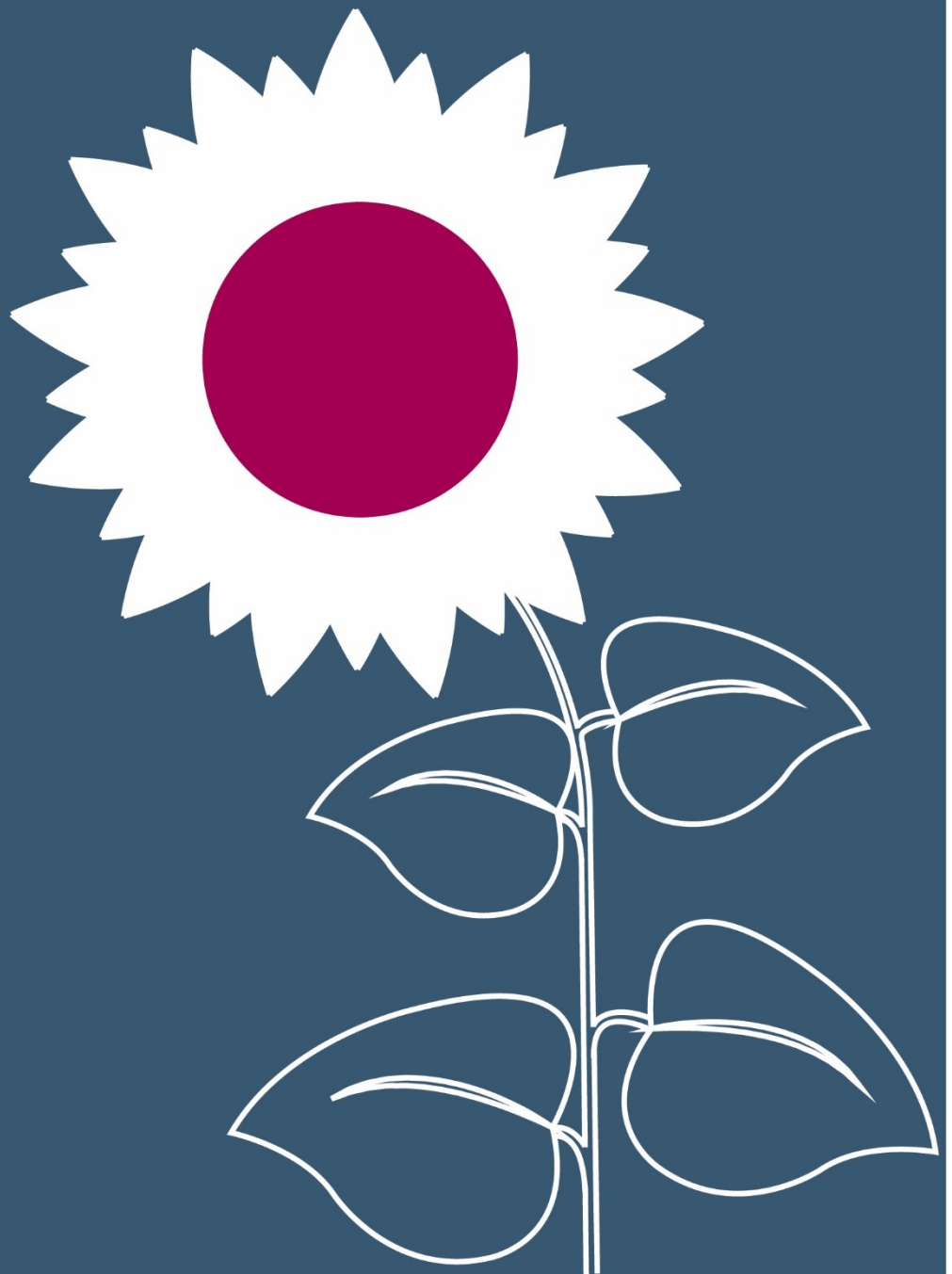


Unaccompanied Ukrainian Children already in the UK

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Introduction

The Homes for Ukraine scheme is open to applications from ‘eligible minors’ who are coming to the UK without their parent(s)/legal guardian. Sponsors of these applicants must follow a different process to the main scheme, including providing parental consent, and will need to meet relevant eligibility criteria and pass enhanced safeguarding checks before a visa can be issued. [See Flow Chart Appendix A](#)

Other unaccompanied minors living with sponsors in the UK who have not applied through this route, include those who have

- Travelled to the UK before the introduction of the ‘eligible minors’ route under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.
- Applied with their parent(s)/legal guardian under the wider Homes for Ukraine scheme but whose parent(s)/legal guardian did not travel with them to the UK.
- Applied with their parent(s)/legal guardian under the wider Homes for Ukraine scheme but who have subsequently been left in the UK with a sponsor and/or accompanying adult, either because their parent(s)/legal guardian has subsequently left the country or moved to a different address in the UK.

In these scenarios, we should retrospectively complete the same sponsor approval and checks required under the unaccompanied minor’s scheme ensuring that the sponsor understands and can fulfil the additional responsibility on them. We should also retrospectively obtain parental consent to the arrangement.

We have included a link [Safeguarding: Homes for Ukraine - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) to this new guidance page within the wider Homes for Ukraine Safeguarding page.

General principles

The wider Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme was not designed for unaccompanied children. Separate guidance for sponsors and parents gives strong advice that where parents/legal guardians have applied through the main scheme they should travel and stay with their children in the UK. If exceptional circumstances mean that the parent(s)/legal guardian are unable to travel with their child or must leave their child in the care of a sponsor, guidance is clear that they should agree this with the sponsor and inform the council in advance so they can carry out additional sponsor suitability checks.

Where we are notified that a child will be or is already in the UK without their parent/guardian and outside the Homes for Ukraine eligible minors scheme the following practice should apply:

- Flag the newly identified unaccompanied minor on Foundry via by notifying Ukraine@stoke.gov.uk and cc in ChAD or CSS Strategic Manager depending on whether the child is known or not.
- Establish the contacts details for the parental or legal guardian and consent for the sponsorship arrangements.
- Carry out the safeguarding and sponsorship suitability checks required by the eligible minor's scheme.
- Confirm that the sponsor understands their role.
- Carry out regular welfare checks on the sponsor and child to ensure the ongoing suitability of the sponsorship arrangements.

This applies in all instances where the child will be without their parents/person with Parental Responsibility.

Councils are required to carry out pre- and post-arrival checks and ongoing monitoring of sponsorship arrangements to ensure children are being care for appropriately. This practice guidance does not replace local council's statutory duties or responsibilities.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Homes for Ukraine Council Guidance (<https://gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils>).

Sponsor eligibility

The sponsor should personally know the child's parents or legal guardians (unless there are personal circumstances), and they should have known them before the conflict started on 24 February 2022. The council should look for evidence that there is a suitable, pre-existing relationship between the sponsor and the parent or legal guardian. This evidence could be in the form of letters, or emails, photos, or social media activity from before the start date of the conflict in Ukraine. The Strategic Manager can exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances if they judge this to be in the best interests of the child. For example, where the council judge that a child will be cared for appropriately by an adult relative who has been given the day to day caring responsibility by the parent or legal guardian for their child and who will live with their child in the UK. In exercising this discretion, we should consider:

- Whether the sponsor will be living in the same property as the child and any accompanying relative;
- Whether the child will be accompanied by an adult relative who will be staying with them for the duration of their time in the UK.

Prospective sponsors must be able to commit to staying in the UK for the duration of the sponsorship agreement because they (for example):

- Are a British Citizen;
- Settled in the UK (also known as indefinite leave to remain);
- Have no time limit to 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 they will be sponsoring the child.

Sponsor suitability assessment

As part of the checks, we are required to carry out a sponsor suitability assessment to ensure that the child's welfare is likely to be satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted by the arrangements.

The assessment of the host (s) should be carried out using the procedures and arrangements they have in place for assessment the suitability of private fostering arrangements ([Private Fostering Assessment.pdf \(stoke.gov.uk\)](#)).

In addition to the factors set out in the Private Fostering Guidance, when assessing the sponsorship arrangements, we must consider all the circumstances of the individual case, which includes:

- The outcome of all checks relating to the sponsor suitability including:
 - DBS Checks;
 - Accommodation Checks;
 - Full safeguarding checks;
 - Any documentary evidence provided including the notarised proof of parental or legal guardian consent and information provided in the UK sponsorship consent form.

ChAD will request the above checks and will forward the outcome of the checks to the allocated Social Worker and Team Manager. The social work team are responsible for reviewing the checks as part of its assessment, and saving the checks to file.

Re-matching for unaccompanied children

Sponsorship arrangements for children not travelling with their parents or legal guardian should go forward only where we judge the risk of breakdown to be low. However, should an arrangement break down, we must consult the parent to ascertain their wishes about arrangements for their child. This could include a rematch with a new sponsor in the UK.

Any rematch of a child must be led by the parent or legal guardian. The new prospective host should meet the relevant criteria for sponsoring / hosting a child as set out above. The same council checks as required for the original host would need to be completed again for the new host before the child can move in with them, and parental consent obtained for the new arrangement. There is no active role for the council to play in terms of sourcing a suitable new host for the child. However as set out within this guidance, we should carry out the relevant checks and approve any new sponsorship arrangements. We should ask the parent (s) or legal guardian to re-complete the UK sponsorship arrangement form' for the host, confirming that they agree the new arrangement is in the best interest of their child, and to inform.

If the parent / legal guardian cannot identify a suitable new host or make alternative arrangements for the child, we will need to consider the options available to us taking into consideration our existing statutory duties including whether they should accommodate the child under Children Act 1989 powers or take further necessary action such as taking the child into care. Local Authority legal advice should be sought and the Ukraine Lead via Ukraine@stoke.gov.uk. The Ukrainian authorities should also be informed using the contact consul_gb@mfa.gov.ua.

Moving out of the UK/Returning to Ukraine

A parent/legal guardian might choose to end the sponsorship arrangement for their child before the full 3 years of their visa stay and move their child somewhere outside of the UK, for example back to Ukraine or a neighbouring safe country to be reunited with them, a relative or other trusted person.

In this scenario, we should request written consent confirming this decision is in the best interest of their child and that appropriate travel and reception arrangements have been made. A form is available for obtaining written consent ([see appendix B – Consent Form](#)).

Enhanced DBS checks

Enhanced DBS checks (with a check of the children's barred list) is to be completed on all sponsors of unaccompanied minors, even in cases where there is a family relationship between the child and sponsor. We are to facilitate the application by the sponsor and any other eligible individuals (those 16+ within the household).

Funding

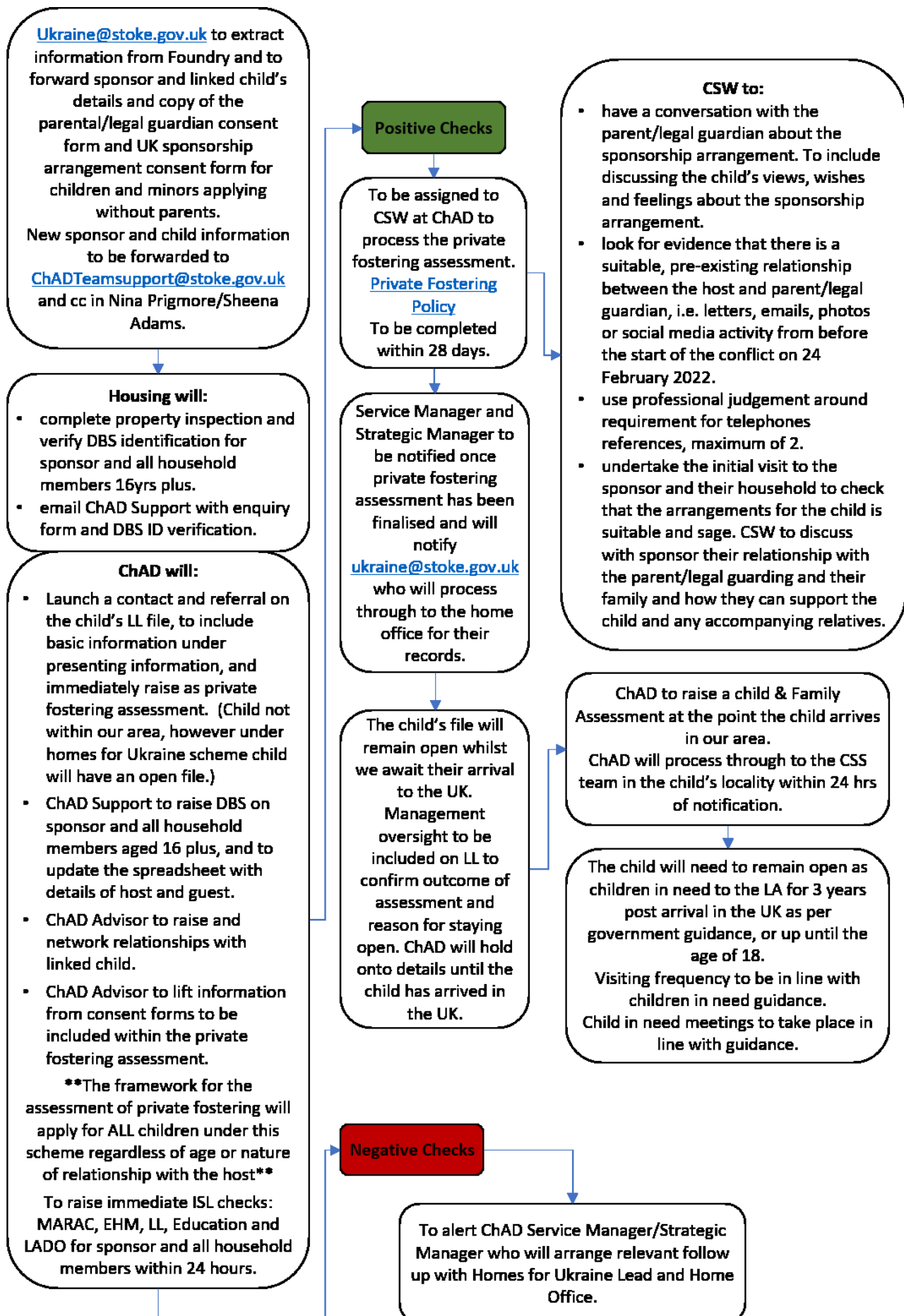
Where the parent or legal guardian has given the sponsor responsibility for the day – to day care of their child, it is expected that the sponsor will also take on the financial responsibility for that care while they are in the UK or they turn 18. Where the parent or legal guardian has given the responsibility to an accompanying adult relative, it is expected that they will take on the financial responsibility for that child. The sponsor will need to discuss this arrangement with the parent or legal guardian. Sponsors of unaccompanied minors are eligible for thank you payments while the child stays with them for up to 3 years. Sponsors have the option to receive a monthly thank you payment while the child stays with them for up to 3 years. A payment of £350 per month for their first 6 months, then £450 up to 12 months, rising to £500 for year two of the child's stay. The level of payment for year 3 will be kept under review. The payments are made once Ukraine@stoke.gov.uk has been notified that all the safeguarding checks and assessment have been completed and this is a viable arrangement.

All Homes for Ukraine guests are eligible for an interim payment of £200 per guest for subsistence costs, and this does not need to be repaid.

Where the sponsors have taken on day to day responsibility for the care of the child, they may be eligible for additional benefit support for the child, depending on their existing circumstances.

The government guidance gives detailed information around financial for sponsors and for eligibility for sponsors, 16 and 17 – year-olds, including child benefit etc. This guidance should be referred to (<https://gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils>).

Appendix A – Flow Chart for Unaccompanied Ukrainian Children NOT already in the UK



Appendix B – Consent Form

Parent/legal guardian consent form for the return of children to Ukraine or other country

You are the **parent(s) or legal guardian of a Ukrainian child under the age of 18 who is currently living in the UK without you, and you have informed the council that you would like your child to return to Ukraine or other country.** We (the UK government and local councils*) want to keep your child safe. We are asking in this form for your confirmation that you consider it is in the best interest of your child to leave the UK and that adequate transit and reception arrangements have been made for your child. You may be contacted by a local council in the UK to confirm these arrangements. This is to ensure that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of your child are accounted for.

Note on your data

Your personal data is collected and processed in accordance with UK data protection legislation. For more details on how the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Home Office uses and shares your personal data, including your data protection rights see the Privacy Notices here.

1. Best interests

I confirm that I _____ [insert your name] am the parent or legal guardian of _____ [insert the name of your child], and am able to make decisions on their behalf.

I confirm that it is in the best interest of my child _____ [insert name of child] to leave the UK and return to and/or live in _____ [insert name of country], and that appropriate travel and reception arrangements have been made to keep my child safe.

2. Travel Plans

I confirm that I have prepared a travel plan for my child to return to Ukraine or travel to another country and I have shared this plan with my child (where appropriate), and relevant persons and/or authorities* so they can ensure my child is kept safe during transit.

3. Alerting relevant state authorities

I confirm that I have informed the Ukrainian Embassy in the UK of my decision to remove my child from the UK and obtained their views about how safe it is for my child to return to Ukraine at this time (if applicable). The Ukrainian Embassy in UK can be contacted at: consul_gb@mfa.gov.ua
If my child is travelling to another country (not Ukraine), I confirm that I have checked their immigration entry requirements and am confident that they will accept my child into their country on arrival. Where possible, I have alerted the relevant authorities in the country my child is travelling to (including Ukrainian authorities where applicable).

4. Council safeguarding duties

I confirm that I understand that if the council in the UK has concerns that my child is likely to suffer significant harm on leaving the UK that they may investigate further. This might include taking my child into their care if they decide my child needs immediate protection.

5. Signature

Please give your signature:

Signature (parent 1) _____

Signature (parent 2 (optional)) _____

By signing this document, I am indicating that I have read, understood and agree to the above statements and I certify that all information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

*Please note, where there are references to Councils, in the context of Northern Ireland these should be read as Health and Social Care Trusts

*Relevant persons and/or authorities may include the sponsor of the child in the UK, the local council, any person accompanying the child during travel and the relevant airline carrier (if travelling unaccompanied)

Appendix C – Flow Chart for Unaccompanied Ukrainian Children ALREADY in the UK

