

# Ukraine: Guidance

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## Background

This guidance covers the:

- exemptions from the Habitual Residence Test for people who have fled Ukraine because of the Russian invasion. These people could be of **any** nationality (including British) and do not need to hold a specific type of immigration visa
- visa schemes established by the Home Office to support Ukrainians and their eligible family members to stay in the UK, access benefits and work
- arrangements for those accommodating Ukrainians under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, including the effects on any benefit payments
- changes to the Home Office Ukraine schemes, including the new scheme to allow those in the UK to extend their immigration leave by 18 months

## Checking Habitual Residence Test requirements

ID must be verified prior to completing the Habitual Residence Test (HRT) process.

From 22 March 2022 certain people who have fled Ukraine are exempt from the Habitual Residence Test.

The exemption applies to everyone who meets the criteria detailed below regardless of their nationality, including to British nationals. Foreign nationals do not need to be Ukrainian nationals or hold a visa under one of the Ukraine schemes to be exempt. Any foreign national who meets the other criteria is exempt provided they have an immigration status without a No Recourse to Public Funds condition, including visas granted under the Ukraine schemes.

The exemption applies to any person who:

- left Ukraine in connection with the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, and
- were resident in Ukraine immediately before 1 January 2022, and
- who:

- are a British or Irish national, or
- have leave under or outside the immigration rules which provides recourse to public funds

The exemption applies to both the factual and right to reside parts of the Habitual Residence Test. Therefore, people covered by the exemption who hold Pre-settled Status under the EU Settlement scheme will not be subject to the right to reside test, and do not need to be exercising a qualifying treaty right to be eligible for Universal Credit.

## **Ukraine visa schemes**

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Home Office launched the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine), followed by the Ukraine Extension Scheme in 2023. Initially, these schemes provided Ukrainians and their eligible family members 3 years' limited leave to remain in the UK, with a right to work and access to public funds benefits.

In February 2024 the Home Office introduced some changes to these schemes (detailed below). In 2025 a new Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme is being introduced. People with leave under the other Ukraine schemes can use the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme to apply for further permission to stay in the UK.

## **Homes for Ukraine**

This scheme is a sponsored visa route allowing UK residents to sponsor Ukrainians to come to the UK. Sponsors are expected to support with housing and integration. There is no cap on numbers. Hosts must offer accommodation for at least 6 months but can continue hosting for longer.

Businesses and other private organisations are not currently eligible to sponsor people coming to the UK from Ukraine directly.

The leave granted under this scheme gives recourse to public funds and a right to work and lasts:

- up to 36 months, if the guest applied before 3pm on 19 February 2024
- up to 18 months, if the guest applied after 3pm on 19 February 2024

Each guest is given an initial one-off payment of £200. This is treated as capital and is disregarded.

Sponsors will receive £350 a month as a "thank you" payment during the first 12 months of their guests' stay. This increases to £500 once the guest has been in the UK for 12 months. Any of the payments unspent after the period for which it was paid is disregarded as capital under provisions relating to local welfare.

Ukraine families are not treated as normally residing with their host, therefore, hosts must not add Ukrainian nationals they have accommodated through Homes for Ukraine as non-dependants to their Universal Credit claim.

The host sees no change to the level of Universal Credit they receive as a consequence, and housing support continues to be limited by existing size criteria rules.

For more information, see Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for sponsors (children and minors applying without parents or legal guardians and Under 18s).

### **Rent liability**

No rental liability can be created between the sponsor and the Ukrainian nationals they offer a home to, while they are part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This means there will be no income from board and / or lodging declared by any claimants who volunteer for the Scheme and Ukrainian Nationals will not be eligible for any housing costs support.

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

Ukrainian nationals who are accommodated by a host in a Homes for Ukraine placement cannot access Discretionary Housing Payments because they do not receive housing costs support through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

### **Ukraine Family Scheme**

The Ukraine Family Scheme closed to new applicants on 19 February 2024, in favour of a single visa application route (Homes for Ukraine) for Ukrainians to come to the UK.

### **Ukraine Extension Scheme**

Applications for the Ukraine Extension Scheme closed for adults on 16 May 2024.

The Ukraine Extension Scheme remains open after 16 May 2024 for children born in the UK to Ukrainian parents who meet the criteria set out in the following: Apply to stay in the UK under the Ukraine Extension Scheme.

### **Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme**

The Home Office have introduced a new scheme which will allow Ukrainians to remain in the UK after their initial grant of leave ends. The scheme opens to applications in early 2025. People with visas granted under the HFU scheme, the Ukraine Family scheme or the Ukraine Extension Scheme who are living in the UK can apply to the new scheme for permission to stay in the UK for a further 18 months. Individuals will be able to apply 28 days before their current grant of leave expires.

Those granted leave under the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme will have the right to work and recourse to public funds.

### **Identity verification**

Ukrainian individuals must verify their identity to claim Universal Credit.

To verify Ukrainian ID, please go to the [Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel Documents Online \(PRADO\)](#).

## **Official documents**

On arrival from Ukraine, non-UK nationals will have either a passport which is stamped or an IS116 document provided to them by Visa immigration.

If the citizen does not have a current passport, they will be issued with an IS116 document. This includes all children who will have individual IS116 documents.

The passport should be stamped with Home Office Immigration to confirm their Leave to Remain status and Recourse to Public funds designation. However, some passports have been stamped incorrectly stating that they do NOT have Recourse to Public Funds.

In most cases a Code 1A stamp was used which confirms Leave to Enter the UK until xx/xx/xxxx.

In some cases, a Code 1 stamp was used with the 'No recourse to public funds' designation scored out in ink.

However, this is unique in this circumstance and only relates to stamps issued from 24 February 2022 until August 2022.

Individuals who have been issued with a digital status (eVisa) will not receive an entry clearance vignette in their passport or on a Form for Affixing the Visa (FAV).

Instead, they will be able to use the Home Office's View and Prove service to:

- view their status **and** or eVisa and check what rights they have in the UK (for example, the right to work or claim benefits)
- prove their status to others (such as employers, landlords or education providers or to get benefits or use the NHS) by generating a 'share code' which gives them time limited access to relevant data
- update personal details (for example, their phone number and email address)

From September 2024 new grants of leave will receive a digital immigration status. When the individual is granted digital status and an eVisa, they will receive a Digital Status Confirmation (DSC) letter accessible through their UK Visas and Immigration account.

## **Claimant is homeless or at risk of homelessness**

Local authorities will work with them to take all reasonable steps to prevent homelessness.

DWP have created a Homeless & Housing Toolkit to provide comprehensive guidance to staff which includes the duty to refer process. The duty to refer is voluntary and can only be made if the claimant gives their consent.

For further information see:

- Your National/District Provision Tool - Refugees

**Further support**

Each site will have a Vulnerable Customer Lead and/or a Homelessness Single Point of Contact (SPOC) or Subject Matter Expert (SME) who is available to support both claimants and colleagues with additional queries. You can also speak with your District Refugee and Resettlement SPOC.