended through the Extension Scheme by 31 January 2023.

The UK Government does [provide data on the number of arrivals of displaced Ukrainians through the Sponsorship Scheme](#) with a Scottish sponsor. By 31 January 2023, 37,897 displaced Ukrainians had been granted visas with Scottish sponsors of which 23,161 had travelled to the UK. This means that 14,736 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, 18,834 were sponsored by the Scottish Government and 4,327 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.

At its meeting on 26 January 2023, the Committee [took evidence from the Ukrainian Consul](#) based in Edinburgh. Last week, the Committee took evidence from local authority representatives on how local authorities are providing support to displaced Ukrainians.

This week, the Committee will take evidence from Neil Gray MSP, the Scottish Government Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine. This paper provides information on the Scottish Government's approach to supporting displaced Ukrainians and highlights relevant issues raised during the last two evidence sessions with the Consul and Scottish local authorities.

## Scottish Government review of the Supersponsor Scheme

The Scottish Government [paused its Supersponsor Scheme](#) in July 2022, primarily citing accommodation capacity issues. Since then, the Minister 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.<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government's [review of the Supersponsor Scheme published in November 2022](#) 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 also 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. 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
- 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 based on information from:

- [Monthly data releases](#) by the Scottish Government
- two UK-wide surveys conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in October and November 2022, [one of 3,148 displaced Ukrainians](#) and [one of 8,770 individual sponsors](#)

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

- The Committee's [evidence session with Andrii Kuslij](#), Consul and Head of the Ukrainian Consulate in Edinburgh on 26 January 2023
- The Committee's evidence session with witnesses representing COSLA, City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership, and Highland Council on 2 February 2023.

## 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. 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 18 January 2023, [the Scottish Government estimated](#) that around 6,323 people were in Welcome accommodation – 4,062 in hotel rooms and 2,261 on the passenger ships. In [letters to the Committee](#), the Minister confirmed that the passenger ship docked in Glasgow will be available until March 2023 and the one docked in Edinburgh until June 2023.

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. Around 3,995 displaced Ukrainians were recorded as having been matched with and arrived in longer-term accommodation by 17 January 2023. In September 2022, the [Scottish Government set out plans](#) to speed up the matching process and create additional longer-term accommodation capacity, including an [announcement of a £50 million 'Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund'](#) for local authorities to refurbish properties not currently in use.

In last week's session, COSLA and individual local authorities said there was a lack of clarity about what 'long-term' accommodation meant in the context of the Sponsorship Scheme and suggested that inconsistency in use of the terms were resulting in mixed messaging. Similarly, the Ukrainian Consul noted that some displaced Ukrainians were confused about the status of accommodation they had been placed into. Local authorities stated that they did not consider individual hosting arrangements as 'long-term' accommodation. [Scottish Government data releases](#) count individual hosting arrangements as 'longer-term' accommodation.

Local authority witnesses told the Committee that while the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund was very welcome, it would take time for properties to become available. Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership stated in its written submission to the Committee:

“[...] the accommodation being brought on stream through the funding will not all be available in time to provide accommodation for UDPs [Ukrainian Displaced Persons] currently resident on the MS Ambition, at the point of departure. Whilst this will greatly assist there will likely be a phasing in as properties become available through this scheme.”

COSLA and Highland Council described issues with matching displaced Ukrainians who are in temporary accommodation in cities into longer-term accommodation in more rural areas. They suggested that this is especially difficult where displaced Ukrainians have been in temporary accommodation for long periods of time and put down roots, and where matches are available in areas in which public transport is limited. Related to this, the Ukrainian Consul expressed concerns about the impact of having to repeatedly move displaced Ukrainians, including by disrupting education or losing employment.

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. In last week's session, COSLA and local authorities confirmed that they were seeing hosting arrangements come to an end.

Witnesses over the last two weeks have drawn attention to barriers to accessing the private rented sector for displaced Ukrainians. The [ONS survey of displaced Ukrainians](#) indicated that not having a guarantor or references, not being able to afford rent, and not being able to afford a deposit were key barriers for Ukrainians trying to rent privately. The Ukrainian Consul noted that even when displaced Ukrainians are employed, a lack of bank history or guarantor can prevent them from being able to rent privately in Scotland. Local authorities in last week's session also referred to a lack of private rented sector housing supply and high rents as barriers. The Scottish Government's review of the Supersponsor Scheme includes [proposals for improving access to the private rented sector](#):

- specialised housing advice
- piloting a deposit guarantee scheme
- scoping a national 'headleasing' scheme to incentivise private landlords offering accommodation.

No timescale for these measures has been set out.

## Funding

Funding for the resettlement of displaced Ukrainians in Scotland is available from both the UK and Scottish Government. Local authorities have so far received a general tariff of £10,500 per displaced Ukrainian from the UK Government. In December 2022, the [UK Government announced](#) that this tariff will be reduced to £5,900 for displaced Ukrainians arriving from January 2023.

In written evidence, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership said this reduction

“significantly undermines the capacity of Local Authorities to provide the full range of services to UDP ([Ukrainian Displaced Persons]. [...])

In addition, it is critical, that there is an ongoing commitment to ensure that the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme is fully funded by the Scottish Government and that individual Local Authorities do not carry the financial burden of this policy commitment and that there is a continued partnership approach to the accommodation needs of UDP.”

Local authorities are also currently able to claim additional education support funding for displaced Ukrainian children and young people. While the [UK Government confirmed](#) that this funding would be available until March 2023, it has made no commitments beyond this date.

Funding made available by the Scottish Government so far consists of:

- £11.2 million for local authorities to [“increase the capacity of local resettlement teams, support refurbishment of properties and support integration work.”](#) An [FOI response from January 2023 states](#) that 3.6 million has been paid so far.
- [A £50 million ‘Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund’](#) for registered social landlords “to bring properties into use and increase the supply of housing”. It is unclear how much of this fund has been allocated to date.
- Further funding has been [awarded to third-sector organisations](#), including £1.3 million to the Scottish Refugee Council and just over £100,000 to JustRight Scotland.

The Scottish Government’s budget for 2023-24 [includes £72.3 million for Ukrainian Resettlement](#). The Government states that this is to ensure “that those displaced by the illegal war in Ukraine will continue to receive a warm Scots welcome, and are supported to rebuild their lives in our communities for as long as they need to call Scotland their home”.

## Employability

The [ONS survey of displaced Ukrainians](#) found that there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who were employed, 56% in October and November 2022 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%).<sup>2</sup> At the Committee’s session with the Consul, he confirmed that these issues were amongst the barriers to employment for displaced Ukrainians in Scotland, including for those with legal or medical qualifications.

The Supersponsor Scheme review conducted by the Scottish Government [identifies a greater emphasis on employability](#) as interventions that would improve the operation of the scheme in the short term. Its plans include “Improved coordination

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<sup>2</sup> Questions about barriers to employment were asked at the [Ministerial statement on 1 November 2022](#).

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 Neil Gray, Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine how the Scottish Government is supporting displaced Ukrainians settling in Scotland. Initially the Committee may wish to explore how the Scottish Government is coordinating support for displaced Ukrainians. The Committee may also wish to explore how the Scottish Government is working with both the UK Government and Scottish local authorities to ensure displaced Ukrainians are getting the guidance and support they need.

The Committee may want to discuss what planning is taking place for housing displaced Ukrainians currently residing on ships given last week’s evidence on accommodation capacity issues in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Committee may also want to ask the Minister what plans are in place to mitigate disruption on education and employment for displaced Ukrainians that are rehoused in different locations.

Members may wish to discuss with the Minister, the Scottish Government’s view on how many Ukrainian visa holders who have not yet travelled to Scotland may still come to Scotland and how local authorities will be able to support them in the context of lower levels of funding from the UK Government for displaced Ukrainians arriving from January 2023. Relatedly, the Committee may wish to explore the Scottish Government’s spending plans for the £72.3 million allocated in its 2023/2024 budget.

The Committee may also wish to explore with the Minister what progress the Scottish Government has made with respect to measures it proposed in its review of the supersponsor scheme, including on matching and access to the private rented sector, and what the timescale for delivery of these measures is. Given the evidence last week from COSLA and local authorities, members may also wish to ask the Minister whether he expects the Supersponsor Scheme to reopen, and if so, when.

**Annie Bosse, Researcher, SPICe Research**

3 February 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](http://www.parliament.scot)



## Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee The Scottish Parliament

### Key issues identified through the Ukraine Advice Scotland service February 2023

#### **About JustRight Scotland**

JustRight Scotland is a registered charity (SC047818) established by an experienced group of human rights lawyers. We use the law to defend and extend people's rights, working collaboratively with non-lawyers across Scotland towards the shared aims of increasing access to justice and reducing inequality.

We provide legal advice and representation on human rights and equalities issues across a range of legal areas including: women's legal justice, trafficking and labour exploitation, EU citizen rights, migration and citizenship, disability and trans legal justice.

Whilst our work is specific to Scotland, our work covers both devolved and reserved policy areas, and as such we endeavour to respond to policy consultations across both Scotland and UK, where appropriate.

As public lawyers for people who face systemic inequalities, discrimination and disadvantage, we use the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) in our work, daily. In addition to providing direct legal advice to clients, we also run outreach legal surgeries and helplines, deliver rights information, training and legal education, and contribute to research, policy and influencing work.

#### **Our Response**

We have been asked by the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament to provide a short written update on the functioning of the Ukraine visa schemes in Scotland. This document draws on our research report 'Reflections on the Ukraine Scheme in Scotland: Feedback from clients of Ukraine Advice Scotland'<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> September 2022, available online at: UAS Report: Reflections in the Ukraine Scheme in Scotland <https://www.justrightscotland.org.uk/research-reports/reflections-on-the-ukraine-scheme-in-scotland-feedback-from-clients-of-ukraine-advice-scotland/>

## Visas

Over time the Ukraine Visa Scheme process has become better understood. There are two particular visa issues that remain very concerning.

The first is **delay**. Applicants are commonly facing five or six month delays and sometimes longer. This is leaving people in destitution in the United Kingdom or displaced in a third country and is leaving people at risk in areas in Ukraine subject to bombing. There were instances during the Ukraine Visa Scheme where some visas were being granted the same or next day, but now very long delays seem increasingly common.

Some kinds of applications seem particularly plagued with delays, including applications from unaccompanied children and applications in-country from Ukrainians who were living in Scotland without leave when war broke out (and who may be left completely destitute while their application is pending). Both of these groups may be waiting six months or more in extremely unsuitable or unsafe conditions.

The second issue is about the **pausing of the Super Sponsor Scheme**. This has left people who cannot find an individual sponsor with no safe route to the UK. This is an issue that particularly impacts on disabled and older people who may find it harder to find an individual sponsor. The closure of the Super Sponsor Scheme has also caused some families to be left separated, because some have visas with the Scottish government as their sponsor, but there is no way for the rest of their children or for their partner to apply. Some of these cases have left to distressing family separation, including parents from young children, as parents come to the UK to try and find some other way to sponsor their children to safety.

## Immigration gaps

There are two further immigration issues that need to be addressed for Ukraine Visa Scheme holders.

The first major immigration issue is the failure to set out a plan for a **settlement** or renewal route for Ukrainian nationals. It creates unacceptably high levels of stress and anxiety for displaced Ukrainians for them not to know if they will be allowed to remain in the UK. On a practical level, Scottish university degrees are commonly four year courses and student finance regulations have been amended to allow Ukraine Visa Scheme holders to study, but when their three-year visas run out they will hit a cliff edge. There are also vulnerable people who have lost everything and older people who have joined children in the UK and will be unable to return to Ukraine, even if it became durably safe in the future. An announcement about this issue is needed sooner and must not be left to the last minute.

The second immigration issue is for **family reunion**/post flight family members. There is no clear way for people's partners to join them in the UK if that relationship was not already formed by 31 December 2021 in Ukraine. As time passes, more Ukraine Scheme visa holders are forming relationships and this includes several pregnant women who have contacted us facing the prospect of giving birth alone because their partner has no way to join them in the UK. It is not even clear how people with a Homes

for Ukraine Scheme visa should obtain leave to remain for a child born to them in the UK.

### **Benefits/subsistence support gaps**

There are Ukrainians in full time education who are left caring for a child. This is often a sibling or similar relative, and they may be caring for the child for the short or long-term. For example, a 20-year-old student has been joined in the UK by her 13-year-old brother, and they are living off whatever their host donates to them, plus Child Benefit. This is a specific issue around evacuations of children from a war zone and is different to the usual eligibility situation where a full-time student's access to benefits may be more limited. There needs to be a clear and accessible pathway for people to obtain financial assistance in this situation so that children are not living in poverty.

### **Temporary accommodation**

Ukrainians arriving under the Super Sponsor Scheme are being placed in hotels and hotel-like boats. There are strict time-limits on the length of time that homeless people can be placed in hotels under normal housing powers and so it is unsatisfactory that instead of a matter of days, Ukrainians are being left for months without a settled home.

Another challenge this causes is that after months in hotel accommodation, people have built a substantial connection to the local area, which is usually an urban area. They are registered with a GP or dentist, may be working, studying or have children in a local school. For people already displaced once, it can be difficult to cope with further displacement – being sent to a different part of Scotland, where they will have to begin from scratch yet again, to rebuild their lives. The overly lengthy use of hotels as a form of institutional temporary homelessness provision, has created a challenging situation where people can then feel distressed when faced with a forced relocation to a different, possibly more rural area.

We also see evidence that Ukrainians are being asked to pay rent deposits of many months up front or are being left unable to rent in Scotland, due to having no credit and rental history in this country. This has a disproportionate impact on women, when so many Ukraine Visa Scheme arrivals are women with children, who can find it especially difficult to rent without a credit history in the UK. A solution to this may be some form of rent guarantor scheme.

### **Matching**

Hosts usually undergo an inspection to look at housing suitability at the outset, but then have reported feeling abandoned and left to try and help new arrivals adjust to life in the UK with very limited assistance. People report that they are really struggling to find hosts for applications now, which makes it hard for families to be reunited in the UK. The lengthy visa delays also creates problems because hosts' lives and personal situations cannot be placed on hold forever while the visa application is pending and uncertain.

Re-matching between Scotland and other areas has been very complicated and has caused issues for people who travel to a host in England without first presenting at one of the Welcome Hubs (which a number of people with Super Sponsor visas did after the Scottish government sent them a message advising them to try to find their own housing).

### **Access to services**

We receive a broad range of enquiries about access to services, from difficulties accessing dentistry in Scotland to issues with accessing school, college and higher education. Our observations are that general awareness about rights of Ukrainian and their family members can be poor. For example, there remain gaps in understanding around the right to work before people get a Biometric Residence Permit/National Insurance Number, how to claim social welfare benefits including for children and disability, healthcare rights and housing rights. As an example, we note that some people are importing medication, as they do not know how to obtain a free prescription from NHS Scotland. This situation is exacerbated, in some cases, by language barriers, age, low levels of computer literacy, and in a lot of cases, the impact of stress and trauma on people's ability to navigate new administrative systems.

We acknowledge, however, that our service only sees a small portion of displaced Ukrainians and by definition they are contacting our service because of a gap in knowledge or a problem they have. We aim to connect people with local services to promote integration, and usually find there is reasonable information online we can direct people to. However, gaps remain where someone is especially vulnerable. For example, we have been concerned for some pregnant women with young children who did not have a full understanding of their rights and eligibility for services – and who advised us that they did not know how they would manage to live when they had their new baby. There is no particular service we are aware of to refer particularly vulnerable Ukrainian new arrivals for 1:1 casework.

### **Employment**

Concerns about exploitation have been reduced by Ukraine Visa holders having the right to live and work anywhere in the UK and to access public funds, but we remain concerned about people being hosted by places of work under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and about seasonal workers, who may have very limited visa rights. We have received queries from Ukrainians who are experiencing what can be described as, at best, poor employment practice. We would encourage continued vigilance around exploitation and effective safeguarding.

For further information, please contact JustRight Scotland at:  
[ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk](mailto:ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk)

**Yevheniia Filippova and Jennifer Blair**

03 February 2023



## **Scottish Refugee Council evidence to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee**

Scottish Refugee Council welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee.

Scottish Refugee Council has responded to the Ukraine Crisis through the delivery of advice and support services, coordination of local community integration networks and support to new community groups and by contributing to the strategic direction of the Warm Scottish Welcome as a key partner, with the Scottish Government and COSLA, of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

We highlight key issues face by people displaced from Ukraine in Scotland and a description of our interventions to meet the needs and support people displaced from Ukraine to progress with their goals.

### **1. Key priorities**

Data from our service delivery and reports we receive through our community engagement and development show that the key priorities and challenges people need addressed are:

- Financial stability – accessing social security entitlements and understanding the cost of living in Scotland;
- Housing – what options are available and where in Scotland and how does it fit with people's education and employment goals;
- Problems with Biometric Resident Permit and the needs to access immigration related information and advice;
- Developing meaningful social connections with other people from Ukraine and the Scottish population;
- Health – understanding the health system in Scotland and health rights;
- Employment – how to access employment that meets past work experience and qualification;
- Language – accessing suitable and sufficient English learning opportunities.

Based on our experience of working with refugees for more than 30 years, those issues are unfortunately common to the experience of other refugees in Scotland. Solutions and policies developed must address some of the wider structural challenges.

In relation to the specificity of the Super Sponsorship Scheme, we have consistently advocated for the following throughout the delivery of our operations and our external engagement

- **Suitable welcome and reception conditions** highlighting the needs to meet international standards and parity with other groups:
  - i) Standards from EU – [EASO Guidance on reception conditions – operational standards and indicators\[3\].pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://easos.europa.eu/easo/operational-standards-and-indicators-3)  
  
'standards for the reception of applicants [that] suffice to ensure [applicants for international protection] a dignified standard of living and comparable living conditions in all Member States should be laid down' (1).
  - ii) Scottish Government Homeless temporary housing  
<https://www.gov.scot/policies/homelessness/temporary-accommodation-data-collection/>  
Shelter Scotland  
[https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional\\_resources/legal/homelessness/local\\_authority\\_duties/standard\\_of\\_interim\\_and\\_temporary\\_accommodation](https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/legal/homelessness/local_authority_duties/standard_of_interim_and_temporary_accommodation)
- **Integration from day 1 including access to a holistic integration** support based on the integration planning process. Integration support needs to be provided in welcome accommodation to ensure people understand their rights and options from the earliest opportunity and are able to make personal and realistic goals.
- **Parity** of support offer with other groups in high housing needs and other people seeking protection in the UK – any incentive and removal of barriers are welcome and should be expanded to other groups in similar needs.
- **Prioritise community cohesion** for long-term positive integration outcomes and ensure that policies developed to support people displaced from Ukraine consider the needs of the wider community. This also includes being proactive in communicating on the positive impact people displaced from Ukraine and other refugees have on Scotland's community and ensuring all statutory actors, including the Home Office, comply with obligations to foster good community relations.
- **Safeguarding** – need to ensure that adults, families and unaccompanied children are offered safe options with hosts and that risk of trafficking and other forms of exploitation is minimised.

## 2. Scottish Refugee Council's Ukraine response

### 2.1 Informing the national response

Scottish Refugee Council proposed a National Framework for the involvement of the Third Sector to support refugee integration at a local level. We presented it to the Scottish Government and COSLA led Senior Oversight Groups who agreed on the approach and that a framework should be developed setting expectations for the role of the third sector with scope for local variation in delivery.

There was strong support for the option that local authorities would determine locally whether to commission the third sector to provide 1-to-1 support to assist Ukraine refugees to access their rights and develop integration plans based on the Ager and Strang Framework for refugee integration; and an approach was discussed for the effective engagement of the third sector and others to co-ordinate integration across all domains of integration. This could benefit all refugees locally and help mitigate concerns raised at both silver and gold about a two-tier or multi-tier system developing in relation to other refugee populations.

[The New Scots Refugee Integration strategy](#) has been developed collaboratively to coordinate the efforts of organisations and community groups across Scotland involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The strategy has been built on a model of partnership working, led by the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council.

The vision of Scotland's national refugee integration strategy is for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive. There are five principles which form the [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy](#) approach:

- Integration from Day One;
- A Rights Based Approach;
- Refugee Involvement;
- Inclusive Communities; and
- Partnership and Collaboration.

### 2.2 Access to rights and integration planning

#### a) National Helpline

We enhanced our National Helpline to ensure newly arrived people from Ukraine can access information about their rights and options across Scotland and be offered support from our Integration Service.

It is free to phone, is open everyday and is staffed with bilingual advisers and interpreters can also be provided. Our advisers are qualified and registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). The Helpline is a key access point to advice and to SRC services, including our Refugee Integration Service.

Up to December 2022, our teams responded to **2189 calls** in relation to Ukraine. This included calls and enquiries made to our Ukraine@ inbox from people in Scotland or abroad, hosts and agencies. This represents 29% of the total of calls to our national helpline.

#### **Key issues**

- Accessing benefits and emergency payments – especially for people recently arrived
- Housing – understanding housing options and offers of longer-term accommodation, especially when people are in welcome accommodation that are being decommissioned and moves are unavoidable.
- Problems with Biometric Resident Permits and difficulties in engaging with the Home Office.
- Accessing health care and understanding the NHS.

#### **b) Welcome point**

This is a volunteer-led project which helps people displaced from Ukraine as they first arrive at Glasgow Airport.

Key interventions from our volunteers:

- Present a warm welcome to people arriving
- Check their visa and documents have a proof of entry in the UK (liaise with Border Force if not)
- Check if people need welcome accommodation, if they do, accompany them to meet Renfrewshire Council Resettlement Team.

Up to December 2022, **we welcomed 1194 people at Glasgow airport.**

The Welcome point in Edinburgh Airport and Waverley station is managed by Volunteer Edinburgh.

#### **Key issue**

The lack of predictability of arrivals is the main challenge of this project. We no longer receive any information from the UK Border Force and we have no means to access pre-arrival information.

#### **c) Integration Service**

- **Your Rights Information sessions**

Our service developed and delivered [Your Rights Sessions](#) to ensure access to accurate information on rights of people displaced from Ukraine, how systems work

and explain options available. Our primary audience are people displaced from Ukraine recently arrived in Scotland.

We have delivered these sessions online since March and in hotels in Renfrewshire and Glasgow since July. We also delivered sessions in Inverclyde.

Those sessions cover the following areas:

- Legal – immigration status and documentation
- Housing – rights and options
- Money – how to claim benefits if you need to, how to access bank accounts
- Health – how to access urgent care and medication, access to GP
- Schools – how to enrol your children in schools
- English language – how to access English classes if you need them

Since December, we have been proactive in supporting the disembarkation of the MS Ambition and have started delivering sessions on housing options. People can access independent advice and information and we work in partnership with Glasgow City Council, other Local Authorities and Scottish Government matching team.

Up to December 2022, **551 people have engaged with those sessions**. People who provided feedback on the sessions were overwhelmingly positive and some pointed out they would have benefitted even more if they had been able to access them very soon after arriving in Scotland.

#### Key issues

- Participants to the session report this information is needed as soon as possible after arriving in Scotland.
- People want to know how systems work and how they can engage with them by themselves and where to find support should they need to:
  - How to access a dentist and the need to be registered with a GP first;
  - What are the housing options, how to access them and support to start tenancies;
  - How to know more about housing options beyond the area of where their welcome accommodation is located;
  - How to find nursery provision, how do the school system work in Scotland.

- **Integration planning and one to one support**

Our Integration Service offers casework support to refugees based on key principles:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Rights based
- Holistic – based on the indicators of integration
- Self-identified goals

The aim of the service is to through a dedicated Integration Adviser to provide access to rights and empower refugees through advice and advocacy to progress towards self-identified goals from day 1; i.e. integration planning in line with the National Framework.

Integration planning is based on key integration domains – health, housing, financial stability, education, language, employment and social connection. Through the integration planning process, we work with people to identify their goals and support them to go through the best pathways to achieve them. An example of this work is to ensure people have access to their income and for this we advocate for them to remove specific barriers, for example, resolving issues with Biometric Resident Permit. Another example is that we advise on housing options based on availability and other goals people may have with regards to employment or education.

Our Integration Advisers are qualified and registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to provide immigration advice and are trained in housing law and welfare rights with a particular focus on the entitlements of migrants and refugees. They receive regular training on safeguarding, trafficking, trauma informed practice and other areas needed for positive professional development.

With the length of stay in welcome accommodation increasing and to meet our goal of early intervention, we started offering our service to people in welcome accommodation and have placed our teams on location. In partnership with Local Authorities and to respond to Scottish Government ask to the Third Sector to provide support in Welcome Accommodation, we located our team in areas identified as priority by the Scottish Government – Glasgow, Renfrewshire, Dundee and Inverclyde.

Since December 2022, we have supported the AUGB Edinburgh drop in to provide specialist advice and take on cases as required.

We also provide our service in Dundee where we take referral from Dundee City Council for long term integration support based on our existing partnership.

All of our services can be accessed remotely from anywhere in Scotland. Our advisers have experience in giving remote support since the pandemic and the closure of public spaces.

People access our service through referrals from Local Authorities, local partners or self-referral on our National Helpline.

Up to December 2022, **our teams have taken on a total of 413 cases.**

## Key issues

The main issues our Integration Services has been supporting people with are:

- Bus pass applications (offer from First Bus);
- Benefit applications with DWP, HMRC, SSSA and Scottish Welfare Fund;
- Advice on and challenge of benefit decisions when required (e.g. underpayment, benefit delay, claims not taken);
- Problem with Biometric Resident Permit,
- Health related issues;
- Employability;
- Understanding housing options and how to access them;
- Supporting and advocating when required regarding problems in current accommodation;
- Accessing ESOL;
- Social connection – identifying opportunities for leisure and social activities.

### ○ Information and resources

To increase our reach and ensure people have access to accurate information, our services developed a range of resources.

The aims are:

- to distribute information about Scottish Refugee Council's role and offer.
- to distribute accurate information to people displaced from Ukraine about how things work and what is available in Scotland.
- to include relevant and timely updates on the UK and Scotland's response to Ukraine displacement in our public-facing communications

#### ▪ Website

We have developed and constantly reviewed new webpages with information for the public on our website. Our target audience are people displaced from Ukraine, hosts and other members of the public who are willing to help.

Since the beginning of the crisis, our Ukraine specific webpages have received 14,206 hits.

Those pages are translated in Ukrainian and Russian.

#### ▪ Factsheets

Following feedback from the "Your Rights" information sessions, we have developed [a series of factsheets for people displaced from Ukraine](#). These factsheets are also translated and are distributed by our Integration and Helpline Advisers, to Local Authorities and Ship Management to ensure access by those who recently arrived.

Following webinars we delivered for hosts, we produced a factsheet based on the main questions posed by hosts.

We work closely with community groups to understand the information need, increase and improve those information resources.

## 2.3. Work in the community

### a) Community Integration Networks

The aim of Community Integration Networks is to mobilise and coordinate community assets to support local integration.

We aim to support establishing or adapting existing local forum to coordinate and control activities which support the integration of Ukraine Displaced Persons within each Local Authority area. We also aim to support and involve representatives of the newly arrived Ukrainian communities and hosts.

We recognise that some Local Authorities already have established similar structures with existing and new third sector organisations, community groups, public bodies and private sector and with comparable objectives and outcomes or have already developed these in response to Ukraine arrivals.

From April to December, our communities team has actively engaged with 9 Local Authorities to develop those networks.

Our progress to date:

- We set up Community Integration Networks in:
  - Glasgow
  - Highland
  - Perth and Kinross
  - Dundee

In areas where similar structure was already in place, we have offered assistance and advice based on local needs. We work closely with the third sector representative and Local authorities in Aberdeen, Dumfries and Galloway, City of Edinburgh, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde.

### b) People Displaced from Ukraine Collective

We initiated the development of and support the People Displaced from Ukraine Collective whose purpose is to address the three main challenges for successful integration into Scottish society, namely Employment, Language and Housing.

The role of the Collective is to work together to identify practical interventions that overcome the challenges and barriers faced by their communities; and, to seek to inform and influence the Scottish Government and other agencies to adopt these interventions where possible.

The Collective will be a key stakeholder in the upcoming Ministerial Stakeholder Reference Group, co-chaired by Scottish Refugee Council. We hope this will be a critical platform to ensure effective involvement of lived experience experts and subject experts in order to inform and amend the delivery of the Warm Scottish Welcome.

### c) Support to hosts

We worked in partnership to develop and deliver information to individual hosts who are providing accommodation to people under the Scottish Government Super

Sponsor Scheme on their roles, expectations and share information and resources available to hosts and people who recently arrived in Scotland. The webinars aim to:

- raise awareness about the [Scottish Government Ukraine Super Sponsor Scheme: Guidance for Hosts](#)
- give accurate information about hosting eligibility, host roles and expectations
- share information about resources available for hosts and people arriving from Ukraine

Scottish Refugee Council chaired three 90 min webinars over a period of three weeks:

- 24th May, 6 pm, attended by 174 people
- 31<sup>st</sup> May: 12.45 pm, attended by 287 people  
This session was introduced by Neil Gray, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development with responsibility for supporting Ukrainian refugees arriving and living in Scotland, and Sabir Zazai, CEO of Scottish Refugee Council.
- 9<sup>th</sup> June: 10 am, attended by 175 people.

A total of **641** people benefited from the information. Approximately 65% attendees were hosts under Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme and 34% were private hosts under Homes for Ukraine Scheme. There were a small number of family sponsors under Ukraine Family Scheme and third sector organisations (1%).

## **2.4 External engagement and partnership building**

As key partner of the New Scots Refugee Integration strategy, Scottish Refugee Council has representation in the governance of the Warm Scottish Welcome. We aim to represent the views of refugees we work with and of other third sector partners to ensure best outcomes possible for people displaced from Ukraine.