

SEPTEMBER 2022

# REFLECTIONS ON THE UKRAINE SCHEME IN SCOTLAND:



Feedback from clients of  
Ukraine Advice Scotland



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## 01

# INTRODUCTION

## JustRight Scotland, September 2022<sup>1</sup>

In this report, written more than six months after the start of the first Ukraine Visa Scheme, Ukraine Advice Scotland documents reflections from clients about our service, the Visa Schemes more widely and arrival in Scotland. [Ukraine Advice Scotland](#) (UAS) is a free advice service funded by the Scottish Government and run by the independent charity JustRight Scotland. It launched on 24 March 2022. As of September 2022 the Ukraine Advice Scotland service had provided advice to over 1,800 clients, many with repeat enquiries. This report analyses feedback responses from Ukraine Advice Scotland's clients.

Ukraine Advice Scotland was set up to provide free advice on routes to Scotland for people displaced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The UK set up three visa schemes for Ukrainians. All three schemes provide for three years leave to remain with access to public funds, homelessness assistance and the right to work anywhere in the UK:

1. **The Ukraine Family Scheme** – where a family member in the UK with a specific immigration status could sponsor family in or outside of the UK – launched 4 March 2022; as of 6 September 2022<sup>2</sup> 60,200 applications had been made<sup>3</sup>;
2. **The Homes for Ukraine Scheme** – where a person could apply to come to the UK if they had a host to sponsor them on arrival; the Scottish and Welsh Governments also offered to act as a 'Super Sponsor' in a number of cases – launched on 18 March 2022; as of 6 September 153,200 applications had been made. The Scottish Government Super Sponsor offer opened on 18 March 2022 and paused on 13 July 2022 with 35,857 applications made with the Scottish Government as the sponsor<sup>4</sup>;

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1. The authors of this report are Jennifer Blair and Steven Lynch, with substantial input from Maisie Wilson, Jen Ang and Andy Sirel. Correspondence to: [jen@justrightscotland.org.uk](mailto:jen@justrightscotland.org.uk).

2. [Ukraine Scheme visa data](#), .gov website, accessed online on 13/09/22.

3. Application numbers for all three schemes may include duplicate applications.

4. Compared with 4,904 applications with the Welsh Government as the Sponsor. [Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority](#), .gov website, accessed on 13/09/2022.

**3. The Ukraine Extension Scheme** – for people already in the UK on time-limited visas – launched on 3 May 2022; as of 6 September 2022 15,200 applications had been made.

Not all Ukrainians displaced by war have permission to be in the UK under these visa schemes. Some may have no visa or some may have another visa, such as a partner visa. Ukrainians displaced by the war have not been encouraged to claim asylum and between January and June 2022<sup>5</sup> only 310 asylum applications were registered for Ukrainians (and only 91 of those after the launch of the Ukraine Extension Scheme on 3 May).

The Ukraine Schemes are not an asylum process and they are not a refugee resettlement scheme. Instead they offer a humanitarian visa pathway to the UK. Since 10 March 2022 an online-only application has been possible, meaning that applicants can apply from Ukraine or from a third country.<sup>6</sup> From the UK's perspective this is an innovative visa route. It is also unusual in that applicants can choose to obtain a visa to travel to Scotland specifically.

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5. [5.1 Statistics on Ukrainians in the UK](#), .gov website, accessed online on 13/09/2022

6. Only those with an international biometric passport can apply from Ukraine, because others have to travel to a Visa Application Centre to provide biometrics and there is not currently one of these in Ukraine.

## 02

# METHODOLOGY

Reflections were sought by way of a feedback survey hosted online using Microsoft Forms. A link to the English and Ukrainian versions of this was sent by email to people who had contacted the Ukraine Advice Scotland service with an enquiry. The feedback survey was sent to all clients who had contacted Ukraine Advice Scotland between 24 March 2022 (when the service launched) and 1 August 2022 (1,285 people). For the month of August 2022 the survey was also featured in the email signature of Ukraine Advice Scotland. Most people who contact Ukraine Advice Scotland are Ukrainians seeking advice, but some hosts and other supporters have sent enquiries and they were also sent the feedback survey.

Survey introduction (English version)	Survey introduction (Ukrainian translation)
<p><i>"You previously contacted Ukraine Advice Scotland for advice. We are undertaking a feedback survey to find out about experiences of the Ukraine Schemes and our advice service. Feedback responses will be collated and will be anonymised. Feedback will be used for service evaluation and improvement and in our policy and research work.</i></p> <p><i>If you contacted us on behalf of a Ukraine scheme applicant, you may only find question 4 relevant. Please do consider passing the other questions onto the Ukraine scheme applicant because we would welcome their feedback on the other questions".</i></p>	<p><b>“Ви раніше зверталися за порадою до Ukraine Advice Scotland. Ми проводимо опитування щодо зворотнього зв'язку, щоб дізнатися про Ваш досвід з Програмою допомоги сім'ям з України, та нашою консультаційною службою. Відповіді на відгуки будуть зібрані та анонімні. Зворотній зв'язок буде використано для оцінки та покращення послуг, а також у нашій дослідницькій роботі.</b></p> <p><b>Якщо Ви зв'язалися з нами від імені заявника на Програму з допомоги сім'ям з України, можливо Ви знайдете доречним лише запитання 4. Будь ласка, подумайте про те, щоб передати інші запитання заявнику за схемою «Програма з допомоги сім'ям з України», оскільки ми будемо раді відгукам щодо інших питань.”</b></p>

Survey introduction (English version)	Survey Questions (Ukrainian translation)	Total no. responses
1.What would make the UK Government's Ukraine Visa Schemes better and did you have any problems using the Ukraine Visa Schemes?	1.Що могло б покращити Українські візові схеми уряду Великої Британії та чи виникали у Вас проблеми з використанням Українських візових схем?	136
2.What would make the process when you arrived in Scotland better and did you have any problems finding safety in Scotland?	2.Що покращило б процес, коли Ви прибули до Шотландії, і чи виникли у Вас проблеми з пошуком безпеки в Шотландії?	133
3.What do you think is good about the UK Government's Ukraine Visa Schemes?	3.Що, на вашу думку, є хорошим у візових схемах уряду Великобританії для України?	136
4.Do you have any feedback for us at Ukraine Advice Scotland (the independent advice service run by the charity JustRight Scotland) about things we did well or could do better?	4.Чи є у вас відгуки для нас в Ukraine Advice Scotland (незалежна служба консультацій, якою керує благодійна організація JustRight Scotland) про те, що ми зробили добре або могли б зробити краще?	127
5.If you have been placed in a hotel as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme - (i) how long have you been in hotel accommodation and (ii) is the hotel suitable for your needs (if not, why not).	5.Якщо вас розмістили в готелі в рамках програми Homes for Ukraine – (I) як довго ви проживаєте в готелі та (II) чи готель підходить для ваших потреб (якщо ні, то чому).	122
6.Why did you choose to come to Scotland rather than a different country? Are you happy that you made that choice to come to Scotland? If not, why not?	6.Чому ви вирішили приїхати в Шотландію, а не в іншу країну? Ви щасливі, що зробили такий вибір і приїхали до Шотландії? Якщо ні, то чому?	134

7.Which part of Scotland do you live in? Why did you choose that area?	7.У якій частині Шотландії ви живете? Чому ви обрали саме цей район?	126
8.Are there any support services you need now, but don't feel you have access to, if so which? [Please note if you need individual advice you can contact us on <b>ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk</b> ].	8.Чи є якісь служби підтримки, які вам зараз потрібні, але ви не маєте до них доступу, якщо так, які? [Зверніть увагу, якщо вам потрібна індивідуальна консультація, ви можете зв'язатися з нами за адресою <b>ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk</b> ].	114
9.Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences or feedback?	9.Чи хотіли б ви ще щось сказати про свій досвід чи відгук?	119

Data was collected throughout August 2022. A feedback survey was deemed to be the most appropriate way to undertake rapid research and service evaluation, while minimising the risk of retraumatising a vulnerable population. The survey questions were open-ended and structured to encourage respondents to reflect on their experiences and describe the most prominent features in their opinion. To increase accessibility it was not mandatory for respondents to answer all questions.

143 survey responses were received, 52 from the English language version and 91 from the Ukrainian translation version. A thematic evaluation process was used to analyse key aspects of the survey responses. Microsoft Forms provides an in-built linguistic thematic analysis, but this was deemed to be insufficiently detailed. Two authors reviewed the responses separately to code key themes, taking into account the context in which the feedback surveys were undertaken, the intense recent life context for many survey respondents and the authors' own professional experiences to undertake 'reflexive and thoughtful' engagement with the data.<sup>7</sup>

7. [The texture of narrative dilemmas: qualitative study in front-line professionals working with asylum seekers in the UK](#), Abbas, Von Wethern, Katona, Brady and Woo, PJ Psych Bulletin, 22 April 2020; and [Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis](#), Braun & Clarke, Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, Vol.11, 2019 – Issue 4; pp.589-597.

## 03

## SURVEY RESPONSES

### 1. What would make the UK Government's Ukraine Visa Schemes better and did you have any problems using the Ukraine Visa Schemes?

54% of respondents reported no problems. Many of the responses said 'no problems' and some provided other positive feedback, including *"Everything was wonderful and professional"*, *"everything is quick and clear"*, *"No, great, convenient scheme, well thought out"*, *"Every step was clear and understandable even by someone, who have never applied for a visa before."*

Of those who did report problems the main issues identified were:

1. Problems with communication, particularly with the Home Office (a need for someone who could trouble-shoot visa problems, including technical problems and with access to Ukrainian interpreters, rather than just providing generalised information).
2. A need for help to make applications, including help with finding a sponsor under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
3. Visa decision-making delays and problems where some family members' visas are granted substantially ahead of others.
4. Need for help for hosts (raised by seven hosts who responded to the survey).
5. Concerns about future arrangements and clearer information on integration and housing timeframes.
6. Systemic mismatches between different government departments. E.g. where the Home Office visa grant says to contact your sponsor, but there is no centralised point of contact at the Scottish Government in Super Sponsor cases or where you have to state which Post Office you will collect your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) from when you make the visa application, but then have no power over where the Scottish Government will actually accommodate you and would have to pay fees to have the BRP forwarded on.

Issues raised by smaller numbers of respondents included a request for better clarity or consistency between the three Ukraine Visa Schemes, difficulties caused by the sudden closure of the Super Sponsor Scheme on 13 July 2022 (leaving people with additional needs unable to find a sponsor or causing family separation – e.g. *"I had a problem with a visa for my daughter, for the sake of whose safety I want to find safety*



in Scotland. Her passport was ready after the program for super sponsor Scotland closed”), problems with airlines not recognising permission to travel letters, difficulty explaining disability-related needs for assistance, perceived racial discrimination against a non-Ukrainian spouse due to problems with processing his application, problems accessing Visa Application Centres, problems raising funds for a rent deposit even when working in Scotland, lack of knowledge about the arrivals process and a request for additional help for Ukrainian students who need housing.

### Example quotes from responses<sup>8</sup>

#### **Problems with communication**

*“Yes. My sponsor tried 7 times to use 'Homes for Ukraine' and had to go through Super-Sponsorship. The helpline 2 numbers were answered by [name deleted], who hung up twice.”*

*“Four months after applying for visas for a Ukrainian friend and her daughter, we still have not received the visa for her daughter! Communication on both how the scheme is administered and on progress of applications is non-existent.”*

*“There were problems with the fact that my husband's and child's documents arrived much earlier than mine.”*

*“We received visas almost 2 months ago for all (4 family members) except our son. And thanks to this (lack of a visa for my son) we cannot leave. We live with packed suitcases. We escalated, but all in vain. There is no answer. This is terrible! There should be some mechanism that reviews the visas of the families.”*

*“I have been waiting for a visa for a very long time. It has already been 8 weeks.”*

#### **Problems with hosts**

*“We need better specific information. There has been no support at all. Departments don't speak to each other. Nobody seems to know we exist and actually have a refugee guest.”*

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8. In the quotations from responses set out in the text below, responses given originally in Ukrainian have been translated into English.

**Problems making applications**

*"I am in the process of searching a host , as I'm staying in Ukraine now. Rather difficult to find a sponsor now."*

*"The visa schemes are very difficult to navigate. Very difficult to understand the differences between each."*

**Problems with arrival and lack of coordination between visas and sponsorship**

*"When filling out the questionnaire of the Home for Ukraine program, it was necessary to select the post office code. At the same time, it is not explained why this code is needed. I knew I was going to Scotland, but out of ignorance I chose the London code. Later it turned out that the BRP will be sent to this department. I had to pay 22 pounds for forwarding the document to another post office."*

*"It would be better if people could contact volunteers from welcome hub in advance (while still being in Ukraine) and inform them about the time when they will travel. So maybe there will be some idea where refugees will stay in Scotland. As in my case invitation letter didn't consist of any contacts of welcome hubs or authorities whom I need to inform about my arrival."*

*"There was a confusion with the next steps especially if your sponsor is Scotland organization, because you do not know where are you going to live, but you should provide the address where exactly you will receive the BRP."*

*"In the letter with my visa was pointed to announce arrival, but hadn't phone number or email address for this. I have Scotland Super Sponsor Scheme visa."*

**2. What would make the process when you arrived in Scotland better and did you have any problems finding safety in Scotland?**

49.6% of respondents reported facing no problems, this is despite the question explicitly looking to gain insights into the problems respondents were facing. Among this 49.6% who reported no problems, other than simply 'no problems', many had positive things to say, including *"The process is organized in such a way that I felt safe and always at ease"*, *"I was welcomed and provided with accommodation and food"*, *"The*

*volunteer met me in the airport and led to the council", "We had been treated like own even by locals wherever we went people welcomed us."*

Of the problems that were disclosed the main issues identified were:

1. Issues regarding reception areas at points of entry into the country. This included issues such as an absence of volunteers in airports and train stations, a lack of signage directing new arrivals where to go, a lack of Ukrainian speaking volunteers and incorrect advice regarding access to public transport.
2. A lack of information or in-depth explanations about integration and how to access services after having arrived.
3. Poor communication by local councils regarding useful information for new arrivals
4. A lack of support for families with single parents or families with members that have additional support needs
5. Where respondents did not know who to contact to discuss travel plans and found no direct line to Welcome Hubs or the National Contact Centre before arriving in Scotland.

Issues raised by smaller numbers of respondents included problems with accessing healthcare, inconsistent access to sim cards for new arrivals, little support on offer for host matching both for hosts and those being hosted, problems caused by the closure of Super Sponsor Scheme and lack of consistency in the stamps on passports given at the border.

#### Example quotes from responses

##### ***Integration issues on arrival***

*"Very difficult to get housing, to get registered for universal credit, pension credit, child benefits. Very disconnected system. We are still waiting for child benefits. Still working out how to get school uniform grants. No support or advice on housing. V little support for teenagers."*

*"If there was more detailed information, what and where to look for, direct links to the right pages, for example for submitting to BRP. The problem at the moment is that I want to work, but I cannot place a child with learning difficulties anywhere, for example, in a specialized school. Also, if we are offered foster care, I am afraid that it will have a bad effect on the health of my son, who has a psychiatric diagnosis."*

### ***Lack of information at point of arrival***

*“There were no volunteers at the Edinburgh airport when I first arrived to Scotland. Therefore, I did not know where to go. I just used the information, which I had previously collected, to reach the welcome hub. In my opinion, controlling the presence of the volunteers at big transport hubs around Scotland would make the process better.”*

*“Upon arrival, more information is needed for Ukrainians at railway stations in Scotland in Ukrainian.”*

*“Unfortunately, there was no refugee hub at Edinburgh train station, only a small help desk.”*

*“It seems to me that the program could be improved by a full-fledged escort of a Ukrainian refugee, for example beginners, from the meeting at the exit of the plane, because many people are confused and many simply do not know the English language perfectly, and for older people, in 60 years it may not be possible at all the first trip in their life abroad and they lose morale and find it difficult to adapt. And I would recommend, if possible, more translators from Ukrainian. Because at the meeting it was unpleasant to communicate in Russian, and I do not know English very well, unfortunately.”*

*“Some of the railway workers was not aware that Ukrainians can travel for free for 48 hours since arrival.”*

*“Women with kids often arrive alone and this is hard to feel safe if you cannot predict your life even for (sic) week ahead. It will be good at least to know before arriving to notify someone about your arrival and understand what options for living is available.”*

### **3. What do you think is good about the UK Government's Ukraine Visa Schemes?**

A small number of respondents replied that the scheme was a good scheme, without providing more detail. From the other responses, the key areas of feedback were:

- The scheme offers a place of safety and protection, including to take children away from a warzone;
- The scheme offers the opportunity to live fully, with socio-economic rights including the right to work and access support from the point of arrival;

- The visa application was free of charge, fairly straightforward, fairly quick and applications could be made online, including from Ukraine;
- A government-backed scheme ensures accommodation and support through an organised process and not in mass or informal housing facilities.

A number of respondents also gave the friendliness of the Scottish people or the reputation of Scotland and the Scottish Government as positive factors. Supportive and friendly local staff, perceived support for Ukraine from the UK and access to different integration opportunities, including English classes and the chance to be accommodated in family units, were seen as other positive factors. A few respondents suggested the intent behind the scheme might be positive, but the implementation was poor, with one respondent stating the visa application took hours to complete and another stating that someone at the local council had been impolite to them. One respondent noted how important the Super Sponsor Scheme was for people unable to find an individual sponsor.

#### Example quotes from responses

##### **Safety**

*"Providing a safe place for us Ukrainians, and this is currently the main thing."*

*"For our family from Mykolaiv, UK visas were a salvation."*

*"They give Ukrainians the opportunity to save themselves from war, save thousands of lives, relieve children from stress."*

##### **Comprehensive integration rights and support**

*"I am grateful to the British government for providing free accommodation and food, the opportunity to find work and study. Very friendly attitude of local residents."*

*"There is an opportunity to study, work and not hear the sound of air sirens."*

*"This is a very good initiative of the UK Government to support Ukrainian refugees in this difficult time. Minor organisational problems do not underestimate that amount of help and safety, the Government provides for us."*

***Usable visa process and support from arrival***

*"A clear and transparent process of applying for an entry permit, especially the possibility to submit biometrics without visiting visa centres."*

*"Accessibility, clear online services, provision of everything necessary, financial assistance, housing, friendliness of people."*

*"A very good attitude, a convenient online document processing system, the opportunity to learn English for free, living in comfortable conditions, financial assistance and many benefits, assistance with food and basic necessities, etc."*

*"The instructions throughout the process of applying is clear, council's work is perfect (Dundee council). They provide us with all information they can provide."*

**4. Do you have any feedback for us at Ukraine Advice Scotland (the independent advice service run by the charity JustRight Scotland) about things we did well or could do better?**

57% of respondents replied with a positive response only or a thank you and 21% replied that they had no comments to offer. 8.6% replied with responses which clearly indicated they did not realise that Ukraine Advice Scotland was not a statutory service (such as a housing provider or visa decision-maker). The most common recommendations for improvement were:

- For Ukraine Advice Scotland to be able to access visa information (currently this is only viewable internally by the Home Office) to help troubleshoot problems (several respondents confirmed that visa delay issues remained unresolved);
- To provide further information for guests and hosts on next steps after arrival in the UK;
- To provide more reliable access to interpreters;
- To improve communication (the length of the introductory recording on the advice line was described as irritating by one respondent).

Other suggestions included to provide information resources on the different organisations people would need to register with on arrival and their different roles, to help people find visa sponsors, to produce housing information resources, to produce medicine and health insurance factsheets (or equivalent information for carers and single parents) and for a similar advice service to be set up for the rest of

the UK. Two responses were wholly negative about the Ukraine Advice Project service (one stating the service did not help and another describing a reply as 'boilerplate').

### Example quotes from responses

#### **Accessible advice**

*"The Ukrainian Advice Scotland was and remains extremely helpful and supportive to me. Thanks to your pieces of advice I could resolve my main issue, and I do strongly believe if any other Ukrainian or myself need a piece of advice in Scotland, it will be my first focal point to contact. I do not have any negative feedback, just my admiration to you."*

*"Thank you very much for your help, it is important to have quality advice."*

*"All my questions were well answered! Thank you very much for the free support. It is very important to have someone to turn to in order to understand your rights and responsibilities, especially when you have just arrived in the country."*

#### **Need for further information resources**

*"Have a leaflet for both guests and hosts. We are all very new at this and our family have seen one person since arrival."*

*"We need more information for the arriving Ukrainians about the next steps in Scotland."*

*"Yes, I would be more confident in future if I knew more about my rights in accommodation such as could I have social housing or only with hosts? Could I refuse to be placed in a place that does not suit me?"*

*"More detailed informational support."*

*"Not everything is clear how medicine and health insurance work."*



***Desire for more access to interpreters***

*"I hope that more translators will help those who do not know the language."*

***Desire for a trouble-shooting process for Ukraine Scheme visa applications***

*"Maybe you could fill in the huge gaps in the Homes for Ukraine scheme? Like being able to provide effective intervention and action on visa applications and any issues that arise?"*

**5. If you have been placed in a hotel as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme - (i) how long have you been in hotel accommodation and (ii) is the hotel suitable for your needs (if not, why not).**

35% of respondents confirmed the hotel was comfortable and/or that they would be happy to stay there for some time. Quotes from these responses include *"I'm living in the hotel about 2 months. The hotel is comfortable and suitable for my needs"*, *"I live in a hotel, I'm very grateful, it couldn't be better."* and *"For me Hotel-good place for living. I could live here a long time."*

Six of the responses were from people very recently housed on cruise ships and none were negative, with four being overtly positive. Three respondents had all been placed in a hotel in Ayr and were all particularly positive about the specific hotel (*"Hotel "Mercury" in Ayr: three weeks you were the best!"*) and others were positive about hotel staff. Respondents had experience of living in hotels ranging from a few days to over a month. The key areas of concern were:

- Uncertainty – current lack of stability and uncertainty about timeframes and next steps – this was the primary issue that was consistently raised;
- Feeling uncomfortable – issues like lack of privacy, overcrowding, finding a hotel room noisy or stuffy or unsuitable for pets/because other residents had pets around;
- Issues with food (some respondents were positive about food, but some were negative. The authors would note that the quality of catering may vary between hotels);
- Special needs not accommodated;
- Difficulties around the location, such as for job-seeking.



Example quotes from responses**Uncertainty of move-on from hotels**

*"2 months already, hotel is good-no problems at all. But you can't start your life normally and find a job cause you have no idea where you gonna accommodate after."*

**Feedback on cruise liners**

*"I was placed on a cruise ship, it has been 1 week already and the accommodation suitable more than I could've expected."*

*"We were placed on the ship, we are staying for 5 days, everything suits us as best as possible!"*

**Hotel unsuitable**

*"We have been living in the hotel for two months. It is not very suitable for my family. I have got a disabled child (mental problems) and it is difficult for her to go each time to some other place to have food; food ( menu) is not always suitable for kids; the place is overcrowded (in a restaurant of the hotel) and we have got infection already several times. Besides, there are people next to our door with a dog - it is noisy and i do not feel comfortable. At the same time the local council is doing all possible that we feel comfortable in the hotel."*

*"3 months; not really [suitable], because we are together with an adult son (17 years old, has a psychiatric diagnosis), and there is only one bed."*

*"We are staying for 2 months, the hotel is suitable, only we are in one room, and there are 4 of us, although I understand that a large number of Ukrainians have come and it is probably difficult to accommodate everyone."*

*"I have been living in a hotel with my sons since June 2, i.e. more than a month. [...] this hotel is a good place. But living here with teenage sons is psychologically difficult."*

### *Access to integration from hotels*

*"Super, the only thing is there is no work."*

## **6. Why did you choose to come to Scotland rather than a different country? Are you happy that you made that choice to come to Scotland? If not, why not?**

The wider context is relevant to this question. The Russian invasion of Ukraine commenced on 24 February 2022. The EU announced it would be offering temporary protection to Ukrainians on 28 February 2022 and EU member states opened their borders to Ukrainians. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the USA, have also announced Ukrainian humanitarian visa schemes. In this context Ukrainians can be regarded as having some choice over where they might relocate to if they are displaced by war. Where Ukrainians chose the 'Scottish Government' as their Super Sponsor under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme they will have made a specific choice to choose Scotland.

Respondents often had a combination of factors for why they chose Scotland. Key areas that influenced their decisions were:

- They wanted to come to an English-speaking country for themselves and/or for the sake of a child, often linked to ease of access to work or study;
- Scotland's support of Ukraine and reputation for friendliness and hospitality/perceived alignment of cultural values (such as both countries fighting for independence);
- A government-backed scheme provided additional security, housing and there were more integration and support rights under the scheme;
- Scotland's reputation for culture, history and natural beauty and/or they had long wanted to visit Scotland;
- Family or friends live here or the person has a personal history of working with Scottish people or in Scotland;
- Scotland was perceived as a stable, safe country, far from Russian aggression;
- The ease of the visa process and because Scotland is not too far from Ukraine (presumably to travel back and forth as necessary).

A small number of respondents said they made a spontaneous decision without detailed analysis. One respondent raised a concern about the cold weather and their destitution on arrival being something that made them less happy.

Example quotes from responses**English speaking/culture, geography and values**

*"I have wanted to visit here since childhood. It is a very beautiful country and the people are very friendly."*

*"I can speak English fluently and I think I can feel safe and be useful here. I don't want to be a burden for a country and want to settle as soon as possible."*

*"I chose Scotland because I have a master's degree in English and American studies. Therefore, an English speaking country is the best option for me. I am happy to be in this beautiful country."*

*"I have long admired Scotland, so when I learned about the opportunity, I immediately knew that I wanted to come here. A big advantage is also the English language, it is easier to adapt than other languages. I also knew that the Scots are friendly, open and kind people. Therefore, I believe that I will be safe here."*

*"A country of incredible beauty."*

*"Scottish people are one of the most friendly and caring people I have ever encountered, indeed. The Scottish nature works as a wonderful therapy and it is absolute plus to me. I do appreciate my sponsor family trying to not only get me connecting to other Scottish people, but to Ukrainians nearby too. Here, we have such a vibrant and supportive environment."*

**Government-backed Super Sponsor Scheme**

*"From what I knew about Scotland, it seemed hospitable and friendly to me. This country fought for its independence. Scotland was the first to announce a public sponsorship scheme, which seemed to me to be more credible for security purposes than private sponsorship. Yes, I am happy here and sincerely grateful for the shelter."*

*"We left with the beginning of the war (me and three children) changed three countries because the sponsors in which we lived [...] asked us to leave their homes, so then heard about government support to know for sure that we will not be left on the street."*

**Government-backed Super Sponsor Scheme continued...**

*"Because the Scottish Government is a supersponsor. This means reliability."*

*"The Scottish Government had a sponsorship scheme that made moving to UK a lot easier. Scottish people are warm and friendly, so yes, I am happy."*

*"Almost from the beginning of the evacuation from Ukraine, I planned to move to an English-speaking country. I found the clarity and simplicity of Scotland's Super Sponsor Scheme to be the most clear and appealing. At the moment, I am completely satisfied with everything and believe that excellent conditions have been created here for Ukrainians. Besides, I see a lot in common between Scots and Ukrainians."*

**Work and family connections to Scotland**

*"Because we used to work in Scotland, and we know the country a little, unlike other countries."*

*"I worked in your country last year, because I was working. But the Scots are also very kind people. It's like my second home."*

*"I'm a sailor. I've been working on a ship in Aberdeen for two and a half years. I have seen Scotland, I talk to people. I like your country very much."*

*"I learned about the program from a colleague who was already in Scotland at the time, liked the conditions; although not ideal, there is knowledge of the English language; my sister used this program, so I won't be alone in a foreign country."*

*"My child and I speak English. I lived in the UK before. My son was born in the UK. I visited Scotland and loved it. Now my child does. Nature is amazing. Also, I support Scotland in its path to independence and to rejoin the EU."*

## 7. Which part of Scotland do you live in? Why did you choose that area?

43.6% of respondents had settled in cities. However not all respondents stated where they had settled, so the real figure could be substantially higher. Around 20% of respondents stated they either liked where they lived or had no problem with where they had settled.

The most common themes identified by respondents were:

- They had chosen to live in cities because of their connectivity and access to jobs, education and other opportunities;
- They had been sent to a part of Scotland other than where they would have preferred and that their wishes were not taken into account;
- They had chosen where to stay because of the history or beauty of the area;
- Family or friends in an area led to them settling in that area;
- Where they had been sent/settled felt random.

Smaller numbers of respondents stated that their choice was influenced by the area being similar to where they came from i.e. a similarly sized city; by the location being close to the entry point they arrived at; and being concerned primarily with safety.

### Example quotes from responses

#### ***Accommodation provided no choice basis***

*"Aberdeen. We had no choices, the people from airport of Edinburgh sent us to Aberdeen. Our family prefer stay in Edinburgh."*

*"Aberdeen, we were sent to this city after we arrived to welcome Hub in Edinburgh. If we had a choice we would have rather stayed in Edinburgh."*

*"Aberdeen as it was directed by Ukraine welcome hub not our decision to choose."*

*"Ayr - it was roulette."*

*"I didn't choose Highland Aviemore, they settled me here!"*

*"My family is temporarily living in Dumfries. But would like to move to a bigger city, Edinburgh or Glasgow."*

**Accommodation provided no choice basis continued...**

*"Dundee we have not chance to choose as this settlement was made by Welcoming Hub."*

**Positive welcome in new area**

*"Edinburgh, because it's a big city so it's easier to find a job here."*

*"Crieff is a wonderful town to live in."*

*"Highlands. It's beautiful. And it's just a feeling, the 6th sense. Choice without argumentation. I knew we'd be happy here."*

*"I will be settled in Paisley soon. This town provides me a lot of opportunities regarding all the aspects of my life because there is a nice connection to Glasgow and other areas."*

*"Aberdeen, we did not choose it until now, we are here temporarily in a hotel while we are looking for accommodation, but the city is beautiful and we do not mind staying here."*

*"Aberdeen. I did not choose, we were brought here. I'm lucky, Aberdeen is a nice city."*

*"We chose Edinburgh for the ease of communication and the opportunity to see and live in one of the most beautiful cities in the world."*

*"I live in Edinburgh. I planned to work (and still hope for such an opportunity), so I decided to live in a city, but smaller than Glasgow, because I don't like too big cities."*

*"I am currently staying in a hotel near the city of Glasgow, the area is nice. I did not choose and did not argue because I consider any place in Scotland safer than Ukraine and I am grateful for the opportunity to be here."*

**Positive welcome in new area continued...**

*"We currently live in Ayr Scotland, a very nice town by the sea 8 minutes from our hotel. On foot. They are very satisfied after all the shock and they are in Ukraine, just at a chic resort. Thank you all very much for your concern. We didn't choose, we were brought here from the station, what can you choose if it's your first time in the country, the main thing is that it's quiet, peaceful, you see the blue sky, the sea, the sun and you're not afraid that you or your family will be killed and you don't hear those terrible sirens."*

**8. Are there any support services you need now, but don't feel you have access to, if so which? [Please note if you need individual advice you can contact us on [ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk](mailto:ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk)].**

46% of respondents reported facing no issues with accessing services. Positive responses to this question included: *"No, it's all good. The support service at the hotel helps to solve all problems", "Thanks, but not needed at the moment", "Everything is fine."*

Of the respondents that did voice concerns the main issues were:

- A lack of access to visa support especially regarding delays with pending applications;
- Problems accessing healthcare including GPs, opticians and dentists as well as in depth medical assistance;
- Problems with accessing education and training opportunities. Two of the respondents reported being told that they had no access to schooling whilst in temporary accommodation, which in the authors' view would be legally incorrect information;
- A desire for better access to career advice and guidance;
- A desire for additional support from their local authority regarding future housing arrangements.

A small number of respondents also raised issues including poor access to information around social welfare benefits, a lack of English classes, wanting more information on housing advice and improved networks for host matching.

### Example quotes from responses

#### **Example of positive experience**

*"Volunteers come to our hotel and have already helped us fill out all the necessary forms, we already have a NIN, everything is very fast, if there are any questions, they will tell and show everything, everything is very organized, we are very grateful to everyone and everyone is very satisfied."*

#### **Integration support needed**

*"Yes , need support with health problem and advice regarding job search, resume writing."*

*"I would like to have English courses, I would like my daughter go to school and I am also looking for the job."*

*"Language. Help to navigate with local authorities. How to ensure we get the financial support we are entitled to."*

*"Yes, dental problems."*

*"Perhaps not everything is clear with medical aids."*

*"The medical service (that is, registration) is the only thing we need. We filled out declarations for everyone, went to medical centres, they don't accept us there. We have to deal with all the issues ourselves, without help. And this issue is very difficult."*

*"A service that would help with work, because the Job Center does not have the ability to help in the search."*

## **9. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experiences or feedback?**

By far the most common response to this question was a thank you message. A few respondents flagged issues of visa delays, problems with finding work or registering



with a GP or perceived poor implementation of the visa scheme. A few hosts as well as those being hosted reported feeling abandoned in the hosting scheme.

Small numbers of people, or individual comments, made recommendations or other comments, including:

- Requests for improved communication in the scheme;
- Better destitution support on arrival for those that really need it (including those without suitable clothing for the weather);
- The prohibitive cost of public transport;
- A need for clearer advice and information about what happens after the six month period in hosting;
- A request for people who want a host to be able to move to one straightaway as living in a hotel can be difficult with children;
- A request for help with private rental deposits and a comment that surely this would be cheaper than long-term hotel fees;
- A request for reassurance that people won't lose their place in the housing queue if they need to visit male family members in Ukraine and that these male relatives will be allowed to join their female relatives in the UK when they are permitted to exit the country.

### Example quotes from responses

#### **Positive responses**

*"To express great gratitude for the support and care of the government, volunteers and ordinary people whom we met on the streets and heard words of support when they found out where we came from."*

*"I would like to thank all people who are doing tremendous work with all this resettlement."*

*"It has been a great experience so far, I am very thankful for this opportunity to stay in Scotland."*

*"I am sincerely grateful, you help a lot, I am even ashamed sometimes. You are the best."*

**Issues with access to services**

*"Everything is great, but it's a long time to wait for a doctor."*

*"very expensive transport, we walk min 15 km per day , please make some discount for transport at the beginning."*

**Risk of homelessness at end of hosting/lack of support for hosts**

*"I am a host on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. We are now dealing with rehousing at the end of the six month period. It would be helpful to have advice on your website about housing for Ukrainians. Are they technically regarded as homeless after the end of six months with the same host?"*

*"Host family have to arrange everything on their own."*

*"We have loved having a guest. We have had next to NO EXPERIENCE AT ALL of the authorities."*

**Help needed in order to rent privately**

*"Aberdeen has a large number of vacant apartments and houses. Why can't we settle there and eventually pay for housing ourselves? After all, keeping us in a hotel costs the local authorities more."*

*"Some people who arrived after us are given housing, others are not, it is unclear under what scheme this happens. Why were we asked where we would like to live, if no one is going to find us a place to live where we wanted. We wanted to finally settle somewhere and start working for the good of Scotland and ourselves. We cannot rent the house, because no one wants to rent it to us."*

## 04

# FINDINGS

## Overall positivity

It was striking how positive the feedback was, even for questions which encouraged respondents to set out problems with the scheme.

The majority of respondents reported that the visa process had been accessible to them and it was seen as a positive that people with biometric passports could apply from Ukraine (reducing the disruption of having to wait in a third country for a visa decision).

A lot of comments were made about the friendliness of the arrivals process and individual hotels and local areas were singled out for praise.

## Choosing Scotland

For many respondents moving to an English-speaking country provided the best chance for independence and integration. The government-backed Super Sponsor Scheme promised stability and no risk of homelessness. One respondent reported repeated homelessness with individual hosts in Europe, before they had applied to the Super Sponsor Scheme.

Respondents chose to come to Scotland because it was perceived to offer a place of safety, because of its cultural reputation and beauty, because of perceived alignment of cultural values (including a history fighting for independence) and because of the friendliness of Scottish people.

## Areas where improvement is needed

### Communication pre-arrival

There were repeated comments about poor communication during the visa process and pre-arrival. People reported frustration that the Home Office did not have a designated trouble-shooting team or process to resolve problems with Ukraine Scheme cases. There is a Home Office helpline for Ukraine Scheme cases, but those who answer the phone were reported to have little power to view

applications or engage with individual cases, as opposed to providing generalised information.

The closure of the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme had created issues of family separation in some cases and had also closed the only Ukraine visa route people could use if they could not find an individual sponsor.

There has been a disconnect between the visa process and Scottish Government Super Sponsor Scheme. For example people will be asked to provide a collection address for their biometric residence permit pre-arrival, but on arrival may be housed anywhere.

### Arrivals process for people who need housing and financial assistance

Respondents reported difficulties with the current arrivals process under the Super Sponsor Scheme, where they had not identified a designated place to contact before they travelled and there was no guarantee that there would be anyone at stalls at ports of entry to meet them. Respondents expressed a desire for a process using official staff at ports and consistent access to interpreters. Respondents seemed unrealistically to be trying to navigate individual local council websites to understand the different arrivals processes.

A small number of respondents reported immediate destitution issues on arrival, particularly not having suitable or sufficient clothing, and needing immediate assistance which they had not received.

A few respondents were keen to be placed with a host quickly on arrival and had difficulties in hotels. Under the Super Sponsor Scheme greater use seems to have been made of temporary hotel accommodation and then often a move into mainstream housing. It was unclear to respondents who wanted a speedy placement with a host why their wishes about this could not be taken into account on arrival.

### Accommodation uncertainty and risk of homelessness

Housing uncertainty was a significant theme in responses<sup>9</sup> While many respondents were extremely positive about the areas in which they were living, some were unhappy that their wishes had not been taken into account when

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9. This is also noted in the Work Right's Centre's, Vicol, D.O., Sehic, A. (2022) [Six months on: The UK's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and how the government can better protect refugees](#)

determining the area they would be housed.

The process was reported as feeling random and arbitrary and some people had been housed away from areas where they had ties that they hoped would help them to integrate. The fairness of the housing process under the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme was questioned, with one respondent describing how people who had arrived after their family were being housed before them and they could not see why.

A small number of respondents reported difficulties finding private housing and there was a suggestion that people could be helped with a deposit to help them rent independently, given arrivals may not have savings, a job or references/a credit history to show a landlord.

Respondents reported that people staying with a host felt unsupported by statutory services and hosts felt left without sufficient information and support. There was concern that in the absence of pro-active case-working during the hosting period to develop a move-on plan, people living with hosts would become homeless.

#### Meeting additional needs and reasonable adjustments

Some people with additional needs were less able to find an individual host so a government-backed Super Sponsor Scheme was important.

The accommodation in hotels was criticised several times by people who reported unmet additional needs, such as healthcare needs or where they were caring for a disabled child. Hotels were reported by some respondents as unsuitable living spaces for children. We were concerned by some evidence of overcrowding, including the response that one family had been allocated a room with their disabled child that had only one bed.

Responses indicated a need for quality control of accommodation and feedback processes, with some hotel facilities criticised, such as the food provided on site. It was unclear how housing would be inspected, particularly where people are housed on cruise ships.

#### Other integration needs and problems with accessing services

People reported problems with finding out what services they needed to register with and how. Respondents particularly highlighted problems with accessing healthcare and understanding their healthcare entitlements. Respondents also raised issues with obtaining different social welfare benefits, education and sufficiently intensive

support to access employment.<sup>10</sup>

There were some issues with accessing transport due to financial barriers, which are a significant problem for low income families in rural areas. This includes people looking for work and single parent families trying to access services.<sup>11</sup> Tackling the issue of access to service issues for refugees in rural areas could be an important structural aspect of Scotland's future refugee integration work.<sup>12</sup>

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10. The need for sufficiently intensive and tailored help to access employment has also been noted in the Work Rights Centre's, Vicol, D.O., Sehic, A. (2022) [Six months on: The UK's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and how the government can better protect refugees](#), which recommends employability support including English classes and help transferring qualifications and experience acquired abroad.
  11. Re the high percentage of women arriving under the Ukraine Schemes see Glasgow Violence against Women Partnership's (2022) [Gendering your response to the Ukraine refugee crisis](#) and Blair J (2022) Written evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee's Asylum Enquiry.
  12. Since 98% of Scottish land is rural according to data taken from the Scottish Government's '[Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021](#)'.

## 05

## CONCLUSION

The feedback from respondents was positive. JustRight Scotland is usually contacted by people about the Ukraine Visa Schemes through the Ukraine Advice Scotland service when people need advice about a problem, so it was interesting to see how positive the survey responses were overall.

While travelling to an English-speaking country was a key to seeking greater financial independence for many respondents, it was also clear that Scotland was perceived as having a particular cultural and political identity that appealed to respondents.

In general respondents found the visa process sufficiently easy to use and the welcome to Scotland to be effective and warm. However where something went wrong in the visa process it was extremely difficult for people to get help from the Home Office. Where people have particular needs and wishes about their housing these do not seem to be consistently taken into account and housing processes under the Super Sponsor Scheme can feel arbitrary and therefore unfair.

It was clear from many responses that people have relocated to the UK with the hope of a long-term move. Some respondents had faced multiple displacements before they travelled to the UK, had used up resources to relocate, sometimes with disabled family members, and others talked about moving to an English-speaking country for their child to complete their education. At the moment Ukraine Scheme visas are fixed-term to last for three years. With respondents moving the centre of their lives to Scottish communities, it is important that there is a clear visa strategy in place as early as possible so that Ukrainians and their families can plan ahead. Without this people will face increased risks of poverty, distress and risks of exploitation.<sup>13</sup>

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13. Uncertainty about a long term strategy is noted as a risk factor for exploitation in Cockbain E., Sidebottom A (2022) [The war in Ukraine and associated risks of human trafficking and exploitation: insights from an evidence-gathering roundtable](#).



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