

Your rights in Scotland: Ukraine schemes

Information sheet

Important information

- *This document is for general information only*
- *For legal advice on individual cases you need to get advice from an immigration qualified legal representative*
- *Information changes frequently. Please check the official websites for up to date information*

This document is for people recently arriving in Scotland under any of the Ukraine schemes and introduces essential rights and information on how to access essential services in Scotland such as housing, financial support, schools and health.

Immigration routes and identity documents

Ukraine visa schemes

On 19th February 2024, the UK Government made changes to its visa schemes for people fleeing the war in Ukraine. If this affects you or your plans to bring your family to the UK we advise to seek urgent legal advice.

Ukraine Family scheme

This scheme for people with family ties to the UK closed at 3pm on 19th February 2024. You can no longer apply for a visa under this scheme. If you applied before the scheme was closed your application will be assessed under the previous immigration rules.

Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme

This scheme is now the only visa application route specifically for people from Ukraine who are outside the UK. The length of this visa changed from 3 years to 18 months.

To apply under this scheme you will need an approved sponsor in the UK. The UK government made changes to who can act as a sponsor. Previously sponsors included anyone who has

leave to remain in the UK for at least 6 months. Your named sponsor now has to be a British or Irish citizen or have indefinite leave to remain in the UK. If you submitted a Homes for Ukraine visa application before 3pm on 19th February 2024, these changes do not apply to you.

The Scottish Government has previously been acting as a 'super sponsor' for people arriving via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This meant people fleeing the war did not have to arrange an individual sponsor before coming to Scotland. However, the Scottish Government has since paused its [Ukraine Super Sponsor scheme](#).

[Ukraine Extension scheme](#)

This scheme is for Ukrainians who are already in the UK on a temporary visa. This scheme closed on 16th May 2024 for everyone apart from children born in the UK to a parent with any Ukraine schemes visa. This exception will allow children born in the UK to apply and get leave in line with their parents. Please check for further information here: [Apply to stay in the UK under the Ukraine Extension scheme](#).

[Ukraine Permission Extension scheme](#)

This scheme is for people with permission to be in the UK under any of the Ukraine schemes (Homes for Ukraine scheme, Ukraine Family scheme and Ukraine Extension scheme). It was announced at 3pm on 19th February 2024 and applications should open from early 2025. If you hold any Ukraine schemes visa in the UK and would like to carry on living in the UK, you will need to apply for this extension within 3 months before your existing visa is due to expire.

If your application is accepted you will be allowed to live in the UK for another 18 months. You will continue to have the right to work, study and access public funds.

It is free of cost to apply under these schemes. The visa issued will give you the right to work, study and access public funds in the UK.

There are other visa routes to come to the UK such as visitor, worker, and student visa routes. Check the Home Office information on [Check if you need a UK visa](#).

Who makes decisions on visa applications?

The Home Office's [UK Visas and Immigration \(UKVI\)](#) is responsible for making immigration decisions about who has the right to visit or stay in the UK. In this document we will refer to [UKVI](#) as the Home Office.

Visa application process

You must apply online for any of the Ukraine schemes routes using the relevant online forms. If your visa application is successful you will get permission to travel to the UK and if you are already in the UK you will get permission to stay in the UK. If you have not already applied for a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) as part of the visa application, you will also have to apply for

identity and confirm your right to study and access benefits and public services.

Immigration advice

You can choose to seek further immigration advice once in the UK. A qualified legal representative will be able to advise you whether going through a different immigration route is in your or your family's best interest.

Will legal advice cost any money?

Some legal representatives do not charge money. Others will charge money. If you are on a low income, you may be able to get Legal Aid to pay for legal advice in Scotland. Your legal representative will be able to help with this and apply for Legal Aid for you.

Free legal Advice

When contacting legal advisers check if the service is free or does Legal Aid. If there is a charge involved, advisers must communicate that to you.

What is immigration advice?

Immigration advice is a type of legal advice given about an individual's right to enter, remain and live in the UK. Immigration advice broadly includes legal advice on asylum, immigration and British nationality matters. Only qualified legal representatives can give immigration advice.

What is Legal aid?

If you are destitute, on a low income and/or in receipt of benefits, you may be able to get Legal Aid to pay for legal advice costs in Scotland. This Legal Aid fund is managed by [Scottish Legal Aid Board \(SLAB\)](#).

Free Immigration legal advice:

- [Ukraine Advice Project UK](#): This UK wide project is for Ukrainian citizens affected by the invasion in need of **free** legal advice on the UK immigration and asylum matters. Please note their **advice is only available in English**

If you need further legal advice, get advice from a qualified legal representative:

- Find a lawyer in Scotland on [the Law Society of Scotland: Find a Solicitor](#)
- Find an Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulated immigration adviser on [the OISC adviser finder](#)

Housing

Temporary welcome accommodation

If you are a Super Sponsor Scheme visa holder arriving for the first time in Scotland and don't have your own accommodation you may be able to access temporary free accommodation. These are usually hotels set-up by the Scottish government to meet your immediate needs before finding longer term accommodation. You need to go to a Welcome Hub first and ask for support. Please check for further information about the Welcome Hubs and temporary welcome accommodation, who is eligible, who else may be offered accommodation in exceptional circumstances and for how long: [Arrival in Scotland - Scotland for Ukrainians: a guide for displaced people - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/collections/documents/Arrival-in-Scotland-Scotland-for-Ukrainians-a-guide-for-displaced-people.pdf)

The temporary welcome accommodation is intended to be a short-term accommodation and you are expected to stay there for up to six months. The local council will work with you to identify up to two reasonable options for longer-term accommodation. One of the options should include a tenancy agreement. The other option will usually be a host accommodation. You are also encouraged to find your own accommodation by renting privately or in social housing.

Housing rights when living in host accommodation

Hosts are expected to offer you accommodation for a minimum of 6 months. The local council will check that the accommodation is suitable. When staying with a host, you are a guest and you don't have to pay any rent. However, if you are in a shared accommodation with your host, they can ask for reasonable and proportionate contribution towards the household bills, for example they can ask you to pay for some portion of the water, gas and electricity bills. If you are living in a separate property provided by your host, you are responsible for the property's utility bills from the date you started living in the accommodation. You are expected to pay for these bills from your income, e.g. benefits and crisis grants.

Housing rights when not living in host accommodation

In Scotland you have the:

- Right to rent a property privately
- Right to rent in social housing
- Option to buy your own home
- Right to present as homeless

Your housing options depend on your financial means and circumstances. Housing rights Charity [Shelter](https://www.shelter.org.uk) has useful information on housing rights.

Renting a home

Private landlords are people who rent out their own home. Rent costs depend on the local market and you may need to put down a deposit.

Social landlords are Local Councils or Housing Associations. Social housing is regulated and cheaper than market rate and is allocated to people based on their housing needs.

If you are renting you will have a contract that is called a tenancy. This contract will give you rights as a tenant. You can find out about your rights in [Shelter's](#) website below:

- Find out [About renting your home from the council - Shelter Scotland](#)
- Find out about [Renting privately - Shelter Scotland](#)

If you rent a home and are on low income or on benefits you may get help with paying your rent. Shelter has a section on [Housing costs and money help](#).

Option to buy a home

If you have the means to buy a home in Scotland, find out about the buying process in Scotland and when you may be able to get help with grants and loans [Buying a home - Shelter Scotland](#).

Right to present as homeless

Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, hosts commit to provide accommodation from 6 to 24 months. However there will be instances where the arrangements may need to terminate early. This could be because you found alternative and suitable accommodation you want to move to or because the situation with your host is no longer suitable.

Under the Ukraine Family scheme, your relative who sponsored your visa application may not have suitable accommodation for you.

If you find yourself in housing that is unreasonable to occupy or you have been asked to leave the accommodation you are in, you have a right to seek support from the Council to find somewhere else to live. Examples of housing that is not reasonable to occupy can be but is not limited to:

- In very serious disrepair
- Unsafe - internal or external violence, including racial or other harassment
- Overcrowded

When seeking help from your council, they will assess with you how urgently you need alternative accommodation and they will try to prevent you from becoming homeless. They will

explore with you all housing options available to you, including accessing a private or social let or another hosting placement.

If nothing is found, you will be entitled to homeless assistance if you have lost your home by no fault of your own. They will provide you with emergency accommodation and will continue to help you find housing.

Find out about being [Homeless, sofa surfing, or nowhere safe to stay - Shelter Scotland](#).

Money

Bank accounts

You will need to open a bank account as soon as possible as you will need this to get your benefits and other income paid into your account. You may find that opening a bank account is difficult in the first instance as you may not have all the documents needed. Banks ask for proof of address, identity documents and immigration status. Some banks have made the process easier for people arriving from Ukraine. Find out about banks who are helping to open a bank account in [Where to find information and help if you are from Ukraine](#). Some banks have guidance on opening basic bank accounts in Ukrainian and Russian. Opening an online bank account is easier. See [Refugee Council](#) Guide on [Bank accounts: Getting Started](#).

Benefits

If you need financial support you should apply for benefits as soon as you arrive. Under all three Ukraine schemes people are able to apply for benefits.

Benefits are:

- payments from the government to help people on low incomes
- payments to meet specific needs, for example needs of people who are unemployed and are looking for jobs, have children, are pregnant, are disabled or not fit to work

In Scotland some benefits are also called social security.

Depending on the type of benefit you are applying for you will have to talk to different government departments as different departments deal with different benefits. You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

Benefits you may be able to apply for include:

Proving right to claim benefits

When you apply for benefits you will need to show you have the right to claim benefits. You will need either your passport with a UK visa and/or BRP.

- [Universal Credit](#) is a payment to help with living costs when people are on low income, out of work or cannot work. Find out about: [Universal Credit: How to claim - GOV.UK](#)
- [Pension Credit](#) is a payment to help with living costs when people are on low income and over State Pension age. Find out about [Pension Credit: How to claim - GOV.UK](#)
- Find out what types of help you can get if you have a child:
 - [Get help with money if you have a child - mygov.scot](#)
 - [Claim Child Benefit: How to claim - GOV.UK](#)
 - [Scottish Child Payment](#) and [How to apply - mygov.scot](#)
- [Scottish Welfare Fund](#) (SWF) helps families and people in Scotland who are in crisis situations and need help with cost of living such as food and utilities. Check [how to apply for a Crisis Grant from your local authority](#)
- Find out about information on different types of payments made by [Social Security Scotland Agency](#) (SSSA)

Ask for help from a benefits adviser

Understanding which benefits you can apply for can be difficult. If you need more information [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) has useful information on [Benefits - Citizens Advice](#). You can also search for your local Citizens Advice Centre here [Bureaux | Citizens Advice Scotland](#) to see if you can get benefits advice.

National insurance number (NINo)

National Insurance Number (NINo) is a unique number linked to you and it is used as a reference number by benefit departments and employers. You will need NiNo to work, claim benefits, apply for student loans and pay national insurance contributions.

You can start work without a National Insurance number if you can prove you have the [right to work](#) in the UK.

You do not need a NINo to apply for benefits. You will be issued with one during the benefit application process.

If you have a BRP, you may have a National Insurance number already - it will be printed on the back of your BRP if you do.

Help with living costs before your benefit payments started

Some benefit applications for example universal credit takes 5 to 6 weeks to process. Here are a few options if you need help with living costs while waiting for your benefit payments to start:

- If you have recently applied for benefits and are waiting for the first payment, you can request an advance payment if you need the money urgently. You will need to pay this advance back when your benefit payments start
- If you need help with food and living costs while you are waiting you may want to apply for [Crisis Grants](#) managed by [Scottish Welfare Fund](#) (SWF) that helps families and people in Scotland who are in crisis situations and need help with cost of living such as food and utilities
- If you arrived under the Homes for Ukraine or Scottish Super Sponsor schemes then you are entitled to £200 interim payment from the local council. You will receive this amount once and will not have to pay this back. This payment may be split between different councils depending on where you entered the country and where you settled first. Speak to staff in your temporary welcome accommodation or the [local council](#) where you are settled to find out how to get this amount. Please note it may take time for local councils to start paying this money. If your visa is under the Ukraine Family scheme or Ukraine Extension scheme you will not get this amount
- Check [Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain](#) (AUGB) website to find out what information and help they can provide

Health

[NHS Scotland](#) (the National Health Service Scotland) is the publicly funded health service in Scotland. NHS Scotland provides most healthcare for free to people living in Scotland. You can ask for an interpreter to access healthcare if you need one.

GP practices

General Practitioners (GP) are often your first contact with the health service. They are like a family doctor who assesses your health and treats all common medical conditions. GPs are trained to assess and treat you with both your physical and mental health. GPs can refer you to hospitals and other specialists if needed.

Register with a GP as soon as possible

You and your family should register with the local GP practice as soon as possible so that you can get help when you need to.

To register with a GP practice you need to find a local GP and complete a registration form. You

do not need a fixed address to register, your immigration status does not matter, and you do not need an identity document, but if you have any you should take it with you.

Use this link for finding a local GP practice and [Registering with a GP practice | NHS inform](#)

If GP practice is full they may not be able to register you as a patient. If they are unable to register you they must explain the reason for refusing your request to register in writing.

Chemist

You can go to your local pharmacy and talk to the chemist if you have a minor illness. They may give you advice and provide medication in some cases. You can buy over-the-counter medicines at the local pharmacy that are not prescription medicines.

There are no prescription charges for medicines in Scotland so you are not expected to pay for medicines prescribed by your doctor.

Dentist

You must first register with a GP before you can register with a dentist. Not all dentists will take on new NHS patients. The dentist will explain which treatments are available for free on the NHS and those for which you will need to pay. Some people are eligible for free dental care, for example if you are under 26 years old, pregnant, and on low income. Every council also provides treatment for dental emergencies.

Optician

In Scotland you can get a free eye health check every two years and some people can get help towards the cost of prescription glasses.

Help with health costs

Most health care in Scotland is free, but there can be charges for some things such as glasses or contact lenses and dental treatment. Find out about who can get help with health costs: [Help with health costs \(HCS1\): information booklet - August 2021 - gov.scot](#).

NHS 24 phone service

[NHS 24](#) is a 24 hours phone service providing urgent care for physical and mental health and advice when the GP, pharmacy or dental practices are closed. **Call 111** for the service. Find out [When to phone 111 | NHS 24](#). Ask for an interpreter if needed.

Accident and emergency (A&E/999)

A&E is for emergencies when someone's life is at risk, such as a suspected heart attack or stroke, severe breathing difficulties or severe bleeding. You should call 999 in an emergency.

Scotland's Health services directory

Find out about health services including Accident & Emergency units, GP, Dental practices in your local area in the NHS Inform service directory: [Scotland's Service Directory - Find health services in Scotland | NHS inform](#).

NHS Scotland Services Guide for Ukrainians

- [Access the NHS Scotland Services Guide for Ukrainians in Ukrainian/English](#)
- [Access the NHS Scotland Services Guide for Ukrainians in Russian/English](#)

Education

Free nursery and child care support

You can get free child care funded by the Scottish government for 3 to 4 year olds. Sometimes free child care is provided for children aged 2 years old, for example if parents are on a low income or receiving benefits. Find out about child care support in Scottish government's website: [Funded early learning and childcare - mygov.scot](#).

School

In Scotland every child has the right to access education, no matter the immigration status of their parents, and has a right to a free school place. Mandatory school attendance is from age 4 ½ to 16 years. Schools are linked to local councils and they have a list of the schools in your local area. To register a child with school you need to contact a local school and speak to the head teacher about a place at school. You can ask for an interpreter if you need one when attending a school meeting. Find out about schools in your local area: [Choosing a school for your child - mygov.scot](#).

Where children need additional support to help them learn at school because of language barrier or health issues, this is provided by the school. Sometimes you may be able to get help with school costs such as school meals and school transport. Find out Citizens Advice Scotland information on [Help with school costs - Citizens Advice Scotland](#).

[Educational Institute of Scotland](#) has useful information on the Scottish education system for

parents / carers and children:

- The [Parents /Carers Guide](#) has information for parents and carers about school education in Scotland
- [Welcome to Scotland: Going to School in Scotland](#) has information for children and young people about going to school in Scotland

English language classes for adults - ESOL

English language classes for adults are called English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL). You are entitled to study ESOL if you need to learn English. The local colleges and classes can have a long waiting list making it difficult for you to access English language classes. You can look for ESOL classes at:

- Local colleges offer mostly part-time English language courses. These are part of Further Education funding
- Charities also offer some classes such as [WEA Scotland](#), [Glasgow ESOL Forum](#)
- Local Council's may offer free community ESOL classes

Search in your local area to find out what ESOL classes are on and how to join.

Further education and higher education

People arriving through the Ukraine schemes wishing to study further education or higher education courses from the 2022/2023 academic year are eligible for free tuition and living cost support. To find out more, go to the [Student Information Scotland](#) page on [Support for Ukrainian Students](#). Also check up to date guidance from Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS): [Residence conditions for non-EEA nationals](#).

Work

You have the right to work in Scotland if you have a visa through any of the Ukraine schemes from day one of your arrival.

Right to Work Checks

Each employer you work with must check that you have a right to work in the UK before employing you.

If you have a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) card or UKVI Immigration account that was created when applying for a visa using the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app, you can prove your right to work by accessing a share code online here: [Prove Your Right to Work](#). You will then give this share code and your date of birth to your employer so they can [View a Job](#)

[Applicants Right to Work](#) online.

If you do not have a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) yet, you can use your passport with an 'endorsement' stamp or vignette sticker in or an entry clearance vignette sticker attached to a 'Form for Affixing the Visa' (FAV). Your employer will then use it to check your immigration status using the [Right to work checks: an employer's guide - GOV.UK](#).

Your Rights at Work

You also need to know your rights at work and beware of exploitation.

- [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) has useful information on your basic rights at work
- [Work Rights Centre](#) also explains your rights at work depending on your employment status: [Your Work Rights](#)
- [Acas](#) gives employers and employees free, impartial advice on workplace rights, rules and best practice
- [Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance \(TARA\)](#) and [Just Right Scotland](#) produced safety advice leaflets for people fleeing Ukraine around what sponsors can not ask you to do and what to do if you are unsure of someone's intentions in [English](#), [Ukrainian \(Торівля людьми та їх експлуатація\)](#) and [Russian \(Торговля Людями и Эксплуатация\)](#)

Right to an interpreter

Public Services in Scotland must provide you with an interpreter if you need one. When booking appointments:

- Ask for an interpreter
- Specify which language you need
- Say if you prefer a man or a woman for medical appointments
- You can refuse to bring a friend or relative to interpret for you

Public Services include Health services – GP, Accident & Emergency (A&E), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), HMRC, Scottish Social Security Agency (SSSA), Social services and schools, Housing Associations, Council's services.

Help from Scottish Refugee Council

Phone Scottish Refugee Council Helpline **0808 1967 274** for information, signposting and initial advice. **You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.** [Helpline opening hours](#).

Where to find help and information

Find out where to find more help and information in this document:

- English - [Where to find help and information if you are from Ukraine](#)
- Ukrainian - [Де знайти допомогу та інформацію для прибулих з України](#)
- Russian - [Где найти помощь и информацию для прибывших из Украины](#)

The document gives information on where to find help and information about your rights in Scotland if you arrived through any of the three Ukraine schemes.

