**Process for supporting unaccompanied Ukrainian Children (February 2024).**

**This document explains what to do when Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council are notified of a visa application, via the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, for an unaccompanied child or young person (aged under 18).**

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme is a national scheme managed by the Home Office. In Redcar & Cleveland the Scheme is coordinated by the Housing Standards Team who undertake the necessary checks of ‘sponsors’ (these are households hosting Ukrainian guests) and provide resettlement support (this support does not include direct support for children).

Ukrainians entering the UK via the Homes for Ukraine scheme are granted refugee status with right to remain for 3 years. This means they can access public services and claim benefits.

The majority of our Ukrainian guests are adults or families with children. It is however possible for children to come through the scheme unaccompanied. In this circumstance the government require private fostering checks to be undertaken before granting a visa. Where this is the case Children’s Services and Housing Standards Team will work together to undertake the necessary checks. This document provides a summary of the application process and explains who will do what.

For further information please see the government guidance for councils.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians#unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-uasc-obligations>

The following documents will also be of relevance:

[Homes for Ukraine: welcome guide for Ukrainian children under 18 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-welcome-guide-for-ukrainian-children-under-18)

[Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for sponsors (children and minors applying without parents or legal guardians) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-sponsors-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians)

This process refers to Ukrainian Children who are entering the UK without their parent or legal guardian.

In some circumstances children who have arrived in the UK with their family may have been subsequently left with the sponsor, a friend or relative - either because their parent/guardian has left the country or moved to a different address.

The **Housing Standards Team** will also make a referral to the **MACH** if they become aware that a child who came to the UK with their parent/guardian under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is now living apart from their parent/guardian.

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

# 1 Scheme requirements and Private Fostering Amendments

The government guidance states that:

*“the child’s parent or legal guardian should personally know the sponsor and that their relationship with the sponsor should have started before the conflict on 24th February 2022. In exceptional circumstances, the council may determine that the sponsor does not need to be personally known to the parent or legal guardian, for example, where the council judge that a child will be cared for appropriately by an adult relative who has been given day-to-day caring responsibility by the parent or legal guardian for their child and who will live with their child in the UK.”*

The government guidance states that, exceptional circumstances might include:

* where a child is travelling to the UK with a relative or friend (not their legal guardian). Both will be staying with a sponsor but the friend or relative will be responsible for the child’s care, rather than the sponsor.
* where a child is travelling unaccompanied to join a friend or relative who is already hosted by a sponsor.

**Amendment to private fostering rules:**

In England the private fostering framework only applies to children up to 16 (or 18 for children with a disability), and where the child is not being accommodated by a parent or legal guardian (or other person with parental responsibility) or a relative (as defined in the Children Act 1989). However, given the additional vulnerability of this group of children and young people, councils are asked to carry out these assessments for all children entering the UK under this expanded scheme (aged under 18).

# 2 Application and Assessment Process

**A detailed application process is set out in the** [**guidance for councils**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians#unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-uasc-obligations)**. The below text summarises this process and identifies the responsibilities for Children’s Services and the Housing Standards Team:**

* **Sponsor (the household in the UK seeking to host the unaccompanied child) makes an application using the online application form.** This includes two consent forms which constitute consent for a private fostering assessment.
* The application generates a new case in ‘Foundry’ (the Homes For Ukraine Case Management System) notifying the **Housing Standards Team.**

**At this point the Housing Standards Team will:**

Make a Safer Referral to **Redcar & Cleveland MACH** sharing information about the child, host, the two consent forms and any other information in the application  [http://www.teescpp.org.uk](http://www.teescpp.org.uk/)  (for advice contact the MACH on 01642 130700).

* After receiving the application, the council will initiate the sponsorship suitability assessment and checks (set out in further detail in the Approving Sponsors and Parental Consent sections of the [guidance)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians#unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-uasc-obligations), which include the following: **(Throughout this process Children’s Services and Housing Standards Team should keep sponsors and parents updated on the progress of their application).**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Housing Standards will** | **Children’s Services will:** |
| Initiate Enhanced DBS checks for the Sponsor and all members of the household aged 16+.  Housing Standards will email sponsor with link and explanation on how to submit DBS check together with  ‘Thank you payment’ form for completion | Notify Housing Standards with contact details of the allocated social worker. |
| Housing standards will inform Children’s Services when DBS checks are complete and share documentation. | Confirm the content in the parental consent forms, including a phone call/ conversation with the parent to verify information provided & agree ongoing contact (e.g. in the event of breakdown).  Please note that Housing Standards have arrangements in place with an interpreter.[[1]](#footnote-1) Please contact Housing Standards to arrange this. This initial contact will be funded via the Homes for Ukraine programme. |
| It is recommended that where possible the allocated social worker and Housing Standards Officer arrange a joint visit to the sponsor to explain the process and start/make arrangements for the following checks. | |
| Complete an accommodation suitability check | Complete a council led assessment in line with the private fostering arrangements.    (See [Appendix 1](#_Appendix_1:_Suitability)) |
| Housing Standards will inform Children’s Services of the outcome of the Accommodation Suitability Check. | Children’s Services will inform Housing Standards Team that they have undertaken the necessary checks and share the outcome. |
| Notify Children’s Services of the changes to the status of the application on the foundry system.\* |  |
| In parallel, UKVI will complete security checks on the prospective sponsor, all other adults in the sponsor’s household, and any adult guests. UKVI will update Foundry with the results of these checks.  If any checks or the sponsorship suitability assessment are not passed, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will contact the sponsor directly to inform them that they do not meet the suitability requirements of the scheme and that applications linked to them cannot progress.  \* If the applicant or the sponsor withdraws their application at any point during the process, Housing Standards should mark the application as withdrawn on Foundry, rather than marking the checks as unsuccessful. The council should only mark the sponsor as having been unsuccessful checks if this is the case, as doing so may impact their ability to sponsor guests in the future. If applicable to be completed by the HST. | |

* **The Housing Standards Team** will upload the outcome of all checks to the Foundry System. Where the sponsorship checks are successful and have been recorded as such on Foundry, the status of the accommodation request will show as ‘Pre-Arrival Checks Complete’. This initiates a ‘send acceptance email’ prompt which the council selects to send the Sponsor Certification code. The applicant can then apply for a visa through the gov.uk site, inputting the Sponsor Certification code when prompted.
* The Home Office will then complete the necessary visa application checks, this includes checking the sponsor’s immigration status to confirm they have no time limit to stay in the UK or, if they have immigration permission, have at least 3 years or as long as they will be sponsoring the child.
* Where the visa application is successful, the Home Office will issue the child and any accompanying adults with a permit to travel.
* The parent or legal guardian and sponsor must ensure at this stage that safe arrangements have been made for the child’s travel and share these with the council for approval using the template at [Annex C](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fguidance%2Fhomes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils-children-and-minors-applying-without-parents-or-legal-guardians%23annex-c-pre-departure-travel-plan-template&data=05%7C01%7CSarah.Johnson%40redcar-cleveland.gov.uk%7Ca8aaea0aa4194c98ef3308dbc9a57053%7Ca95b5b75274441ba91105a29c6ee2ba4%7C0%7C0%7C638325484612365357%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4ytitQGcx2h0YPcvB%2FrmSFnifLsLEKVAp8LFpeaf78U%3D&reserved=0) of the guidance.  If the council is content with the travel arrangements, the child can then travel to the UK.
* The sponsor must share the travel plan with **Children’s Services** who will support the Sponsor with completion of the plan where required.
* **Children’s Services** will upload a copy of the completed travel plan to LCS and share the travel plan with **Housing Standards Team** when complete (**Housing Standards** will upload this to JIRA).
* Within 24 hours of a child’s arrival, local councils (**Children’s Services**) should carry out an initial visit, consistent with the Private Fostering framework, to confirm the suitability of the living arrangements and establish any immediate welfare needs.
* **Children’s Services** will give the child information about how to raise any concerns about their arrangement.
* All Homes for Ukraine guests are eligible for an interim payment of £200 per guest for subsistence costs. It is expected that in relation to eligible children the council will pay this to the sponsor on behalf of the child (where they are fully unaccompanied) or to an accompanying adult relative living with the child (where they have been given responsibility for the child’s day-to-day care). The £200 payment does not need to be repaid. Councils will also have discretion to top-up or further support guests with interim or additional payments.  A visit will also therefore be made asap after arrival to give over the £200 assistance payment by **Housing Standards Team**
* Providing all checks are satisfactory and the Ukrainian guest(s) has arrived **Housing Standards Team** will commence the thank you payment if the sponsor wants this.  For a period of three years (£350 per month in year 1, £500 per month in year 2 – amounts for year 3 are still to be determined) or if the child turns 18 during their stay, like other guests on the scheme the sponsor will be eligible for the payment for up to 2 years from the date of the child’s arrival in the UK. Where the individual turns 18 but has not been in the country for 2 years, the sponsor will still be eligible for the payment for up to 2 years, in line with the wider Homes for Ukraine scheme. Where the individual turns 18 but has already been resident for more than 2 years, thank you payments to sponsors will stop. This payment will be tax free and should not affect the sponsor’s entitlement to benefits or council tax status. **Housing Standards will coordinate the payments to the Sponsor.**
* **Children’s Services** will undertake regular visits to monitor the arrangement in line with private fostering requirements. and must notify **Housing Standards Team** immediately if there are any changes to the Sponsorship Arrangement.
* Likewise **Housing Standards** will keep in touch with the Sponsor and will notify **Children’s Services** of any change in circumstances or concerns about the child.
* **Housing Standards Team** to be responsible for keeping Foundry system up to date.
* **Housing Standards Team** to make quarterly returns in line with Delta requests.

**What happens if the private fostering arrangement breaks down?**

If the private fostering arrangement breaks down **Housing Standards Team** should notify the allocated social worker or contact the MACH. **Children’s Services** will undertake an assessment to determine how to meet the child or young person needs.

The council should make best efforts to inform the child’s parent or legal guardian at the earliest opportunity, as well as the Ukrainian Embassy.

Where the local authority determines that placement with the sponsor is not a viable ongoing arrangement for the child, but 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. Further guidance is included in the [ending of sponsorship arrangement section of the published guidance for councils.](file:///\\Redclev.net\CorpDept\ChildServ\Children's%20Services%20Policy%20Group\Private%20Fostering\ending%20of%20sponsorship%20arrangement%20section%20of%20the%20published%20guidance%20for%20councils.)

# Appendix 1: Suitability Assessment

* A suitability assessment of sponsorship arrangements; Councils should carry out the assessment of the host(s) using the procedures and arrangements they have in place for assessing the suitability of private fostering arrangements in accordance with the [Guidance on Private Fostering](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fnational-minimum-standards-for-private-fostering&data=05%7C01%7CSarah.Johnson%40redcar-cleveland.gov.uk%7Ca8aaea0aa4194c98ef3308dbc9a57053%7Ca95b5b75274441ba91105a29c6ee2ba4%7C0%7C0%7C638325484612365357%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=DIssiDhAnQGmosi5%2Bb2IErc9HfWYEUaAVP6wv%2FfspLw%3D&reserved=0). Where the arrangement is in accordance with the private fostering provisions in the Children Act 1989 then the private fostering framework applies and should be recorded as a Private Fostering arrangement. In all other cases, including where the adult relative, rather than the sponsor, will take on day to day responsibility for the child’s care, local councils should still use the framework to assess the sponsor’s suitability.
* Verifying the parent’s or legal guardian’s contact details (as provided on the UK sponsorship arrangement form) and to discuss with them any questions that arise during the suitability assessment. They may also wish to speak to the child to begin to determine their views and needs.
* The council should set out the expectation of the sponsor and ensure these are understood.  The council should also complete the form at Annex A and share a copy of this with the prospective sponsor to confirm that they understand their role as a sponsor of an eligible child  (further info provided in Government guidance). Written confirmation that the prospective sponsor understands the expectations of them, as set out in the sponsor guidance.
* Checking any documentary evidence provided including the notarised proof of parental or legal guardian consent and information provided in the UK sponsorship arrangement consent form.
* Checking whether the sponsor is known to the parent or legal guardian and whether the relationship began pre-conflict (before 24 February 2022). Councils are advised to request evidence of this which could for example be in the form of letters or emails, photos, or social media activity that pre-dates the conflict. The council can exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances where they judge this to be in the best interests of the child. In exercising this discretion councils may wish to consider whether the sponsor will be living in the same property as the child and any accompanying relative and 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.

# Appendix 2 - Support for Ukrainian Children

**Funding available to support Unaccompanied Children**

The government provides funding at a rate of £10,500 per unaccompanied child to councils, this is to provide support to enable guests to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. This is only for the first year of arrival despite the fact that sponsors are obliged to support the unaccompanied child for 3 years. It has been agreed with Housing Standards that this funding will be split between the two teams (60% to Children’s Services and 40% to Housing Standards)

For all other Homes for Ukraine guests the year 1 tariff is £5,900 for arrivals after 1 January 2023.  This funding is un-ringfenced, with a number of conditions attached.  This is in addition to the thank you payment received by the Sponsor.

Housing Standards administer the tariff and must evidence to the government how funding has been spent. This money will be used to cover staff costs of the Housing Standards Team and Children’s Services in assessing and monitoring the arrangement and ongoing generic support, including translation costs.

There is no identified budget for children who require additional services, however where this is the case please contact Alison Ker, Housing Standards manager to discuss. There may be potential to utilise underspend for this purpose.

The remaining tariff can be used to fund any additional services the unaccompanied child may need – for example, translation services, therapeutic services and other interventions.

For note the government also provides funding for councils to administer the ‘thank you’ payments at the relevant monthly rate. This is allocated via additional funding for these payments through a ringfenced grant, and it is expected that councils cover administration costs within the tariff.

The government have published

B. A telephone helpline run by the children’s charity Barnardo’s, which has a free number to call: 0800 148 8586. The helpline offers a confidential service and has Ukrainian and Russian speakers. [Visit Barnardo’s website](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/barnardos-ukrainian-support-helpline).

[Homes for Ukraine: welcome guide for Ukrainian children under 18 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-welcome-guide-for-ukrainian-children-under-18) (available in English, Ukrainian and Russian)

**School Placements** - To arrange a school placement please contact Sue Beevers (Educational Capital Projects and Place Planning Lead). Sue’s team will support to find a school place, the funding to the Education Authority to support school integration is transferred by Sue to the child’s school. However, if the child is struggling to integrate into school, please contact Sue for further advice. We have a service level agreement in place with Middlesbrough Council’s Ethnic Minority Achievement Team and can spot purchase support if required.

As with all pupils, schools are responsible for meeting any additional learning needs in the first instance, where schools are not able to meet needs it is their responsibility to initiate requests for additional support and resources via the council’s Resource Support Panel. This would be the first port of call for any children with additional learning needs or if they require additional support at school due to a physical disability.

**Support with traumatic experiences** – Please be mindful that discussing traumatic experiences of war and conflict can be retraumatising and triggering. It is therefore best to seek professional advice. The Asylum Seeking Through Care Team make referrals to the charitable organisation [Freedom from Torture](https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/what-we-do/therapy-and-support). They offer free therapy, support and advice to adults and children who have survived physical or psychological torture.

Our Asylum Seeking Through Care Team are experienced at supporting children and young people with experience of war and conflict. Whilst they avoid discussing traumatic experiences directly, they have developed good strategies to build resilience and support better mental health. The team can provide general advice about different approaches you can take (please contact Elaine Spencer).

[TRANSLATED HEALTH INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS - Doctors of the World](https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/translated-health-information/?_language=english&_gr=navigating-the-nhs-and-right-to-healthcare) includes a guide to the NHS – aimed at adults but may be useful for young people and any Ukrainian adult responsible for their care.

**Financial Support for Carers and Sponsors** – Details on financial support for those caring for a child who has not arrived in the UK with their Parent or guardian is included in the information guide Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for sponsors (children and minors applying without parents or legal guardians) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

**Sponsor/ carers can apply for Child Benefit and Free Child Care Schemes.**

**Other websites and resources**

[Support for Ukrainian children and families | Children England](https://www.childrenengland.org.uk/support-for-ukrainian-children-and-families)

[Resources to help support children and young people arriving from Ukraine - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-ukrainian-students-in-schools/resources-to-help-support-children-and-young-people-arriving-from-ukraine) – This web page includes links to resources supporting wellbeing, educational resources, mental health, learning English and explaining the education system.

[Resources to help welcome Ukrainian children into school](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-ukrainian-students-in-schools/resources-to-help-support-children-and-young-people-arriving-from-ukraine)

[Barnardo’s](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/services/barnardos-ukrainian-support-helpline) (0800 148 8586). The helpline offers a confidential service and has Ukrainian and Russian speakers. [Visit Barnardo’s website](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/services/barnardos-ukrainian-support-helpline).

[Advice for Host Familes.pdf (barnardos.org.uk)](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/Advice%20for%20Host%20Familes.pdf) Barnardo’s have also published a guide for host families which includes information about Ukrainian traditions and culture.

1. Housing Standards have agreed to fund the translation costs, where required, for this initial conversation with parents and following this, for any joint visits where Housing Standards are also present. Children and Families Directorate will be responsible for any other translation costs for visits/phone calls etc. to be arranged in the normal way. We have a contract in place with Everyday Language Solutions ([Make a Booking - Everyday Language Solutions](https://everydaylanguagesolutions.co.uk/bookings/)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)