

A host's guide to navigating the Ukraine Refugee Schemes in Richmond-upon-Thames

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1. Finding a guest from Ukraine to host

Richmond Council recommends registering with ResetUK, which is in the best position as a government-funded charity to match hosts and guests safely: <https://resetuk.org>

Hosts report having also found guests through word of mouth (relatives and friends of people who have already arrived in Richmond), and unofficial matching sites which are unregulated so cannot be officially endorsed, such as Opora or Facebook group UK Accommodation for Ukrainian Refugees.

2. Applying for a visa

Once matched, you can apply for a visa online:

<https://apply.visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/has-international-ukrainian-passport>.

This is best done together with your guest(s) if possible, with the host filling in the form as if they are the refugee, and the guest supplying answers to the usual questions about occupation, criminal record etc. Passport details for all guests and sponsors are required. The result is a letter giving permission to travel to the UK. On entry it is essential that they get their passport stamped with the stamp that allows them to live and work in the UK for six months. Within six months of arrival they must go to a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services Centre to convert this to a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) giving leave to remain in the UK for three years from arrival.

3. Travelling to host on arrival

Within the first 48 hours of arrival guests are eligible for a free single onward journey via National rail, bus, or coach to their host's accommodation in England, Scotland, N Ireland and Wales — they just need to show their passport and boarding pass/ticket to confirm their time on arrival in the UK.

There should be a Ukrainian help desk at airports and major railway hubs. (At Luton, parking is free if you press the help button at the exit barrier and say you have picked up a Ukrainian guest, quoting manager 'James' if necessary.)

4. Things to organise

a. Disclosure and barring service (DBS) check (Homes for Ukraine Scheme only)

The visa application triggers the Council to send a link so that all adults over 16 in the host household can apply online for a DBS check. It is free if you apply through this link. The certificates will come back between two and ten days later, and must be taken in person to the Civic Centre in Twickenham for verification. DBS checks can be completed once guests are here, but ideally should be completed before guests arrive to reassure them that they are coming to a safe environment.

b. Council Home Inspection (Homes for Ukraine Scheme only)

The visa application also triggers the Council to email to arrange a home inspection, ideally before but if necessary after the guests arrive. This usually takes about 15 minutes. They check the room is suitable and large enough, and that the gas boiler has been serviced. If smoke alarms are needed your local fire service may fit them for free.

c. Council Welcome Visit (Both Ukraine schemes)

When guests arrive, the Council visits to assess their needs and advise them what they are entitled to, which is basically the same benefits and support as for any UK resident. If there are children, the welcome visit is conducted by Achieving for Children, otherwise by the Adult Social Care Team.

For those arriving on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, this visit triggers a monthly £350 payment to the host for twelve months, paid in arrears, and a one-off £200 welcome payment for each guest, including children.

As no government funding is available for the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme, the Council has no way of knowing that guests have arrived under this scheme, and participants will not be eligible for the initial £200 or monthly £350 payments. Nevertheless, it is important that hosts notify the Council of their guests' arrival, so that they can access the same welcome visit and other provision as anyone arriving through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

d. Claim £200 Welcome Payment

Richmond Council provides £200 in Post Office vouchers to meet immediate needs until Universal Credit payments come through, which can take several weeks (This payment is not available for those hosted by relatives under the Family Visa scheme). Each claimant, including children, needs to go in person to the Civic Centre reception (44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ) between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday, with passport and permission to travel letter as proof of ID. No appointment is necessary, though it may speed things up. Any issues, ask for Graham.

If guest is of pensionable age, email or phone the Department of Work and Pensions (0800991234 – can select English or another language). If you call on their behalf your guest needs to give consent. You can supply your bank details if waiting for theirs. Ask if they will apply for an NI number at the same time. The pension may take a few weeks to process. More advice here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-businesses-offering-work-to-people-coming-from-ukraine>

e. Register with GP/Medical services

In person or online:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/>

An urgent appointment, eg for a diabetes prescription, will be triggered if you specify it is for 'Immediate Necessary Treatment'. No NHS number is necessary, including for dental or optician appointments.

For NHS dentists: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>.

For opticians: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-an-optician>

f. Arrange Covid vaccination

Most guests will not have been vaccinated. NHS advisors and interpreters are available at NHS vaccination centres to speak to guests with concerns about vaccination. Take guests to Queen Mary's Roehampton or any other walk-in NHS clinic – no need to be registered with a GP:

<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site>

g. Open a bank account

Most online banks (e.g. Monzo, Sterling) and high street banks (e.g. NatWest, Santander, HSBC, Halifax) are offering accounts for Ukrainians without requiring an NI number. Ask for a 'basic bank account', as this will be the easiest and quickest to set up. Print off their form, help your guest fill it in, and take into a branch together with their passport/letter of invitation. Some banks also ask for proof of address (bank statement, utility bill in the host's name) and a letter from the host confirming they are residing with you.

h. Apply for Universal Credit (benefits)

Applications should be submitted online <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>, with a follow-up appointment at the Job Centre. Alternatively, the Job Centre can help guests apply online. Apply as soon as possible as UC is not necessarily backdated. Guests will need an email address, access to a phone, and a bank account for the UC to be paid into. If you have a guest of pensionable age, you can register for Pension Credit by phone (0800 991234) and email required documents. If requested, the Job Centre or Pension team might also apply for their National Insurance (NI) number, though this won't actually be needed until people are in work.

i. Apply for free SIM card

Vodafone offers Ukrainians arriving on either scheme SIM cards pre-loaded with 20GB data per month plus unlimited calls and texts for six months. Hosts can apply on behalf of guests: <https://www.refugease.org/vodafone-sim>.

They can take 30 days to arrive, so as a stop-gap buy a 30-day giffgaff SIM card from a newsagent or post office (or online for delivery in 1 to 2 days) which costs £10 for 15GB with no contract or commitment: <https://www.giffgaff.com/sim-only-deals>

j. Facilitate travel

Oyster cards can be bought for £5 for contactless travel prior to having a bank card, or any cashpoint card can be used. Children under 5 travel free, and children 5-18 yrs, Students 18+ and adults 60+ can apply online for a photocard for free or discounted travel on all transport services in London:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel>

When applying online skip verification, as you won't have a 10 digit number to verify the passport, and it will generate a QR code which you need to take to a post office with their passport.

Adults seeking work may be entitled to the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount which gives 50% off pay-as-you-go adult fares on bus, tube, tram, DLR, London Overground, TfL Rail (excluding between West Drayton and Reading) and most National Rail services in London. For more information see link:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel/jobcentre-plus-travel-discount?intcmp=54730#on-this-page-1>

Apply for a free bicycle at: <https://thebikeproject.co.uk/>

Drivers can use their Ukrainian driving licence for the first 12 months after arriving, but will then need to exchange it for a British licence:

<https://www.gov.uk/exchange-foreign-driving-licence>

k. Apply for Biometric resident permit

Apply within six months of arrival as their visa stamp is only valid for six months from date of entry. The BRP will extend this to three years from date of entry, making it easier for guests to leave and re-enter the UK, which may otherwise be less straightforward at border control.

Guests need to go in person to a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) Centre. The two nearest are in Croydon (CR9 2EF) and near Fenchurch Street (EC3R 7AF). You have to make an appointment online:

<https://apply.visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/ukraine-scheme-brp>

If you can't find an appointment keep scrolling down until you find more slots. Your guests must take their appointment confirmation with QR code together with their passports (or other ID) to the appointment. The card should arrive by post in ten working days.

The BRP card will show name, date and place of birth, fingerprints and a photo of face, immigration status / conditions of stay, whether entitled to public funds ie benefits and health services, and in some cases the National Insurance number (depending on visa status and date issued).

l. Find work

The Job Centre will provide support with finding work in the UK at the Universal Credit appointment, as you cannot claim UC unless you are looking for work. Other sources of help include: <https://www.uatalents.com>

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services/register-with-us-to-get-help-finding-work/>

Guests can start work without a National Insurance number if they can show they have the right to work right to work in the UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work>

m. Apply for school / nursery places.

You can apply before guests arrive. Some schools are paying for uniform, shoes, gym clothes and school meals- keep receipts to claim back.

o. Sign up for English lessons

Richmond and Hillcroft Adult community College (Parkshot) has just announced additional free English courses at all levels for Ukrainians, starting early June. Sign up for an assessment on 19 May, to determine level:

<https://www.rhacc.ac.uk/course/ukranian-esol-enrolment-day>

Barnes Community Association English School is also running free classes — call 020 8878 7229

The Ukrainian Institute offers free English classes for displaced Ukrainians in person in Paddington or online (though fully booked at time of writing):

<https://refugee-support.ukrainianinstitute.org.uk/english-school>

Plus an enrolment form in Ukrainian:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfN4E0NUR9og7B0sYEuYXiDekjg7Uf46MPul8qTD97dcZEcVw/viewform>

5. Local refugee support groups

WhatsApp groups:

- **Ukraine befrienders** run by Refugees Welcome in Richmond. Contact Hirsch Cashdan 07710981243 to be added to the Hosts' group in English, and for your guests to be added to the Guests' group in Ukrainian.
- **Teddington** Contact Celia Marsh 07305905170
- **Kew** Contact Sally Durant <https://chat.whatsapp.com/Hg5qb0gzfS8A96EUBfF9zT>
- **Ham** Contact Sarah Tippett 07956 692473

Facebook groups:

- **RWinR:** <https://www.facebook.com/refugeeswelcomeinrichmond/>
- **Ukrainians in Richmond:** <https://www.facebook.com/richmondukrainians/>

Social Hubs:

- **The Vineyard / Refugees Welcome in Richmond**
Weekly social hub for hosts and guests every Friday 2-4 pm, with free tea, coffee, cakes. The Vineyard also offers crisis support sessions Mon-Friday, 9-11 am.
2a The Vineyard, Richmond TW10 6AQ.
<https://www.vineyardcommunity.org/get-help/crisis-support/>
- **Prosperity Café**
1-3pm Sundays, social hub, childrens' language classes.
Twickenham 59 York St, Twickenham TW1 3LP.
<https://www.londondonationsforukraine.org/>
- **ETNA community centre**
Fortnightly on Fridays 4-6pm.
13 Rosslyn Rd East Twickenham TW1 2AR.
<https://etnacentre.org/friends-of-ukraine/>

6. Preparing your home

- **Insurance:**

The Association of British Insurers has announced that hosts need not notify their contents insurer unless guests stay beyond 12 months. If guests are lodged in an annexe or second home, policyholders should notify their insurer, as this could constitute a legal tenancy. More details:

<https://www.abi.org.uk/products-and-issues/topics-and-issues/ukraine-crisis/>

- **Shops selling Ukrainian food products:**

East Sheen: Polish shop on Upper Richmond Road.

Kew/North Sheen: Polish section at Sainsbury's, A316 roundabout Apex Corner.

Twickenham: Hungarian store 'Paprika', Polish section at large Tesco.

Ealing: Hungarian store next to number 65 bus stop, Polish bakery nearby.

- **Creating welcoming space for guests:**

Make space in fridge / freezer.

Show where they can wash and dry their laundry.

Maybe provide some toiletries / toys to make them feel at home.

If you know when their birthday is, perhaps arrange a little birthday surprise.

7. Free legal advice for Ukrainian refugees

- **Sterling Law firm**

Contact contact@sterling-law.co.uk or via their [Facebook page](#).

- **Nataliya Burns** of Montecristo LLP is an Immigration Legal Executive.

Contact 020 7164 6234 or 07815 068665, nburns@montecristollp.com.

- **Ukraine Advice Project UK** provide free legal advice on UK immigration, visas and asylum. Contact ukraine@freemovement.org.uk.

- **Citizens Advice Richmond** provide support on legal and benefit-related issues.

8. Information sources online

- <https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions>
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-family-members-of-british-nationals-in-ukraine-and-ukrainian-nationals-in-ukraine-and-the-uk>

- <https://www.redcross.org.uk/-/media/documents/get-help-as-a-refugee/ukraine/information-leaflet-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk.pdf> (downloads file)
- The Financial Times Q&As:
<https://www.ft.com/content/732a2cb2-3160-4f4a-b736-dc282ccbdd83>
- The Ukrainian Institute website has a wealth of information from setting up bank accounts, getting psychological help, claiming financial help, healthcare and childcare, to driving and insurance, with links to various other sites in both English and Ukrainian:
<https://refugee-support.ukrainianinstitute.org.uk/settling-into-the-uk>