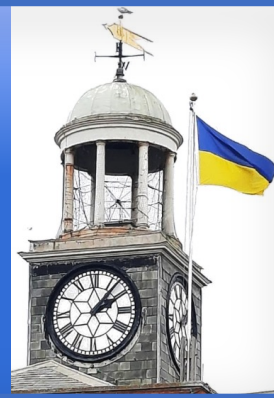


# A Practical Guide to Hosting Ukrainian Refugees in the Bridport Area

Issue Version 2



This document is intended for those considering whether to host Ukrainian refugees, those embarking on hosting, and those already hosting.

Becoming a host is a rewarding experience, but the process involved in doing so is an undoubted challenge.

You are taken step-by-step through what needs to be done, from the point of registering your interest to when your Ukrainian guests are hopefully settled and receive their Biometric Residence Permit.

At each step the experiences gained by hosts living in the Bridport and Lyme Regis areas are captured, location and organisation specific information is provided, as are useful local contacts and social media group details.

There is a companion document to this one '*Useful Information for Ukrainian Guests and their Hosts in the Bridport Area*' which provides information to enable you and your guests to benefit from local support and advice.

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## Introduction

These notes are intended to complement and supplement formal government advice and guidance. They are written through a Bridport (and Lyme Regis) area lens and build on direct experience gained to date by those hosting Ukrainian refugees (our guests) and the guests themselves.

It is not intended to duplicate detailed advice provided by the government, Dorset Council, and charities such as Help & Kindness. Refer [Appendix I: Key links to Government, Dorset Council & Charity Organisations](#) for a summary of such advice.

This document will be updated from time to time to capture further knowledge and advice.

**This update was made end June 2022 – green text highlights where changes are made.**

## Communication and Co-ordination

Weekly get-togethers of hosts and guests are held in both Bridport and Lyme Regis. The **Bridport Ukrainian Friends** and **Lyme Regis Hosts** WhatsApp groups operate synergistically and provide an invaluable basis for sharing information and building confidence in those facing the challenges of being a guest or being a host.

A Ukrainian Telegram group has been set up called **Refugees in Dorset Chat** where guests can communicate in Russian and Ukrainian.

Bridport Town Council's Town Clerk, Will Austin, has also set up a Facebook group, **Homes for Ukraine in Dorset**.

These groups are informal, run by volunteers, and intended as inclusive and supportive. For those thinking about becoming a host, those already hosting, and for guests, it is recommended to join these groups.

Refer [Appendix II: Key WhatsApp, Telegram & Facebook Groups](#) for information on how to join.

## This Documents Structure

This document looks at the steps needed to be taken by:

- **Would-be hosts:** Those either considering whether to become a host, and those who have committed to becoming one and are in the process of getting their guests here.
- **Hosts, and their guests who have arrived in the UK.**

Note that this document does not address Ukrainian Refugees entering the UK on a Family Visa.

A separate document has also been prepared titled '**Useful Information for Ukrainian Guests and their Hosts in the Bridport Area**' which provides information, tips and advice aimed at making life easier and more enjoyable.

## Would-be Hosts - The Steps

The key steps are:



### Appreciating what is being committed to

Along with the obvious challenges of hosting (time, effort, language, transport, schooling, privacy, sharing space, long term commitment, and more) there are two aspects it is important to highlight:

- A key consideration relevant to our rural area is one of remoteness, coupled with a poor bus service. A number of would-be hosts have expressed concern that since they live in relatively remote and small villages guests will feel isolated, and transport demands (possibly including getting children to and from school) potentially excessive.
- **Bear in mind** that your guests will be living cheek-by-jowl with you and may be doing so for a long time.

### Recording your interest

Having taken the critical decision to become a host the first formal step is to register with the 'Homes for Ukraine: Record your Interest' scheme, <https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine> . Once registered you are referred to as a "Sponsor".

Once your interest is recorded then the system kicks in (**although nothing much happens until you & your guests apply for the Entry Visa, see below**). If you have second thoughts, you can drop out of the scheme at any time.

Worth saying that this scheme only registers you as a potential host: it does NOT try to identify Ukrainian guest(s) to stay with you, you must do that yourself. Read on!

### Finding a guest or guests

In addition to the many means of finding guests and matching guests to hosts (Refer [Appendix I](#) for some examples), Bridport Ukraine Friends and Lyme Regis Hosts WhatsApp groups often have requests seeking hosts for guests. Would-be hosts can also post requests for guests.

## Obtaining an Entry Visa

When matched the single visa application form is completed on-line on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website (specifically <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-visa-under-the-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme>) using both parties' details. If your guests have a valid Ukrainian passport, they do *not* need to go in person to a UK visa office.

This online application requires hosts to liaise with guests. If you need translation assistance over and above the Google Translate App's (or similar) capabilities then post for assistance on Bridport Ukraine Friends and/or Lyme Regis Hosts WhatsApp groups.

One host advised:

1. We could not verify the guest's Ukrainian mobile phone on the [Govt.] App. Apparently this is because the Russians have put a block somewhere. We were advised by the helpline specifically not to use the App. Consequently, note that at the bottom of one of the early pages there is an option to say you are not using the App.
2. In addition to their passport details you need the guest's home address in English, and the mother's maiden name.
3. The helpline told us to select Poland as the place for biometric identity checks. It gets you through the form and when you upload the passport it is clear a visit is not needed.
4. Whenever the online form says 'you' it means the guest.

Be prepared for the processing of the visa to take two to four weeks, without the possibility of any updates. Eventually a "Permission to Travel" letter is issued by email.

## Safeguarding (DBS) & Home Suitability Checks

Once the [Entry Visa application is complete](#), then:

- A UK Gov security & safeguarding (DBS) check is initiated – you will receive an email instructing you what has to be done. It is not onerous for the average household.
- Dorset Council will arrange for someone to visit your home to ensure it is suitable and fire-risk safe. (The inspection will check that fire/smoke and carbon monoxide detection is sufficient – if not they will tell you what is needed and check in the follow-up inspection about a month after your guests arrive. You can buy smoke and CO alarms from RKL Tools (top of South Street, Bridport).

Overall experience to date is that Dorset Council's Ukrainian helpline (call 01305 221000, email [customerservices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) and ask for "services for Ukrainian refugees") is helpful.

## Getting your guests to the UK

Guests will be issued with a letter confirming they have permission to travel to the UK without a UK visa in their passport. The UK Border Force, airlines and carriers will automatically be informed that guests can enter the UK.

When guests arrive in the UK, they need to show their permission letter to Border Force officers who will endorse their passport with a 6-month entry stamp which is evidence of their right to work, study and claim benefits in the UK.

It is not the government or Dorset Council's responsibility to get guests safely to the UK. Invariably the guests will have to work out the travel arrangements that are best for them whether it be by air or rail or cross channel ferry. Hosts can try to guide them to the more

convenient arrival points, for example Bristol rather than Luton airport, but be sensitive to the plight their guests are already in.

**Some** carriers may offer Ukrainian Nationals free passage on request.

Wizz Air **may** have a quota of free flights to Luton. Guests have also flown EasyJet from Posnan to Bristol on a free ticket.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/720764482432558/?ref=share> is a useful link.

However, it is not certain how long this generosity may continue. Arrival by train at St. Pancras is also possible.

In practise it would seem that the Ukrainian refugee network will provide your guests with viable options, but a number of hosts have travelled to Europe (by car) in order to collect their guests.

### **Preparing for your Guests**

Remember to put together a courtesy set of basic essentials. You can buy European to UK plug adaptors from RKL Tools.

Some guests may prefer to cook for themselves and favour plain, wholesome food compared to our more fancy international culinary variations. Don't be offended if guests turn down a Masterchef special of yours!

### **Guest's arrival at the port of entry**

The UK government has set up 'Welcome Points' at designated port of entries. (Dover & Folkstone if by sea, St. Pancras by rail, and 10 airports including Bristol & Bournemouth).

**The UK Border Guard may call you on the mobile number which you submitted to the Homes for Ukraine application to make sure you are there to meet your guest, so make sure you have this phone with you!**

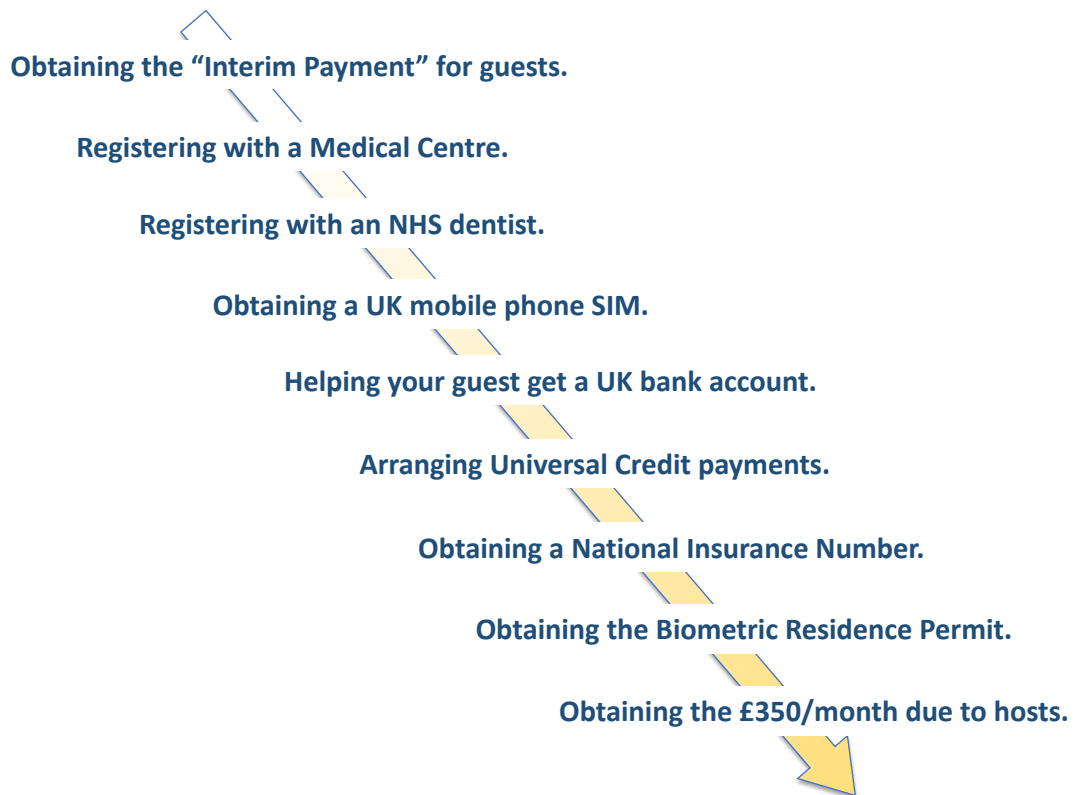
**Arriving at Bristol Airport:** The arrivals hall is low-key and it will be easy to find your guest, especially so if you have a Ukrainian flag to wave.

Bristol Airport parking is free when you are collecting a refugee. Park in the short-term car park and just press the buzzer on your way out, any issues the advice is to get your guest to speak.

Our guests came in on the Eurostar via St. Pancras, we were not there to greet them but it went smoothly, probably helped by the fact that one guest can speak English.

## Hosts whose guests have arrived in the UK – The Steps

The key processing steps, more or less in sequence, are:



And these steps which do not fall into an overall sequence:

1. Registering children with local schools;
2. Obtaining English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes ([refer the companion document ‘Useful Information for Ukrainian Guests and their Hosts’ for more information on English lessons](#));
3. Obtaining advice/referring to mental health/specialist services if needed (again, refer [Useful Information for Ukrainian Guests and their Hosts Issue](#) for some guidance).

### Interim Payments for Guests

Each guest should receive via Dorset Council a debit card loaded with £200 prior to, or very soon after, the guest’s arrival at their new home. If no cards arrive then phone the Dorset Council Ukrainian Helpline (see above). Note, these cards *do not allow cash to be withdrawn* from a cashpoint (although a cashpoint can be used to check the balance), but can be used to swipe for payment. Successful swiping is erratic so guests should remember pin numbers.

### Registering with a Medical Centre & Obtaining an NHS Number

To register at Ammonite Bridport (Bridport Medical Centre, Bridport Medical Centre West Allington, 85A West Allington, Bridport DT6 5BN), ask at reception for forms (this can be done before the guests arrive). Hosts can then help fill the forms in with their guests (as before, if you need translation assistance then please post for assistance on Bridport Ukraine Friends and/or Lyme Regis Hosts WhatsApp groups).

Return the completed forms to the Medical Centre and within a couple of weeks they will write to confirm the registration and provide the guest's NHS number.

### Registering with an NHS dentist.

Putting it simply; it is not possible to register with an NHS dentist as they are already oversubscribed.

In an emergency 111 can be dialled, but if the patient speaks no English an interpreter will be needed (which 111 can arrange or can be requested through the WhatsApp groups). 111 will only help if the actual patient is on the line which can introduce challenges for any call-backs as the patient, interpreter, and possibly the host, has to be ready to receive a call.

### Obtaining a UK mobile phone SIM

Having mobile phone communication is an important lifeline for guests in an unfamiliar country. As well as providing security, a network connection is essential for in-phone translation apps such as Google Translate to work. **It is also a sensible and important prerequisite for obtaining a Bank Account and other practical reasons.**

**It is therefore wise to obtain a SIM card as soon after a guest's arrival as possible. A host advises:**

**"The Red Cross are issuing the Vodaphone cards and they are coming through quite quickly. These cards allow free calls to and from Ukraine for 6months! Evidently when they are used to call Ukraine a message comes up saying "this call is not part of your package do you want to continue?" If they say yes, they will not be charged. Cards can be ordered on the phone and at the same time the Red Cross can offer £50 support grant that can be ordered at the same time, but this is taking longer to come through!"**

**Our guests have waited 6 weeks but lots of promises later Red Cross have still not given them £50.**

### Your Guest's Bank Account

HSBC in Bridport have learnt how to set up an account for a Ukrainian visitor with a minimum of fuss. Make an appointment with Carolyn Buss either by calling into the branch in person or by email, [carolyn.a.buss@hsbc.com](mailto:carolyn.a.buss@hsbc.com). The whole process takes place on a mobile phone with a UK number under her instruction so make sure the phone is fully charged and has mobile network signal in Bridport. Ideally this should be your guest's mobile phone (see the previous note on SIM cards). If your guest does not have a mobile phone you can set up on the hosts and be changed later as long as the guest is happy with this.

**Other banks, including Nationwide in West Street, also provide this service.**

### Universal Credit & Citizens Advice Bureau

The JobCentre in Bridport now understand how to get Ukrainian nationals registered. Call in in person and you will leave laden with paper in two languages, and instructions to complete the process on line.

Completing on line is tedious, but not difficult. Documents such as passport and the Home Office permission to enter the UK will be needed to be seen for their reference numbers. *A UK bank account number is essential.*

You can log in and out again as needed and build the application up over several days. Spin-offs from this are being awarded a *National Insurance Number* for which there is a linked but separate application process.

Despite optimistic promises on the Universal Credit website there is no short-cut to getting a cash advance out of the Department of Work and Pensions. It is therefore possible that the £200 Interim Payment will be spent before Universal Credit payments start. If this is the case and leads to hardship, please contact your local councils (for Bridport Town Council, ask for the Town Clerk, Will Austin)

The **Citizens Advice Bureau**, CAB, in South Street Bridport are available to help you through the vagaries of the Universal Credit benefits system, amongst other things. CAB have already proved very helpful for a number of hosts and their guests on a range of issues.

Note that guests can start work as soon as they arrive in the UK should they wish. It is advised that the guest keeps an accurate record of income, employer, etc. Hosts have reported that their guests taking on work has been beneficial for them – apart from having an income, it helps self-esteem, engenders a feeling of independence, and helps with learning English.

### National Insurance Number

As part of the Universal Credit application, you will be invited to apply for a National Insurance number. This is another online process and equal in tediousness to the Universal Credit one. Among the requirements are a new photo, of passport quality, of the applicant holding their Ukraine passport open next to their face so that someone can compare the two. In one local case, despite stating that a telephone interview was an essential part of the process, and sending a text saying it would take place that day, the call failed to materialise and the number came in the post the next day.

### Biometric Residence Permit, BRP

This little plastic card contains, electronically encoded, the holder's fingerprints, mugshot and signature. Its significance is that it allows a Ukrainian national to stay in the UK for up to 3 years, and to re-enter the UK should they need to make a trip abroad.

The application process is online

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-information-for-ukrainians-in-the-uk-your-next-steps> If you have problems with this link please signal on a WhatsApp group.

Once the application has been registered (more documents to be scanned, plus a new photo) the UK Visa service **may hand** it over to a private company who operate the biometric scanning. They will try and tempt you to buy extra services: do not do this, it's free if you evade their traps.

You must book an appointment at one of their centres and upload various documents including a scanned passport and any other evidence of the applicant's identity and right to be here; after uploading, which can be done over several days, the documents must be submitted en-bloc and you only get one shot at doing this.



The nearest processing point is in Exeter; Magdalen Road car park is adjacent. It is advised to apply for the Biometric Residence Permit in good time as it can be some weeks before getting an appointment at Exeter and the next nearest is Bristol.

The appointment itself is quick and straightforward, and based on limited experience the permit is granted by email the next day and physically arrives by courier about a week later.

*Note that our understanding is that the 6-month initially issued visa is a once-only entry permit and if a guest goes out of the UK for any reason, they would not be permitted to re-enter the UK.*

### **Obtaining the £350/month due to hosts.**

£350 monthly payments are made to hosts over the initial 12 months of the guest's stay. Dorset Council will email hosts with the message: 'This payment will start on the one month's anniversary of your guests' arrival and continued payment is dependent on the satisfactory completion of a welfare check. The welfare checks are being carried out by the Children's Services Early Help Team who should be in touch with you soon to arrange a convenient time to visit.'

### **Other Key Activities**

The following are managed through Dorset Council. Advice can be sought from the Ukrainian Refugee helpline mentioned previously:

- Registering children with local schools;
- Obtaining English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes;
- Obtaining advice/referring to mental health/specialist services if needed

**English lessons and mental health are mentioned in the companion document [Useful Information for Ukrainian Guests and their Hosts in the Bridport Area.](#)**

## Appendix I: Key links to Government, Dorset Council & Charity Organisations

### General Links

- Homes for Ukraine: Record your interest  
<https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine>
- Homes for Ukraine: Sponsor Guidance  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>
- [UK visa support for Ukrainian nationals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)  
Guidance on support available to Ukrainian nationals and their family members planning to apply for a UK Entry Visa.
- Welcome: a guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk>
- [www.ukrainianswelcome.org](http://www.ukrainianswelcome.org)  
Site translated into Ukrainian with loads of support, health, housing, work, legal etc.
- [SUPPORT FOR THOSE FLEEING THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE - Understanding Universal Credit](#)  
A Universal credit website profiling that refugees from Ukraine can apply for financial help immediately and get extra help to find work.
- [Immigration information for Ukrainians in the UK: your next steps - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) Information about the steps Ukrainians need to take after arriving in the UK to confirm their immigration status, including obtaining their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

### Dorset Council links:

- Refugee programme in Dorset  
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/refugee-programme-in-dorset>
- Dorset Council's 'Welcome Guide for Ukrainians arriving in Dorset': now translated into Ukrainian, Russian and Polish.  
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/-/welcome-pack-for-those-arriving-from-ukraine>

### Bridport Town Council

- Useful Contact Points in the Bridport Area:  
<https://www.bridport-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Ukraine-host-contact-points-2022-05-12.pdf>

### Help & Kindness

This is a Charity organisation tasked by Dorset Council to support Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK, and their sponsors (hosts). They aim to connect local hosts and guests with local community support, and with the wider response from the Council, NHS, Public Health and county-wide services.

- Ukrainian Refugees in Dorset:  
<https://www.helpandkindness.co.uk/support-for-ukraine>

### **Finding Ukrainian Guest(s)**

There is no immediate or guaranteed method of matching guest(s) with a host. Some have reported success with:

- “Reset UK”, an established charity ( [www.resetuk.org](http://www.resetuk.org) ) to match refugees with UK hosts.
- Word of mouth, talking to Ukrainians here already who know others who want to follow them.
- “Trawden”, a British couple working in refugee centres in Poland: [trawden4ukraine@hotmail.com](mailto:trawden4ukraine@hotmail.com).
- Opora UK, set up by ex-Ukrainians already living in the UK: <https://www.opora.uk>

## Appendix II: Key WhatsApp, Telegram & Facebook Groups

The main active groups are:

### **Bridport Ukrainian Friends**

A WhatsApp hosted by the Bridport Quakers that supports Ukrainian refugees, hosts, and volunteer helpers in the Bridport area. Contact Sue Beckers on +44 78794 51154 to request join.

### **Lyme Regis Hosts**

Running parallel and in unison with Bridport Ukrainian Friends this group serves the Lyme Regis area. Contact Kath Gigg on +44 75355 21115 to join the group

### **Refugees in Dorset Chat**

A chat group for guests – in Russian & Ukrainian. This is on the Telegram app preferred by many Ukrainians. <https://t.me/+I4NQBBVe-Ho5NDMy>

### **Facebook – “Homes for Ukraine in Bridport”**

Hosted by Will Austin, the Bridport Town Council’s Town Clerk.