

**CONSTITUTION, EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

35th Meeting, 2023, Session 6

Thursday 14 December 2023

Ukraine

Cover note

1. Between March and June 2022, the Committee considered [Scotland's humanitarian response to the war against Ukraine](#), with a focus on the resettlement of displaced people from Ukraine across Scotland.
2. We also held a roundtable on links with and support for Ukrainian culture in [November 2022](#).
3. In early 2023, we followed up on that work, taking evidence from [the Consul and Head of the Consulate, COSLA and a selection of local authorities](#), and the then [Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine](#).
4. Today's session is an opportunity to seek an update from the [Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees](#).
5. The following papers are attached for this item—
 - **Annexe A:** briefing from SPICe (plus updates on interventions set out in review of Supersponsor Scheme)
 - **Annexe B:** letter to the Convener from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice of 7 December 2023

Committee Clerks

December 2023

Supporting displaced people from Ukraine in Scotland

The Committee previously considered the Scottish Government's response to supporting displaced people from Ukraine at several evidence sessions in 2022 and 2023. Most recently, in January and February 2023, the Committee took evidence from various witnesses, including Neil Gray, at the time the Scottish Government Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine. A [SPICe paper for the session on 9 February 2023](#) contains information on support provision up to that point.

This paper summarises the Scottish Government's longer-term strategy for Ukrainian resettlement, based on its [Warm Scots Future strategy](#) published in September 2023, and provides updates on the Scottish Government's provision of accommodation for displaced people from Ukraine.

Visa schemes for displaced people from Ukraine

Members will be aware that Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine resulted in [millions of people being displaced](#), both within Ukraine and across Europe. In response to the unfolding humanitarian crisis, the UK Government established three visa schemes for displaced people from Ukraine:

- a [Family Scheme](#) for those with family members in the UK
- an [Extension Scheme](#) for those who held a valid UK visa on or after 1 January 2022
- a [Sponsorship Scheme](#) through which displaced people from Ukraine are sponsored by hosts that offer them accommodation for at least six months. The Scottish Government [acted as a supersponsor](#) for the scheme but applications to the Scottish scheme have been [paused since July 2022](#).

The UK Government [provides data on the number of displaced persons from Ukraine with UK visas under the Family and Extension schemes](#), but no Scotland-specific information is available. 71,100 Family Scheme visas had been issued and 22,100 visas extended through the Extension Scheme by 28 November 2023.

The UK Government does [provide data on the number of arrivals of displaced people from Ukraine through the Sponsorship Scheme](#) with a Scottish sponsor. By 5 December 2023, 39,468 people had been granted visas with Scottish sponsors of which 26,214 had travelled to the UK. Of those that have arrived in the UK with Scottish sponsors, 20,667 were sponsored by the Scottish Government and 5,547 by individual hosts directly. However, displaced people from Ukraine with a Scottish sponsor are not required to stay in Scotland once they have arrived in the UK, so these figures may not reflect the actual numbers of displaced people from Ukraine currently in Scotland.

Visas available to displaced people from Ukraine allow visa holders to enter (or remain in) the UK and access public services. Barriers to accessing public services, including benefits, education, and healthcare, [were discussed in previous Committee sessions](#). In evidence to the Committee, [local authorities expressed concerns](#) about how a reduction in resettlement funding from the UK Government from January 2023 would affect the provision of public services to displaced people from Ukraine. The funding reduction is discussed further below in the context of accommodation provision. The Committee [wrote a letter](#) to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Homelessness, Felicity Buchan MP, detailing its concerns and [received a response in May 2023](#).

The Supersponsor Scheme

The Scottish Government's [October 2023 statistical release](#) provides information on the numbers of arrivals with sponsors in different parts of the UK relative to the size of the population. As of 17 October 2023, there were:

- 472 arrivals with a sponsor in Scotland per 100,000 population
- 231 arrivals with a sponsor in Wales per 100,000 population
- 178 arrivals with a sponsor in England per 100,000 population
- 69 arrivals with a sponsor in Northern Ireland per 100,000 population.

Please note that, because displaced people from Ukraine with a sponsor in any part of the UK can move freely within the UK, these figures may not reflect the number of displaced people from Ukraine currently in different parts of the UK. There is also a known undercount in the Northern Ireland data. See the [Scottish Government's methodology notes](#) for more information.

The Scottish Government [paused applications to its Supersponsor Scheme](#) on 13 July 2022, primarily citing accommodation capacity issues. The Scottish Government then commissioned [a review into the scheme](#), which was published in November 2022. The review stated:

“Even when taking into consideration a pause to applications from July, Scotland still reports the highest number of total applications, visas issued and arrivals per head of the population of any of the four nations [...]. A considerable achievement far beyond our initial commitment.”

The review also confirmed the need to reduce the length of time displaced Ukrainians are staying in welcome accommodation and to increase the availability of longer-term accommodation. It set out:

- [16 interventions aimed at improving the operation of the scheme](#), including efforts to improve the matching process with hosts, increase access to the private rented sector, and strengthen employability support
- a list of [seven criteria for reopening the scheme](#), which centre on accommodation capacity, mitigating pressures on local authority services, and plans for meeting the costs and challenges associated with reopening.

In a [letter to the Committee dated 31 July 2023](#), the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Shirley-Anne Somerville provided an update on the Sponsorship Scheme pause:

“The outcome of the most recent review in June 2023 has concluded that a continuation of the current pause should remain. With the Programme Board’s endorsement, we now intend to review the pause on the Scheme every 6 months and we will inform the Committee of the outcome of that review in 6 months’ time.”

A further announcement is expected in the new year following a review by the Programme Board in January 2024.

A Warm Scots Future paper

On 27 September 2023, the Scottish Government published a strategy paper entitled ‘[A Warm Scots Future](#)’. The strategy, written in partnership with COSLA and the Scottish Refugee Council, “outlines the transition from an emergency response to Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, to a long-term and holistic approach that supports the integration of displaced people from Ukraine.” [SPICe has published a blog that summarises](#) the Warm Scots Future strategy.

The Warm Scots Future paper sets out five strategic priorities:

1. A trauma-informed, holistic and rights-based approach to long-term integration
2. Reduce reliance on Welcome accommodation
3. Boost long-term, settled housing that leaves a legacy for Scotland
4. Pursue clarity on routes to settlement, family reunification and repatriation
5. Continued partnership and collaboration, ensuring good governance and recognising the lived experience of displaced people from Ukraine

Two of the strategic priorities relate to the provision of welcome and longer-term accommodation, pressures on which [were identified as the main reason for the pausing](#) of the Supersponsor Scheme in the Scottish Government’s review. This paper provides an update on the provision of welcome accommodation by the Scottish Government and efforts to improve access to longer-term accommodation for displaced people from Ukraine.

The Warm Scots Future paper also [provides updates on progress](#) made in delivering the [16 interventions intended](#) to improve the Scottish Supersponsor Scheme. This information has been collated into a table in Annexe 1.

Updates on Scottish Government accommodation provision

Welcome accommodation

The Scottish Government has provided accommodation for displaced people from Ukraine who arrive through the Supersponsor Scheme where required. This can be

temporary accommodation (called 'welcome accommodation') such as in hotel rooms or longer-term accommodation, which is available for at least 6 months.

In response to pressures on welcome accommodation capacity, the Scottish Government used hotel rooms and chartered two passenger ships - docked in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The ship docked in Glasgow, the M/S Ambition, provided accommodation until March 2023 and the ship docked in Edinburgh, the M/S Victoria, accommodated displaced people from Ukraine until 4 July 2023. The Scottish Government [published information on the disembarkations](#) of both ships on 14 September 2023, including data on the immediate destination of passengers disembarking.

According to this publication, of passengers disembarking the M/S Ambition since 5 January 2023:

- 33% went into alternative welcome accommodation
- 7% went into hosted accommodation
- 29% went into social housing
- 30% went into 'unknown or other accommodation'.

Of passengers disembarking the M/S Victoria since 17 April 2023:

- 72% went into alternative welcome accommodation (this figure includes 12% of the total number of disembarking passengers who had other accommodation lined up, mostly social housing, which was not yet ready at time of disembarkation)
- 1% went into hosted accommodation
- 3% went into social housing
- 23% went into 'unknown or other accommodation'.

The Scottish Government's most recent data release on the Supersponsor Scheme estimates that by 26 September 2023, [around 3,030 people remained](#) in welcome accommodation.

New welcome accommodation policies

In a letter to the Committee on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Shirley-Anne Somerville, set out changes to the Scottish Government's welcome accommodation policies. Key changes set out in the letter include:

- From 7 December 2023, those in welcome accommodation are expected to work with their local authority to identify two options for longer-term accommodation considered 'reasonable'. One of these should be a tenancy (including social and private rented tenancies) and the other will usually be hosted accommodation.
- If neither option is accepted, welcome accommodation will cease to be provided after 60 nights or 180 nights from arrival – whichever is longer.

- From 8 January 2024, welcome accommodation will generally only be provided to those holding a Scottish Supersponsor Scheme visa on their initial arrival to Scotland, unless in exceptional circumstances or if they are already in welcome accommodation.
- Those in welcome accommodation will generally not be able re-enter temporary accommodation if they leave it for more than five nights (unless special circumstances apply).

The [Scottish Government's guidance document](#) (available in English, Ukrainian, and Russian) for displaced people from Ukraine has been updated to reflect these changes.

The policy document provided by the Scottish Government provides a definition of what will be considered a 'reasonable' offer of longer-term accommodation (Annex D in that document). The property must be expected to be available for at least six months, be affordable to the household, and meet standard space and disability accessibility requirements where applicable. The document also states that as far as possible location preferences based on personal health and social care needs, educational needs or employment status will be considered, but notes that "Local pressures will dictate the extent to which the considerations of education and employment can be taken into account."

Longer-term accommodation

Accommodation for displaced people from Ukraine counts as 'longer-term' housing if it is available for at least six months. Longer-term accommodation can include that offered by hosts, either within their home or separately, or social rented accommodation. Displaced people from Ukraine can also access private rented housing but the Scottish Government does not collect information on people in private rented accommodation.

As part of its funding for Ukrainian resettlement, the Scottish Government made available a £50 million '[Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund](#)' for registered social landlords "to bring properties into use and increase the supply of housing". By 8 November 2023, £22.9m had been allocated. According to the Warm Scots Future paper, 671 homes had been completed using the fund as of August 2023, with 472 tenancies in place, housing 948 displaced people from Ukraine. The paper also states that:

"the Scottish Government has also widened the scope of the fund to allow different types of projects to come forward for consideration that could meet the eligibility criteria. For example, off-the-shelf purchasing, new build, site purchase and re-provisioning of properties not currently in use as social housing, where these are additional to the existing Affordable Housing Supply Programme operating in the area and can deliver homes in the timescale required."

In the letter to the Committee on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice confirmed that the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund remains open for applications and is being extended to 31 March 2025.

The Warm Scots Future paper also provides an update on interventions intended to boost access to other types of longer-term accommodation, which had been recommended in the review of the Supersponsor Scheme, including private rented housing. The Warm Scots Future paper states that local authorities already have a variety of schemes in place to support such access, for example through deposit and furniture grants, but that eligibility criteria across these schemes vary and so not all displaced people from Ukraine in Scotland are eligible. The paper notes that consideration is being given to using an additional £30 million from the UK Government to supplement local authority existing schemes, and that discussions with local authorities continue on a 'Private Sector Leasing Scheme.'

The background to this funding from the UK Government is that until December 2022, local authorities received funding of £10,500 from the UK Government per displaced person from Ukraine, which reduced to £5,900 for those arriving after December 2022 (excluding minors). As part of this change, a one-off fund of £150 million was made available to local authorities across the UK to support displaced people from Ukraine to move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness. It was agreed that Scotland would receive £30 million (to reflect its higher share of displaced people from Ukraine per head of the population) and that this would be passed to local authorities by the Scottish Government. On 26 September 2023, the Scottish Government [published an allocation letter for local authorities](#). The letter outlines allocations ranging from £88,789 for the Shetland Islands to £4,500,781 to the City of Edinburgh.

Today's evidence session

Today's evidence session provides an opportunity for Members to take evidence from Emma Roddick MSP, Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees on how the Scottish Government is supporting displaced people from Ukraine in Scotland.

Initially, the Committee may wish to explore how the Scottish Government is working with local authorities and other partners to support displaced people from Ukraine. The Committee may also want to discuss how the Scottish Government's approach to resettling displaced people from Ukraine in Scotland has changed over the past 21 months. In connection with this, Members may wish to ask the Minister about the Scottish Government's longer-term approach as set out in its Warm Scots Future strategy. This may include discussion of whether the Supersponsor Scheme will be reopened for applications and if so, when.

The Committee may also wish to explore with the Minister what progress the Scottish Government has made with respect to measures proposed in its review of the Supersponsor Scheme. As part of this, Members may want to discuss the current and future welcome accommodation provision for displaced people from Ukraine and efforts to improve longer-term accommodation capacity, through the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund or assistance for accessing the private rented sector. In connection with the new welcome accommodation policies, members may wish to

explore the potential impact on displaced people from Ukraine of the new policy approach and what housing support will be offered to those whose hosting or other longer-term accommodation arrangements come to an end in the future.

Annie Bosse, Researcher, SPICe Research

7 December 2023

Note: Committee briefing papers are provided by SPICe for the use of Scottish Parliament committees and clerking staff. They provide focused information or respond to specific questions or areas of interest to committees and are not intended to offer comprehensive coverage of a subject area.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.parliament.scot

Annexe 1: Updates on interventions set out in review of Supersponsor Scheme

Intervention	Description from review of Supersponsor Scheme	Summary of Warm Scots Future update
<p>1. Improved Clarity in Pre-Arrival Communications</p>	<p>Refreshed communications giving accurate reflection of limited availability of accommodation; prioritisation for those most in need (e.g. families) and request accommodation booked in advance.</p>	<p>Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the publication of Scotland for Ukrainians: a guide for displaced people that visa-holders have been issued with translated and trauma-informed communications and stakeholders provided with 'strengthened and accurate messaging'.
<p>2. Refined Arrival Script and Communications</p>	<p>No longer assume all arrivals require accommodation; better prioritisation for most in need; clearer expectation stay is short-term until accommodation secured; advice and integration from day one.</p>	<p>Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a leaflet containing information about housing options, which has been used in welcome accommodation since September 2022 communication plans used in the disembarkation of the two passenger ships the publication of Scotland for Ukrainians: a guide for displaced people as well as an accompanying stakeholder toolkit.
<p>3. Strengthening of Matching</p>	<p>Taking steps to better support and expand resources to assist local authority resettlement teams finalise longer-term</p>	<p>Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights additional staffing resources for local authority and national COSLA matching teams.</p>

	accommodation for guests, as well as identify opportunities to match ahead of arrival.	
4. Social Housing	Introduce capital fund and programme of work aimed at registered social landlords to improve the overall supply of housing stock for arrivals.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights use of the Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund, leading to 671 homes having been completed by August 2023. More information on this fund is provided above.
5. Scotland Call for Volunteers	Scottish campaign to secure volunteer hosts for those currently in short-term accommodation, with improved geographical targeting and clarity on role, expectations and support.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights a new host campaign launched in November 2022. The Scottish Government's latest statistical release contains further information on numbers of host offers since November 2022.
6. Greater Emphasis on Employability	Improved coordination with councils, third and private sectors, Skills Development Scotland and DWP to ensure arrivals can seek out and secure employment, including through job fairs.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • job fairs held in various parts of Scotland • establishing an employability focus group with representatives from the Scottish Government and partner organisations, local authorities and DWP • a one-year pilot project to provide bespoke English language and employment support. The project is funded by the UK Government and coordinated between the UK Government and devolved governments.
7. Local Welcome	Working closely with third sector,	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The

	consulates and Eastern European communities to bring alive cities, towns and villages across Scotland through digital content and case studies.	paper highlights events about housing and employment opportunities that have taken place in Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as virtually.
8. National Approach to ReMatching	Work with local authorities to finalise consistent approach to 're-matching', where there has been a breakdown in host arrangements for super sponsor or private sponsor visa-holder.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'in progress'. The paper states that "as host arrangements come to a natural conclusion, or end due to changes in circumstances, guests are triaged and given help to agree alternative accommodation such as further host arrangements, support into private rental market, or entering short-term accommodation."
9. Refinement of Accommodation Offer	Improve sustainability of the programme by adjusting provision of accommodation and wider hospitality, including consideration of time limits and contributions, depending on needs and income of guests.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'in progress'. The paper states that hospitality provision was changed in December 2022 with discretionary lunches no longer being provided and that further changes to the accommodation offer are being considered. The update states that a 'Move On Policy' was considered by the Accommodation & Matching Working Group but provides no further information.
10. Warm Welcome Grant	Consider and test feasibility of grants programme aimed at financial support to those leaving short-term accommodation, recognising the barriers around this important milestone.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'closed'. The paper states that this intervention has been subsumed under plans to provide support for accessing private rental accommodation.
11. Private Rental Assistance	Improved advice on renting privately, as well as identifying and testing interventions which	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'closed'. The paper highlights that translated materials about private rental assistance have been shared.

	may include deposit guarantees recognising the potential for wider application for other groups.	It further states that as not all displaced people from Ukraine are eligible for existing local authority schemes to support access to private rented housing, the provision of additional support is being considered.
12. Self-Matching Infrastructure	Facilitated 'in-person' matching events and exploration of digital solutions aimed at allowing arrival to 'self-match' using a directory of approved hosts prior to a facilitated introductory meeting.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper highlights cases in which local authorities have supported matching events. It also notes a pilot (to run until March 2024 with Positive Action in Housing to support third sector matching. The paper also states that "Early stage work is ongoing on innovation in self-matching."
13. Modular Housing	Working with our partners to identify potential sites for modular housing and analysis of modular design options for both short-term and longer-term application.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'complete'. The paper states that following work with local authorities, several challenges have been identified with the use of modular housing but that there remains interest in using 'non-traditional build methods' and that a national approach is under assessment by the Housing Review Group.
14. Approach to Matching	Looking at evidence of delivery to date, a targeted project reviewing the most efficient delivery model for this type of service, with consideration of other public and third sector organisations.	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'in progress'. The paper highlights the roll out of a digital tool to support matching but provides limited information on the tool itself. It states that updates on the tool have been provided to the Warm Scottish Welcome Delivery Programme Board in July and August 2023.
15. Headlease Scheme	Scoping potential for a national 'headleasing' scheme to incentivise landlords to provide accommodation thereby reducing	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'in progress'. The paper states that discussion with local authorities about a headlease scheme are underway but that challenges remain.

	barriers for those seeking to access privately rented accommodation.	
16. Research and International Best Practice	Working with universities, academics and policy-makers both at home and abroad to ensure Scotland continues to provide the best possible welcome for people displaced by the war in Ukraine	Delivery of this intervention is marked as 'closed'. The paper states that "The Ukraine Programme is increasingly established within a broader policymaking and academic network, especially as this moves beyond mass evacuation into integration". It highlights also that its approach to the resettlement of displaced people from Ukraine will align with the wider New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy.

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Ceartas Sòisealta
Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP/BPA



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Clare Adamson MSP
Convener
Constitution, Europe, External
Affairs and Culture Committee

By email: CEEAC.committee@parliament.scot

07 December 2023

Dear Convener,

I previously wrote to you on 13 July regarding the successful disembarkation of MS Victoria and the announcement that the Scottish Government's Ukraine Longer-term Resettlement Fund is now funding the improvement of over 1000 void properties for rehousing Ukrainians across Scotland.

This letter is to provide you an update on recent policies that the Scottish Government has been working on to support the Resettlement of Ukrainians in Scotland displaced by the war against Ukraine.

Warm Scots Future Policy Position Paper

On 27 September 2023 we published The 'A Warm Scots Future' Policy Position Paper sets out the policy direction for the next phase of Scotland's response to the humanitarian crisis created by Russia's illegal war against Ukraine.

Five strategic priorities have been identified to guide the next phase of Scotland's Ukraine response.

1. A trauma informed, holistic and rights-based approach to long-term integration, in line with the New Scots refugee integration strategy
2. Reduce reliance on welcome accommodation
3. Boost long-term, settled housing that leaves a legacy for Scotland
4. Pursue clarity on routes to settlement, family reunification and repatriation
5. Continued partnership and collaboration, ensuring good governance and recognising the lived experience of displaced people from Ukraine

Commitments to further and future funding are not within the scope of this policy position paper. However, the Scottish Government recognises the challenging economic conditions within which national and local government and third sector partners are operating and will work towards delivering the strategic priorities set out in this paper.

Strategic Priority 1 – A trauma informed, holistic and rights-based approach to long-term integration, in line with the New Scots refugee integration strategy

The next phase of Scotland's response will draw on the holistic and rights-based approach to successful integration set out in the [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 – 22](#). This is underpinned by five principles: integration from day one, a rights-based approach, refugee involvement, inclusive communities, and partnership and collaboration.

Strategic Priority 2 – Reduce reliance on welcome accommodation

The provision of welcome accommodation has been at the heart of Scotland's ability to offer immediate sanctuary to displaced people from Ukraine. However, we know that access to a settled home supports integration and better longer-term outcomes.

To reduce reliance on welcome accommodation, displaced people from Ukraine have to be able to make their own choices about where and how they want to live. The Scottish Government will continue to work with our partners to reduce the length of stay in welcome accommodation and further support integration into communities.

Strategic Priority 3 – Boost long-term, settled housing that leaves a legacy for Scotland

Access to settled housing has been highlighted as one of the most difficult challenges facing displaced people from Ukraine - as it is for many thousands of people across Scotland.

The Scottish Government's vision for housing, set out in the Housing to 2040 vision and priorities¹, is that all people in Scotland live in high quality, sustainable homes that they can afford and that meet their needs.

The Scottish Government and partners will work to support displaced people from Ukraine to access longer-term housing in this wider context. The Scottish Government's Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund has an important role to play in boosting the supply of social housing and this Fund is covered in more detail later in this letter.

Strategic Priority 4 – Pursue clarity on routes to settlement, family reunification and repatriation

When the Scottish super sponsor scheme was paused to new applications in July 2022, the Scottish Government committed to reviewing this decision. To support this, we developed a set of seven criteria against which plans to reopen the scheme to applications could be considered. The next review is in December 2023.

The lack of certainty about the future immigration status of displaced people from Ukraine, arriving through any visa route, is having a negative impact on their ability to make decisions about their future. Currently, Ukrainian visas are valid for 36 months from the date of issue. The UK Government has not provided any clarity on what options will be available to displaced people after this. The Scottish Government will pursue urgent clarity on what will happen after the three-year period for visas comes to an end. We will also look to seek answers on opportunities for routes to settlement, family reunification, and voluntary repatriation.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-2040-vision-principles/>

Strategic Priority 5 – Continued partnership and collaboration, ensuring good governance and recognising the lived experience of displaced people from Ukraine

Scotland's Ukraine response to date has been delivered through strong partnership and collaboration across the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council, local authorities, the third sector, community groups, business communities, the NHS as well as schools, colleges and universities. This has been aided by the generosity of the people of Scotland who have volunteered as hosts and provided other forms of support. In the next phase, the Scottish Government will continue to work with its partners to strengthen this approach.

The Scottish Government and its partners, including COSLA, local government, the third sector, community volunteers, business communities and the wider public sector remain committed to welcoming and supporting all those fleeing war and persecution.

Moving on and Re-entry Policies

An important pillar of the Scottish Government's 'Warm Scots Future' is the reduction in reliance on welcome accommodation. As a result of concerted effort locally and nationally, there are around 3,000 displaced people residing in Scottish Government accommodation as of September 2023. This represents a reduction of around 60% from 7,200 in November 2022.

To help continue to drive down numbers in welcome accommodation, and encourage guests to move on from welcome accommodation, the Scottish Government has worked closely with COSLA, Local Authorities and other key delivery partners to develop a new national 'moving-on' policy requiring guests to accept reasonable offers of accommodation, with a 're-entry' policy to reduce future re-presentations.

We expect the changes, scheduled to come into effect on 7 December, will help to reduce the reliance on welcome accommodation which will be beneficial to the displaced people involved as well as ensuring better value for money for Scottish taxpayers.

The detail of these policies are attached and have been agreed by COSLA and local authority leaders as well as Scottish Government Ministers.

My officials are working with COSLA and our key delivery partners to support the policy introduction and have developed a suite of resources for displaced people, local authorities and key stakeholders to support implementation, including guidance, flow charts and FAQs.

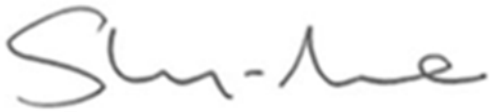
Ukraine Longer Term Resettlement Fund

The Scottish Government is pleased to advise that the £50m Ukraine Longer-Term Resettlement Fund has now been extended by a further year to 31 March 2025. The fund is aimed at encouraging Local Authorities (LAs) and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to increase the number of homes available to support the longer-term resettlement of people displaced from Ukraine.

To date the Fund has been successful in bringing over 1200 void homes back into use – many of which will leave a longer term social housing legacy. The Fund is still actively accepting applications from Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords and we are actively inviting new applications to the fund.

I hope that you have found this information useful.

Yours sincerely,



SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

Policy overview: November 2023

POLICY OVERVIEW

This document provides an overview of: who can access welcome accommodation; expectations around offers of longer-term accommodation and what happens when offers are not accepted; and conditions for re-entry to welcome accommodation following a period of absence.

This is an overview only and more detailed information relevant to local authorities and welcome hubs can be found in Operational Guidance stored in Objective Connect.

Purpose of Welcome Accommodation

The purpose of welcome accommodation is to provide a temporary place of safety for displaced people from Ukraine with Scottish Super Sponsor visas on their initial arrival to Scotland.

Entitlement to access Welcome Accommodation

1. From **8 January 2024** entry to welcome accommodation will be limited in most circumstances to displaced people from Ukraine with a Scottish Super Sponsor Visa on their initial arrival to Scotland if they have not been able to make their own accommodation arrangements.
2. Some displaced people with a Super Sponsor visa may have made their own accommodation arrangements on their initial arrival to Scotland and seek to enter welcome accommodation at a later date. Entry under these circumstances will not be permitted unless there is a corresponding safeguarding concern (see [Annex A](#)) or in exceptional and compelling circumstances. Entry may also be permitted after the point of initial arrival for family reunification reasons of immediate family members only, or for large families requiring a property with three or more bedrooms.
3. In limited circumstances, displaced people holding a Homes for Ukraine visa with a named individual sponsor may be offered welcome accommodation in the short-term only where there is a safeguarding concern or there are exceptional and compelling circumstances that cannot be immediately managed through local processes.
4. Displaced people holding a Homes for Ukraine visa with a named individual sponsor may be offered welcome accommodation for family reunification of immediate family members only (see Annex B) or in cases of large families who will require a property of three or more bedrooms.
5. Displaced people from Ukraine on any other visa types are **not** entitled to access welcome accommodation. This includes but is not limited to: Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Extension Scheme visas (Skilled Worker Visa, Student Visa, Seasonal Worker Visa etc), Ukrainians with leave outside the immigration rules (LOTR) and those seeking asylum, or with refugee status.

Policy overview: November 2023

6. In cases where additional time is required to determine a displaced person's eligibility for welcome accommodation, for example for a safeguarding assessment or verifying visa type, welcome accommodation may be utilised for as long as it takes to carry out assessments.

Welcome Accommodation for Scottish Super Sponsor holders arriving in Scotland for the first time from 7 December 2023

7. Displaced people from Ukraine with a Scottish Super Sponsor visa arriving in Scotland for the first time and who have not arranged alternative accommodation can be offered welcome accommodation on arrival in Scotland.
8. Welcome accommodation may be provided anywhere in Scotland. In the majority of cases it will not be possible to accommodate requests to be accommodated in any particular local authority area. All welcome accommodation is temporary and therefore subject to change and displaced people may be required to move to alternative welcome accommodation anywhere in Scotland.
9. Local authorities will support displaced people in welcome accommodation to identify two reasonable options for longer-term accommodation. One of these options should be a tenancy and the other option will usually be hosted accommodation. A definition of a reasonable option can be found in [Annex D](#).
10. If neither option of accommodation is accepted, the displaced person may remain in welcome accommodation for a maximum of 180 nights from their arrival date in welcome accommodation, or two months (60 nights) from the date of refusal of the second offer (whichever is longer). It may be necessary for displaced people to move to alternative welcome accommodation during this time.
11. In cases where it is not possible to identify two reasonable options of longer-term accommodation, welcome accommodation will not be time-limited.
12. Displaced people with a Homes for Ukraine visa with a named individual sponsor who are allocated welcome accommodation for family reunification reasons or because they require a large property will also be entitled to receive two offers. However, in cases of family reunification where offers have already been made to the original household group, this may vary.

Welcome Accommodation for displaced people already in Welcome Accommodation before 7 December 2023

13. Local authorities will support displaced people to identify two reasonable options for longer-term accommodation from 7 December 2023.

Policy overview: November 2023

14. If neither option of longer-term accommodation is accepted, the displaced person may be permitted to remain in welcome accommodation for a maximum of 180 nights from their arrival date in welcome accommodation, or two months (60 nights) from the date of refusal of the second offer (whichever is longer). It may be necessary for displaced people to move to alternative welcome accommodation during this time.
15. Offers of accommodation made by local authorities before 7 December 2023 will not be counted towards the two reasonable offers of accommodation.
16. Local authorities may re-offer accommodation that has previously been rejected prior to 7 December 2023, providing it meets the standards set out in [Annex D](#).
17. In cases where it is not possible to identify two options of longer-term accommodation, welcome accommodation will not be time-limited.
18. Displaced people on any visa type within welcome accommodation as of 7 December 2023 are entitled to the same offer and timescales on accommodation detailed above.

Moving on from welcome accommodation and reasonable options for longer-term accommodation

19. A reasonable option for longer term accommodation could be:
 - an offer made by the local authority of hosted accommodation
 - a tenancy agreement offered by a local authority
 - a successful application for housing
20. All households should be supported to identify one option of an affordable and sustainable tenancy agreement. The other option can be another tenancy agreement or a hosted arrangement that is expected to last at least six months.
21. A tenancy agreement could include social housing either through the local authority or an RSL, a mid-market rent property, or a private tenancy.
22. Where necessary for displaced people to apply for housing through a Common Housing Register, directly to RSLs or through other local processes, local authorities should provide sufficient support to displaced people to understand local processes and make applications.
23. Displaced people are expected to actively engage with local authorities to apply for housing where necessary. If displaced people do not engage with local authorities to apply for housing, this will be considered a refusal to engage with the process of identifying longer-term accommodation options, and displaced people will be required to leave welcome accommodation within 60 days.

Policy overview: November 2023

24. Where local authorities are making both offers of accommodation, this may happen on the same day, or on different days and can be made in any order (either hosted or tenancy can be the first or second offer). Local authorities are not required to hold offers of accommodation that have been refused for later reconsideration, however local authorities may wish to do so at their discretion.
25. Local authorities will take into account the location preferences of displaced people and will seek to identify and support applications for accommodation within the local authority, or within a neighbouring local authority where possible. However, where necessary, a local authority may make an offer of accommodation in any Scottish local authority area or support an application for housing in a different local authority area.
26. Where local authorities are making offers of accommodation directly, this should be in writing with sufficient information about the offer for an informed decision to be made. Offers of accommodation and all corresponding information should be provided in English and Ukrainian. Local authorities should offer displaced people the opportunity to discuss offers of accommodation by phone or in person with access to an interpreter where required.
27. Where local authorities are making offers of accommodation directly, the displaced person should formally reply to offers, preferably in writing and within 3-5 working days, advising acceptance or rejection of the offer. If no response is received within this timeframe it will be assumed that the offer has been declined.
28. In cases where displaced people are being supported to apply for housing, local authorities should liaise with RSLs to understand when offers of accommodation have been made to displaced people where possible.
29. In cases where a displaced person receives an offer of housing through a RSL, local authorities should offer displaced people the opportunity to discuss the offer by phone or in person with access to an interpreter where required. Displaced people should respond within the time set out in the offer from the RSL.
30. Local authorities must provide information on any relevant support that displaced people may be entitled to in relation to commencing a tenancy agreement including rent deposit support schemes, Discretionary Housing Payment and Community Care Grants. Support should be given to apply for any relevant grants or schemes as required.
31. If both options of longer-term accommodation are refused, local authorities should advise the displaced person in writing of the final date for exit from welcome accommodation. Local authorities should support a referral for a Housing Options Assessment which should be carried out before the displaced person is required to leave welcome accommodation.

Policy overview: November 2023

32. If a displaced person does not consider that an option of longer-term accommodation meets the standards set out in [Annex D](#), then a request for a review of the option identified should be made in writing to the local authority within 5 working days of the offer being made. An official who did not make the offer should review the details of the offer against accommodation standards and respond to the displaced person within 5 working days.
33. If a decision is made that an option has been declined on justifiable grounds, defined as not meeting the conditions set out in the standards in annex D, then a further offer of accommodation should be made or support offered to apply for additional tenancies.

Re-entry to welcome accommodation following a period of absence [FROM 8 JANUARY 2024]

34. Short-term absences from welcome accommodation of up to 5 nights are permitted. Welcome accommodation will be retained for absences of up to this duration. Displaced people should inform their accommodation provider of any overnight absences for health and safety reasons.
35. From 8 January 2024 if a displaced person vacates welcome accommodation for a period exceeding five nights, they will not be permitted to return to any welcome accommodation in most circumstances.
36. At the discretion of the local authority, absences of more than five nights may be permitted in limited circumstances including:
 - Travel relating to medical treatment
 - Travel relating to short-term family reunification
 - Travel to check on property in Ukraine, or for administrative reasons
 - Travel for reasons relating to mental health and wellbeing.
37. Local authorities may wish to consider asking for evidence for absences of over five nights for one of the above reasons.
38. If the local authority has agreed a longer term absence from welcome accommodation prior to travel then welcome accommodation will be retained for the period of absence.
39. If a period of absence takes place following rejection of a second offer of accommodation, this does not change the final date that welcome accommodation must be exited.
40. If a displaced person is absent from welcome accommodation for a duration exceeding five nights and permission was not sought or granted, then their room will be closed and any personal items managed in line with local policies. Re-entry to welcome accommodation will **not** be permitted on return in these circumstances and displaced people will be required to make their own accommodation arrangements.

Policy overview: November 2023

41. Re-entry to welcome accommodation following a period of absence exceeding five nights that was not agreed prior to travel by the local authority will only be permitted in cases where:
- There are safeguarding concerns that cannot be managed through local processes;
 - In cases of emergency where a displaced person was unable to seek authorisation prior to departure and on return the local authority deem it an acceptable reason for an absence exceeding five nights.
 - If a displaced person has made arrangements to travel prior to the revised re-entry policy being announced on 7 December 2023 and they travel under the impression re-entry will be permitted. Local authorities may ask for documentation to prove travel arrangements were made before this date.
42. In these cases it is at the local authority's discretion whether or not to permit re-entry in welcome accommodation.
43. Following a period of absence of any duration, displaced people are responsible for their own transport to and from welcome accommodation. For example, from an airport to welcome accommodation. Alternative welcome accommodation (e.g. airport hotels) should not be used for people re-entering Scotland following an absence, for example, following a late night flight.

Annex A: Safeguarding

Safeguarding principles

Safeguarding duties are the responsibility of the local authority for the area where an individual is living or presents. This approach builds on existing procedures, noting the underlying principles and areas to be considered, in supporting displaced people from Ukraine to welcome accommodation for reasons of safety.

Local authorities will make their assessment of need, which may exceptionally, for safeguarding reasons, include a return to welcome accommodation. Where required, this should be seen as an emergency, short-term solution to help mitigate risks to the safety and wellbeing of an individual or family. It should include steps to support people to move on to more settled accommodation. It is important that any planned interventions focus on reducing uncertainty and provide stability to support trauma recovery. The following principles are therefore suggested to support consistency of decision-making around re-entry into welcome accommodation for safeguarding reasons:

- Outline the identified risks and mitigations within the safeguarding assessment (for children this is undertaken using the GIRFEC national practice model) which supports decision making;
- Summarise the support plan to assist displaced people with longer term arrangements in the community;
- Be cognisant of the impact of multiple transitions for vulnerable people. Where no other safe alternative is identified, the additional risk to wellbeing should be recognised and recorded, alongside further supports offered – for example continuity of workers to maintain relationships and trust already built;
- Wherever possible, the move should be as well planned as possible with support agencies, both statutory and third sector, alerted in advance;
- Any decision to utilise welcome accommodation should only be taken where there is no alternative and placement in welcome accommodation is the only way to minimise the assessed risk;
- For unaccompanied young people, local authorities should consider whether a formal care arrangement is more appropriate, in line with local safeguarding processes.

Policy overview: November 2023

Annex B: Definition of Immediate Family Members

For the purposes of these policies, immediate family members are defined as:

- a spouse or partner
- a fiancé, fiancée or proposed civil partner
- a child under the age of 18
- a parent of a child or young person under the age of 18
- a relative who will provide long-term care for a displaced person

Annex C: Definition of a large family

The definition of a large family is a household requiring three or more bedrooms.

Annex D: Definition of a reasonable option for longer-term accommodation

A reasonable option for longer term accommodation could be:

- an offer made by the local authority of hosted accommodation or a tenancy agreement
- a tenancy agreement offered by a local authority or Registered Social Landlord (RSL)
- a successful application for housing

A reasonable option for longer-term accommodation must:

- meet all relevant health and safety requirements.
- be of a suitable size to accommodate all household members, based on overcrowding legislation. More than one property may be required for larger households, depending on the family composition. Local authorities should consider the proximity of these properties and needs of the household in these circumstances.
- be affordable for the household, taking into account access to employment and benefits.
- give consideration to caring needs and responsibilities - accommodation will be within reasonable distance of any caring needs or responsibilities the household may have.
- meet disability requirements, following reasonable adaptations.
- be expected to last for at least six months, regardless of the type of accommodation

As far as possible, a reasonable option for longer-term accommodation should:

- give consideration to personal health and social care needs, however it should be noted that health and social care support is available in all local authority and health board areas and it may not be possible to make offers based on where support/treatment is currently being provided. If travel for appointments or treatment is required, costs may be covered by the NHS in some circumstances.

Policy overview: November 2023

- give consideration to educational needs, however, it is likely that it will not be possible to offer accommodation within the catchment area of current school or college.
- give consideration to employment status and occupation, particularly specialist employment, however being employed does not guarantee an offer in a particular area.

Local pressures will dictate the extent to which the considerations of education and employment can be taken into account.