



Summary of Homes for Ukraine scheme guidance updates relating to unaccompanied minors – January 2023

On 16 January 2023 a range of updates were made across the Homes for Ukraine guidance pages on Gov.UK. This included updates to the bespoke guidance for **councils**, **sponsors** and **parents** covering children under 18 from Ukraine, who are not travelling with or to join a parent or legal guardian.

The below provides a summary of the main changes.

Unaccompanied Ukrainian children already in the UK

- We have published [new guidance on what councils should do where they encounter Ukrainian children living in the UK without their parent or legal guardian but who have not entered through the Homes for Ukraine unaccompanied minors scheme](#), meaning the sponsor will not have been subject to the enhanced safeguarding checks required under the unaccompanied minors scheme.
- In this scenario, councils should retrospectively complete the same sponsor approval and checks required under the unaccompanied minors scheme, ensuring that the sponsor understands and can fulfil the additional responsibility on them. The council should also retrospectively obtain parental consent to the arrangement.
- These steps should be taken when parents intend to or have left children in the care of the sponsor for 28 days or more.
- We have included a link to this new guidance page within the wider Homes for Ukraine [Safeguarding page](#) too.
- We have also included stronger messaging in wider Homes for Ukraine guidance for parents ([here](#)) and sponsors ([here](#)) to discourage parents from leaving children with sponsors where they have applied through the main Homes for Ukraine scheme, while also ensuring that in the exceptional circumstances where this has had to happen, they know the steps they need to take including alerting the council.

Rematching for unaccompanied children

- Sponsorship arrangements for children not travelling with their parents or legal guardian should go forward only where the council judges the risk of breakdown to be low. However, should an arrangement break down, the council 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.
- We have updated our guidance for councils on the [rematching process for children](#) who are here without their parent or legal guardian as this is different from the process under the main Homes for Ukraine scheme.
- Any rematch of a child must be led by the parent or legal guardian and the new prospective host should meet the relevant eligibility criteria for hosting an unaccompanied child – including that they are known to the parent or legal guardian with that relationship pre-dating the conflict. 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.

- We have also updated the relevant sections in guidance for sponsors ([here](#)) and parents ([here](#)) to ensure they are aware of how the process differs for unaccompanied children.

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, the council 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.
- We have updated our [guidance to councils on returns](#) and made a [new form available on GOV.UK](#) for obtaining this written consent.
- We have also updated the relevant section of the guidance for sponsors ([here](#)) to ensure they know to make the council aware where a parent is planning for their child to go back to Ukraine (or other country), and to consider the role they (the sponsor) can play in ensuring the child leaves the UK safely. Likewise, we have updated guidance to parents ([here](#)) so they know to alert the council if planning to remove their child and understand they will be asked to provide written consent that this is in their child's best interests.

Enhanced DBS checks

- Given recent legislative changes, we are now recommending councils undertake Enhanced DBS checks (with a check of the children's barred list) on all sponsors of unaccompanied minors, even in cases where there is a family relationship between the child and sponsor.
- Updated guidance can be found under the '[sponsor approval checks](#)' section of guidance.

Funding

- On 14 December 2022 we announced some changes to the funding associated with the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We have updated our guidance for councils [here](#) (under the 'administering payments to sponsors' and 'funding for councils' sections) to make clear how these changes apply to the unaccompanied minors scheme specifically.
- This includes that:
 - the £10,500 year one tariff will remain for unaccompanied minors arriving after 1 January 2023.
 - The uplift to the thank you payment to sponsors to £500 from months 13 to 24 applies to sponsors of unaccompanied minors too.
 - Sponsors of unaccompanied minors are eligible for thank you payments while the child stays with them for up to 3 years. We will continue to keep the level of thank you payment for sponsors of unaccompanied minors in year 3 under review given the scheme is in the early stages of rollout.

In addition to the above, more substantial updates, we have made some smaller tweaks to guidance, including:

- Updated language in all guidance pieces to reflect that the process for new applications from eligible children has now opened, as well as updated language to better reflect how the guidance applies to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (see [here](#));

- Recommending that councils seek to, where possible, involve the parent / legal guardian (remotely) in their post arrival and ongoing visits to the sponsor and the child (under [‘supporting post arrival and ongoing checks’ section](#))
- Included stronger messaging in both guidance for parents (see [here](#)) and sponsors (see [here](#)) that the care arrangements for the child should be discussed between the parent, sponsor and any accompanying adult relative as early as possible, ideally before the child arrives in the UK so all are clear on respective roles and responsibilities.
- Included further guidance for sponsors on supporting the child to adapt to life in the UK, flagging some of the key issues they may need to support them with navigating such as the transition to adulthood/independence (acknowledging that Ukrainian 16/17-year-olds may consider themselves more adult), differences between the UK and Ukrainian education systems, and understanding relevant UK laws including on employment of U18s (see [here](#)). We have also made similar additions to the [Welcome Pack for Ukrainian children](#) to ensure that they are able to adjust well on arrival.
- Included stronger messaging in guidance for sponsors on supporting the young person once they turn 18 and alerting the council as early as possible if they cannot continue to sponsor them after this point (under [‘Post 18 support’ section](#))