



WAVE OF COMPASSION

THE HOMES FOR UKRAINE SCHEME ONE YEAR ON

Sanctuary Foundation Report
on the *Homes for Ukraine Scheme*



by Dr Krish Kandiah OBE



It's a victory when the weapons
fall silent, and people speak up.

Volodymyr Zelensky

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This report was presented on the anniversary of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in the House of Lords.

Lord Richard Harrington hosted the reception and Dr Krish Kandiah OBE, Founder and Director of Sanctuary Foundation, presented the report alongside Ukrainian refugees, UK hosts and the Deputy Ambassador of Ukraine.



Executive Summary

One Year On

Exactly one year ago, on March 14th 2022, the UK launched its most successful refugee initiative.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme has, within a year, become the largest UK response to a refugee crisis since the historic and heroic Kinder Transport of 1939 which saw 10,000 Jewish children rescued from the Nazis.

To mark this significant milestone, Sanctuary Foundation offers this first major report on the Homes For Ukraine scheme, outlining its effectiveness and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The successes of this state-sponsored civilian hosting programme as highlighted in the report include:

- **18 days to launch from the start of the war**
- **Uncapped**
- **117,100 people, predominantly women and children, finding sanctuary in the UK**
- **71% of Ukrainian refugees in the UK hosted by people who were strangers a year previously**
- **99% of refugees feeling grateful to be in the UK**
- **£4.4bn+ of taxpayers money saved**
- **A social integration triumph**
- **A world leader in the mass mobilisation of ordinary citizens using their homes for refugees**
- **A game-changer in global refugee response**

This report also outlines four major areas of challenge ahead if the programme is to continue to be successful:

- **Welcome**
- **Work**
- **Worthwhile Housing**
- **Welfare**

These four areas have emerged from a major new survey exploring insights into the daily lives, hopes and fears of nearly 2000 Ukrainians currently living in the UK. The survey, commissioned by Sanctuary Foundation for the one-year anniversary of the war, is the largest and most up-to-date of its kind and offers important insights into the successes and limitations of the HFU scheme.

This report offers a number of ambitious yet achievable recommendations that could help solve some of the major ongoing challenges facing Ukrainian refugees in the UK.

The report also suggests that the government's willingness to take risks, act with compassion, collaborate with civil society and optimise processes can be redeployed for other refugee groups and vulnerable people.



"This sponsorship system and derivatives of it should be the recognised way of dealing with refugee resettlement from wherever tragedy happens in the world."

Lord Harrington,
War and Hospitality Summit,
Christ Church College, Oxford University
February 24th, 2023





Introduction

Wave of Compassion

At 5am on 24th of February 2022 residents of Kyiv and other cities across Ukraine were woken up by air raid sirens followed very quickly by the sounds of bombs dropping. Ordinary citizens found themselves the target of a brutal, unjustified and unprovoked attack by Russia. This war has been **catastrophic for the country** and people of Ukraine. It has also sent shockwaves around the world that has impacted everything from geopolitical alliances and defence spending to the energy crisis and the availability of supermarket groceries.

The invasion of Ukraine has also provoked **the greatest humanitarian crisis in Europe** since World War Two. An exodus of 8.1 million refugees left their homes to seek asylum in neighbouring countries within six months of the breakout of war[i]. The majority of internationally displaced Ukrainians are in Poland – around 1.5 million, with Germany and the Czech Republic hosting hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians[ii].

The UK has been visibly at the forefront of countries providing **military, diplomatic and humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian people** in their hour of need but were initially slow in responding to the refugee crisis. However, the UK responded promptly to the groundswell of solidarity and desire to support Ukrainians, as tens of thousands of UK citizens expressed a willingness to open their homes and communities to provide sanctuary[iii].

This **generous impulse among the UK population** is not new – it has been seen before in welcoming the exodus of Syrians, and Hong Kongers[iv] in recent years. This impulse will persist as a reflection of British values, emerging again as future conflicts drive people from their homes.

Homes For Ukraine

In response to the push from UK citizens, a new government support scheme, Homes for Ukraine (HFU), was developed, which has helped to resettle **over 165,700 Ukrainians**^[v] to date.

While this scheme reflects longstanding government policy to provide sanctuary and asylum to those in need, it also represents an **innovative and highly effective shift in approach**. The scheme simultaneously recognises and highlights the enormous benefit of integrating the support offered by the state, with the support British citizens wish to volunteer.

This **collaborative approach** is significant. Ministers and civil servants across the British government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Home Office have joined forces with each other and civil society to deliver a novel scheme that has not only served refugees from Ukraine but also **saved taxpayers over £4.4bn**^[vi]. Crucially, it has enabled **an agile and cost-effective response** to a significant crisis, even when the resources of the state, and especially Local Authorities, are thinly spread. There is much to be gleaned here for future crisis response initiatives.

Sanctuary Foundation, alongside civil society actors, charities such as Opora, Reset, Refugees at Home, Refugee Council, Barnardo's and countless other local groups, churches and other faith groups have been in the **vanguard of the citizen response**. Of the 164,500 Ukrainian refugees^[vii] in the UK, an **enormous 117,100**, predominantly women and children^[viii], are being accommodated in the homes of UK citizens through the HFU scheme^[ix].

Sanctuary Foundation has been involved with HFU since its conception. Among other things it has produced **inspirational and informational resources for hosts and guests**, a **welcome book** for 29500 Ukrainian children, organised **cultural events** and produced a **safeguarding course** for all hosts and volunteers, and hosted a **landmark summit** at Christ Church College, Oxford University. It uniquely has provided formal and informal consultation to the government on all aspects of welcome and integration^[x].

Survey

In February 2023, for the **anniversary of the war in Ukraine**, Sanctuary Foundation published the results of a major new survey exploring insights into the daily lives, hopes and fears of nearly **2000 Ukrainian refugees currently living in the UK**[xi]. This survey is the largest and most up-to-date survey of its kind and offers **important insights** into the successes and limitations of the HFU scheme.

Based on the survey responses, as well as on Sanctuary Foundation's extensive work with government, community groups and Ukrainian guests and their hosts over the past year, this report highlights and analyses the **strengths of the HFU scheme** and **potential areas of development**, as well as recommending a number of **practical steps** that HM Government may wish to take to mature and integrate the state support to UK citizens in this area.

Given the success of the HFU Scheme, it would be of great benefit to future refugees that the package is refined and taken forward to be used in other times of need.





Overview of the Scheme

“The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a reminder that almost literally anyone can become a refugee pretty much overnight. This Homes for Ukraine Scheme is a chance to think about the UK contributing to best practice globally. Aspects of the programme have been innovative, historically important and have potential to take us forward. We have given a leading role to UK residents and civil society organisations. We have enabled the generosity and compassion of the British public to set the boundaries of the limits of this scheme.”

Professor Alexander Betts,
Professor of Forced
Migration and International
Affairs, William Golding
Senior Fellow in Politics at
Brasenose College, Oxford
University



Overview

The Homes For Ukraine (HFU) scheme was **launched on 14th March 2022**^[xii], 18 days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is one of three routes introduced by the Government to help Ukrainians fleeing the conflict. The HFU scheme was launched to allow Ukrainians to live with UK hosts and has become **by far the biggest of the three routes**^[xiii].

UK-based hosts were encouraged to match themselves with named Ukrainians if they were able to offer accommodation for **at least six months**. In return they were offered a 'thank you' payment by government, provided they met the welfare and safety checks carried out by their local council. This thank you payment offer was subsequently extended and increased in light of the difficulties in finding ongoing housing ^[xiv].

Security checks were conducted prior to any visas being issued on all adults living in the same household as the guests. This included checks against government records and those of other third parties such as the Police National Computer (PNC), or its equivalent in Northern Ireland. Those arriving also needed to meet standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa.

Ukrainians arriving under the HFU scheme were granted **3 years leave to remain**, following successful application of a Biometric Residence Permit. They are allowed to work and study and access benefits, healthcare and other public services.

Local councils took the lead in completing the suitability checks, issuing thank you payments and offering various levels of ongoing support in terms of language classes, accommodation, careers advice and, in some cases, rematching. They received funding for this from central government – £10,500 per person reduced to £5,900 in January 2023^[xv].

In **Scotland and Wales**, a super-sponsor scheme was established, enabling the Scottish and Welsh governments to act as sponsors. This initially sped up the process of getting people to safety, and there was an excess of hosts applying to accommodate them. However, the use of temporary accommodation made connection harder between host and guest. Therefore, many people have ended up staying in temporary accommodation for longer than was anticipated, hindering independency^[xvi]. Scotland and Wales have had to pause their schemes. ^[xvii]

In June 2022, the government also introduced a policy to allow a restricted number of **unaccompanied minors** to come to the UK under the HFU scheme. The minors must have parental consent, certification from a Ukrainian consul and a personal connection with the sponsor. It is initially being offered to the 1000 children waiting to travel^[xviii].

“Research undertaken by the University of Greenwich indicates a number of different processes that capitalised on existing and newly formed local community ties to enable fast compassionate mobilisation of hosts and broader community structures, such as voluntary community Hubs, in response to the provisions made by the Home for Ukraine Scheme. Examples from this research illustrate the importance of the role of civil societies in enabling the practical operation of humanitarian schemes for forcefully displaced populations in close collaboration with central and local governments, charities and business organisations.”

Dr Nataliya Rumyantseva
Senior Lecturer in
Leadership and
Organisational Behaviour at
the University of Greenwich





Strengths

“I’m grateful to everyone who supports Ukrainians. I have had such a great experience with the educational system. My son has some issues but over here he is accepted by the society; he has been supported by his teachers. He is getting his resilience and that is great. Thank you.”

Tanya Pantelieieva ,
Refugee from Ukraine



1. Good initial response from civil society

The HFU scheme has mobilised unprecedented numbers of people to respond with compassion and hospitality. Not since the Second World War has there been such a large-scale civilian hosting programme. Over 165,700[xix] Ukrainians have found sanctuary in the UK and the vast majority, 117,100, have been hosted in homes of ordinary UK citizens. For context, a total of 522 Syrian refugees were sponsored to come to the UK since the Community Sponsorship scheme opened in 2016[xx] and the Kinder Transport which ran between November 1938 and September 1939 saw approximately 10 000 Jewish children come from their families in Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia to be hosted by families in the UK to escape the Holocaust. [xxi]

According to Sanctuary Foundation's polling, most hosts in the HFU scheme had no involvement with refugees before. The surge in hospitality was offered despite a national cost-of-living crisis and the additional struggles many are facing due to the economic and social impact of the pandemic. It also took place concurrently with the highly covered initiatives to protect our borders. These three restricting factors combined make the scale of the HFU hosting programme in our time even more remarkable.

Furthermore, the hosting has been overwhelmingly positive for the Ukrainian refugees. While 46% of those polled[xxii] are sad not to be in Ukraine, an incredible 99% said that they were grateful to be in the UK, with 90% specifying further that they were glad they had come to the UK rather than another country. The vast majority of respondents said that they had received a warm welcome to the UK, with an average score of 9.4 out of 10 for the warmth of welcome. 89% cited their UK hosts as the main reason why they felt so warmly welcomed, with immigration schemes, local refugee hubs, other refugees, neighbours, religious groups and schools also being important factors. 65% of those with children reported that it was very or fairly easy for their children to settle in the UK, although one in three (33%) said that it was fairly or very hard. Of those with children, 90% of the children are now attending school and engaged with their learning, and the feedback was very positive – over 75% said that it had been easy to get their children a school place, that the school had helped their children to adjust, and that their children are making good friendships.

This data indicates that the response from civil society has been well-intentioned and well-received. Ukrainians feel welcomed and supported even a year into the scheme. This success should not be underestimated.

“The Homes for Ukraine scheme has demonstrated the potential for community sponsorship to offer a sustainable crisis response at scale. Its innovations have positively impacted refugee welcome responses in other countries and are contributing to a global movement that recognises the fundamental role of communities in welcoming refugees.”

Hannah Gregory,
Global Director Pathway
Development,
The Refugee Hub



2. Good social capital and integration success

The HFU scheme has built on the strengths of the UK's existing Community Sponsorship scheme programmes which saw a total of 942 refugees resettled to the UK since it opened in 2016.[xxiii] The social capital of both these schemes provides the key to their successes.

Unlike many other asylum seekers and refugees who have struggled to integrate into British society, those moving to the UK with the HFU scheme have seen far greater successes. As Ukrainians are being housed in people's homes, they have been able to forge strong friendships with local people and quickly found champions, guides and supporters. Living in homes has accelerated both language acquisition and cultural understanding for the refugees. It has also allowed many British citizens who previously had no experience, passion or sometimes even a basic understanding of refugee issues to have first-hand experience of supporting refugees and the challenges and rewards that brings. Many newcomers to the world of refugee support have become both highly motivated and highly innovative in problem-solving.

The shared experience of refugees and hosts living together has helped to forge friendships and strengthened the resolve of thousands of people to bring change for refugees. On top of the household relationships there have also been large numbers of community groups or so-called Ukrainian hubs formed that have instigated collective support and action. Language classes, social spaces alongside therapeutic arts sessions, car sharing services, bicycle repair initiatives, family day trips and holidays, childcare circles and more have been organised by neighbourhood groups and grass roots volunteers with no push or support from central or local government financial or otherwise.

Such Ukrainian hubs often provide a tangible structure that attracts larger scale donations and support of local businesses and charities. Presence of such nodal points in the limited community support infrastructure provides a clear roadmap to further harness good will and resources of the local communities. Often such hubs supplement the work of local councils taking on the re-matching services to find refugees alternative accommodation, getting involved in the safeguarding issues at hosts request and provided focused services for young children (e.g., summer camps or assistance with school issues).

70% of Ukrainians surveyed had at least one child with them. It is important to recognise and acknowledge therefore that a significant proportion of the work of welcome and integration is being done by UK children in schools and community activity groups around the country.

“The opportunity to host a refugee in our home has changed our lives for the better in so many ways. It has activated me to help not just this family but hundreds of people from Ukraine who have come to live in the Chilterns. I have witnessed first-hand the huge impact communities can have when given the chance. The Homes for Ukraine programme has brought about significant positive change, supporting Ukrainians and bringing together our communities to make a difference to each other’s lives.”

Sarah Graham,
Hilltops Ukrainian Support
Community



3. Good efficiency of visa approval

The decision to empower civil society to conduct the matching between sponsors and guests was initially met with fear and scepticism. Understandably many were worried about sexual exploitation and abuse. However, in an emergency it is sometimes necessary to act quickly. If a house were on fire, strangers willing to help would not be screened before evacuating residents. However, if residents were then to stay in the strangers' homes, it would be pertinent to check their safeguarding credentials and police records.

A minority of guests were matched with unsuitable hosts or affected by exploitation and abuse, and these were quickly rehoused. The vast majority of hosts have been welcoming and continue to offer a safe haven to their matched refugee families. The choice to allow informal matching, mostly by social media, ensured the HFU Scheme took off very quickly and gathered momentum.

The visa programme overseen by UK Visas and Immigration department in the Home Office initially took 5 weeks from application to approval but at its height was able to turn a basic / uncomplicated visa around in 48 hours. This was in large part due to a surge of capacity in the Home Office and a willingness to rethink and innovate on existing practices. This was a great improvement on the process for Syrian refugee sponsorship which took in the region of 12 to 18 months. With the investment of staff and infrastructure, it is now not unusual for a decision on a Ukrainian visa application to be made within days.

Home Office staff worked collaboratively with civil society to help accelerate and problem solve the process. For example, Sanctuary Foundation ran a joint teach-in session with the Home Office and many hosts and volunteers offered user-experience feedback to inform the process^[xxiv].

The speed and scale of this visa roll-out is unprecedented in UK history and is to be highly commended.

"What the Homes for Ukraine example shows is that we can find practical, workable responses to humanitarian crises requiring refugee protection when we need to, and the public can be brought onboard as part of the solution."

Sunder Katwala,
Director, British Future



4. Good precedence set for future refugee crises

Sanctuary Foundation polled hosts and found that the majority are willing to host again and do not intend to restrict their hospitality to Ukrainians. A wide range of people have taken up the opportunity to host refugees; most have deemed it to be a positive experience, and they can be called upon again and soon.

The rapid matching of guests and hosts has proved significant when compared with the Super-Sponsor programme used in Scotland and Wales. The Super-Sponsor scheme was initially very effective in reducing the time spent in the visa application process, however struggled when it came to the ongoing commitment of potential hosts. In England the early-stage delays with the visa application were the biggest frustration raised by hosts and guests, especially as other countries throughout Europe did not require a visa (Romania, Germany, Poland etc.) The Super-Sponsor approach utilised hotels and temporary accommodation before looking for sponsors. The challenge was that many people who had expressed interest in the early phases of the resettlement programme dropped out when approached later, without the urgent need for accommodation.

The HFU scheme on the other hand relied on a personal connection being made early on between sponsors and guests, while the guests had no other accommodation solution. This relational bond and perceived need ensured that a large number of sponsors came forward, many of them persevering with the early challenges to the programme. This bond has led to a large proportion of hosts agreeing to host refugees again, increasing the UK's overall willingness to take in refugees in the wake of future crises.

“There can now be no doubt that communities and charity organisations are extremely effective in implementing and executing policy, as long as there is a clear framework and guidance for self-management. Opora’s approach also demonstrated that we should not be afraid of deploying technology to solve charitable problems at scale, when the right technical and risk management skills are brought together to generate outsize impact.”

Yegor Lanovenko,
Founder and Chair of
Opora



5. Good value for money and better outcomes

The resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees utilised around 80 bridging hotels to accommodate some 10,000 refugees. This is proving not only unhelpful in welcoming and supporting the families, but prohibitively expensive[xxv]. It has also led to traumatised families stuck in hotels for over eighteen months unable to settle in work, school and communities. Many of the families in the hotels have not developed far in their language skills or their ability to work, many remain socially isolated and are at risk of becoming institutionalised. Well-organised far right groups have been targeting the asylum and refugee hotels with disruptive and traumatising demonstrations inflaming friction with certain segments of the local community. The ghettoisation process of long-term use of institutions has led to some serious financial, political, social, educational and emotional issues for refugees.

The HFU scheme, relative to the Afghan resettlement scheme, was far better value for money. On an annualised basis housing 10,000 Afghan refugees in hotels costs around £438 million per year: this is around £1.2m a day, or £120 per night per refugee [xxvi]. Housing 117,100 Ukrainians in this way would cost annually £5.12 billion a year. A conservative estimate puts the HFU scheme hosting cost at £500 a month with the current thank you payments. This comes to £702 million a year. [xxvii] This is a saving of around £4.4 billion pounds a year. The true saving is much greater as many Ukrainian families are being hosted in groups. [xxviii] At the very least this is a 90% cost saving to the taxpayer on accommodation alone.

The HFU scheme also produced better outcomes, such as closer integration with British families and communities. The sharp contrast is a useful reference for future resettlement schemes; however lessons can also be applied now informing policy and decision-making regarding the wide variety of refugee groups currently in the UK and how to help them.

6. Good collaboration between civil society and government

From the earliest point possible there has been excellent open communication between DLUHC and civil society and NGO groups. This has included ministerial engagement and close working relationships between senior civil servants and NGOs through the governments HFU Core Delivery Group and working groups. The DLUHC and Home Office teams are to be commended for patiently engaging with groups and organisations that were initially sceptical about the scheme. The commitment to collaboration is one of the major strengths of the HFU initiative and must continue as we progress to the next stage of the scheme.

There has also been strong collaboration across different government organisations. In the past (for example, with the Afghanistan scheme), the programmes have been owned by individual government departments and run in a relatively siloed way. HFU has instead been run by a truly cross-government entity, with strong ties to Local Authorities, which has enabled its relative success.





Opportunities for Development

“At NatWest Group we have been delighted to play our part in helping Ukrainian refugees settle in the UK. We have seen the way that our staff and our customers have responded with great compassion and kindness to people in need. We relish the opportunity to partner with government and civil society to help in future initiatives.”

Michael Duncan, Head of
Giving Strategy &
Programmes,
NatWest Group



1. Challenges of matching process

The matching process was not straightforward. In May, HM Government published a list of recognised organisations running services which supported the matching of people coming from Ukraine with sponsors in the UK. This approach was designed to encourage guests and sponsors towards experienced organisations, that have the skills and knowledge of people's needs. However in the meantime many hosts had looked to social media to make their own arrangements. Although many successful matches were made through social media and it was a fast and effective way for prospective guests to find a suitable sponsor, many potential hosts were nervous. As they waited for the official government support, there were delays and drop-off of interest.

Those experienced organisations which had to scale up and develop a digital mechanism at pace were overwhelmed with the sheer scale of the response.[xxix]. Digital agencies and localised groups coped better[xxx]. Most matches came via social media.

2. Challenges of safeguarding

Local authorities rapidly created safeguard and mandatory welfare checking mechanisms that ruled out many inappropriate hosts before they received refugees. Many of those doing the checks did so voluntarily or as overtime. The policy framework offered some discretion in determining suitability of the sponsorship arrangement, in recognition of the local authorities own expertise in safeguarding, own local intelligence and well-developed multi-agency arrangements in place to ensure collaboration. However, the arising discrepancies saw some social workers showing leniency, while others insisted on more thorough checks and restrictions[xxxi]. As a result, stories emerged such as that of the single male host who installed hidden cameras in the guest room and a lock on the outside of the room[xxxii]. Conversely a foster carer went to great lengths to quickly adapt their home to welcome a family of four including a severely disabled man, only to be deemed unsuitable for hosting by the local authority.

It must also be noted that robust safeguarding checks of the guests were also put in place, but a few incidents still arose. One was removed to a hotel but continued to exert control with little ongoing protection for family members[xxxiii].

The HFU scheme moved from an emergency evacuation programme in early 2022 to a well-functioning rapid refugee resettlement programme in the second half of the year. With ever more vulnerable groups of Ukrainians continuing to seek to leave the country due to nuclear threat, electricity and water outages and ongoing financial and vocational challenges, there remains an urgent need to find ways to help Ukrainians move into homes that are safe, with the ability to report abuse or raise concerns in their mother tongue. When placements break down it is important for vulnerable Ukrainians in hotels to be able to access sufficient support promptly.

"We are calling upon the UK Government to continue supporting Ukrainian refugees in the UK through the introduction of extended and harmonised financial support, as well as the appointment of a new Minister of State for Refugees, to ensure no one fleeing the war in Ukraine and seeking sanctuary in the UK is left facing homelessness."

Bob Blackman MP and Florence Eshalomi MP,
Co-chairs, APPG on Ending Homelessness



3. Financial challenges

With the triple whammy of the ongoing conflict, the cost-of-living crisis and limited local housing authority capacity, there is a significant risk of the hosting scheme not being sustainable. Some hosting commitments are not viable after six months, and some are being terminated early. 23% of hosts surveyed in the Homes for Ukraine sponsor survey have said they would have to stop hosting at 6 months because they could not afford to host any longer^[xxxiv]. However, of those who planned to provide accommodation for between 6 and 12 months, 7 in 10 (70%) said continued thank you payments would enable or encourage them to host for longer. An alternative solution would be to adapt the payments to be per refugee, rather than per family, but in times of country-wide financial hardship, this may present a challenge.

It is important to note that many businesses have become involved in supporting Ukrainian refugees, and this contribution should not be underestimated. For example, NatWest rolled out a multilevel response which included: supporting their staff to sponsor by offering additional paid holiday days, communicating with their customers that their mortgages and insurance policies would allow them to host to streamlining their processes to help Ukrainians to be able to open bank accounts, and donating the use of their Headquarters in Scotland as a welcome and reception centre. Similarly, companies such as Salesforce have run special events to help Ukrainian women into work with CV and interview skills workshops and networking events.^[xxxv]

4. Long-term housing challenges

There is a high demand for rehosting arrangements as some hosts were found to be inappropriate, and many hosts are not able to complete or extend 6 months for a variety of reasons. Only 23% of hosts are reportedly happy to continue hosting beyond for 12+ months. New hosts are coming forward within supportive communities but not all refugees have a stable housing arrangement. The lack of available social housing and affordable private rental properties has caused many hosts and guests to reach out to the government and ask for urgent help with issues preventing refugees securing appropriate accommodation.^[xxxvi] The charity Crisis reports that “over 4,000 Ukrainian households have received homelessness support from their local authority in the last year.”^[xxxvii] A recent ONS report found that almost half (45%) of the Ukrainians living in the UK have experienced barriers to accessing private rented accommodation.^[xxxviii]

In recognition of these challenges, HM Government has announced £150m UK-wide funding to help support Ukrainian guests to move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness, as well as a £500m Local Authority Housing Fund, providing capital funding to English councils in areas that are facing the most significant housing pressures as a result of recent HFU arrivals. This is yet to translate into widespread alleviation of the housing shortages.

“Psychological support and social [network] support are hugely important and that is where the next focus should be. Ukrainians are not a burden. In most cases, they want to be contributors to your societies.”

Deputy Ambassador Fesko,
Minister-Counsellor,
Deputy Head of Mission at
the Embassy of Ukraine in
the United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern
Ireland



5. Support challenges

Despite the generous amount given to local authorities to support refugees, the services available has varied considerably from area to area. The burden has landed on hosts to support them. According to the ONS 53% of hosts reported supporting refugees to apply for benefits as a challenge, along with 45% reporting they found supporting their guests with access to public services a challenge. The experience refugees have is thus highly dependent on what is effectively a postcode lottery – and there is currently no mechanism for best practice sharing to drive consistency across different areas.

Another significant request is for language support – so that refugees can find work in their fields of expertise, childcare support – as many refugees are single mothers, and subsidised transport support – to enable community integration and employment possibilities. In some areas, local authorities and community groups have organised this support – but again, this is inconsistent across different parts of the country. There is also a notable absence from either central or local governments of any forms of support for the community groups that work hard to support refugees and hosts, but this could be easily rectified.

6. Mental Health and Psychological Trauma challenges

There are huge mental health concerns for people fleeing the war in Ukraine. Many have suffered bereavement. Children have experienced trauma and yet our CAMHS systems are already at capacity. Most hosts have received no training in hosting, spotting trafficking, identifying sexual exploitation, supporting people in a cross-cultural context, dealing with trauma or enabling successful integration into the community. Nevertheless 67% of hosts report they are emotionally supporting their guests.

This lack of mandatory basic training before and during hosting arrangements may be a contributing factor to placement breakdown, placing strain on both hosts and guests. Further development in this field would be extremely beneficial.


7. Employment Challenges

Many of the Ukrainians that have arrived in the UK have left behind significant and well-paid jobs however they have been unable to secure equivalent employment here. One case study is of a single lady who is a trained barrister with 15 years' experience. Despite receiving the Statement of Comparability ratifying her qualifications, she still faces language challenges and a lack of expertise in British law, meaning she is currently unable to practice here and is instead working as a sales assistant. Similarly other IT managers, psychologists, programmers, teachers and more are taking up entry level jobs as cleaners and carers, or other jobs for which they are overqualified. While this may be of some help to local communities, and can assist the guests financially and in integration, there is building frustration, a lack of potential fulfilment for refugees and a waste of skills valuable to the UK.

Because many of the Ukrainian refugees in the UK are women with children, there are additional difficulties in finding employment that is flexible. Many of them do not have the support networks or financial security to seek help outside of school hours or during school holidays. English language difficulties and mental health struggles make it even more difficult for mothers to leave their children in childcare settings while they work.



Recommendations

A young boy with light brown hair, wearing a blue puffer jacket over a white shirt with a red and white patterned collar, is holding a large yellow sign. The sign has two lines of text in blue. The background is a blurred city street with a building and a flag.

Don't leave refugees in limbo

Homes for Ukraine

“The emergency mobilisation of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme allowed Ukrainians to arrive at a faster rate and a larger scale than we have seen for some time. We have seen the huge generosity of the British people in welcoming people into their homes, alongside important support from community organisations and local government to ensure that the scheme can run effectively. Homes for Ukraine makes a strong case for a permanent infrastructure for refugee resettlement and integration, including through community-led welcoming, building upon the strengths of this scheme to improve integration and inclusion.”

Jacqui Broadhead,
Director, Global Exchange
on Migration and Diversity,
University of Oxford



Areas of Recommendation

In light of the findings from the survey, and the lived experience of Ukrainian refugees one year on from the start of the HFU scheme, we recommend prioritisation of the following four interrelated areas:



1. Welcome

Continued commitment to the welcome and integration of Ukrainians into society and ongoing support for hosts and new arrivals.

2. Welfare

increased mental health and integration support, particularly for Ukrainian children.

3. Work

Increased support for matching Ukrainians with appropriate employment.

4. Worthwhile Housing

Increased options for future long-term accommodation.

Short-term intervention opportunities

In order to support both the hosts and refugees involved in the programme, further steps should be taken to promote the integration of Ukrainian refugees into our society, enabling them to better care for themselves and ultimately become less dependent on the state.

WELCOME

Introducing regular mechanisms and forums for best practice sharing between different Local Authorities and community groups will enable various groups to demonstrate what has worked and what hasn't and promote consistency across different areas so refugees are not subject to a postcode lottery when they arrive, and can potentially help us get ahead of problems before they arise. This will also help in developing more formalised training materials for hosts. Similarly engaging UK universities' expertise in facilitating and optimising such knowledge exchange between communities and other stakeholders would be highly beneficial.

Creating a Ladder of Engagement would ensure people from the community can get involved in whatever capacity they are able to and would communicate support requests to the public more effectively. There are many in the UK who may want to help but are unable to host – more information around different ways to provide support will allow us to tap into a much larger pool of volunteers (including special interest groups like artists, faith groups or LGBTQ+ individuals) who are best placed to provide emotional and practical support to refugees from their community with similar interests. There would be benefit in engaging the creative sector in supporting these approaches on a more systematic footing.[xxxix]

WELFARE

Investing in the provision of mental health treatment, particularly dealing with trauma available to refugees would benefit the Ukrainian refugee population, particularly the large cohort of children[xl]. Being acutely affected by conflict in their own country at a young age will have a significant impact on their mental health. Adults too will be strongly affected. In the long run, sufficient, appropriate and timely mental health support will increase the chances of refugees to be happy and productive members of our society and our workforce, which will be of wider community benefit.

WORK

Providing transferable skills workshops will promote movement of Ukrainians into the UK workforce. There are significant staff shortages in many industries within the UK and increasing the working population of the country can only aid this situation. CVs from other countries often follow formats that are auto-screened out by UK employers – CV workshops for refugees can help get around this. With a regular income it is also far more likely that Ukrainians will be able to pay for their own rented accommodation and thereby alleviate the pressure currently on British people to host and on the government to provide the already limited local authority housing. This is also likely to lead to cost reduction as there would be less need for hotel accommodation as a long-term housing option. Drawing on existing university expertise in professional development could help address this.

Ensuring language classes for refugees to learn/develop their English language proficiency will enable already skilled and qualified people to fulfil jobs they perform in their home country here in Britain. There have been stories of prestigious Ukrainian lawyers working in cafes, a clear waste of skills valuable to the UK and a lack of potential fulfilment for refugees.

WORTHWHILE HOUSING

The “welcome” of refugees should be viewed as an ongoing process that starts from the initial welcome (e.g., provision of sim cards, detailed leaflets with sufficient information about where to access different services), includes ongoing provision of information on hosting (e.g. opportunities to participate in community) – and must also present advice about moving to independent living.

Providing additional incentives will enable and encourage hosts to continue. This could include continued thank you payments until the guest is financially self-sufficient. Help with planning permission for extensions would be an alternative way forward. Cross-cultural education to both sides of the arrangement can ease some of the tensions.

Elaborating on the £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund, designed to support councils facing housing pressures is vital. More detail is needed to help ensure that any measures to address the housing stock shortage will be affordable and available for Ukrainians.

Long-term intervention opportunities

WELCOME

Ukrainians have experienced a warm welcome to the UK and achieved unprecedented levels of integration for such a large scale and fast migration. As the war continues, we need to recognise that public sympathy should not be taken for granted. Hosts were initially asked to welcome Ukrainian guests for 6 months but for some it has been nearly double this already because of ongoing challenges sourcing housing. This situation risks losing the good will of the welcome so far.

We need to continue to offer practical and public welcome for our Ukrainian new arrivals, and a range of initiatives that will continue public engagement. In the Hong Kong BNO scheme there was central government funding to help NGOs mobilise community. This went towards welcome events and published resources amongst other things. A similar funding package would be very welcome to ensure the Ukraine community feels welcomed, remembered and appreciated, and to build bridges within communities.

In order to serve future cohorts of refugees, there is much from both the successes and areas for development that we can learn. This method of refugee hosting has been more successful and cost effective than any method used in the past 70 years. As such, it is logical to apply and implement similar methodology to future groups of refugees. For this it is important to recognise and remember the institutional knowledge used to construct the programme should not be lost.

- A playbook, recording both the successes and potential for improvement in this method, could be produced as a blueprint for how we can act in the future. It will detail a step-by-step plan to bring this approach to reality in a way that can be rapidly put into action in the wake of future crises. This playbook should clearly delineate the role of central government, local authorities, and community groups. [xli]
- A database of individuals prepared to be 'on call' in the event of a future disaster necessitating a refugee hosting response, similar to a RNLI volunteer, could be maintained. These individuals will have previous experience and expertise in such eventualities and may have been involved in this most recent hosting effort. By conserving their experience and knowledge in such situations we can prepare for the best chance of responding in a similarly effective and efficient fashion should the need arise.

WORK

Sanctuary Foundation's survey shows that employment remains an issue for many Ukrainians, with over half (53%) citing it as one of the biggest challenges they have faced since arriving in the UK. 6 in 10 had a full-time job when they were living in Ukraine, with over 10% running their own business and only 6% searching for a job. Now in the UK, over a third are currently looking for a job with a further third (34%) in a lower level of job that they are used to, and just over 10% in full-time employment. While 61% feel proud of being able to work at all, and 55% say they are learning new skills, nearly a third of respondents feel physically or mentally exhausted (30%) or frustrated (27%) and sadly 1 in 7 (14%) feel humiliated by their work situation.

Accelerating pathways into work through continued ESOL support and faster recognition of qualifications would be helpful. The government funded NGO groups to help with Hong Kong work access pathways and this could be revisited for the HFU Scheme.

We recommend implementing the following long-term measures to support refugees in finding employment that is more aligned with their skills and qualifications. This not only benefits the refugee involved but can also benefit the country when experience matches areas of which there is a shortage. It would alleviate financial pressure both on the government and on the refugee. We recommend:

- Accelerating the process for all refugees/asylum seekers to be given the right to work, study and claim benefits in the UK.
- Developing a transition plan for when initial right-to-work approvals expire (i.e., in 2-3 years), communicating this clearly to refugees and employers
- Accelerating requalification pathways for work that requires it (e.g., medical professionals, teachers, etc.). While awaiting requalification, provide information to refugees about adjacent employment in relevant professions (e.g., medical professionals can support filling online prescriptions).
- For work that requires accreditation (e.g., builders, hair stylists), provide grants to facilitate ease of access by industry cohorts – especially in areas with skills shortages.
- More effectively engaging employers, increasing awareness and understanding about Ukrainian qualification regimes (and those of other relevant regions such as Hong Kong, Afghanistan, etc.).

WORTHWHILE HOUSING

Housing is a long-term concern for many Ukrainians in the UK with 40% citing it as one of the biggest challenges they have faced since arriving in the UK. Two-thirds (66%) are currently living with host families, with under 20% in privately rented or council-provided accommodation. Less than a quarter of respondents were confident that they could stay in their current accommodation long term – 59% were happy with where they lived now but were worried about where they would live in the future, while around 1 in 10 (9%) were unhappy with where they currently live. Affordability and location of housing were both key issues in terms of finding accommodation in the future, with over a quarter (28%) struggling to find a landlord who would take a tenant on benefits.

We recommend implementing the following measures to ensure no Ukrainians are left facing homelessness^[xlii] and to provide sufficient housing stock in the long term. These include:

- Use Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) to install demountable homes in underutilised areas (e.g., above church car parks). These houses can be relocated, as existing MMC homes commissioned have a structural warranty of 60 years. An existing MMC scheme in Bristol has gained a huge amount of momentum and has provided a truly innovative and space-saving solution to homelessness – rolling this out more broadly across the country can be instrumental in addressing the long-term housing challenges that emerge in hosting refugees. This will require an industrial strategy for and investment in the MMC supply chain, as well as plans to unlock land use. This may also require more tailored regulations (e.g., surrounding planning permissions) to ensure these houses can be built at pace.
- Impose quotas on the percentage of such new housing to be used for refugees, key workers, etc. This will require planning and matching to ensure social cohesion within communities – as well as concerted efforts to get around possible 'not-in-my-back-yard' ('NIMBY') attitudes.
- Create partnerships between multiple organisations to provide a wide range of support. For instance – an existing partnership between a local pub, Sanctuary Foundation, and the local council has enabled the provision of not only housing, but also local social support for refugees.
- Provide a guarantor for rentals. Local Authorities are under significant financial pressure, meaning a national-level scheme is more likely to be effective. This would enable refugees to become more self-sufficient and relieve pressure on local authority housing.

WELFARE

Although the survey indicates that 99% of Ukrainian refugees are grateful to be in the UK, many have major challenges in terms of employment, housing and communication in English and this adds to the anxieties they already have about the situation in Ukraine, friends and family living in Ukraine, and about their uncertain future. Although 9% are planning to stay in the UK permanently and 19% are planning to return to Ukraine, the majority are undecided. 70% of respondents had children and reported that 75% had found it easy to get their children a school place, that the school had helped their children to adjust and that their children are engaged with learning and making good friendship. However, 33% of respondents had said that it was fairly or very hard for their children to settle in the UK.

Overall, the respondents are reporting as their biggest challenges anxiety and concern for family here in the UK and those they have left behind in Ukraine. 7 in 10 (71%) fear for the future of Ukraine. Over 54% have struggled with communicating in English or with employment, with housing, mental health, social life and friendships also cited as key challenges being faced.

We therefore recommend implementing the following measures to ensure sufficient mental health and trauma support in the long term. This investment into the welfare of refugees will prevent future expensive treatment plans and knock-on effects into future generations.

- Develop a branch of CAMHS specifically trained in refugee support, PTSD and conflict and displacement trauma.
- Provide training for educational professionals in trauma-aware practices and EAL challenges.
- Provide additional EAL classes, support and online resources.
- Facilitate schools across the country to help all children provide appropriate peer support to refugees, promoting and enabling understanding and integration. A cross-curricula day that ties in with World Refugee Day could cover relevant issues such as cross-cultural understanding, safeguarding, mental health, and aspects of geography, history and religious education.



Endnotes

Endnotes (page 1/2)

[i] <https://cream-migration.org/ukraine-detail.htm?article=3573>

[ii] <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

[iii] The Guardian reported more than 100 000 people expressed interest in the first 24 hours.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/15/homes-for-ukraine-website-crashes-refugees>

[iv] There has been a total of 160,700 applications for the BN(O) route in the almost 2 years since its introduction on 31 January 2021 up to the end of December 2022.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2022/how-many-people-come-to-the-uk-each-year-including-visitors#british-national-overseas-bno-route>

[v] Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[vi] See calculation under strengths of the scheme

[vii] The 165,700 includes arrivals under the Ukraine Family Scheme and 117,100 are those who have come specifically through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. (figures correct as of 9/3/2023.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>)

[viii] Home Office: As of the end of December 2022, adult females aged 18 to 64 accounted for 48% of total arrivals since the schemes began, children (aged 17 and under) accounted for 30%, and adult males aged 18 to 64 accounted for 17%.”

[ix] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>

[x] sanctuaryfoundation.org.uk

[xi] <https://www.whitestoneinsight.com/s/Sanctuary-Foundation-Full-Tables-Website-23-Feb-2023-ENG.xlsx>

[xii] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-launches>

[xiii] Data is as of 9 March 2023 and comprised: arrivals via Ukraine Family Scheme: 48,600 arrivals via Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: 117,100 Total Ukraine permissions to extend stay in the UK: 24,000

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>

[xiv] <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-over-650m-support-package-for-ukrainians-sees-increased-thank-you-payments-for-longer-term-hosts>

[xv] <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-councils-homes-for-ukraine>

[xvi] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-63845498>

[xvii] The Scottish Super Sponsor scheme has been closed since July 2022

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/23093737.scottish-super-sponsor-scheme-ukrainian-refugees-stay-closed-new-applicants/>

[xviii] <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-to-begin-processing-applications-from-unaccompanied-children>

[xix] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2>

[xx] Since the Community Sponsorship scheme began in 2016, a total of 942 refugees have been resettled: 522 of those were resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), 405 since the start of the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS); and a further 15 since the start of the ACRS from Afghanistan

[xxi] <https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/the-holocaust/kindertransport-refugees/>

Endnotes (page 2/2)

[xxii] <https://www.whitestoneinsight.com/s/Sanctuary-Foundation-Full-Tables-Website-23-Feb-2023-ENG.xlsx>

[xxiii] Since the Community Sponsorship scheme began in 2016, a total of 942 refugees have been resettled: 522 of those were resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). 405 since the start of the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS); and a further 15 since the start of the ACRS from Afghanistan

[xxiv] See the recording of the live webinar here: Q & A with the Home Office on the Ukraine visa process <https://youtu.be/QeHSGo3T2ls>

[xxv] Testimony of Abi Tierney Home Affairs Committee. Oral evidence: Channel crossings, HC 822, Wednesday 26 October 2022. see <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/11390/pdf/> Question 87

[xxvi] Neither the Afghan hotel costs, nor the hosting costs covers administration expenses, so this is a straight comparison of accommodation costs.

[xxvii] This is an overestimate – £350 thank you payments are given per household for the first year.

[xxviii] According to Sanctuary's Ukrainian refugee survey the average household is two people.

[xxix] Sanctuary Foundation received 29,000 pledges for hosting in two weeks.

[xxx] Opora received no government funding but took a digital first approach to matching and has consistently outperformed the other matching interventions in terms of number of matches.

[xxxi] Independent, Ukrainian refugees at risk of exploitation under UK's new sponsorship scheme, charities warn (14 Mar, 2022)

[xxxii] Privately disclosed incident.

[xxxiii] Privately disclosed incident

[xxxiv] Experiences of Homes for Ukraine scheme sponsors, UK – Office for National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/experiencesofhomesforukrainschemesponsorsuk/7to14july2022>

[xxxv] For testimony more detail the video recording of the War and Hospitality Summit which took place on the anniversary of the Ukraine War on 24th February 2023, Christ Church College, Oxford University <https://www.youtube.com/live/WC95YGkFhVk?feature=share>

[xxxvi] See Sanctuary Foundation Petition www.sanctuaryfoundation.org.uk/letter

[xxxvii] <https://www.crisis.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/cross-party-mps-urge-uk-government-to-act-as-homelessness-amongst-ukrainian-refugees-increases-sixfold-in-a-year/> see Based on data from 72% of English lower-tier local authorities from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-management-information-ukrainian-nationals-england>

[xxxviii] <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/bulletins/visaholdersenteringtheukundertheukrainehumanitarianschemes/17octoberto7november2022>

[xxxix] For a good example see Songs for Ukraine (roh.org.uk)

[xl] More than half of Ukraine's children displaced after one month of war (unicef.org), <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-half-ukraines-children-displaced-after-one-month-war>

[xli] For example, <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2022/building-an-infrastructure-for-community-led-welcome-in-the-uk/>

[xlii] House of Commons Debate Pack: Anniversary of the Homes For Ukraine Scheme: Between 24 February 2022 and 27 January 2023, a recorded total of 2,595 households initially housed under the Homes for Ukraine scheme approached their local authority and were assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty. A further 1,685 Ukrainian households were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty after arriving. By 27 January 2023, 1,510 Ukrainian households (35% of those owed a prevention or relief duty) had received an offer of settled accommodation.

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Author

Dr Krish Kandiah is the founder and director of Sanctuary Foundation. He is a social entrepreneur with a vision to help solve some of society's seemingly intractable problems through building partnerships across civil society, faith communities, government and philanthropy.

He served as the Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board and works as a consultant in global child welfare reform, education and refugee resettlement.

Krish has been involved in refugee support since the height of the Kosovan crisis in 1999. He was involved in welcoming to the UK newcomers from Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

Krish is also a foster carer, a Homes for Ukraine host and a representative on the government's Homes for Ukraine Core Delivery Group as well as the Homes for Ukraine Delivery Board.

He is the author of over 15 books, including children's books and two welcome books for resettled Hong Kong and Ukrainian children.

Krish was awarded an OBE for services to refugee integration in the King's New Year's Honours list 2023.



Sanctuary Foundation

Sanctuary Foundation exists to provide compassionate service to vulnerable people through catalytic partnerships between government, churches, civil society groups, the media and individuals.

Sanctuary Foundation was launched in February 2022 with a rapid response initiative to inspire families, individuals, churches, community groups and businesses to welcome Ukrainian refugees. It became a registered charity in April 2022.

Sanctuary Foundation is involved in informing government and shaping policy, inspiring and resourcing civil society and mobilising churches, faith groups and communities.

Sanctuary Foundation's work to date has focussed on refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan as rapid response support and innovation was needed which harnessed both public and government response.

Over the past year Sanctuary Foundation has produced and distributed over 29500 welcome books for Ukrainian children arriving in the UK. It has delivered over 2970 care packages to refugee mums from Ukraine and Afghanistan. It has helped train and inspire over 16000 people through live and online events. Over 2550 households are active users on our online refugee support course. Over 8000 Ukrainian refugees receive regular updates and inspiration from our mailings and over 31000 hosts and supporters are on our mailing list. Further resources can be found on their website

Sanctuary Foundation remains committed to help Ukrainians and Afghans but also stands ready to respond to new emerging crises.





We can overcome
hostility with hospitality
and war with a
wave of compassion.

Dr Krish Kandiah