

# Digital Welcome Pack (Homes for Ukraine)

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## 1 Welcome to Scotland and Aberdeenshire

The Aberdeenshire Council Refugee Resettlement Team will assist Ukrainian families and Sponsors with any questions you have about settling into Aberdeenshire. We know that leaving Ukraine, family and friends will be difficult and we are here to help.

You can contact us on: [refugeeresettlementteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:refugeeresettlementteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Useful links to learn about Scotland and Aberdeenshire:

<https://www.scotland.org/about-scotland/facts>

<https://www.aberdeenshirecommunitysafety.org.uk/download/welcome/english.pdf>

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communities-and-events/refugees/>

<https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/information-for-people-in-scotland-affected-by-the-crisis-in-ukraine/>

## 2 Immigration

You have been granted a Visa to remain in the UK for 3 years. You will be able to work and access benefits and public services – including healthcare, benefits and schooling. If you have any questions about your visa or immigration status, you must speak with a qualified immigration advisor:

<https://www.justrightscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/migrant-refugee-rights/ukraine-advice-scotland/>

## 3 Money Advice

You will receive £200 per person on arrival to help with living costs until your benefits are in place. Your first priority will be to apply for Universal Credit or Pension Credit. Universal Credit takes 5 weeks to process but you can apply for an advance.

- Universal Credit <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>
- Pension Credit <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>
- Child Benefit <https://www.gov.uk/child-benefit>
- Scottish Child Payment <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment>
- School Clothing Grants <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/school-info/assistance/school-clothing-grants/>

*Useful links:*

Council Money Advice <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/benefits-and-grants/>

Scottish Government <https://www.mygov.scot/browse/benefits>

Citizens Advice Scotland <https://www.cas.org.uk/>

A bank account in the name of the applicant is required for Universal Credit and benefit claims. Your sponsor may be able to introduce you to their bank. The Bank of Scotland can be flexible with ID requirements for applicants with refugee status.

#### **4 Health and Wellbeing**

On arrival, your Sponsor will help you register with your local GP Practice. In Scotland, all health appointments and prescriptions are free. The National Health Service (NHS) is under pressure due to the impacts of Covid 19, so you may have to wait for an appointment <https://www.know-who-to-turn-to.com/>

There is a central call number available for people to access help and advice in relation to dental emergencies and dental registration, with a team of qualified dental nurses who will respond to these queries/issues. The team can be contacted on 0345 4565 990 between 8.05am and 6.00pm. They can provide details of dental practices who are accepting new patients within Aberdeenshire.

Covid information in Ukrainian: <http://www.healthscotland.com/documents/78277.aspx>

It may find it hard to adjust to life in Scotland and you will have a range of difficult emotions to deal with. If you feel unwell, depressed or anxious you should speak with your GP. Please let us know if we can help. Wellbeing Scotland has some resources that may also help: <https://www.wellbeingScotland.org/>

#### **5 Education & Language Learning**

Scotland provides free school education for all children from the age of 4 or 5 up to age 18. Young children attend primary school and older children go to secondary school. Where children need additional support to help them learn, this is provided by the school. For example, your child will get extra support if they speak little or no English, or if they have a health condition which affects how they learn. This support is a right and is set out in law. Most children with additional support needs will be educated in their local mainstream school but in some cases another school may be better equipped to meet their needs.

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/Documents/refugee-schools-guide.pdf>

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/schools/>

Your sponsor will help you enrol your child in school and your Resettlement Officer will signpost you to any help needed.

Funded early learning and childcare is free to parents. All 3 and 4 year olds are eligible to get a funded place at a council nursery, or funding towards a place at a funded provider (private nurseries, playgroups and childminders that we have an agreement with). Some children younger than age 3 may also be eligible. If you need help applying to nursery, contact the Myra McRobbie, Early Years Team on [earlyyears@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:earlyyears@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/childcare-and-early-learning/>

Colleges and Universities provide a range of educational opportunities for those aged 16 and above. Funding may be available, but you would need to check eligibility with the institution. If you need advice on college or university applications, speak directly with the institution or ask for a referral to our New Scots Employability Worker.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are available in person and online, but you may need to travel to access them. ESOL classes are delivered in the community and at college. On arrival you will be offered an ESOL assessment. Once assessed you will

be advised of your English language levels and classes and courses available. College terms run from August to June so you may have to wait until a new term starts. Great tips to learn English include watching television, listening to the radio and practicing conversational English with your host.

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communities-and-events/cld/adult-learning/english-of-other-languages/>

## **6 Housing**

Your Sponsor has agreed to accommodate you for a minimum of 6 months. They will receive a £350 per month thank you payment to cover their costs so you are not expected to pay rent. After 6 months, you and your Sponsor will need to discuss if your arrangement will continue. If you or your Sponsor decide to end your accommodation arrangement, you can contact the Housing Service for advice:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/housing/housing-options/>

## **7 Employment**

When you arrive it will take to adjust and settle. When you apply for Universal Credit, there will be an expectation that you will look for employment, training or volunteering when you and your Work Coach think you are ready. You will be appointed a Work Coach by the Jobcentre but you can also seek advice and support from our New Scots Employability Worker. Volunteering can be an excellent way of adjusting, building confidence and learning language and skills. If you care for someone or have young children, you will not be expected to work.

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers/employability-support/employment-support-team/>

[employmentsupportteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:employmentsupportteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

## **8 Community**

Aberdeenshire has a wide range of communities from all around the world who are ready to help. We can help connect you with Aberdeenshire residents who speak Ukrainian and Russian and want to help you settle into Scotland. The Ukraine Aberdeenshire WhatsApp Group will be an essential source of support, guidance and reassurance in difficult times. Local communities will also want to help you in any way they can – your Sponsor will introduce you to your new neighbours.

If you've arrived without essential items like clothing and toiletries, your Resettlement Officer can refer you to the Community Link Worker Service for support.

Friends of Al-Amal Project is a charity supporting New Scots, with community and social activities, and informal learning in Aberdeenshire [friendsofalamalproject@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofalamalproject@gmail.com)

## **9 Safety and Stability**

Police Scotland have produced a Guide to Scots' law to help you adjust to life in Scotland.

<https://refugeesaberdeenshire.wordpress.com/2022/03/28/a-guide-to-scots-law-ukrainian/>

<https://refugeesaberdeenshire.wordpress.com/2022/04/01/a-guide-to-scots-law-russian/>

## **10 Sponsors**

Anyone in the UK with a spare room, or separate self-contained accommodation that is unoccupied can become a **Homes for Ukraine** Sponsor. Accommodation must be available for at least 6 months, be fit for people to live in, and suitable for the number of people being accommodated.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>

The Government pay Sponsors £350 per month as an optional 'thank you' payment. Sponsors must not charge families rent. You will continue to receive payments for as long as you sponsor somebody and for up to 12 months. The payment will be made in arrears and eligibility checks will be carried out which will include a visit to your home, prior to payment. Aberdeenshire Council will ask you to complete a form to allow payments to be set up.

Sponsors are required to provide warm and comfortable accommodation but not meals, however, there is nothing stopping sponsors offering meals should they wish. Sponsors are not required to cover the costs of food and living expenses (although you may wish to offer this philanthropically). Sponsors should not expect their guest to carry out any unpaid work.

Families arriving will have met standard security checks against the police national computer database and antiterrorism checks as part of their visa application process. Sponsors and all adults in the sponsor household will also be subject to standard security checks as part of the visa process. Aberdeenshire Council will also check that the accommodation you are offering is appropriate and that everything is in place for your guest(s). We will also conduct a safeguarding and Disclosure Scotland check on all adults over 16 in your household. These checks and the process will be expedited. For those who are sponsoring a Ukrainian family which includes a child or a vulnerable adult, we will require an Enhanced Disclosure.

Council tax discounts and Housing Benefit will not be affected if you sponsor and host a Ukrainian family in your home. If you rent your property, you will need to check with your landlord, freeholder or mortgage provider, and insurance company, about whether they have any policies which you need to factor in.

Sponsors are committed to hosting families for a minimum of 6 months, but you may choose to continue beyond the initial six months if you and your guest wish to do so. If you don't want to continue the arrangement beyond six months, you should let your family know at least one month before, so they can seek advice on housing.

Sponsors are required to:

- agree to an enhanced Disclosure Scotland check, this includes an ID check
- agree to a home visit undertaken by a local authority officer/contractor in order to assess the suitability of the accommodation offered if required
- check their mortgage lenders website for further guidance or seek the agreement of their landlord if they are a tenant
- notify their insurer that they will be hosting guests prior to their arrival
- provide suitable accommodation for a minimum of 6 months

- support and help guests to adapt to life in the UK, initially checking if they have enough food and supplies such as toiletries, along with checking if they have access to a mobile phone and internet to stay in touch with family members
- help direct their guests to public services, for example, registering with a GP or NHS dentist.

Families fleeing war and seeking sanctuary will be traumatised. Being forcibly separated from loved ones, friends, community and country will be challenging for everyone involved. Families still in Ukraine will be at risk of injury and death so anxiety levels will be high. People will need space, Wi-Fi to stay in touch, patience and understanding. Aberdeenshire Council has resettled refugees from war and conflict zones for the last 6 years so we have experience and supports in place to help you, but this will be very different and new to all of us, so we will all need patience to learn and develop supports together.

Finally, some messages of welcome and reassurance from Aberdeenshire New Scots

*“You will be feeling tired after your journey and you will be worried because you do not understand everything. This is very natural and temporary – you will settle in.” (Wasan, Iraq)*

*“I have learned here the true meaning of trust where both the state and the citizens trust each other – you will be safe here.” (Shirin, Syria)*

*“Welcome to Aberdeenshire. The weather here is very cold, but people's hearts are very warm” (Ali, Afghanistan)*



[refugeeresettlementteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:refugeeresettlementteam@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)