

Key Updates 2026: Homes for Ukraine & UPE



WHO WE ARE

 **OPORA** serves as a primary information and support hub to one of the largest online Ukrainian communities in the UK, providing integration support via comprehensive information provision and emergency assistance in the Ukrainian language

WHAT DO WE DO

- Online information channels, support groups, and virtual assistant
- Life in the UK guides and blogs
- Advocacy and awareness
- Mental health support projects



Webinar guidelines

- The webinar will last for **1 hour 30 minutes**
- Please write your questions in the chat
- Use the “👍” reaction to indicate if a question is also important to you
- We will answer all questions at the end of the webinar
- Do not share any personal data in the chat
- A recording of the webinar will be available on **Opora Facebook** and **website**
- For technical support, write in the chat
- Use reactions to express your thoughts or show support





Webinar agenda

1. Intro to Ukraine Schemes
2. Homes for Ukraine
3. Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE)
4. Thank You Payment changes
5. What's next for your guests
6. Questions & answers

This is a volunteer information session, not a legal consultation.

Intro to Ukraine Schemes

Various visa schemes for Ukrainians

| Scheme | Conditions | Months | Status |
|--|---|--|---|
| Ukraine Family Scheme | Join a UK-based family member (British or settled). Be outside the UK when applying | 36 | CLOSED in 2024 |
| Ukraine Extension Scheme | Ukrainians (+ eligible family) already in the UK with a valid visa by mid-Nov 2023. Did not require a sponsor | 36 | CLOSED in 2024 (Feb'25 for UK-born children) |
| Homes for Ukraine (sponsorship scheme) | Ukrainians who lived in Ukraine before Jan 2022 + their immediate family. Be outside the UK when applying. Have an eligible sponsor (British, Irish or settled) | 36 (before Feb'24) or 18 (later & now) | OPEN |
| Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE-1) | Current / past Ukraine Scheme visa holder whose visa is expiring or their child born in the UK. Must be in UK. | 18 | OPEN since Feb'25 |
| Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE-2) | UPE-1 holder whose visa is expiring. Detailed conditions not known yet (expecting announce in Q2'26) | 24 | NOT YET OPEN |

Homes for Ukraine

Homes for Ukraine. Requirements

For guests

- Ukrainian or their immediate family (must apply with them or to join them)
- Lived in Ukraine as of January 2022 (evidence required!)
- Has a named eligible sponsor
- Apply outside of the UK (any country)
- FREE of charge

For sponsors

- British/Irish or settled/ILR status
- Over the age of 18
- Based in the UK
- Confirm they can and will provide accommodation for at least 6 months
- Pass accommodation and DBS checks
- FREE of charge

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guides>

Homes for Ukraine. Application Process

For guests

- Apply online on gov.uk (separate application for each guest)
- Upload documents and evidence on VAC website **or** bring copies to VAC
 - guest's passport
 - evidence of living in Ukraine
 - sponsor's passport **or** photo driving licence + British/Irish birth certificate
 - sponsor's share code (if settled/ILR)
- Provide biometrics in person at the VAC
- Wait for decision

For sponsors

- **No** need to submit a separate application or “register your interest” form
- Provide details and documents for guests' application
- Respond to council contact attempts promptly, keep contact details up to date
 - sponsor + all 18+ yo living in the property must pass the (DBS) checks
 - pass the accommodation checks (living standards, no overcrowding)
- Confirm you can and will provide accommodation for at least 6 months
 - your own or rental accommodation
 - landlord's letter needed if rented
- Wait for decision

Homes for Ukraine. Application Delays

There's **no standard processing time** for Homes for Ukraine visas. UKVI processes them "as soon as possible"

In practice, most applications decided within **1-4 weeks** from the date guests provided biometrics at the VAC

Some applications get delayed for 3+ months (worst cases - up to 12 months)

If your guests' application is delayed

- Ping your **local council**: did they submit the accommodation & DBS check to the UKVI?
- Escalate to the **UKVI hotline**: +44 300 790 6268 with:
 - guests name(s) as per their passports
 - UAN or GWF application numbers
 - date of application & VAC visit
 - guests' email address(es)
- If no answer after 2-3 weeks, complain to your **MP** with the same details
 - explain how the delay is affecting your guests & ask to expedite the decision

Homes for Ukraine. Financial Arrangements

For sponsors

- £350 monthly “thank you” payment
 - some councils pay more
 - not paid for relatives sponsored
 - not paid if this is guest’s 2nd HfU
 - stop when guests move out
- One payment per address (regardless of the number of guests hosted)
- Not expected to help with flights, food etc
- Can’t charge rent but allowed to ask for a “reasonable & proportional” contribution for utilities consumed by guests
- Guests are “disregarded” for council tax
- “Thank you” payments are tax-free and do not affect sponsors’ benefits/pension

For guests

- Get £200 one-time “arrival payment” (if this is their 1st HfU visa)
- Free free onward travel by train, bus, coach or light rail from the major airport or port within 48 hours of arriving in the UK
- Right to work, rent, study and access benefits (if eligible) from day 1

Homes for Ukraine. Support Available

For sponsors

- Local council is your first and main point of contact (most have Ukraine teams)
- Ukrainian charities e.g. Opora
- Ukrainian organisations, e.g. AUGB

For guests

- Ukrainian/refugee charities
 - Opora: website, chats, help@opora.uk
 - Settled (immigration matters)
 - WorkRightsCentre (work rights)
- Ukrainian organisations, e.g. AUGB
- Citizens Advice, Shelter
- Local councils

Organisations that support Ukrainians in the UK:

<https://ua.opora.uk/dopomoga/pidtrimka-ukrayinciv>

Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE)

Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE). Key Facts

Eligibility

- Ukrainian or their immediate family who has or previously had any Ukraine Scheme visa
 - or their child born in the UK
 - Must apply on gov.uk within the last 28 days of their current visa (separate application for each person)
 - Must provide biometrics via ID Check or in person at the VAC (system decides!)
 - Must be in the UK at the time of applying and wait for decision in the UK
 - Standard processing time is **8 weeks**
 - steps if delayed: 1) escalation, 2) MP
 - Visa is extended by **18 months** since the date of decision (might be shorter for under 18s)
 - Further extension for 24 months (UPE-2)
- UPE applications are **FREE** of charge
 - No need to pay for VAC (free slots available)
 - No need to engage lawyers or “helpers”
 - No financial or housing requirements
 - Guest needs to provide a valid passport
 - May need to prove “ongoing ties” to the UK if lived outside of UK or Ukraine for 12+ months
- “Section 3c”: guest who applied for UPE **in time** remains in the UK **legally** even after their visa expires. Their rights (work, rent, benefits etc) continue while their UPE application is pending
- Sponsor needs to re-apply for “thank you” payments** via the local council after the UPE is approved. Provide guests’ share code(s)

Homes for Ukraine & Ukraine Permission Extension: Key Changes for Sponsors After 1 April 2025

1. “Thank You payments reduced to £350/month/address for all sponsors
 - previously £500 after 12 months
2. Payments extended for 18 months if guests apply for visa extension under the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE)
 - you need to reapply for Thank You payments after their UPE is approved
3. No Thank You payments for sponsors hosting close family members under the UPE
4. Guests are encouraged to plan for independent living and look for rent
 - which is *extremely* challenging!
5. Sponsors can ask guests to contribute *reasonably* to bills but cannot charge rent while receiving Thank You payments
6. Sponsors are offered an alternative option: switch to **Rent a Room scheme** and become landlords for their guest(s)

Learn more:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/paying-sponsors-homes-for-ukraine#thank-you-payments-to-sponsors>

**When sponsorship
ends: what's next?**

Guest's Accommodation Options After Homes for Ukraine / UPE

1. Rent independently

- They need a strategy and a lot of grit:
 - a. Takes 3-10 weeks to find a rental
 - b. On average, 50-80 contacts
 - c. Really hard if they don't speak English
- Must pass the affordability checks, provide a guarantor and/or pay 6-12 months' rent in advance
- Relocation challenges and costs...

Housing webinars, "How to rent" guides and more: https://ua.opora.uk/housing_

2. Homelessness > social/council housing

- In most regions, there are long waiting lists: not an option unless they're in a priority group
- They'll be moved between temporary houses, even multiple times > uprooted again

3. Rent from their ex-sponsor

- Much easier vs renting independently
- Requires minimal paperwork
- Can still get housing benefits
- No relocation challenges

Rent a Room Scheme. Key Details

For landlords / ex-sponsors

- Allows you to rent out part of a property which is your only or main home
- You can rent out as much of your home as you want: one room or more
- Tax-exempt automatically if you charge <£7,500/year: no need to do anything
- More flexible than a standard tenancy:
 - simpler/faster eviction process
 - no deposit protection required
- You pay council tax for the property
- Bills are usually included in rent
- You keep it in “habitable” condition
- It must be furnished

For lodgers / ex-guests

- May pay rent on their own and/or get “housing benefit” if they’re in receipt of Universal Credit / Pension Credit
- Have one of the following agreements:
 - exclusive use of one/multiple room
 - non-exclusive use of the property
- Can have a fixed-term or periodic rent
- Must use the property “responsibly”

Learn more:

<https://www.gov.uk/rent-room-in-your-home>

Homes for Ukraine/UPE vs Rent a Room. Let's Compare

| | Homes for Ukraine | Rent a Room |
|-------------|---|--|
| Income | Thank you payment £350/month/address. Can't charge rent. | Any reasonable rent amount as agreed |
| Council tax | Guests "disregarded", as if they don't live there | Lodger not disregarded. <i>May(!)</i> impact discounts |
| Bills | Only a "reasonable" contribution as consumed | Usually included into rent amount |
| Tax | Thank you payments are 100% tax-free | Up to £7,500 per year exempt from taxes |
| Paperwork | None | Tenancy / lodger agreement + proof of paying rent |
| Ending | Very quick | Can't end during fix term, then "reasonable" notice |

Homes for Ukraine/UPE vs Rent a Room. An Example

Anna (47, sponsor) hosts Natalia (36, guest) in her 2-bed home under Homes for Ukraine in Sheffield. The home is in Council Tax Band A, and Anna has a 25% single-person discount. Natalia is on Universal Credit, actively looking for a job. She gets £400/mo via UC and contributes £100/mo towards bills.

| | Homes for Ukraine | Rent a Room |
|-------------|---|--|
| Income | £350/month | £625/month (max. tax-exempt amount) |
| Council tax | -£1,192/year or -£99/mo (25% disc.) Natalia is disregarded and doesn't impact this | -£1,589/year or -£132/mo (full rate). Natalia impacts 25% disc. (~\$33), if not disregarded by council |
| Bills | £100/month | £0 (included in rent) |
| Income tax | £0 | £0 |
| Total net | £450 | £592 |

After the switch to Rent a Room, Natalia's UC pays her an additional £574/mo of UC housing element

**When guests' UPE
ends: what's next?**



Petitions

UK Government and Parliament



This petition was submitted during the 2019-2024 parliament

[View other petitions from this parliament](#)

Petition

Provide Ukrainian refugees with settled status to enable a stable life in the UK

Provide Ukrainians on Ukraine visa schemes with settled status. This will help to bring stability to their lives, which is threatened by the time limit of the schemes and uncertainty of when the war is going to end.

[▶ More details](#)

This petition is closed

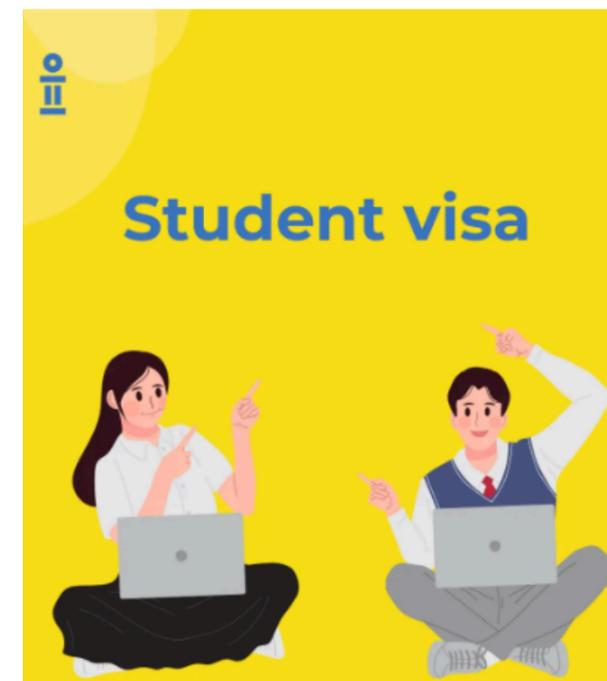
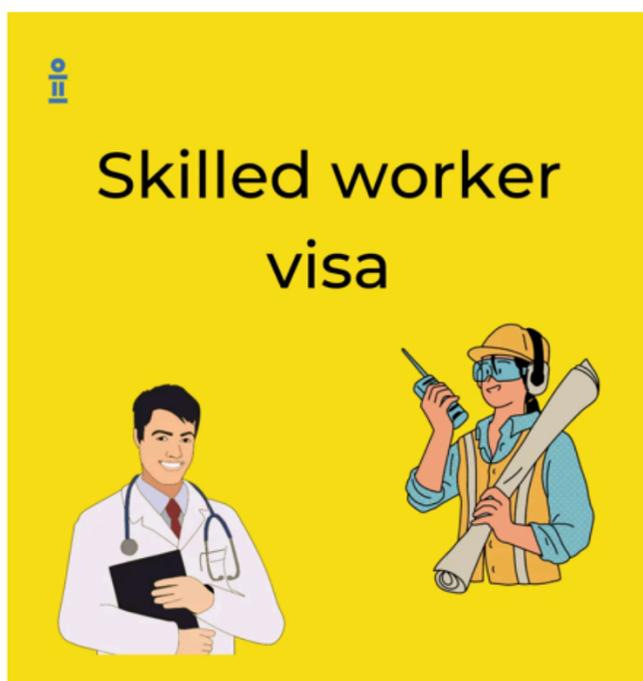
This petition ran for 6 months

36,721 signatures

Ukraine Scheme visas do **not** contribute to the residency period required for applying for indefinite leave to remain (ILR)

There will be a **further 24 months UPE-2** extension

Other visas they may switch to (if eligible)



“What’s Next?” Opora Guides in Ukrainian



Save!

Asylum, Refugee or “Humanitarian Protection”

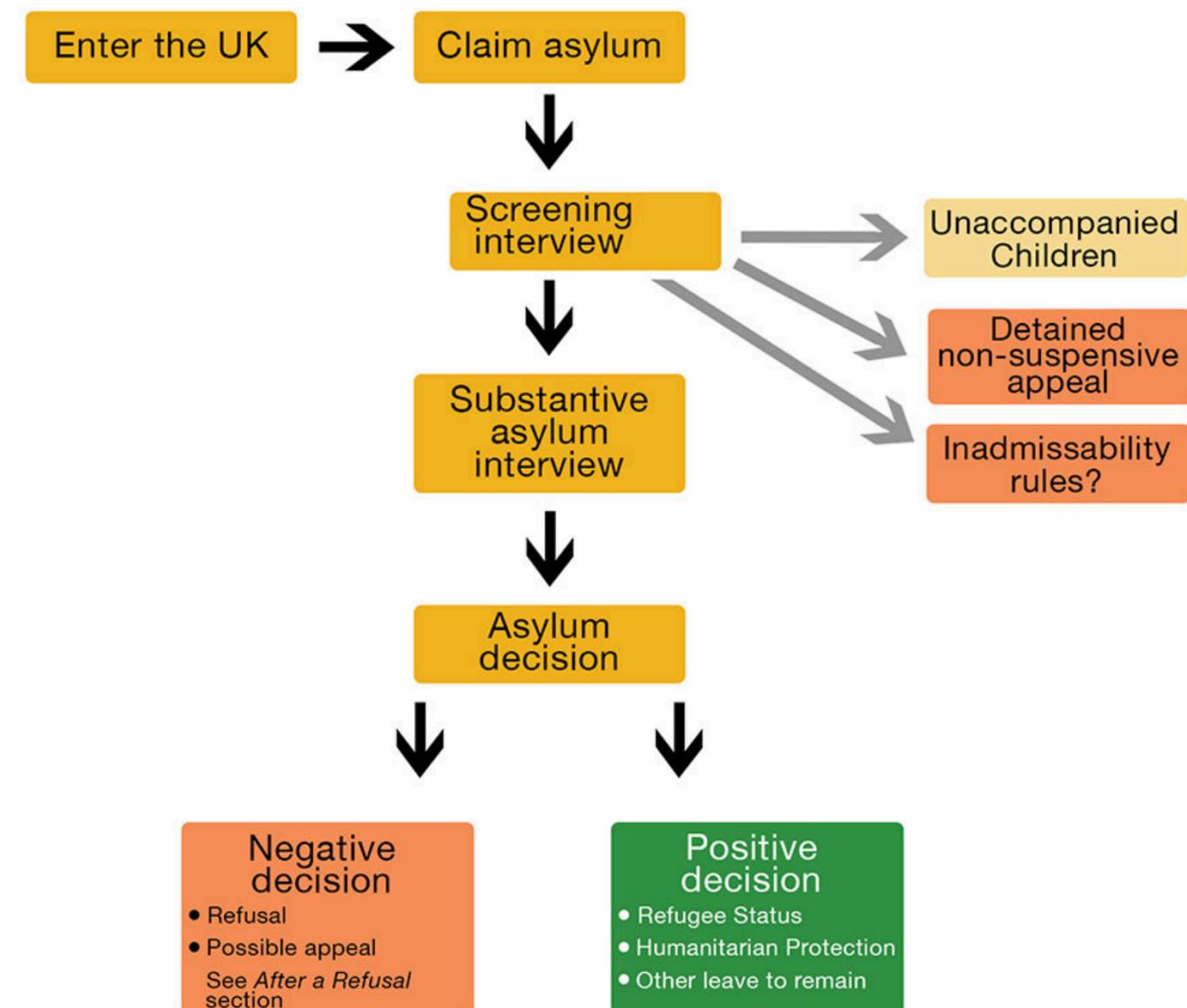
OPORA does NOT endorse this route, but we receive lots of questions about it

- For those who can prove they are being personally(!) persecuted by their home country
- This process is very long, difficult, and the outcome is not guaranteed
- Do not trust Instagram or TikTok “lawyers”
Submitting false claims = serious consequences

This is NOT an option for:

- Those on the Ukraine Scheme.
- Anyone who can’t prove persecution in Ukraine
- Note: conscription is NOT considered “persecution”

As of Q3 2025, the refusal rate for this route was 95% for Ukrainian nationals (UKVI statistics).



Q&A

Thank you!

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