

# London Councils

The voice of London local government

## Local government's response to the Ukraine crisis

### Overview

Local government has been at the forefront of the response to welcome and support Ukrainian refugees since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Over six months on from when the Ukraine visa schemes first opened, local authorities, particularly those in London, face considerable growing pressures, from a rising number of homelessness presentations to increased financial pressures facing sponsors. Local authorities must now receive clarity on the financial package for Homes for Ukraine beyond the first year of the programme so that they can plan ahead.

This briefing summarises the challenges facing London boroughs, and shares some examples of best practice as well as London Councils' key asks of government. It also includes an update on the latest data on the Ukraine visa schemes.

### Pressures facing London boroughs

#### Homelessness

Data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (from 24 February – 23 September) and data from London Councils (from 24 February to early July) shows that:

- London boroughs have accepted 682 homelessness applications from Ukrainian households since 24 February. Of this total, over two thirds are families with children.
- 44% of the presentations across the country are Ukraine Family scheme arrivals, 50% are Homes for Ukraine arrivals and 6% are unknown. Over 30% of homelessness presentations across the country are in London.
- Now that many sponsors have reached the 6-month mark for Homes for Ukraine sponsorship, there are concerns about rising homelessness presentations. Recent research by London Councils shows that fewer than one in ten properties listed for private rent in the capital are affordable to Londoners who depend on welfare support for meeting their housing costs.
- A [recent survey by the Work Rights Centre](#) found that 10% of respondents have been worried about eviction at some point during their stay and 70% had little or very little confidence in finding private rental accommodation.

#### Employment and cost of living

- An [ONS survey](#) (July-August 2022) shows that there has been an increase of Ukrainians in employment (42%). However, around half of Ukrainians have experienced barriers to

work, including limited English language skills and qualifications not being recognised. 58% of respondents also weren't sure what state benefits to apply for.

- According to the Work Rights Centre Report, 59% of survey respondents said they had no savings and the cost of living could exacerbate financial pressures for Ukrainian guests and hosts.

## Sharing best practice in London

London boroughs continue to meet on a regular basis to share best practice on supporting Ukrainian refugees. In light of the pressures around the six-month sponsorships coming to an end, boroughs have established a number of innovative approaches to support Ukrainians and prevent homelessness. This includes using the £10,500 tariff under Homes for Ukraine to top up sponsor 'thank you' payments, helping change sponsorship arrangements to lodging arrangements, and working with organisations such as Beam to help Ukrainians with landlord contact and crowdfunding support. Boroughs also continue to work closely with the voluntary and community sector to provide key wraparound support. Health colleagues have been translating health guidance and establishing trauma-informed training for staff supporting Ukrainians, including Thrive LDN. Recently London boroughs in East and South London worked in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to establish job fairs. These had a high turnout and many participants secured jobs or interviews.

## Key asks for the government

- Clarity on whether there will be alignment between the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the Ukraine Family scheme and the additional Ukrainian visa routes. Currently the £10,500 tariff is only available for arrivals under Homes for Ukraine, there is no £350 thank you payment for hosts under the Family scheme, and no access to housing from Homes for Ukraine sponsors if placements break down for Family scheme arrivals. MPs were told at PMQs on 6 July that Family scheme arrivals would be able to transfer to the Homes for Ukraine scheme so that they could access sponsor accommodation if necessary, however no further announcements on this have been made.
- Clarity on the Homes for Ukraine funding arrangements for Years 2 and 3 to effectively plan ahead.
- Double the £350 sponsor 'thank you' payments to Homes for Ukraine sponsors to £700, to help prevent sponsorship arrangements from ending after 6 months and incentivise more potential sponsors to come forward. The former Refugees Minister Lord Harrington publicly stated that he had suggested doubling the payment to the Treasury.
- Improve access to English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, including more tailored provision (i.e. language lessons for certain jobs) and to resolve issues concerning the lack of recognition around Ukrainian qualifications.
- Consider the funding/capacity challenges for councils supporting Ukrainian unaccompanied minors. Councils receive the same tariff to support unaccompanied minors as for other Homes for Ukraine arrivals (unless the child goes into care), despite having additional safeguarding responsibilities and support requirements. Furthermore, when unaccompanied minors go into care following a sponsorship breakdown, this should count towards a council's 0.1% unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) national transfer scheme threshold.
- The government should consider the pressures on local authorities resulting from the Family scheme and Homes for Ukraine alongside the wider asylum, UASC, refugee/evacuee, and British National (Overseas) visa scheme pressures.

# Update on the Ukraine visa schemes

## 1) Ukraine Family scheme:

- As of 25 October, 55,400 visas have been granted under the family visa route (out of 69,600 visa applications). 39,000 have arrived in the UK under this scheme.
- All arrivals have three years' leave to remain and access to benefits, but there is still no additional funding for this scheme. Local authorities do not receive data on arrivals leaving them unable, and not resourced, to do welfare/safeguarding checks.

## 2) Homes for Ukraine scheme:

- As of 25 October, 138,900 visas have been granted under Homes for Ukraine (out of 163,200 visa applications). 100,000 people have arrived in the UK under this scheme, and 13,516 have arrived in London
- The [guidance for councils](#) continues to be updated. Most recently guidance was published on arrangements for sponsors 4-6 months into sponsorship, and efforts are being made to simplify guidance on re-matching

## 3) Ukraine Extension scheme

- As of 25 October, 20,100 people have applied to extend their permission to stay in the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme.
- Ukrainians are still unable to apply for Homes for Ukraine whilst they are in the UK.

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*London Councils represents all 32 London boroughs and the City of London.*

## Appendix

### Homes for Ukraine visas issued, sponsored by individuals, by local authority of the sponsor's property

London borough	Number of visa applications	Number of visas issued	Number of arrivals by sponsor location
Barking and Dagenham	407	320	216
Barnet	1,147	1,029	782
Bexley	369	317	257
Brent	543	472	327
Bromley	745	699	548
Camden	840	760	607
City of London	<40	<40	<40
Croydon	656	582	486
Ealing	855	752	543
Enfield	372	302	244
Greenwich	800	708	527
Hackney	427	364	286
Hammersmith and Fulham	583	528	400
Haringey	718	633	507
Harrow	276	248	202
Havering	409	337	270
Hillingdon	495	448	355
Hounslow	688	574	401
Islington	464	424	339
Kensington and Chelsea	810	709	513
Kingston upon Thames	457	415	341
Lambeth	637	584	479
Lewisham	618	540	424
Merton	772	658	478
Newham	553	441	318
Redbridge	667	549	390
Richmond upon Thames	849	777	637
Southwark	588	540	430
Sutton	379	347	273
Tower Hamlets	500	436	318
Waltham Forest	527	428	318
Wandsworth	1,050	954	740
Westminster	861	762	560
London Total	20,062	17,637	13,516

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority>