

Gloucestershire Homes for Ukraine Sponsor Guide

Version 1

Guidance for Gloucestershire Sponsors in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme – Version 1.0

Thank you for offering your home to someone in need. The generosity of people across the county in providing safety and refuge to those fleeing Russia's war in Ukraine reflects the very best of our county.

Gloucestershire County Council; the District Councils for Cheltenham, Cotswolds, Forest of Dean, Gloucester City, Stroud, and Tewkesbury; the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group; Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) and other partners are working together to support sponsors and guests through the Gloucestershire Housing Partnership.

This guidance is being issued by the Gloucestershire Housing Partnership for those who have registered as sponsors in the **Homes for Ukraine Scheme** in Gloucestershire.

We are still receiving updates and information from central government regarding the scheme; requirements for sponsors; and how local authorities are expected to help. As more information becomes available, we will continue to update this guide.

It should be read alongside the national guidance for Sponsors which is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>.

I have registered as a sponsor but do not know any Ukrainians applicants. Will the Council help me to match with someone in need?

There is not currently a government-run matching process for linking sponsors and guests: however, we understand this is under development.

If you do not want to wait for the central government matching process, then several charitable organisations are helping to match individuals. Like other local authorities, we recommend using Reset (<https://resetuk.org/about/ukraine>).

At present we are focusing on ensuring we can provide appropriate support to sponsors and guests once they arrive in Gloucestershire, and so we are not prioritising a local matching scheme at this time.

Can I sponsor a young person or child from the Ukraine to live with me?

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have advised us that under the Homes for Ukraine scheme children (under 18 year olds) can only be granted a visa if they are with a parent, or other adult with appropriate responsibility for the child. Children under 18 will NOT be granted a visa under this scheme. If you have matched with an unaccompanied child under 18, please contact the Home Office about this to discuss. Sadly, we are unable to help with this

at a local level. You are allowed to match with any adult over 18, or any guests who are in a parental role and have children with them.

I am a sponsor and have a match. What happens next?

The Housing Partnership will receive your information from the Home Office portal once you have a confirmed match. Once this has happened, you will receive a call from:

- Your District Council will contact you to arrange a **Property Check** which we are required to carry out to ensure the accommodation you can provide is safe and suitable for guests.

Please be aware that for some sponsors, this may be from one of the District Council within Gloucestershire, but which is different from the one your address is in. This is so that we can share resources and undertake checks more quickly.

- The Gloucestershire Homes For Ukrainians Welcome Team, who will ask you for some more details and initiate your DBS checks. They will also look to arrange an **Initial Welcome Visit** to meet you and your guests once they have arrived.

You do not need to contact your local authority to tell them that you have a match as the Home Office will send data to us when you have put your match on their system.

Should I tell the local council my guest is on their way/has arrived?

We have a long list of properties locally to check. So, if you have not heard from us and are expecting your guest to arrive within the next 7 days, or they have already arrived please contact the Gloucestershire Homes for Ukrainians team on [hfuteam@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:hfutuream@gloucestershire.gov.uk) so that we can prioritise contacting you. Please bear with us as we are working as quickly as we can once we get the information from the Home Office about your match.

I have a match and have put it on the system, but no one has contacted me from the local authority to do the property check or DBS check. Will this delay my guest from being able to travel?

No. The visa application process is being run by the Home Office and starts as soon as you have entered your own and your guest's details on the system. Locally, we will then be sent your information. However, the visa process does NOT need the local property or DBS checks to have been started/completed for a visa to be issued. We already have families arriving in Gloucestershire, and where we know of these, we are prioritising visiting and calling them. The process of local DBS and property checks is independent of the visa process.

What standards will my property be checked against?

The central government guidance for sponsors provides information on some of the things your property must have to be considered suitable for the scheme. We will check that your accommodation meets that list. This list is being updated with more detail all the time so please refer to the national guidance.

We are also required to check that the gas and electrics in your home are safe. To do this we will:

- Ask to see a Gas Safety Certificate and/or your boiler service record to show that your boiler has been serviced by a professional within the last 12 months. If you do not have a Gas Safety Certificate or boiler service record, we are exploring whether we can help to cover the cost of a gas safety check.
- Carry out a visual inspection of the electrics in your home. If faults are identified, we may ask to see an electrical safety certificate or works certification to confirm your electrics are safe.

How will I know the person undertaking a Property Check is from the Council?

The officers undertaking property checks are trained professionals who are used to visiting people's homes to carry out similar checks. They will always carry ID and show these to you before you enter the property.

Wherever possible you will be contacted before the check to arrange an appointment, however given the urgency to complete the property checks this may not always be appropriate. Please be aware that officers may seek to visit your property outside of normal working hours, or at the weekend.

What happens if problems are found?

If there are significant problems identified during a Property Check we will discuss these with you during the visit and explain any work which would need to be carried out to enable us to endorse your property for the Scheme.

Unfortunately, if you are not able to carry these works out within a certain time then it may mean you are not able to welcome your guest into your home and your guest will need to find an alternative sponsor through the central government scheme.

Providing privacy and security to your guest

It is best practice is to ensure that refugees accommodated in homes have access to a lockable, private space. All refugees have experienced trauma, including the often-violent loss of their own home and accommodation. For many this experience may come alongside additional traumatic experiences, including violence and abuse. It may be difficult for people to discuss or explain what has happened to them.

As a sponsor, you can do small things to help them to recover from these experiences by providing them with privacy and security within your home. For sponsors who are comfortable, we are exploring whether the Partnership is able to support the installation of locks on your guests' bedrooms. If you would prefer not to have a lock installed inside your home, we will offer your guest a "Door Jammer" which is a removable device enabling them to secure their bedroom from the rest of the home without causing any damage or changing fittings and fixtures.

We recognise this may feel like a difficult response to your generosity in welcoming guests into your home, and your particular guests may not choose to use them. Please understand that this is not about suggesting that you pose a threat to your guests or that they believe that you do. Providing reassurance and security in this way is a way of recognising the difficult circumstances in which guests have come to the UK and taking small steps to help them feel safe and in control, to help them recover from previous traumatic experiences.

When will I receive my £350 "Thank You" payment and how will this payment be made?

We are awaiting further detail regarding this from central government. We expect to make these payments through District Council's council tax teams, but will confirm this in due course.

What will happen during an Initial Welcome Visit?

The Welcome Visit will be carried out by **either** a member of County Council staff or by a Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS).

They will want to meet you and all of your guests together, including any children. During this visit they will want to check that your guest feels safe and to understand any problems they are facing. ***Please be aware that to do this they are likely to give your guest an opportunity to speak with them privately.*** We would ask you to respect and facilitate this.

They will provide some additional information to you and your guest about registering for key services. They may also provide some essential items, and may include a "Door Jammer".

Who needs to be present for an Initial Welcome Visit?

During an Initial Welcome Visit it is really important that you and all of your guests are present, including children.

Please be aware that during the Welcome Visit, we will ask for an opportunity to speak to your guest privately. This is to ensure that they have an opportunity to share any information important about their welfare or needs which they don't yet feel comfortable discussing in the open.

Will the person visiting speak the same language as my guest?

We are currently increasing our access to Ukrainian and Russian-language interpreters in Gloucestershire, which are the two most common first languages spoken in Ukraine.

During the initial phone call to arrange a visit, we will ask about your guests' spoken English language. This is so we can ensure that we prioritise interpreters time to visit those guests who have little or no English language skills.

You might also like to download this [Free Ukrainian Phrasebook - Lonely Planet UK](#)

What financial support is my Guest entitled to?

Your guest will receive an initial payment when they arrive in Gloucestershire. The Housing Partnership will be providing these via a pre-payment card that your guest can use like a debit card, via the County Council.

If your guest has already arrived and you cannot support them until we can arrange the Welcome Visit, then please discuss this with the Welcome Team when they call as we may be able to arrange alternative ways of making a payment, or you can email hfuteam@gloucestershire.gov.uk

More details of how your guest can access this payment will be provided shortly.

Your guest is also be able to register for benefits, a National Insurance number, and to access support in finding employment. You can help them to arrange an appointment at your nearest Job Centre to do this: <https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus>.

Support and advice is also available through the Citizens Advice Bureau, and through Gloucestershire's Community Based Support providers.

You can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau on 01452 527202 and through their website <https://gloscab.org.uk/>.

If you live in Gloucester, Tewkesbury or the Forest of Dean this is through "Caring for Communities and People (CCP)". You can contact them on 0300 365 2002 or online through <https://glos.p3charity.org/index.php> including to find out about their next drop-in sessions in your area.

If you live in Cheltenham, Stroud District or Cotswolds this is provided by P3 Gloucestershire who you can contact through their website

(<http://www.p3charity.org/glosCBS>) or by calling their closest centre, who will be able to provide information about drop-in sessions:

- Stroud (01453 750480)
- Cheltenham (01242 514417)
- Moreton-in-Marsh (01608 653377)

How will my guest be helped to settle into life in the UK, and what can I do?

The Gloucestershire Housing Partnership is supporting GARAS to recruit new Resettlement Officers to help guests arriving under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. They will be able to provide dedicated and specialist help to your guest in integrating into life in the UK. However, it will take some time to recruit this team and in the meantime you can help.

There is great advice on how hosts can support refugees in their homes available through Refugees at Home: <https://www.refugeesathome.org/>

It is expected that sponsors will help their guests to register for schools, medical care, and benefits (see below for further information on how to do this). You can also help by showing them around your local area and showing them how to access local leisure facilities, public transport options and other facilities. Our local libraries have lots of facilities e.g. computers with internet access and other free resources you might like to explore with your guests

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/libraries/library-locations-and-opening-hours/>

It can be tempting to want to do everything for your guests: but we would encourage you to consider how you can help them to do things independently. This will ultimately help them to feel settled. They may find it useful to contact Gloucestershire's Ukrainian diaspora community; to access culturally relevant food; or attend relevant church services.

There is also a Welcome Guide for Ukrainians available in different languages at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk> and we will also be developing a local guide.

How can I help my guest find a place in a local school?

Although some schools will have places available throughout the year, the choice of school is likely to be limited by the fact that some of the most popular schools will be full when are applying. The advice for Ukrainian families who need school places is to apply in the usual manner for in-year transfers.

Families can make applications directly to the school(s) of their choice by completing an In Year Application Form and taking this to the school. A paper copy of the In Year Application Form should be completed and sent directly to the preferred schools. This is available [here](#).

More information regarding In Year applications can be found through the websites below:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-admissions/applying-for-a-school-place-during-the-school-year/>

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2114196/in-year-advice-for-ukraine-families-032022.pdf>

How can my guest access medical care?

Your guest has the same access to NHS care as you do, and they will receive a detailed guide in their own language to using the NHS in Gloucestershire as part of their Welcome Pack.

You can help your guest to access NHS care by helping them to register with your local GP. They will not need proof of address, immigration status or ID to do this. More information is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/>.

My guest has special medical or care needs? What should I do?

If your guest has or may have special medical or care needs it is important the local authority is aware of this so that we can help. More information on the services available for children and young people can be found on the NHS website [here](#) and contact details for the services provided within Gloucestershire can be found [here](#)

It may be appropriate to discuss this during an Initial Welcome Visit, which will enable a care assessment to be arranged if that is appropriate or for details of how to access specialised medical services if that is what is required.

Your guest may feel more comfortable discussing this in private, including with a GP. Sponsors can help best by supporting their guest to have an opportunity to do so.

I have been approached by the media who want to speak to me and my guest about their experiences, what should I do?

We would discourage sponsors from inviting the media to speak to them or their guests about their experience as refugees. Coping with the experience of losing your home, fleeing war, and settling into a new life is a challenging and traumatic time. Please bear in mind that your guest may feel some pressure to accept if you suggest they do so, even if this is not your intention.

Being placed in the public spotlight is likely to bring additional pressures and challenges. It may also expose your guest to unwanted attention from others, and may even attract Russian trolls who are very active in identifying and targeting prominent Ukrainians in media, including social media.

Introducing your guest to your friends and neighbours, including on social media

As with media appearances, you should remember that your guest has been through a traumatic experience. However, it is likely that making social connections in the local area will help them to feel more at home. The important thing is to go at your guests' pace, and not to put pressure on them to join you to attend social or community events until they are ready.

We would encourage you not to actively post about your guests' arrival on social media: this may expose your guest to unwanted attention from others and may even attract Russian trolls who are very active in identifying and targeting prominent Ukrainians in media, including social media.

Why is the person visiting my home from a charity and not the Council?

Gloucestershire Housing Partnership and GARAS are working together closely on the local response to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. GARAS have substantial expertise in supporting refugee resettlement and have been a trusted partner for the local authority on other refugee resettlement programmes in Gloucestershire.

It is likely that over the longer-term, GARAS will be playing a growing role in providing individual support to your guests as they settle into life in Gloucestershire. If you have concerns regarding GARAS visiting your home, then you should make this clear during the initial call from the Welcome Team – however, if this worries you then we would suggest you should consider if hosting a refugee in your home is appropriate for you.

My guest does not speak good English. What English-language training is available?

Your guest is entitled to access Adult Education in Gloucestershire, including English as a Second Language (ESOL). More information about ESOL classes is available at <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/alternate-tests/courses/esol-learn-to-speak-english/>.

In other government resettlement schemes, the government has provided additional resources to allow us to provide additional ESOL classes for those arriving in the country through those routes.

We are awaiting further information on this in relation to the Homes for Ukraine scheme and will share this as soon as it becomes available.

Is there advice or a special process for helping my guest open a bank account?

You should be aware that opening a bank account can be difficult for refugees: particularly as a result of proof of address requirements. Central government is currently discussing this with banks. Locally, we are trying to identify how local authorities may be able to help provide or verify address details to make this easier.

We hope to post more information on this as soon as possible.

What should I do if I have concerns about a child or adult's wellbeing?

We are all of course aware of the difficult circumstances that your guests have experienced in coming to your home. We also know that there is a small possibility that you may observe concerns about an adult or child's welfare that you think might need additional support from local services, then the following information might help.

The Red Cross has a really useful website containing lots of information about how to support Ukrainian refugees including sources of **emotional support**.

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee/help-for-refugees-from-ukraine>

If you have a **concern about a child** please contact the Children and Families Services Helpdesk on 01452 426565 (during office hours), but if you are concerned about the immediate safety of a child please contact the Police on 101 at any time.

If you prefer you can send an email to childrenshelpdesk@gloucestershire.gov.uk

The Children and Families Services helpdesk is open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. To report a concern outside of these hours, please contact the Emergency Duty Team on 01452 614194.

This is an answering machine and you will need to leave a message and your telephone number. Someone will then call you back. Please remember that this number is only for situations that cannot wait until the next working day.

You should contact us if you feel that:

- A child needs protection - if you feel that a child is suffering harm, neglect or abuse, we can investigate and act to protect the child.
- A family is under stress - we can offer support and advice and help families access support from other services.
- A child is seriously ill or disabled - we can arrange an assessment of the child's and families needs and provide support.

Some **adults are particularly vulnerable** to be hurt or abused because they have a disability, illness, or impairment and need help and support. Depending on others can sometimes make them vulnerable and at risk of abuse, very often from people they know. It isn't always intentional... but it is still abuse. So if you do observe this within the families you are supporting, or in the wider community, then please

contact 01452 426868 between 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Out of hours, you can call the Emergency Duty Team on 01452 614194 or email at any time socialcare.enq@gloucestershire.gov.uk

