

Considering hosting a refugee family

Introduction

Some of the things which are relevant to consider have been collected together to help you with this journey.

The government website **Homes for Ukraine** is regularly updated and has lots of [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and answers.

Think about what support you can give to refugees from Ukraine – if you decide you can't be a sponsor at this time it is likely that a wide range of other support will be needed so look out for other details.

If you do decide you want to be a sponsor then you will probably want to think about the following things:

1. What accommodation can I provide

Potential sponsors will have a diverse range of options to consider. Many will have one or two rooms in their house with shared use of kitchen and bathroom while others will have an annexe an empty flat or a whole house.

The UK Government has issued initial guidance on what they expect of accommodation and the local council (district council or equivalent) will visit before or soon after guests arrive to check arrangements.

Scroll down to find **Appendix 1** that lists common requirements a host property should meet.

2. Who do I need to speak to

Once you and any existing members of your family have discussed hosting, you may want to consider the following:

- Talking to wider family and friends about what support they can give to you and your guests if needed.
- Do you need permission from your landlord or local authority?

- Do you need permission from your mortgage company?
- If your house is leasehold, do you need to get permission?
- Do you need to tell your insurer and do you and they know what is covered under insurance for guests?
(if you are going to transport people as a volunteer your car insurer may need to be aware)
- Is there a neighbour, friend or another host that can help as an emergency contact/support if you are at work or unavailable at other times?

Think through what might need to be discussed to help everyone feel comfortable in a new situation.

3. Keeping everyone safe

Children and vulnerable adults need particular care to ensure their safety.

Many potential hosts will already have children in the house or as regular visitors and have this well covered.

People who have fled from traumatic situations need all the safety and protection we can give them so it's worth just double checking a few things.

Guests will be in the home for at least 6 months and arrangements made for short term visits may be different from what is needed for longer term stays – so think if any additional safeguarding measures are appropriate.

The Parents or carers of children who are guests will be mainly supervising their children while in your home, but Hosts will want to reassure themselves and their guests that their house is as safe as it can be and learn together how to keep everyone safe.

Consider your own online safety as you communicate ID details to potential guests for visa requirements and begin to consider any online safety issues for guest arriving.

See **Appendix 3** for more details on safety requirements.

4. What checks need to be done?

When a joint visa application is made, the central government will be responsible for national and international checking of identity and addressing any known concerns.

It is expected that the local council Kent County Council (KCC) and the relevant District council (Canterbury City Council) will do the relevant checks.

This includes Relevant level of DBS checks (KCC) and Household Checks (CCC).

The Government guidance (as for 25/3/22) states:

- In addition to checks prior to visas being issued, all households receiving guests from Ukraine will receive checks by your local council on the property and household. All households will be visited to ensure the accommodation is fit for purpose and suitable to receive guests.
- If the accommodation is self-contained or only adults without specific vulnerabilities (see below) are coming into the property then **Basic DBS checks** are undertaken on all adult members in the sponsor household.
- If children under the age of 18 are going to be accommodated in the household, then an **Enhanced DBS check (including a check of the children's barred list)** will be undertaken on all people in the sponsor's household over 16.
- Local Authorities will follow existing guidance for regulated activity with vulnerable adults. Where the local authority officials know that there is an adult guest arriving in the household, who is vulnerable (due to illness, disability or age) and has particular needs for which the sponsor is to provide support, a request for an **Enhanced DBS check with check of the adults' barred list** can be made.

While individuals can request a **basic DBS check** themselves, only employers or volunteer agencies can request enhanced DBS checks.

Local authorities will decide if an existing DBS is available or if an updated one is needed (there is no expiry date on a DBS but many agencies expect an update every 3 years).

If you don't have any DBS (or the relevant DBS) it appears that you can apply for a visa and the local authority will then support the application process for a DBS but this does not appear to be a requirement before your guest arrives.

See **Appendix 4** for information on DBS checks.

5. Ground rules and boundaries

Government guidance suggests the following:

It's best to set a few clear expectations between you and your guests. As a sponsor you may want to draw up an agreement with your guests that sets a few ground rules, such as sharing use of common areas of the house, or concerning things like smoking, alcohol or noise. It's good to be clear about what the bottom-line rules are.

The government guidance is clear – **you should not charge any rent.** (*At least for initial 6 months*)

Agencies with experience in supporting refugees and hosts suggest other rules and clarifications including:

- Business relationships or any financial agreements are highly unlikely to be appropriate and there are significant legal risks if hosts accept any rent or payment which might be construed as rent from guests
- Hosts need to be very aware of the power differential, and consider how this might affect their relationship with the guest. Particular care should be taken about developing any relationship beyond that of host and guest and to think through what consent might mean to the guest.

This is particularly important in terms of sexual relationships, which are never appropriate.

Read **Appendix 5** for more advice.

6. Thinking about how to support your guests

Once you have begun the matching process, you will want to think about how to support guests and this will vary widely.

Think about what support you can provide:

- in transit
- immediately on arrival
- in the first few days
- as people get involved in accessing services, employment and settling into their new situation.

April 2022

Appendix 1. Accommodation standards

What do I need to do to make sure my home is suitable for my guest? (25/03/2022)

The local authority will be responsible for inspecting the arrangements and on 25/03/2022 guidance was issued on minimum expectations.

Summary

At least 6 months of stable accommodation is expected.

It must be safe, heated and free from health hazards, and gives your guests adequate access to bathroom and kitchen facilities.

A bed in a shared space would not be an appropriate offer.

Prospective sponsors should consider if your accommodation is suitable for someone with a young child, the elderly or someone with a disability.

Accommodation needs to be free from serious health and safety hazards. You should make sure your home is safe for your guests and that it is in a suitable condition.

Two people should not be in one room unless they are:

- adult cohabiting partners;
- a parent and child;
- two siblings of the same gender if aged over 10;
- two siblings regardless of gender if aged under 10.

Individuals who didn't previously know each other should not be given the same room.

The wider specification states that the accommodation should:

- be kept clean and in a reasonable state;
- have adequate kitchen and bathroom space;

- have access to drinking water;
- have a **working smoke detector on each floor of the property** and other fire safety precautions suitable for the building (e.g. fire doors or escape routes as appropriate);
- **have a working carbon monoxide detector** in any room containing a solid fuel burning appliance (e.g. a coal fire, wood burning stove);
- have sufficient heating to keep the property at a comfortable temperature;
- have safe gas appliances, fittings and flues and have undertaken a **Gas Safety check within the last year** (see [more information](#));
- have safe and working electrics, which a qualified electrician can help with if you are unsure;
- be almost entirely free of damp or mould;
- **have doors and windows at entry level that lock properly;**
- **be easy and safe to move around in,** without **excessively steep staircases that may cause harm.**

Appendix 3. Safety checklist

The following is drawn from checklist used for people caring for children in their homes (childminders, foster carers etc.) and focuses on safety of children. It is based on experiences from a wide range of settings.

Most people will get to the end of the list and have a few things to consider before their guests arrive or their house inspection. If you have already thought of all of the relevant ones – brilliant, and if you find more – pass on your ideas.

Online resources you may find helpful are:

[Home safety - RoSPA](#)

[A Guide to Home Safety: Identifying and Preventing Hazards - SafeHome.org](#)

Things to consider (in no particular order...)

Kitchen

Watch out for trailing flexes which children might pull

Do you need a cooker guard?

How are sharp knives and other equipment kept safe?

How are cleaning chemicals kept safe?

Do you have a chest freezer where children could get trapped?

Are there hot surfaces which need to be protected? (remember about other places in the house such as fireplaces and hot radiators)

Bathroom

Is all electrical equipment suitable for damp environment and controlled by pull cord switch?

In shared bathrooms: Are razors, scissors, medicines, cleaning materials, cosmetics etc. kept safely locked away/out of reach?

Is there a lockable or out of reach place guests can put their things to keep children safe in their private area?

Can your hot water from taps get very hot? Think about preventing scalding in sinks and baths

In shared facilities: does the lock work and is it at a height children can use? With locks on bathroom door, can you get in if a child locks themselves in?

Bedrooms

Are beds/cot safe? Check safety particularly if they're second-hand (new mattresses for cots may be available from local charities).

Consider young children & fire exit issues – is furniture kept away from escape routes/windows?

Generally, think about:

Medicines, toxic substances, matches, glues and solvents, button batteries etc. Are they locked away or out of reach?

Is all alcohol out of reach? (Children's reach - not yours!)

Water safety

More than 400 people die in the UK from drowning every year. Young children are most likely to die in the bath or in a garden pond in just a few inches of water when someone is distracted.

Is your garden pond/paddling pool/hot tub/swimming pool etc. a risk?

Can you get bathing equipment for the parents to support a young child in the bath?

Trip hazards

Are rugs and carpets secure to avoid tripping? Are there any other tripping hazards (trailing cables etc.)

If you have pets, babies, toddlers – how are floors and litter trays kept safe and hygienic?

Particular risks

Do you possess a firearm/air rifle or other weapon, including ceremonial, antique or replica weapons? How are they stored safely?

Windows and glass

Are all large areas of glass and windows/glass doors fitted with safety glass? Does indoor glazing have safety glass or protective film?

(One local authority asked hosts to board over glass doors to make them safe but appropriate safety film should be adequate)

Think about windows above ground level – for children under 10 these should be lockable or not able to be opened more than 4 inches (remember, an Afghan child died in fall from a window)

Any blinds should have cords securely tethered to prevent danger of strangulation.

Electrical

Government guidance does not propose an electrical safety certificate but some authorities are asking for one.

In any case – is there a plug or light switch that is ‘dodgy’, is loose or sparks? Something that ‘everyone knows about and takes extra care’ – now is the time to get it sorted!!

Is your consumer board in a cupboard where children can access – how can it be made safe?

(One household check in another county identified a missing blanking plate needed to be preplaced in a consumer board)

Do you have a tangle of extension leads or adaptor plugs?

There are competing views on the need for plug covers – certainly if used, they must be correctly fitted (not put in upside down by older children as that increases risk).

If guests arrive with electrical equipment with Ukrainian plugs can you help them keep it safe? Do you have UK plug adapters handy?

Gas safety

Government guidance expects an annual gas safety certificate (given when boiler is serviced). Is this up to date and do you know where your copy is?

Fire safety

In Kent, Fire Service are offering a free home visit to advise and assist in remedying any shortfalls. Consider using this.

Do you have fire/smoke detectors fitted at each level of the house?

Do you have any fire equipment (blankets, extinguishers) and know how to use them correctly?

Are all window and door keys accessible in the event of a fire?

Think about the best way to get out if there was a fire and tell your guests. (remember, most insurers require keys to doors to be removed from locks and out of sight so think how your guests will know how to get out in the case of a fire)

Do you need to have a torch so people not familiar with the house layout can use it if main lights are not working?

If you have very old furniture or been given furniture, is it fire resistant?

If you have moved beds/soft furnishings to accommodate guests, are they too close to fire or hot radiators?

If anyone in the house smokes, what are the rules and expectations?

Are cigarettes/lighters/matches kept safely, especially with children around?

Animals

Do you or your guests have pets?

You will have considered any allergies or possible fears and phobias before agreeing to host a pet or for the family to join a pet owning household.

Have you thought about risk of unpredictable behaviour from pets and/or children?

(2 young children were killed by dogs in last 6 months in UK and around 2000 children injured by dogs each year)

Children may be very frightened of unfamiliar pets and those that have suffered trauma might express that by being rough with animals so make sure you have considered how you will make sure there is appropriate supervision.

Giving children and adults lifts

Have you confirmed your insurance covers this?

Do you have correct and age appropriate baby/child seat? General advice is never to use a second-hand car seat as you may not know its history (it could have been in an accident).

You may not know how to tell a Ukrainian child who doesn't speak English that they must wear a seatbelt – how will you deal with that?

Are the door locks in your vehicle child proof?

First aid

Do you have first aid equipment and know how to contact medical services in emergency?

Make sure your guest has this information and consider how you can convey this type of basic information to guests if their use of English is limited.

Garden, outbuildings and equipment

You want your guests to be relaxed and, if appropriate, free to use outdoor space without having to worry about hazards.

Think about if space is enclosed to avoid children 'getting out' onto road.

Are the garage & shed kept locked?

Do you have a greenhouse and if so, what safety measures do parents need to take in and around it?

Consider securely fencing off ponds and swimming/paddling pools or keep them covered/drained if hosting a family with young children.

What is for use 'under adult supervision only'?

Think about any play equipment any damage or dangers – is the sandpit hygienic and covered when not in use?

Think about safety and security of garages, sheds, barns, DIY and farm equipment and chemicals stored there.

It is suggested by some that the collapsible rotary dryers be covered or removed when not in use.

What information do parents of children need to know about in order to keep them safe in your home and the neighbourhood?

Are you aware of any poisonous plants in your garden and if so, what safety measures do you take?

Is rubbish stored safely and the garden free of rusty metal, broken glass etc.?

Is garden free of dog/cat fouling?

Road safety

How are young children prevented from straying onto roads?

With older children they may have lived in a rural setting and they are now in a town or vice versa – remember, even adults who have good road sense can get confused when driving or as pedestrian in Europe when they drive on the ‘right side’ – it will be the same for adults and children adjusting to the UK where we drive on the ‘wrong side’.

Equipment

Do you have or need to get:

- Stairgates (do you have open banisters which need securing?)
- Bed guard
- Fire guard
- Cooker Guard
- Others?

Personal items

Your own children or visiting children and adults may be very good about not touching your valuable China glass or fragile things, but all children are

different and it's worth thinking not just about any possible risk to children but how you would feel if something irreplaceable was damaged.

We hope this helps

April 2022

Appendix 4. Checks

If you do have a DBS check know what type it is.

Enhanced standard or Basic? The certificate heading gives the type.

Adult, Children or both? 'Position applied for' will give a description of your job/role followed by either Child workforce Adult Workforce or Adult and Child workforce.

Barred list check included? Look at the 'DBS Children Barred list' box, if the relevant check has been done it will say 'None recorded', if not it will say 'Not requested'.

If you are considering taking adults with specific needs requiring an adult barred list check then talking to local health or social care team would be advisable.

If you are registered with the DBS update service, this allows checks to be updated with your consent without a new application (not changing category).

If you subsequently get a DBS, consider joining this service.

DBS checks and update service is free for volunteers but must be done by employer or agency responsible for 'regulated activity'.

Vulnerable adults are defined as those due to illness, disability or age receiving particular support.

While many adult guests will have vulnerability due to traumatic experiences and being in an unfamiliar culture, adult DBS checks will only be required for a very few with specific needs due to illness, disability or age.

Matching agencies may priorities those with the relevant DBS checks already in place.

Local councils may decide on minimum space requirements or additional specifications for the house checks they are responsible for.

Appendix 5. Rules and boundaries

Refugees and asylum seekers are, by definition, vulnerable. That doesn't mean they aren't articulate, intelligent, determined human beings with personal agency; but they are also in a complicated legal and personal situation, often having endured very difficult circumstances that have left them with very complex things to work through; and all this in an alien country & culture.

Hosts need to be very aware of the power differential, and consider how this might affect their relationship with the guest. Particular care should be taken about developing any relationship beyond that of host and guest and to think through what consent might mean to the guest. This is particularly important in terms of sexual relationships, which are **never appropriate** and will result in placements ending and hosts being removed from our register.

This also extends to business relationships or any financial agreements (we believe that these are highly unlikely to be appropriate and there are significant legal risks if hosts accept any rent or payment which might be construed as rent from guests) or even very intense friendships. A host might be making a very genuine offer of help or friendship but the guest may well feel very powerless and obliged to agree as a result. We ask our home visitor to explore with the host the limitations of the hosting role and this power differential. We also take up two references for hosts in order to help protect our guests. Guests are also usually supported by their referrers throughout the placement, who they often have an established relationship with and who can support them with any concerns relating to the placement. Refugees at Home seeks regular updates from referrers to try to establish that all is well from the perspective of the guest.

Extract from [Refugees At Home - Host / Refer a Guest / Donate](#)