

## **Letter to Sponsors: children already living with sponsors in the UK without their parent or legal guardian**

On 22 June, the UK Government announced that the Homes for Ukraine scheme will now allow children under the age of 18 who have already applied through the Homes for Ukraine scheme to come to the UK without a parent or legal guardian. As of 15 July, the Government has begun processing these applications, and on 28 July the scheme opened to new applicants.

A small number of children are already living with sponsors in the UK without their parent or legal guardian, having travelled here before the introduction of the expanded scheme.

We are writing to you because you are sponsoring a child, or children, who is currently living with you without their parent or guardian. In some cases, they may have travelled here without their parent or guardian, and in others their parent or guardian might have travelled with them but subsequently returned to Ukraine and left them with you and/or an accompanying adult relative on a temporary or indefinite basis.

Recognising that these children are particularly vulnerable, the Government built enhanced safeguarding processes into the expansion of the Homes for Ukraine scheme to children applying without their parent or guardian. This included some additional expectations for sponsors of these children. It is important that children already living in the UK without their parent or guardian also benefit from these, to ensure they have the same level of safety and security.

**As a general principle, existing sponsors of children already living without their parent or guardian in the UK are expected to commit to the additional safeguards and expectations for new sponsors under the expanded Homes for Ukraine scheme. However, there may be exceptions where this is not possible or practical. You should discuss this with your local council who will be in touch to carry out any additional sponsor approval and safeguarding checks required.**

**This guidance sets out how these additional safeguards and expectations should be applied to sponsors of children who are already here in the UK, having travelled before the introduction of the formal scheme.**

It should be read in conjunction with the guidance issued on 15 July by the UK Government for children who have applied to come to the UK without their parent or guardian: 'Applications to Homes for Ukraine for children who are not travelling or reuniting with their parent or legal guardian: Guidance for sponsors' which can be found [here](#).

### **Parental consent and key information about the sponsorship arrangement**

***Your council should contact the parent or guardian of the child you are sponsoring to ask them to complete a version of the UK Sponsorship Arrangement Consent form at the earliest opportunity (Annex A).***

This will ensure the council has important information about the sponsorship arrangement and has confirmed that the parent or guardian consents to their child living with you, and any accompanying relative. It will also confirm whether you or any accompanying adult relative will have day-to-day caring responsibility for the child.

The form asks whether you, the sponsor, are personally known to the parent or guardian, in line with the requirements of the wider scheme. However, councils are able to exercise discretion in applying this requirement where this is in the best interests of the child. Where

children are already living with their sponsor in the UK, it is likely to count as an exceptional case where this requirement can be waived, providing that the arrangement otherwise meets the criteria set out in this guidance.

The form includes the following information:

- The parent's details including address, phone number and email address;
- Details of any adult relative that is living with you and the child in the UK (where applicable);
- Their child's next of kin contact details in the event the parent can't be reached in an emergency.
- Confirmation that they believe it is in their child's best interests to live in the UK and stay with you and/or an accompanying adult relative
- Confirmation of whether it is you, or any accompanying adult relative, who has day-to-day caring responsibility for their child, including financial responsibility for their care. The parent/legal guardian will retain parental responsibility for their child.
- Confirmation that you and any accompanying adult relative understand any specific needs and vulnerabilities of their child and is able to meet these needs.
- Confirmation that the parent understands the extended duration of sponsorship arrangements for children in these circumstances. The parent can end the sponsorship arrangement early. If they want to do this, they will need to notify the sponsor, who will then alert the council.
- Confirmation that they understand the role of the council in caring for their child in the event that the sponsorship arrangement breaks down before the child turns 18, and any plans for alternative arrangements for the child if this happens.

In the event that the council is unable to contact the child's parent or guardian to confirm consent, they will use their discretion as to whether the sponsorship arrangement is still suitable in lieu of formal parental consent. Where the parent doesn't consent to the arrangement, the council will work with the parent to agree alternative arrangements for their child.

### **Ensuring sponsor suitability**

***Where not already completed, the council will ensure that any outstanding sponsor approval checks are carried out as soon as possible.*** This includes:

- Relevant DBS checks
- Accommodation checks
- A sponsor suitability assessment

Further details on these requirements are set out in the [published guidance](#) for sponsors on children not travelling with or joining their parent in the UK.

Where the sponsor does not pass the checks for safeguarding reasons, the council will be expected to accommodate that child or take them into care in line with their legal duties, as set out in the 'Ending of a sponsorship arrangement with a child' section below. Where checks fail for other reasons and there are no immediate concerns for the child's welfare, the child should stay with the sponsor while the parent is consulted on alternative arrangements. We expect that LAs will seek to maintain the arrangements as far as possible where there are no safeguarding concerns, given this is likely to be in the best interests of the child.

### **Expectations on the sponsor of a child**

***In recognition of the need to provide this vulnerable cohort with greater security, the expanded Homes for Ukraine scheme for children not travelling with or joining their parent or guardian sets increased expectations for sponsors of these children. As part of their sponsor suitability assessment, the council should discuss these requirements with you, and ask you to confirm in writing that you understand your role as a sponsor of a child.***

This includes that you:

- Can commit to hosting the child for the full 3 years of their leave in the UK, or until they turn 18 (or in cases where the child's parent has returned to Ukraine only temporarily, until their parent returns to live with them in the UK).
  - In relation to a minor who is 17 and a half years old or older, you are required to commit to host for at least 6 months (in line with requirements of sponsors under the wider Homes for Ukraine scheme). Where the child turns 18, you are expected to support them into adult life including moving into independent accommodation or hosting the child for longer, if you are able to.
- Can commit to staying in the UK for the duration of the sponsorship agreement, because you (for example):
  - Are a British Citizen.
  - Are settled in the UK (for example you have indefinite leave to remain).
  - Have no time limit on your stay in the UK
  - Have permission to stay in the UK for at least 3 years from the date of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme application or as long as you will be sponsoring the child.
- Are able to meet the expectations on you as a sponsor of a child, including taking on responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child (noting that this expectation may vary if the child is accompanied by an adult relative and they have been given responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child and/or are living in self-contained accommodation). Where you have taken on responsibility for the day-to-day care of the child, it is expected that you have also taken on financial responsibility for that child.
- Are able to support any medical, developmental or other needs the child may have, as well as the need to support the child's education
- Are able to support the child to keep in touch with the parent/legal guardian and maintain cultural and language links with Ukraine.
- Understand that if the sponsorship is to be discontinued for any reason you must alert the council immediately

Further details on these requirements are set out in the [published guidance](#) for sponsors on children not travelling with or joining their parent in the UK.

In line with the requirements of the expanded scheme, the expectation is that where children are not travelling with or joining a parent or guardian, the sponsor is personally known to the parent, except in exceptional circumstances. Given that the children in these cases are already living with their sponsor in the UK, this is likely to count as an exceptional case where this requirement can be waived, providing that parental consent has been given and that all safeguarding and suitability checks have been passed.

Where sponsors are not able to commit to the requirements of the expanded scheme (for example, to host the child for the full 3 years of their leave), councils may still determine that

it is in the best interests of the child to remain with the sponsor, providing the parent consents to the arrangement and safeguarding checks are passed.

Where you are looking after a child whose parent or guardian has returned to Ukraine only temporarily, the council should adapt the assessment to assess the suitability of the arrangement.

### **Ongoing welfare checks**

***The council should visit the child regularly until the child turns 18 to ensure the child's ongoing needs are being met and check that the sponsorship is working well.***

You should cooperate fully with any visit, providing access to your accommodation and to the child. It's expected that the council will speak to the child without you or any accompanying adult being present for part of the visits.

Further details on these requirements are set out in the [published guidance](#) for sponsors on children not travelling with or joining their parent in the UK.

### **Changes of circumstances and ending of a sponsorship arrangement with a child**

***You must notify the council immediately if the sponsorship arrangement is to be ended for any reason, setting out the reasons for the ending of the arrangement (where you are comfortable doing so).***

Where circumstances change, for example if you move into new accommodation, you should make every effort to notify the parent or legal guardian, and should inform the council.

In the event that the parent or guardian of the child you are sponsoring has returned to Ukraine temporarily, you should inform the council if they do not return to the UK when planned.

Detailed guidance on ending of sponsorship arrangements with a child is provided in the [published guidance](#) for sponsors on children not travelling with or joining their parent in the UK.

### **Further support**

- [Homes for Ukraine](#) contains further information about the scheme, including a set of [Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- The UK Government has [published a list of Recognised Providers](#) – voluntary and community sector organisations running schemes which provide support for and help match people coming from Ukraine with sponsors in the UK. However, you should note that the matching service provided by these organisations are not relevant to this group of children given the requirement for sponsors to be personally known to the parent or legal guardian.
- The UK Government will publish a welcome guide for children not travelling with or joining a parent or legal guardian in the UK in due course. It will provide useful information on the support available to them once in the UK.
- The [Childcare Choices website](#) also provides useful advice and information to help sponsors support their guests.

