



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Felicity Buchan MP

Minister for Housing and Homelessness
2 Marsham Street
London
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Our Reference: 25957724

Dr Ruth Allen
BASW
Wellesley House
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02 May 2023

Dear Dr Allen,

Thank you for your email of 20 March 2023 to the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP about the Homes for Ukraine scheme. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

I am extremely grateful for the support BASW has shown the scheme since we launched it just over a year ago.

With regards to the cost of living, in recognition of their ongoing support all sponsors will receive an increased thank you payment of £500 a month for guests who have been in the country for over a year. Thank you payments will also be extended from twelve months to two years, so that guests who may not yet be ready to move into independent accommodation can stay in sponsorship for longer where sponsors are willing to extend arrangements.

Legislation is in place which exempts those arriving from Ukraine from the Habitual Residence Test and Past Presence Test, giving them immediate access to benefits. Regulations came into force on 4 May 2022 which ensure that the 'thank you' payment under the Homes for Ukraine scheme is disregarded as capital for all benefits.

Those arriving under the scheme are issued with a 3 year Visa meaning they have the same access to services as anyone else normally resident in the UK which includes help with energy costs or rental costs if they meet the criteria.

Ukrainian arrivals also have immediate access to employment support and services. Support includes:

- Benefits and employment support at the point of a successful claim.
- Wrap-around support through Jobcentre Place Based Partnerships, including signposting and access to charities and mental health providers.
- Work coach support to identify suitable employment, support with training through the Sector-Based Workplace Academy Programme, etc., including

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training, as well as support through Plan for Jobs.

- Mobilisation of Advanced Customer Support Senior Leaders and Visiting Officers where complex needs are identified.

We are working across Government to identify new ways to help Ukrainians access employment and we continue to review and develop plans to support guests to access economic opportunities, informed by engagement with other government departments, local councils, Voluntary Community Sector organisations, sponsors, and guests. This includes engaging employers through round table discussions; particularly where there are sectors with skills gaps. The Department for Education is improving signposting of and ensuring accessibility of childcare options. The Department for Work and Pensions is working with guests and employers to match job opportunities. We are encouraging the use of job centres and directing Ukrainians with work related qualifications to the UK Centre for Professional Qualifications, who can help make sure that their certificates are recognised and direct people toward relevant professional organisations to make the most of skills and experience.

With regards to safeguarding, keeping sponsors and guests safe is a priority for the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Local councils are required to carry out their existing statutory safeguarding functions in relation to Homes for Ukraine, in the same way as they would for anyone else. We have recently updated our guidance to include new content on GOV.UK under the section 'How to live with your sponsor' which gives advice on how to stay safe and what to do if there are any concerns. This guidance is available in English, Ukrainian and Russian.

I agree Ukrainians need access to specialist support such as the NHS and education. A year on since the start of the conflict the Government remains committed to ensuring all Ukrainian arrivals receive high quality care from the NHS. Arrivals have free access to NHS healthcare including screening, vaccinations, mental health support, dental and hospital services.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is working to expand NHS mental health services as part of the NHS Long Term Plan. We are also investing £2.3 billion additional funding a year which will enable an extra two million people in England to access NHS-funded mental health support by 2024.

In the Ukrainian health service, the GP is not the gatekeeper to other services in the same way they are in the UK, which is why GP registration is the most important point to communicate to Ukrainians to help them access healthcare. Government has been working with Ukrainian community organisations and the third sector to help maximise the number of Ukrainians registering with a GP and to help them access the support they need. The government has also been translating key documents and guidance into Ukrainian.

DHSC has worked tirelessly to support Ukrainians including providing translated documentation to help with GP registration and the UK Health and Security Agency

produced guidance for GPs to assist in initial health assessments. This helps facilitate a smooth, speedy registration and continued care for a healthy community.

We continue to work across government to ensure we are supporting all Ukrainians in the UK to give them the same access to education and childcare as a UK citizen. Our priority is protecting vulnerable children and families and ensuring appropriate checks and safeguards are in place.

Alongside councils, the Voluntary and Community Sector and sponsor and guest groups play a vital role to support the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We have worked closely with these on the evolution of the scheme and will continue to do so. I would also like to thank you for everything that you do.

I have been overwhelmed with the generosity of the British public and their offers of support.

I trust this information is helpful and I thank you for writing on this important matter.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Felicity Buchan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Felicity Buchan MP
Minister for Housing and Homelessness