



University of
Nottingham
Rights Lab

Homes for Ukraine: learnings to inform and shape future hosting schemes



Funding partners



Cover image: James Bullough, 'Release', 2014.



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Partner overview

Commonweal Housing: Established in 2006, Commonweal Housing is an independent social justice charity working to investigate, pilot and champion housing-based solutions to social injustice. By using its charitable resources, Commonweal provides experts and partner organisations the opportunity to trial and test new approaches designed to enhance housing equality and justice. It also focuses its attention on emerging injustices, funding and supporting forward-thinking research and helping to influence policy and practice. commonwealhousing.org.uk

Hope at Home: Hope at Home is a registered charity providing safe homes for survivors of modern slavery via a hosting programme. The overarching objective of the charity is to relieve the needs of people who are at risk of, or who have been subject to, modern slavery or human trafficking by providing access to safe housing within the community and by assisting in the provision of all necessary support designed to enable individuals to rebuild their lives and become independent individuals and members of society. hopeathome.org.uk

Rights Lab: The Rights Lab delivers research to help end modern slavery. The Rights Lab is the world's largest group of modern slavery researchers, and home to many leading modern slavery experts. Through five research programmes, the Lab delivers new and cutting-edge research that provides rigorous data, evidence and discoveries for the global anti-slavery effort. More information about the Rights Lab is available at nottingham.ac.uk/rights-lab

Project team from The Rights Lab, University of Nottingham

Kate Garbers: Senior Research Fellow in Policy Evidence and Survivor Support,
Audrey Lumley-Sapanski: Research Fellow and lead in Migration and Displacement
and Rebecca Brown: Research Fellow in Law and Policy.

Funding

This project was funded by Commonweal Housing and Hope at Home.

Glossary

Asylum seeker: Is an individual who is seeking international protection. An asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. If recognised as in need of protection asylum seekers can be granted different forms of protection, including refugee status or humanitarian protection.¹

Biometric Residents Permit (BRP): Is a permit issued by government that can be used to confirm and evidence an individual's identify, right to study and entitlements to public services or benefits.²

Home for Ukraine scheme (HfU): HfU is a humanitarian support pathway enabling Ukrainians without family connections in the UK to be sponsored and hosted within the UK.³

Host: Refers to those accommodating Ukrainians.

Guest: Refers to Ukrainian nationals who have arrived in the UK and are staying in accommodation provided under the HfU scheme.

Sponsor: Is the term the UK government use for hosts in relation to the HfU scheme. This is because hosts have acted as sponsors for visa applications for those they are offering to host.

Refugee: Is 'a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.' 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

It should be noted that most Ukrainians arriving to the UK are not claiming asylum and have not been granted refugee status, via the asylum route. The UK government have established specific entry pathway and immigration routes for Ukrainian nationals, allowing them to enter the UK, work and claim benefits. Entitlements those entering as refugees and seeking asylum do not have access to.

Executive summary

1. Purpose of this research

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent on-going conflict has created one of the largest human displacement crises in modern history, with nearly one-third of Ukrainians forced from their homes. In March 2022, the UK government announced its intention to assist those fleeing Ukraine and established three new visa routes, including the Ukraine sponsorship scheme, also known as the 'Homes for Ukraine' (HfU) scheme. Nearly 300,000 Ukrainians have applied for visas to come to the UK across the three schemes, with nearly 150,000 of these granted via the HfU scheme.

This research project aimed to understand hosts experiences of hosting and to gain an understanding of people's motivations for volunteering to offer their homes as part of the HfU scheme. The questions we wanted to understand are: why do people host, what can make hosting better, and how can learning from this scheme be used to improve future hosting schemes?

The insights and experiences shared by hosts have enabled the development of key conclusions and considerations for a range of stakeholders in relation to the better running of existing and future hosting schemes.



2. What we found

Initial and ongoing concerns regarding the HfU scheme

At the announcement of the HfU scheme, various stakeholders – including the third sector and academics – raised concerns. These included concerns that; in launching the HfU scheme, the UK government were treating Ukrainians differently to other nationalities who also sought protection and assistance; that there was a risk of the scheme being abused and guests being exploited; and that the lack of clarity around longer-term accommodation options would be problematic.

Hosts' motivations

Hosts were asked what factors influenced their decision to take part in the scheme, such as cultural, religious, conflict exposure and previous familial experiences.

The key factors hosts reported as impacting their decisions to participate in the HfU scheme were:

- on-going and extensive media coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine which promoted an affinity with those fleeing Ukraine
- overwhelming feelings of injustice and immorality felt at the invasion
- the ability to practically be able to provide the space within their homes
- the short-term nature of the scheme and the fact that guests would have access to benefits and the ability to work
- that the scheme was centrally designed, endorsed and advertised by central government
- the apparent ease of access to participate in the scheme

Interestingly, engagement with other migrant and refugee crises, previous experience of hosting, and the financial incentive offered by government were not reported to be motivating factors for participation.

Recruitment and enrolment

Hosts registered their interest in hosting via a centralised government portal and once registered were able to match with Ukrainian guests. Initially, matching was undertaken predominantly via social media platforms and relied on hosts and guests self-matching. The government later outsourced the matching process to several recognised providers, although only a few hosts participating in this research used these providers.

The following key findings were identified during this stage of the hosting process:

- Hosts noted that the continuous and ubiquitous nature of the media reporting of the crisis influenced and prompted them to enrol in the HfU scheme.
- Hosts recognised the ease of access to register interest in the HfU, however also noted that there was a lack of clarity over the matching process for hosts and next steps once they had registered their interest to host.
- Checks on the property and hosts were not always conducted ahead of guests arriving.
- There was limited training available to hosts to help them prepare for hosting.

Practicalities of hosting

The scheme was posed first and foremost as a temporary accommodation solution, but the reality was it was more complex and nuanced with all hosts in the research ending up doing far more for their guests than providing a safe place to stay. Whilst the scheme was designed and instigated by the state, it was not delivered by them and relied heavily on the good will of the British public. Post the experience of hosting under the HfU scheme, nearly a quarter of hosts said they would not consider hosting again, however, the remaining hosts were all open to the idea of hosting again in the future.

Key findings in relation to the practicalities of hosting were as follows:

- Hosts found the scheme to be heavily bureaucratic and relied on them to undertake a greater role in supporting guests than expected, for example assisting with universal credit applications, school places or finding employment, and undertaking household activities together.
- Hosts found they faced a variety of spatial, financial, emotional and lifestyle challenges due to cultural or relationship differences, which had an impact on their personal lives and the running of their homes.
- The financial payment, whilst not a motivating factor for participation, was welcomed, and hosts reported using it to support increased costs associated with shopping and bills, especially before guests were able to work or claim benefits.

The transition out of hosting

Those arriving in the UK via the HfU scheme had the capacity to reside and work in the UK for up to three years. The transition out of a hosting arrangement is a crucial element of any hosting scheme. Whilst the HfU scheme offered an initial six-month timeframe (due to end September 2022), this has been extended due to a lack of other available and suitable follow-on accommodation options being available.

Key findings at this stage of the hosting processes showed that:

- Hosts felt there was a lack of clarity around the length of placement; whilst most signed up for six months and were content to extend this, the lack of clear move-on options left hosts feeling stuck. Most only wanted to offer short-term help but realised there were no clear move-on options for their guests.
- A lack of appropriate and affordable accommodation options was seen to impact guests and their feelings of safety.
- Whilst the leave to remain offered to Ukrainians was well intentioned, it is misplaced if it is practically unfeasible for guests to move-on. The wider housing crisis means options for Ukrainian refugees are scant.
- Hosts expressed concerns that the success of the HfU scheme was over-reliant on hosts extending their hosting period and that goodwill may run out.
- Government guidance on move-on is limited in its practical application and feasibility.

3. Recommendations

The recommendations below offer practical and tangible actions for a range of stakeholders to improve the development and delivery of current and future hosting schemes. A full list of key recommendations and considerations can be located in the body of the main report and are offered at the end of each identified stage of the hosting process (refer to pages 33, 43 and 54).

Recruitment and enrolment

- Government should provide centralised mechanisms to enable and facilitate all elements of a hosting arrangement. This should include clearly defining which organisation is responsible for each element of the recruitment, matching and training process. These elements should be mandated and monitored for effectiveness.
- Third sector organisations in the hosting sector should advertise the role of the host realistically – not only stating what benefits hosts will get from the process but also noting the potential personal, emotional, practical, and financial costs of hosting.
- NGOs must support hosts with appropriate training and assistance.

Practicalities of hosting

- Government should consider working with stakeholders in the design of any future schemes. The development of a uniform scheme that could be replicated would be welcomed. In addition, government should invest in infrastructure to better equip participating hosts and guests with required tools, including at a minimum, centralised provision of language lessons, employment and skills-based training, and support in Universal Credit applications.
- The hosting sector need to consider how to offer appropriate initial and ongoing training and support for hosts and work to understand how to increase host retention – this could include improvements to host support, host debriefs and time off between guests.

Transition out of hosting

To ensure safe transition out of hosting arrangements, the UK government should consider:

- providing a suite of on-going, long-term suitable housing options for guests
- supporting the right to work for those accessing resettlement and hosting schemes
- providing leave to remain for those accessing resettlement and hosting schemes

To establish routes out of hosting arrangements, hosting and partner organisations should:

- work in partnership with the local authority and private landlords
- include the voices of guests to ensure understanding of what those being hosted want and need in relation to future housing options

4. Conclusions

The hosting sector should take learnings from the HfU scheme.

Despite initial concerns and a series of challenges presented by the application of the HfU scheme has largely been successful. HfU offers key insights and practical learning points that can be applied to existing hosting schemes. The HfU scheme and its success should set a precedent of how government, the third sector, and wider society can respond to such crises and provides the foundations of a model that can be further developed and considered for existing and future hosting schemes.

Those involved in hosting must work to change the narrative.

Mobilising connection and action are big challenges for any hosting scheme. The proximity of Ukraine, perceived affinity to Ukrainian culture and work ethic, familial experiences and the media portrayal of the crisis all contributed to the number of people signing up to be hosts. It is encouraging that many hosts involved in this research had not actively considered or participated in hosting previously and yet decided to do so via the HfU scheme. Whilst some hosts expressed anxiety about hosting other population groups and felt they wouldn't consider housing other nationalities, the experience of hosting via the HfU scheme has begun to challenge perceptions and preconceived ideas about what it is like to host someone and who needs this type of support. With the right narrative, clear structures and systems, training and support, people may be encouraged to reconsider their positions on specific groups of people they see as deserving of assistance. The hosting sector must challenge narratives that position population groups as more or less deserving and champion hosting as a viable option for a range of different nationalities as appropriate.

Those involved in the hosting sector must continue to lobby the government for safe and legal routes of entry into the UK for all population groups.

With these routes in place, and the provision of access to the labour market, benefits and health systems for those arriving, hosting could provide a viable accommodation option for a range of populations, and assist with cultural integration. Any future scheme spearheaded by government (as HfU was) must be developed in collaboration with existing hosting schemes, sector experts and community groups and should be available as a ready-made response, rather than being constructed as a crisis response.

Effective hosting schemes require the investment of a range of stakeholders to be successful.

In the case of the HfU scheme, the government, local authorities, third sector, NGO partners and members of the public have needed to engage and perform different roles. In order for hosting and hospitality to work efficiently within the UK, overall changes to centralised systems, policies, laws and attitudes will need to be considered. With the right surrounding structures and systems in place (for hosts and guests), hosting for a range of population groups could flourish and provide guests with the initial welcome and safety they need. With the right training and support, people may be encouraged to open their homes to host other population groups and hosting could act as part of a solution to accommodate, support and integrate not only new population groups arriving in the UK but also those who are already here and unable to access appropriate housing.

The British public's response to the Homes for Ukraine scheme – what can other hosting programmes learn from this?

Purpose of the research

This research project aimed to understand hosts experiences of hosting and to gain an understanding of people's motivations for volunteering to offer their homes as part of the HfU scheme. The insights and experiences shared by hosts is used to identify and consider the different stages of the hosting process and offer key considerations in relation to running hosting schemes for government, local authorities, third sector hosting schemes and prospective hosts themselves.

Overview

Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24 February 2022.

As a result of the invasion and the subsequent on-going conflict, we have witnessed one of the largest human displacement crises in modern history, with nearly one-third of Ukrainians forced from their homes. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) nearly 8 million refugees from Ukraine can now be found across Europe with over 4 million of these individuals registering for temporary protection or national protection schemes across EU states.^{4 5a} Nearly 300,000 Ukrainians have applied for visas to come to the UK.⁶

a Figures correct at the time of writing this report January 2023



Diagram 1: Numbers leaving Ukraine

Refugees from Ukraine registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe:

7,710,924



Refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe:

4,386,102

Total Ukraine Scheme visas issues by the UK to Ukrainians:

194,000 (As of the 27.10.22)

On the 4 March 2022, the Council of Europe voted to adopt the Temporary Protection Directive^b to offer assistance and protection to those fleeing Ukraine. The Directive outlined the scope of protections and the obligations upon EU member states to deliver assistance to Ukrainians. As the UK is no longer part of the EU, this Directive did not apply, however the UK government announced its intention to assist those fleeing.⁷

Rather than use the established and recognised resettlement schemes, pathways or the asylum process already in place, three new visa routes for those fleeing the war in Ukraine were established by the UK government.

- **Ukrainian Extension Scheme** - temporary visa concessions and extensions for Ukrainians already in the UK when the war broke out.⁸
- **Ukrainian Family Scheme** – a family visa route that allows family members to join their family based in the UK.⁹
- **Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme** – known as the ‘Homes for Ukraine Scheme’ (HfU), HfU is a humanitarian support pathway enabling Ukrainians without family connections in the UK to be sponsored and hosted within the UK.¹⁰

^b The European Commission state that ‘temporary protection is an exceptional measure to provide immediate and temporary protection in the event of a mass influx or imminent mass influx of displaced persons from non-EU countries who are unable to return to their country of origin.’ European Commission. (2022). Migration and Home Affairs: Temporary Protection. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en

Diagram 2: Difference between the available visa schemes

Homes for Ukraine	It is free to apply. No requirement to pay the immigration health surcharge or biometric enrolment fee.	Can live, work and study in the UK and access public funds.	Can stay in the UK for up to 3 years.	Receive £200 per person upon arrival.	Monthly 'thank you' payments sent to hosts.
Ukraine Family Scheme	It is free to apply. No requirement to pay the immigration health surcharge or biometric enrolment fee.	Can live, work and study in the UK and access public funds.	Can stay in the UK for up to 3 years.		
Ukraine Extension Scheme	It is free to apply. No requirement to pay the immigration health surcharge or biometric enrolment fee.	Can live, work and study in the UK and access public funds.	Can stay in the UK for up to 3 years.		

HfU overview

The HfU scheme is the first time the UK government has actively developed a hosting scheme whereby individual sponsors (members of the British public) were asked to match with guests and host guests in their own homes. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) was responsible for the scheme's development, administration and implementation.¹¹ The government made it clear that the scheme would offer Ukrainians with no ties to the UK a route to live and work in the UK for up to three years. No limit was put on the number of people that could apply. Criteria and expectations for sponsors was set (as outlined in Diagram 3). The government also confirmed it would be providing each sponsor hosting Ukrainians with a monthly 'thank you' payment. This payment was initially set at £350 per month and would last up to 12-months.¹²

Diagram 3: Sponsor criteria

Sponsor criteria

UK Households can only host if they:

- can offer a spare room or home for at least 6 months
- are a British citizen or have leave to remain in the UK for at least 6 months
- do not have a criminal record



<https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine#whocanrecordtheirinterest>

Members of the British public wishing to sponsor Ukrainians, via the HfU scheme were required to register their interest via an online central portal, established by the government. A sponsor's guide was produced by the DLUHC outlining what was involved in the sponsorship and hosting process and setting expectations of hosts.^{13 14} Hosts were advised assistance would be available to facilitate the matching process.¹⁵ Those enrolled in the scheme were required to meet the government eligibility criteria and were subject to a series of security and criminal checks ahead of being able to host.¹⁶ Once registered and the initial checks were completed, a host registration reference, for use on visa application forms of prospective guests was issued. Ukrainians wishing to access the HfU scheme had to apply online for a visa and were also vetted by the government before being granted a visa and travel documentation. These processes required applicants to have already identified and matched with a potential sponsor who was willing to host them for a minimum of six months. Information from both the applicant (Ukrainian) and the sponsor (British) was required to complete the visa application process.¹⁷ Those accepted for the HfU scheme were not subject to visa fees or the national health supplement and had immediate access to benefits and the right to work.¹⁸

When the government announced the HfU sponsorship scheme, an unprecedented number of people came forward and volunteered to open their homes. News outlets reported over 100,000 Britons had registered their interest within a day of the scheme launching.¹⁹ To date, over 200,000 visas have been granted across the three visa schemes. Specifically, the HfU scheme has received 177,900 applications; 149,000 of these have been granted and the number of arrivals in the UK to date via this scheme is recorded as 111,000.^{20c}

Context and critique

In a UK context, over the last ten years, the government have established various resettlement programmes specifically for those fleeing war.^{21d} Currently the UK government operate four

c These figures are accurate as of the 18.01.2023 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data--2#:~:text=Sponsorship%20Scheme%3A%20177%2C100-,Total%20Ukraine%20Scheme%20visas%20issued%20to%20people%3A%20210%2C800,Ukraine%20Sponsorship%20Scheme%20visas%3A%20148%2C100> These are updated weekly.

d In the last ten years these have included the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS, 2014-2021 used for the resettlement of Syrians), Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS, 2015 used for the resettlement of children from Middle East and North Africa), and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP, 2021).

resettlement schemes: Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS), the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS, 2022)²² and Mandate Resettlement Scheme (MRS).²³ These programmes assist the UK to meet its mandate in offering protection to refugees. Resettlement policy outlines the UK's international obligations and the entitlements to be received under these programmes. The UK only offers these resettlement options and programmes to those determined by UNHCR to be refugees in accordance with the definition under the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.²⁴ In addition to these schemes the UK government state there are other safe and legal pathways to the UK, including Family Reunion and specific schemes that assist specific population groups at specific points in time (for example the Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme).²⁵

Whilst the schemes offered to Ukrainians fleeing war are new visa routes and not official resettlement schemes there are a lot of similarities. The Ukrainian Family Scheme appears to be based on similar principles to the Mandate Resettlement Scheme (MRS) – a global scheme whereby recognised refugees can be resettled with a close family member in the UK who is willing to accommodate them. The Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) appears to be the closest comparator to the HfU scheme.²⁶ CSS is built on the notion of shared responsibility between civil society and the state for the integration of refugees.²⁷ It enables registered community groups or charities to sponsor a family fleeing conflict and to support them as they settle in the UK for up to two years. Support provided via this resettlement route includes the provision of suitable accommodation, on-going support, cultural orientation, support to access medical and social services, education, employment and benefits processes.²⁸

“...over the last ten years, the government have established various resettlement programmes specifically for those fleeing war.”

Whilst the visa routes offered to Ukrainians replicate some of the elements and processes from other resettlement programmes, they do not offer all elements found in the established resettlement programmes. Similarly, to the processes and entitlements outlined in Refugee Resettlement Policy Guidance, those applying for the HfU scheme undergo security and health checks, are able access to benefits and health care, can access the labour market and are granted biometric residence permits upon arrival in the UK.²⁹ However, unlike other resettlement schemes (UKRS, CSS and MRS) the HfU scheme does not allow for a grant of indefinite leave to remain within the UK.^e

Once permission to enter the UK via a resettlement scheme is granted, the UK government rely on partnerships with local authorities, local accommodation providers and local partner agencies who assist in the accommodating and supporting of new arrivals. Accommodation provision within the HfU scheme relied on UK nationals offering their homes and matching with Ukrainians who needed to leave their situation. While it is believed that the HfU scheme is the first established visa route that has relied on members of the public to directly offer to house and host people within their own homes, the idea of hosting in one's home is not a new concept.

Currently in the UK there are a range of non-governmental and third sector organisations who offer hosting programmes and schemes, offering safety and shelter in people's homes. When HfU scheme was launched, eighteen hosting schemes were functioning across the UK.³⁰

^e The granting of Indefinite Leave to Remain on arrival in the UK for those resettled through the UKRS and Community Sponsorship commenced in October 2021. Those entering the UK via the MRS scheme receive status on arrival. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011824/Resettlement_Policy_Guidance_2021.pdf

These hosting schemes have been established predominantly for refugees and asylum seekers with others offering hosting to survivors of modern slavery, young people and individuals facing homelessness. Schemes are often established to fill the gaps apparent in the provision of accommodation for these groups and are predominantly run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), third sector voluntary organisation and faith groups. Support available for those being hosted and those hosting varies depending on the organisation running the schemes capacity and approach, as well as the immigration status of those being hosted.

The HfU scheme is still a relatively new scheme, developed and implemented swiftly as an immediate and short-term response to the invasion of Ukraine. Whilst critiquing the scheme is not the remit of this report, the following concerns and critiques have been identified via recent articles, reports, sector roundtables and charity sector briefings. They are identified here to provide a context for the rest of the report and provide a useful basis for development of key considerations for future schemes.

“
When HfU scheme was launched, eighteen hosting schemes were functioning across the UK.³⁰”

Concerns and critiques of Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme³¹

Development of a new scheme

- Whilst the scheme was well received by the public, concerns were raised by organisations working in the hosting, asylum, refugee and anti-trafficking sectors.³²
- The HfU scheme offers a new ‘bespoke humanitarian pathway’ for a specific population group.³³
- Scheme highlights the government’s approach and the differential treatment of different nationalities in relation to immigration matters.³⁴

Application of the scheme

- The scheme offers an emergency pathway for those fleeing Ukraine however, government’s approach was labelled discriminatory towards other nationalities who have not been offered similar schemes.³⁵
- Concerns were raised that it was putting those coming to the UK at risk of exploitation and harm due to a lack of safeguards and training for those signing up to participate in the scheme, including both UK hosts and Ukrainian guests.³⁶

Accessibility of the scheme

- Pathways offered by government were only available to Ukrainian nationals, non-Ukrainian nationals residing in Ukraine were unable to access any of the routes established.³⁷
- The routes presented by government as a solution transpired to be overly bureaucratic and entailed complex administrative processes that some have suggested put those they were trying to assist in harm’s way for longer than necessary.³⁸

Visa requirements

- Before the war, Ukrainians were required to obtain visas to visit the UK. This requirement did not alter. The government did not believe that visa waivers were the right approach, arguing that to keep the country safe checks needed to be done on those entering the country.
- The UK did not follow the international response or the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive that allows those fleeing war to immediately enter a country and claim protection. Waivers were not given to Ukrainians rather specific 'safe and legal routes' were established.³⁹
- This approach meant people were forced to stay in potentially unsuitable geographical locations whilst they waited for their visa to be granted. It was suggested that this had the potential to put people at risk in order to fulfil administrative processes.⁴⁰

Financial incentives

- Concerns were raised that offering hosts payments may incentivise sponsorship among people not equipped to host and that the 'thank you' payments may open avenues to those looking to exploit guests.⁴¹
- A financial discrepancy has been highlighted between those coming via the HfU scheme, who received a £200 one-off payment on arrival, unlike those using the other visa schemes. In addition, 'thank-you' payments of £350 per month are standardised irrespective of the number of individuals being hosted.⁴²

The end of the scheme

- Hosts were asked to commit to a minimum of six months. Post this timeframe there is a lack of clarity on longer-term options for those being hosted. Whilst this commitment may be extended, it was noted that this should not be an expectation placed upon hosts.
- Move-on accommodation options have been identified as limited, and the risk of homelessness and exploitation have been identified as risks associated with the HfU scheme.⁴³
- The lack of accommodation provision is compounded by the lack of clarity on entitlements that will be in place upon expiry of the three-year leave to remain. There is no pathway to settlement under this scheme and no guidance on longer-term plans from the government have been announced.⁴⁴

Diagram 4: Visa data for Homes for Ukraine scheme

Homes for Ukraine	Number
Visas issued	149,000
Applications withdrawn	17,900
Applications refused	1,000
Applications on-going	10,000

Data available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data>

Diagram 5: Timeline of UK response

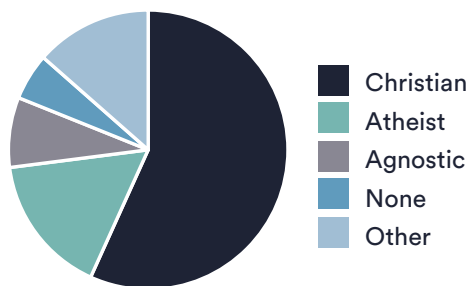
24.02.22	<p>Russia invades Ukraine.</p> <p>Europe sees largest refugee crisis since World War 2. Nearly 8 million refugees are to be displaced across Europe over the next few months.</p>
01.03.22	<p>Prime Minister and Home Secretary announce plans for a new scheme for Ukrainians with no ties to the UK. The intended visa route will rely on a sponsor to provide accommodation. Those arriving via this route will be eligible to work.</p>
14.03.22	<p>Homes for Ukraine scheme is announced.</p> <p>UK households can register their interest to offer a home to people fleeing Ukraine by becoming a sponsor as part of the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.</p>
18.03.22	<p>The HfU scheme opened for visa applications from individuals or households fleeing from Ukraine who have named people in the UK willing to sponsor them.</p>
10.09.22	<p>Homes for Ukraine scheme extended to enable new applications from eligible children, enabling children to travel on their own to the UK via Homes for UK scheme.</p>
20.10.22	<p>Government statistics show 192,600 visa have been granted to Ukrainians with 138,200 visas being granted under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.</p> <p>100,000 of those granted under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme have arrived in the UK.</p>

Participant overview

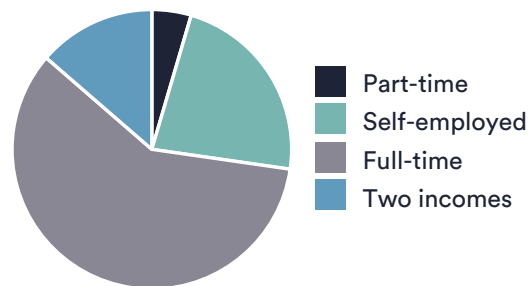
To better understand the experiences of hosts participating in the HfU scheme, interviews and/or surveys were conducted with 35 households; 31 of whom were currently hosting or had hosted. Four households were waiting to host, although one had already matched with a family and was awaiting their arrival. 16 households participated in an interview with the remaining households (19) submitting answers via a survey. Across the 31 placements, 74 people from Ukraine were hosted (72 in placement at the time of the research). Participating hosts were interviewed in September and October 2022, for further information about participant recruitment and the research approach refer to page 58.

Figures: Pie graphs to demonstrate demographics of participating households

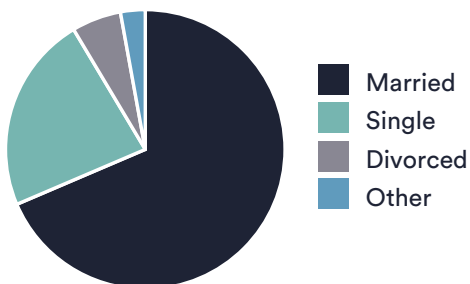
Hosts faith orientations



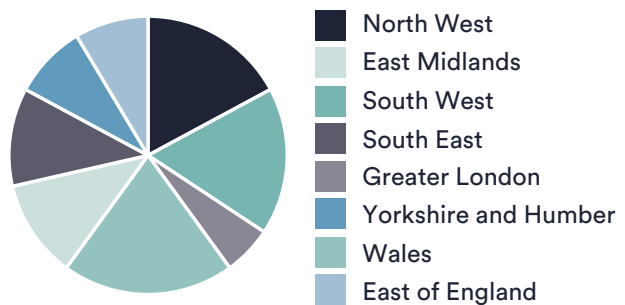
Employment profile of hosts



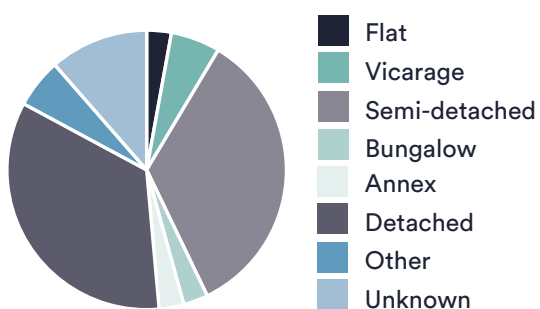
Relationship status of hosts



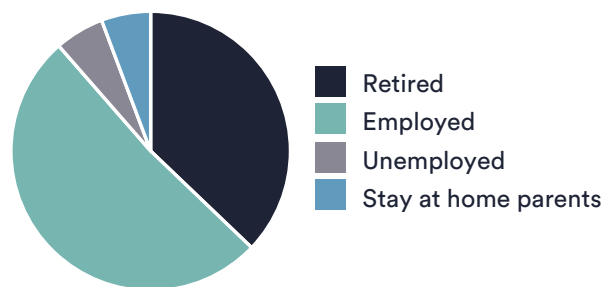
Locations of hosts who participated in research



Hosts accommodation type



Hosts occupational status



All participating hosts identified as white, the majority were British citizens from birth (91%) and were married (71%). Most hosts owned their properties (91%), which on average had at least 3 bedrooms.

13 of the hosting households were retired (37%) while 18 households engaged in paid employment (51%). Hosts ages ranged from 33 to 77 with an average age of 55. 11 host households had children in them (31%) – the ages of children in host families ranged from under a year to into their twenties. Host demographics are similar to a survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics that found: 43% of hosts were working full time, with 21% being retired. 48% of hosts were aged between 50 and 69 and 33% of homes had host children residing in them.⁴⁵

Most guests were couples, family units or groups of friends (77%) as opposed to single individuals. Three homes hosted multi-generational family units, three homes hosted a couple, eight homes hosted a single person and 12 homes hosted a mother and child or children.

Insights

Hosting schemes require people being willing to share their homes, usually with those with whom they have little or no connection. Without hosts, hosting schemes are not viable. Starting to understand why people made the decision to offer homes via HfU is an important element of this project that may offer insights and considerations to assist current and future programmes.

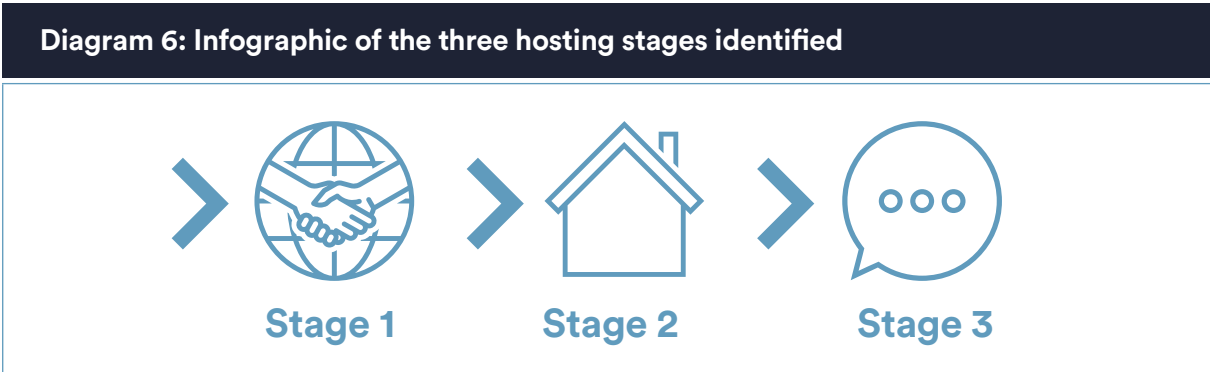
This project looked in depth at the following elements of the HfU scheme, including:

- host motivations for participating in the HfU scheme
- the registration and enrolment processes
- the living together, practical implications and impacts of hosting
- host and guest relationships
- transitions away from the hosting arrangement

The report has structured the learnings from the HfU scheme into the three main stages identified as pivotal elements of the hosting process:

1. Recruitment and enrolment
2. Practicalities of hosting
3. Transition and exit

This design is intended to capture information from the research in a way that will assist the relevant actors (government, local government, hosting organisations) as they look to improve, develop, deliver and implement hosting schemes for a range of different cohorts of people.



During the data analysis, themes and experiences shared by hosts have been identified and allocated to one of the three stages. Host motivations underpin and can be seen to be present at each stage of the hosting process.

The findings are then discussed in line with wider, available literature, research and data. Finally, for each stage we identify learnings from the experiences of the HfU scheme and consider how they might shape future development and effective delivery of hosting schemes. Identifying, critiquing and understanding the pivotal stages in a hosting programme will practically assist those offering hosting schemes and programmes to identify the elements of hosting that prove to be problematic and need consideration during programme development and design.

At the end of each section a range of key considerations are offered. The intention is that these are practically useful and therefore they are directed at each of the different entities involved in operating and facilitating hosting schemes more broadly: central government, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, hosting organisations and hosts.

Motivation and connection

“ I think just seeing the news, seeing the appalling way in which the Ukrainians were being treated and that war was declared and that they didn't want that and we just both felt a want to help.” –Host

Whilst this research does not have the capacity to look comprehensively at the psychology behind the concept of motivation, it does acknowledge that at a basic level being able to understand why someone felt compelled to participate in the HfU scheme can offer insights into how hosts can be encouraged to participate in similar schemes in the future as well as what schemes should be considering when trying to engage and retain people willing to host. It is important where possible to understand what framed hosts engagement with the scheme ahead of discussing the three stages of the hosting process.

“ And then as soon as I decided I would host, I got a bit of personal relief knowing that I did my bit, that people helped. Although I've followed the war since, and I can genuinely say that I am doing everything I can as an individual to help with the situation.” –Host

Extensive prior research has been conducted to look at the reasons foster parents choose to foster with findings being used to attempt to better understand and encourage fostering, (see De Maeyer et al 2014).⁴⁶ Building on this research, we broadly explore the reasons given by hosts for volunteering for the scheme and pursuing participation. We asked about what factors influenced the decision to host, paying attention to personal relationships, cultural, religious, employment, or familial connections, conflict exposure, place specific knowledge, and prior experiences hosting.

“ In a nutshell, we just thought it was the right thing to do. I think there was a lot of emotional response initially because people felt there's a drastic and considerable need, and I could offer and do something. And we felt all of that as well.” –Host

The act of hosting can't be facilitated within a vacuum. Hospitality as a concept can only be enacted within the legal and policy frameworks that enable hosting to occur.⁴⁷ Never has the UK government offered such a tangible and direct way for the British public to become involved in being part of the solution to a migration crisis. Previous research identifies a range of motivators that encourage hosts to offer their homes to guests, including the desire to help⁴⁸, feelings of compassion⁴⁹, ability to offer hospitality⁵⁰, the thought that they can make a difference, and the impact of media coverage.⁵¹ All of these motivators were identified in host responses in this project.

“ Surely history isn't going to judge us kindly unless we do more...we have to put our money where our mouth is, so to speak. You know, we can't criticise the government for so long as we have been, particularly post-Brexit, and not jump into this where we can.” —Host

Previous research, looking at hosting schemes, divided host motivations into two distinct areas; practical and faith based.⁵² Only three hosts involved in this research described their faith as an impetus to act and offer their home, even though 57% identified as having a faith. Faith was not identified or described as a primary motivator for the majority of hosts involved in this project. Practical considerations, such as location of the home, size of house and available rooms were reported by participating hosts as elements they had thought about ahead of signing up to the scheme, but they were not voiced as something that encouraged or discouraged involvement. Hosts reported when they didn't have space but felt this was something they wanted to do plans were made to facilitate hosting, including rooms being repurposed and people temporarily moving out of the family home.

Generally, participating hosts identified that their motivations and connection to the war, Ukraine and those fleeing were multi-faceted. Certainly, connections hosts described feeling were largely facilitated initially by media coverage. The on-going and extensive media coverage appeared to promote an affinity with those fleeing Ukraine and a horror in relation to what they may have experienced.

“ I think just seeing the news, seeing the appalling way in which the Ukrainians were being treated and that war was declared and that they didn't want that and we just both felt a want to help.” —Host

Other elements that hosts referred to as motivating factors included the fact they deemed what Russia was doing to be unjust, the proximity of the conflict to Europe and the UK, the opinion that Ukrainians were culturally similar and having previous family experiences and links to refugees or refugee crises.

“ I think people relate more to people because they're in Europe. We find it harder and it is wrong that we are like this, but we do find it harder to relate to Syrian refugees or Afghan refugees. But to see people who live similar lives to us being in that situation, I think that really affected people.” —Host

“ My mum was always incredibly concerned about any refugee crisis and always saying, I was a refugee...so really felt strongly that I wanted to do it. I really felt, OK, this is something I can do, and I should.” —Host

Others felt their participation was a political act, viewing their participation in the scheme as a political statement that challenged the current and growing anti-immigration rhetoric and showed, when offered an opportunity to help, people would step up. Additionally there was a sense that offering a scheme showed that the government was serious and committed in their intention to assist Ukrainians and this encouraged their participation.

“ It was obviously altruistic, you know. Anybody that’s had to just walk out and pick up what they can carry. They’re welcome to stay here, but it’s also a political statement. You know, we can’t go out and fight, but we can actually make a standby offering a room for somebody who has nothing.” —Host

The practical elements of the scheme—particularly the short-term nature and existing household capacity—also influenced the decision to host. Hosts felt guests would want to return home as soon as possible and this practically made hosting appear more feasible for them.

“ Through no fault of their own, they have been put in a situation of danger and just need somewhere to live. They’re not seeking asylum, so their intention is they want to go back. They do not want to live here, they want to go back home, so it is for a temporary period.” —Host

Hosts identified the time limited commitment and a centrally coordinated scheme, combined with available space requiring few alterations as factors that influenced the decision to host.

“ I liked the look of when the financial incentive was announced because it told me that the government was serious, at least. If anything, it did give us a little bit more confidence that the government was going to follow through with this.” —Host

Previous experience of hosting was not a motivating factor for hosts and in fact few hosts had previous experiences hosting or working with refugees or migrants. Up until participating in the HfU scheme overwhelmingly hosts had not engaged with other migrant and refugee crises in such a proactive way. Many reported financially supporting causes and donating items as required but, bar two hosts, no-one had previously engaged in welcoming guests, via a formalised hosting programme, into their homes. A small number of hosts (25%) referred to having previously had lodgers, facilitating short-term school trips, au-pairs, having family and people they knew coming to stay but not having hosted in this format.

“ We’ve never done anything like this before. It was our first time ever to do anything like this but we were both very much on the side that we wanted to do it. And we both felt same, which I think was vital.” —Host

“ We have had lodgers over the years, so we’re used to sharing spaces and things like that. And younger students or people just starting out. Yeah, that thing. But also people that we’ve known, you know, not just strangers. So, this is the first time we’ve taken someone that we’ve not known.” —Host

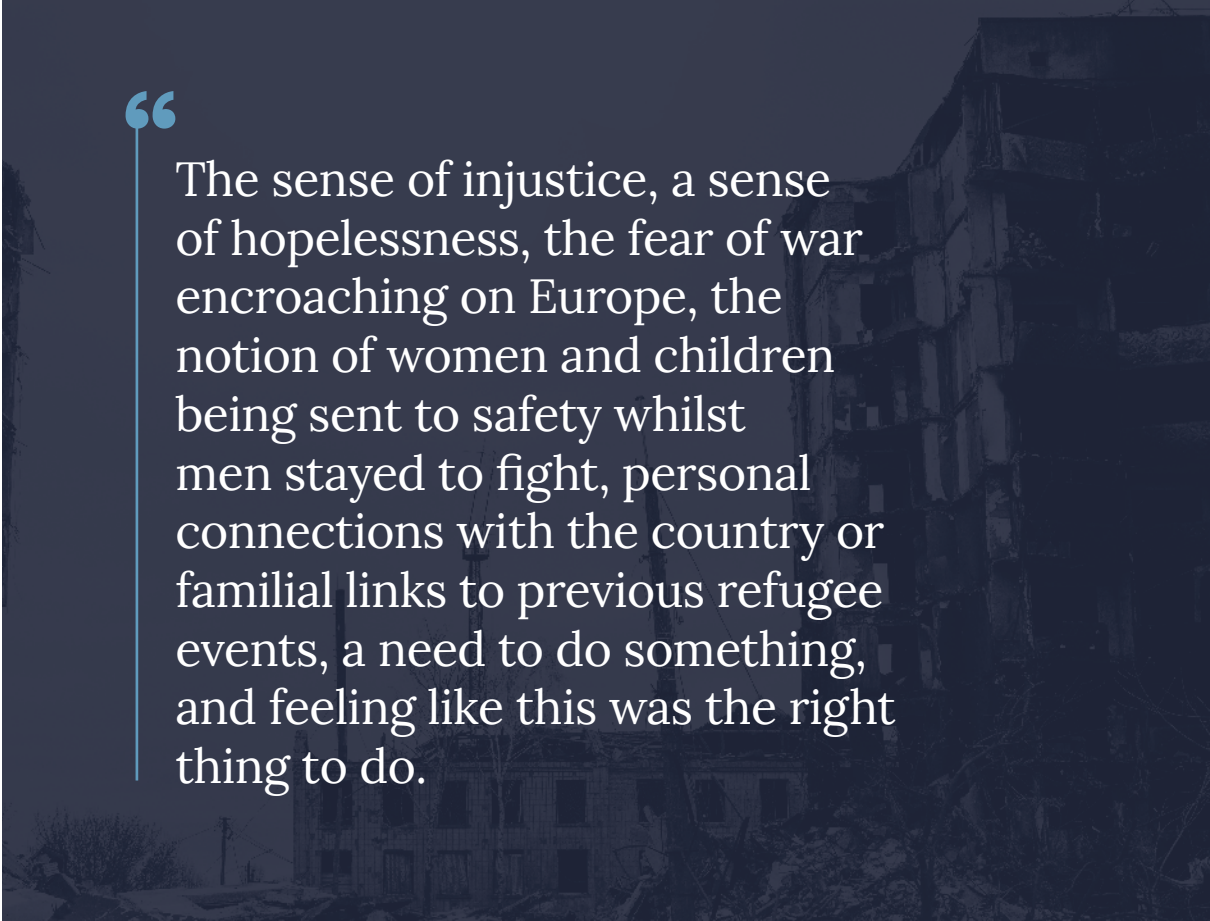
Whilst the financial contribution offered as part of the HfU scheme (the £350 monthly ‘thank you’ payment) was acknowledged as helpful, especially considering the rising cost of living, hosts across the board did not identify this as a primary motivator for their involvement.

“ It didn’t really impact us. We’re not in it for the money. We would have done it regardless.” —Host

Most of the motivating factors identified by hosts participating in this project were related to the emotional and personal connection people felt with the situation in Ukraine and its perceived closeness to their own lives.

The sense of injustice, a sense of hopelessness, the fear of war encroaching on Europe, the notion of women and children being sent to safety whilst men stayed to fight, personal connections with the country or familial links to previous refugee events, a need to do something, and feeling like this was the right thing to do were all contributing factors in host participation. Hosts experienced a strong connection with the crisis and those it was impacting, which they attributed as a factor in their decision to help. Arguably, when announced, the HfU scheme offered a mechanism through which people could practically channel these emotions and respond to the crisis in a practical way.

Media coverage, the ease of participation in the scheme (and its perceived temporary nature), and the practical capacity of the household enabled participation, the immorality of the invasion and social-emotional response to the injustices experienced by Ukrainians elicited host participation.



“ The sense of injustice, a sense of hopelessness, the fear of war encroaching on Europe, the notion of women and children being sent to safety whilst men stayed to fight, personal connections with the country or familial links to previous refugee events, a need to do something, and feeling like this was the right thing to do.



Stage 1: Recruitment and enrolment

This research has identified three thematic areas in relation to the recruitment and enrolment of hosts:

- **The way in which schemes are advertised**
- **The matching processes involved**
- **The training offered to hosts**

These three areas are discussed and critiqued based on the research findings and other available literature and research. The section concludes with a discussion and sharing of insights of the impact of effective recruitment and enrolment proposes key considerations for different agencies (based on their roles in the process). Key considerations are directed at the development of schemes, during the initial phases of identifying a match and preparing for hosting, to ensure the best outcomes for guests and hosts.

Advertising the scheme and the influence of media

The image of Alan Kurdi, the small child washed up on the shores of the Mediterranean prompted an international uproar and response the Syrian crisis in 2015.⁵³ Seven years later the media images and coverage of the war in Ukraine are again prompting nations and individuals to respond. Data indicates that many people followed the events happening in Ukraine on their television screens.⁵⁴ All hosts reported engaging with the situation via various media outlets, including radio, television and online, and being impacted significantly by what they were seeing and the emotions this prompted for them.

The public response to a migration crisis or mass movement of people is impacted by the way in which the story of the people moving is told. The HfU scheme was presented as something anyone could do if they had a spare room available for a minimum of six months and government Ministers framed it as a way to continue the tradition of the British public helping those in their hour of need.⁵⁵

There certainly has been a sense of solidarity towards Ukrainian people both in the UK and Europe. The media portrayal of the war and the people needing assistance has further fuelled this sense of similarity and compassion. News articles have described Ukrainians as ‘civilised’, ‘educated’, ‘prosperous’, ‘middle-class’ and ‘different from those from third world nations’.⁵⁶

In relation to Ukraine, as outlined in the ‘motivation and connection’ section of this report, hosts felt connected to the situation, threatened by its closeness, compelled by its similarity to refugees from WW2 and inspired by men staying home to fight whilst sending their wives and children to safety. Previous research shows schemes and initiatives that welcome specific groups can reinforce boundaries between those who are welcomed and those who are excluded by state policies.⁵⁷ The portrayal of Ukrainians and the situation being faced in Ukraine is notably different to the depiction of other refugee crises resulting in the mass displacement of people.⁵⁸



“ I think probably for me because it was a European country. I know the UK has left the EU, but I still see Ukraine as part of Europe, not in Russia. I think I just had that stronger commitment that we should do something.” —Host

Hosts put themselves in the shoes of Ukrainians and imagined what it would be like to be in a similar situation. Media portrayal promoted and maintained the connection hosts felt with the issue and those fleeing. From this perspective, we see the way in which the media was able to mobilise empathy for displaced persons from Ukraine which in turn appears to have driven host participation.

Matching considerations

Initially the government was clear its role was not to facilitate the identification and direct matching of hosts and guests.⁵⁹ When the scheme was announced many new Facebook pages appeared containing Ukrainians looking for sponsors, in effect advertising themselves and their families, not dissimilar to the processes used on a dating site. This self-advertising and lack of regulated matching caused concern for the safety of both hosts and guests.⁶⁰ Following pressure and concerns from the third sector, the government listed organisations available to assist with matching hosts and guests.⁶¹ Two weeks after the scheme was launched one of these organisations received £300,000 from DLUHC to create a centralised and official matching system.⁶²

Whilst several organisations were identified as recognised providers, there was no expectation or requirement for hosts and guests to match via these organisations.⁶³ For any organisation offering matching services, guidance and minimum requirements were produced by government.⁶⁴ These requirements included organisations having to have safeguarding and complaints processes in place and organisations were advised to consider the location, size of property and ages and genders of hosts and guests when undertaking matching processes. It was accepted that matching would look different for every organisation and organisations were not required to offer on-going support post a match being made.⁶⁵

The HfU matching process uses a different approach than the other resettlement schemes run by the government. Both the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) offer a government-led allocation programme, with the government identifying and proposing a family ‘suitable’ for resettlement. As part of CSS, government work directly with the sponsor and the local authority to identify, propose and match a family with an appropriate sponsor.⁶⁶

Previous reports have found that most NGO and third sector hosting programmes, specifically offer matching services as part of the hosting process.⁶⁷ Most hosting schemes focus on matching from the point of view of the host and ensuring that the home and its location is suitable for a guest. Matching is also used as a way of assessing any risks the host or guests pose and putting in place safeguards as appropriate.

“ It’s breaking down at the point of allocating potential guests to potential hosts and there are a lot of frustrated people.” —Host

Whilst the scheme was never intended to offer a matching service and hosts were expected to facilitate this process themselves, this was not immediately clear to everyone who had registered and enrolled. As identified earlier, third sector organisations proposed that the



'hands-off approach' to matching guests and hosts would put vulnerable people at greater risk of traffickers preying upon them.⁶⁸ Guidance produced contained no advice in relation to how hosts should identify and match with guests outside of listing the contact details of the recognised provider organisations.⁶⁹

“ So, applying to the government was very straight forward, they just had a form. But we quickly realised that they weren't going to make any steps towards doing any matching.” —Host

The No Accommodation Network (NACCOM) is a membership organisation that coordinates organisations working towards ending destitution for people seeking asylum, refugees and other migrants via the provision of accommodation. Via members of the network accommodation is provided via a range of mechanisms including night shelters, hosting schemes, safe houses and supported housing. In 2021, 2,771 people were accommodated over the network, with organisations across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.^f

NACCOM hosting scheme guidance states that good practice for schemes should include 'either a meeting before the placement or a trial period at the beginning of the placement to ensure the pairing is a good match.'⁷⁰ NACCOM further offers good practice guide focussing on considerations for hosts ahead of opening their home to guests – this helps those considering hosting to reflect on the practical and emotional implications of hosting.⁷¹

“ Oh honestly I was just willing to help anyone who needed help. It didn't really matter to me whether they were young, had children, or a full family. It's whoever contacted me first, really.” —Host

Some hosts didn't mind who they hosted and were willing to assist anyone who needed a place to stay. Other hosts had clear notions of who they felt they would and wouldn't be able to host based on their location, amount of time available, home layout and family make-up, previous experience, and their understanding of the needs of those leaving Ukraine. Most hosts were able to only consider matching with women and children.

“ Feels a bit bad, but personally, I didn't really want a man. I just thought I would be able to relate more easily to a woman and it was generally women who needed it. So, I guess that was something that was on my radar. And then also, although we've got several rooms or spare rooms, I wasn't sure that we would, particularly from the long term, want small children.” —Host

Three hosts described multiple matching attempts before a successful match was made. Decisions to not accept hosting were made by both hosts and potential guests. For guests this decision was often related to wanting to find a host nearer to a city or to friends and family that had already arrived.

^f Information sourced from NACCOM website <https://naccom.org.uk/>



“ Each one said yes we want to come and then at the end at the last minute they said no we have found somewhere else...we went through that about three times before our current guests found us.” —Host

All the hosts involved reported doing their own research and relied heavily on previous personal and professional experiences and connections to consider how they would identify and match with guests. Most hosts (71%) reported not accessing or using the centralised matching system, nor did they engage with matching organisations. Only three hosts reported actively signing up with a matching service, the remaining hosts (32) took matching processes into their own hands identifying guests predominantly via online platforms, social media, and personal connections. Of those hosts interviewed only one reported finding a successful match via one of the government identified hosting organisations. Most identified, matched and arranged placements via their own connections in the community, local arrangements, faith communities or via social media.

“ Sort of went on a host for Ukraine website group. And you know it was almost like an estate agents website.” —Host

“ We signed up initially with the government scheme. That got the reference number because that’s a requirement for visa application. You have to do it, but that did not match us with any families. It was basically an admin thing. And then it was you are on your own to find someone.” —Host

Survey data, produced by the Office of National Statistic, about the HfU scheme shows 33% of hosts met their guest via social media platforms and 23% via a matching service – which service this was and whether it was one of the recognised by government or the centralised systems they had funded was not recorded.⁷² Most hosts, involved in this research, did not report any third sector or ‘official’ support with the identification and matching process nor indicated they were aware of any available support with this element.

“ We initially thought about having a young mum with a child because we’ve got 5 grandchildren. But we only wanted someone who is a woman and a child, a boy, of about 8.” —Host

“ I went online, registered on the government thing, and then I started going online and on Facebook and looking at different things. Then a lady approached me, and she said that she knew a lady with a little girl, so I said “of course”. I got as much information as I could.” —Host

Where third parties (including hosting schemes, third sector organisations and individuals) were involved in the identification of guests, hosts report them acting as interpreters, intermediaries, and assessors of information in relation to identifying suitable and appropriate matches. Positive examples were shared by hosts when organisations and individuals had been involved in supporting these processes and this enabled both prospective hosts and guests to consider and reconsider if they were the right fit for each other. An evaluation report critiquing the CSS demonstrates that having the capacity to choose hosts and locations as well as having knowledge about the hosting site ahead of time is important to guests and may impact initial settlement if not available.⁷³



“ They matched us with the with the person that we’re hosting now, so it’s a young mum with a one year old child. Because we’ve got two young children ourselves, that is something that we put on the various forms. Because we thought we’d be able to offer advice and equipment in terms of, you know, baby bits and pieces, that kind of thing.’ —Host

26 hosts (84%) reported speaking with guests ahead of their arrival. Hosts and guests spoke via video call and exchanged messages, usually via WhatsApp, ahead of finalising a hosting set-up and these conversations continued throughout the subsequent visa application processes up until guests arrived. This allowed both hosts and guests to learn more about each other in the intervening period between matching and guests arriving and was reflected on positively by hosts.

“ We had been in touch for at least two months while she was in Poland in a refugee centre or several different ones. And so we built up a WhatsApp text relationship before she finally got her visa and letter to remain.” —Host

Finally, choice has been identified as a crucial element of any hosting arrangement and good matching processes need to be in place.⁷⁴ In choosing or matching with guests, considerations hosts made included identifying potential guests with similar interests, similar aged children (if still at home), behaviours – not smoking and the practicalities of how many extra people their home could hold. Other literature identified guest experiences, support needs, personalities, and preferences need should be considered for hosting matches to be effective.⁷⁵

Training and checks

Host training was not established as a requirement of the HfU scheme. The government advised matching organisations to consider if they could provide training, noting this would ‘increase the likelihood of a successful 6-month match’.⁷⁶ Proposed training topics included the responsibilities of the sponsor; how to set and maintain boundaries between sponsors and guests; confidentiality and safeguarding.⁷⁷ The government, via the DLUHC, produced sponsor guidance, frequently asked questions documentation, and provided links to third sector organisations that may be able to provide training and support.

The CSS required sponsors to complete training prior to matching. Training for those participating in the CSS is delivered by one organisation and is intended to assist sponsors prepare for welcoming and the resettled families they will be supporting. Training includes various topics such as cultural awareness, safeguarding issues when working with resettled families, empowerment and arrival and exit planning.⁷⁸ Similarly, research shows other hosting schemes across the UK run introduction to hosting sessions for people considering hosting to assist them to think about the implications of sharing their home with someone else. This very much follows the processes involved in fostering and adoption of children and forms part of an assessment of suitability of those applying to offer their home.⁷⁹

Hosts confirmed that training was not offered as standard a part of the HfU scheme upon expressing interest and enrolling in the scheme. Whilst various training inputs were available and had been identified by hosts there were mixed responses to its effectiveness and relevance. Hosts who reported having attended training (45%) had had this arranged by their local authorities and delivered by third sector organisations or had sought out webinars and information sessions themselves in preparation for hosting. Hosts identified that training on



a range of topics would have been beneficial and helped them to prepare for hosting. These topics included practical inputs such as how to claim benefits, apply for national insurance numbers and signposting to other agencies as well as softer topics such as understanding trauma, boundary setting, cultural differences, bias training and time to consider sharing your home.

“ Training for hosts was useful to ensure we considered different aspects of hosting, such as ensuring we maintain our own family time and boundaries.” —Host

The interactions, liaisons and advocacy hosts undertook on behalf of guests were time consuming (as discussed further in Stage 2), in some cases complex and required making contact and connections with agencies and systems that were new to both hosts and guests. The speed at which HfU was established left room for ambiguity in relation to who was expected to do what for guests and where the responsibility lay. Hosts received minimal support or training to prepare themselves for hosting and largely relied on informal networks, community groups and social media forums when issues arose.

“ I think that many people are simply not prepared for the commitment required! A few issues...that training may help...House rules, cultural differences, trauma, financial situation of guests, move on plans (or lack of options!), education opportunities for guests and the benefits system.” —Host

Many hosting schemes offer training to prospective hosts that will be contextually specific to the population group being hosted. There was a lack of organised training and support associated with the HfU scheme. Training offers safety and structure to both guests and hosts and may facilitate longevity of hosts willingness to participate in hosting programmes, however lengthy training programmes requiring on-going commitment from host ahead of being matching and able to host and welcome a guest may not appeal to hosts. Addition of a formalised training programme ahead of hosting takes away the immediacy of being able to respond to someone who requires a home, it adds commitment and extends the time frames involved between wanting to host and being able to.

“ There could be more guidance to help, but then every family is different anyway and it would be quite hard. I think in our situation I don't feel that we need anymore, I feel that the help and support we've had is sufficient for what we are doing and what we need to, and in one sense, if you get too much thrown at you, it can become overwhelming.” —Host

All hosts and guests had to be vetted to access the HfU scheme.⁸⁰ Centralised security and criminal checks were conducted on all hosts and guests ahead of any permission to travel being granted to enter the UK. These checks are comparable to the checks run on those involved in other resettlement schemes (CSS and UKRS).⁸¹

Once matched with guests, all HfU hosts were Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked and had a home visit.⁹ Visits were conducted by a range of agencies including the fire brigade, children's services, resettlement team and third sector organisations. Visits were described

^g Two host families who participated in this project hosted independently of the scheme and did not receive these checks.



as like those undertaken on houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs). The space available was checked, along with access to bathroom and kitchen facilities and safety mechanisms such as fire alarms and smoke detectors. Visits and checks did not always occur before guests arrived.

Insights and key considerations for future schemes

The impact of media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine and its impact on the British public should not be discounted. Whilst we are not able to offer a full, in-depth analysis of the role media played in the success and promotion of the HfU scheme, it is reasonable to believe the continuous nature of the reporting influenced and prompted people to enrol in the HfU scheme. Whilst hosting schemes may not be able to commandeer all news channels, certainly the centralised advertising and clear messaging about what was needed, for who and the parameters of the scheme was well received. Coverage spurred people into action and the provision of a government backed centralised mechanism to register interest in hosting provided the avenue through which people could connect with the issue and resolve their need to take action.

The HfU scheme provided a way to move from a position of inactivity to tangibly offering to do something for those fleeing war, it was easy to access, had low requirements and the online process meant people could respond by registering their interest immediately and in the moment.

The design of the HfU schemes appealed to hosts for two reasons. First, participants were offered the right to work and access to public services and second, the conceptualisation of the programme as a short-term solution appealed to those who wanted to help.

Whilst a government run, centralised registration system was instigated and positively received, the lack of organised matching systems did prove problematic for hosts who had to navigate their way through this process. Once hosts had enrolled in the scheme and committed to finding someone they could assist, the matching process was organic and largely conversational and based on what the host was able and willing to offer. Hosts in effect instigated their own approaches to matching and did not utilise or know about the agencies tasked to offer assistance with this process. People appeared to largely know who they were wanting to and able to host, this was based on what they perceived the need to be, what they felt comfortable with and what they were able offer practically in terms of space and asked questions of those they were considering based on these factors.

“

Whilst a government run, centralised registration system was instigated and positively received, the lack of organised matching systems did prove problematic for hosts who had to navigate their way through this process.



In relation to the HfU scheme processes were replicated and hosts found this administrative burden frustrating. Hosts had to register online with both the government portal and a matching service if they wanted assistance matching. Both processes required similar information.

Home visits did occur for the HfU scheme but not always prior to matching or guest arrival. It would have been unrealistic for hosts and guests to have met prior to matching for this scheme, however connection and communication prior to both parties agreeing to embark on hosting reportedly worked well for hosts in this project and should be a standard element of any matching process.

Certainly, an organised matching process is posed as best practice and appears to be the norm in schemes offered across the UK. The process enables hosts and guests to consider the impact hosting will have on them as individuals, their wider family dynamic, their time, energy and resources. What guests want in relation to a hosting placement is an area that does not appear to have been developed in this sector. Historically this could be as a direct result of hosting being used in emergency situations or for population groups who have limited, if any, choices however this is an area that needs to be considered further.

Hosts were impacted by a lack of a formal training programme in both positive and negative ways. The lack of training made the programme more accessible for hosts, but the lack of standardised training and support could arguably put guests at risk of inappropriate placements and hosting arrangements.

It is important to acknowledge the power dynamics at play in a hosting relationship and that by offering space to someone who needs it in their home hosts by default hold a position of power. They reside in the property already and whilst willing to share their space in theory, what this looks like in practice can be challenging if expectations of both parties are not disclosed. Discussion between host and guest is required ahead of agreeing to host and this process must take into account the interests, needs, wants and situations of the guest as well as the host. Hearing what guests want and need in relation to a hosting arrangement is paramount if the sharing physical space is going to be successful.

“Hosts were impacted by a lack of a formal training programme in both positive and negative ways.”

Table 1: Overview of Stage 1: Recruitment and enrolment key considerations

Key considerations for future government run schemes

- [Continue to] Employ clear media and communications strategy to engage potential hosts.
- Develop effective and streamlined administrative processes for those registering interest in hosting.
- Provide centralised mechanisms to allow, enable and facilitate all elements of a hosting arrangement.
- Clearly define which organisation and agency are responsible for each element of the process and supply funding sources to enable this to happen effectively.

Key considerations for local authorities involved in implementing hosting schemes

- Support and promote hosting schemes locally to increase visibility and accessibility for both hosts and guests.
- Support local partners and stakeholders to recruit hosts.
- Support hosting schemes to carry out property and host checks.
- Work with stakeholders to develop a centralised system for identifying, checking, training recruiting and enrolling hosts regardless of the guest population.

Key considerations for future NGO and third sector hosting schemes

- Develop an understanding of host motivations so advertising and communications can be targeted.
- Consider how to most effectively use available advertising and communication channels to connect to hosts and motivate their participation in hosting schemes.
- Advertise, realistically, the role of the host – including what hosting can cost personally, emotionally, practically, and financially, as well as what benefits hosts will get from the process.
- Develop and facilitate an effective matching process that allows for both host and guest preferences to be considered.
- Consider facilitating safe processes whereby hosts and guests can ‘meet’, connect and begin to communicate ahead post matching but before hosting begins to enable proactive discussions and informed consent of both parties ahead of hosting starting.
- Develop and facilitate hosting mentorships with current and previous hosts to transmit learned knowledge to new hosts.
- Consider the length of the processes involved and the timeframes between agreeing to host and a guest arriving. Work out how to balance achieving the necessary safeguarding checks and training as well as maintaining enthusiasm and impetus to host.
- Create a suite of standardised training modules that can be accessed depending on the specific population group being hosted and host needs.
- Offer essential and follow up training and support to hosts.
- Consider how to structure training and the expectations upon hosts, so it is not overly burdensome or time consuming so matching and hosting are not unnecessarily delayed.

Key considerations for hosts

- Participate in cultural orientation training on displacement and trauma.
- Consider household use of space, personal comfort level, and goals for interaction; develop a plan for sharing resources and space.
- Discuss household use of space and schedule with guest prior to move-in.

Hosts might consider the following queries in determining the appropriate number and age of guests:

- Cost of energy and resources.
- Time allocation for school enrolment, job procurement, and integration processes.
- Presence of community supports for guests.
- Access to community support or mentorship for host.



Stage 2: Practicalities of hosting

This research has identified four thematic areas in relation to the to the practicalities of hosting. These areas are:

- Practical implications of hosting
- Relationships
- Cost of hosting on hosts (emotional and financial)
- Impact of hosting on future hosting

Looking at each of these areas the report discusses the practicalities of hosting and the activities hosts became involved in to support guests and the implications of these. These areas are discussed and critiqued based on the research findings and other available literature and research and this section concludes with the sharing of insights and proposing of key considerations.

Practical implications

The scheme was certainly posed first and foremost as an accommodation solution for those fleeing conflict in Ukraine. The HfU scheme was far more than a simple hosting arrangement, and all hosts participating in this research have ended up doing far more for their guests, specifically in the first few weeks, than providing a safe place to stay.

“ Trying to get them prescriptions, arranging dental treatment, emergency doctors, universal credit, child benefit, school, getting them on a list for a potential housing association. There’s just so much admin! You know, it’s like if you move to a different country and you don’t speak English, the host has to help with all of those things.” —Host

The impact of agreeing to host didn’t just start with the arrival of guests but from the point of matching hosts were involved in convoluted visa application processes, travel arrangements, on-going conversations with guests and preparing their homes to receive guests. Upon arrival of their guests, hosts have had to navigate a range of bureaucratic systems that they have not had to interact with previously or personally and the whole process has proved to be time consuming and a learning curve for most involved. Expectations of hosts were outlined briefly in government guidance.⁸²

“ Yeah, just to sum up the amount of time and hassle: In the early days, it was all consuming. It was just problem after problem, just administrative hurdles.” —Host

Practically, hosts were expected to set their guests up with the basics, including access to food, essential supplies, toiletries, phone and internet upon arrival. In addition, hosts were



requested to support guests to access public services and register with the GP and dentist and signpost them to other services such as banking. Hosts were also asked to support guests to orientate themselves in their new locale, helping guests to understand transport routes and the local amenities available.

Hosts were not expected to provide transportation for guests for the duration of their stay and guidance outlined that school registrations, English lessons, referrals to specialist services (including mental health services) and advice about accessing welfare benefits and the role of the Jobcentre was the role of the local council.⁸³ Guidance advised that hosts should consider drafting some basic ground rules so guests were clear on host expectations when in their home.⁸⁴ Initially, all hosts under the HfU scheme would be in receipt of a standardised monthly £350 ‘thank you’ payment regardless of how many guests they were hosting.

“ I think the administration is the big challenge, you know, going through Universal Credit, I’ve never done that in my life. I’ve had to get to grips with that and go and meet the people in the offices because in the beginning they couldn’t speak English’. —Host

A recent government survey of hosts hosting under the HfU scheme shows that experiences of hosts participating in this research are not unusual. 99% of hosts surveyed stated they provided more support to guests than just accommodation.⁸⁵ Hosts involved in this project reported that even the tasks outlined by the government as the responsibility of the local council were often completed by them. National statistics show hosts were involved in taking guests to appointments (84%), helping them to find work (63%), setting up of bank account (93%), registering with health care (91%) and helping with language and translation (65%).⁸⁶

Hosts also reported assisting in the set-up of national insurance numbers, universal credit application and payments, child benefits and the biometric residents permits, finding and registering with medical establishments and educational establishments (school and college places for children as well as English language classes for adults), assisting with the writing of CVs, and finding employment.

“ Yeah, everything had to be set up, like bank accounts. I took time off work and just went and got it all set up with everything that needed to be sorted out.” —Host

“ We’ve done the run around getting various things sorted out and now on to job centre visits and getting them registered with doctors and mobile phones sorted out, and all the other things that needed to be done.” —Host

Whilst some hosts had received a check list of tasks to be completed in a specific order, which they reflected was a useful resource, most hosts had not planned for or expected the level of commitment and the time required far exceeded host expectations.

Most hosts did not have a formal source of support to assist guests in navigating the various registrations required, even those that did find that guests often needed things re-explaining or clarifying and came to hosts for advice and help. Hosts found themselves engaging with and navigating systems they had not had to use before and encountered a lot of duplication in processes and bureaucracy.



Most hosts relied on informal networks within their communities and online for support and to source advice in relation to guest needs. Informal host networks on social media provided a lot of information and shared experiences that hosts found useful reference points. When guests had other friends and family members locally, who had already been through the various registration and set-up processes, the burden of support expected from hosts was reduced. In all cases where schooling was required, hosts reported schools going the extra mile, providing access to uniforms, extra in class support, free school trips, and school meals. All hosts were impressed with the responses received from schools.

“ She seems really happy in school and she’s doing really well. The school have bent over backwards for her. She’s got her own laptop and there’s a Ukrainian teaching assistant...she’s got a reduced timetable. I couldn’t fault the school. They’ve been absolutely amazing.” —Host

There was a very clear sense that hosts felt the need to liaise, advocate and protect their guests’ best interests when engaging with statutory services. The realities of finding work was a major theme that many hosts commented on.

“ We went with them on pretty much every interview that they had at the job centre before they got a job, simply to make sure that their interests were protected.” —Host

Whilst the HfU scheme allows access to the labour market, the lack of English acted as a major barrier to this. In the evaluation of the CSS language competency was identified as a key hurdle to finding work.⁸⁷

“ They have now got work in the local chicken factory, so it’s on horrendous shifts, but they’re happy working - these are professional people. It’s such a waste of their time and resources. But they have no English.” —Host

“ Job applications, that’s taken a lot of time, and it’s been interesting to see her expectations gradually dwindle. We started off applying to theatres, but she doesn’t have any English and, you know, I kind of knew that nothing was going to materialise, but I couldn’t rain on her parade. I just felt like she had to do it so...” —Host

All hosts had in some way been directly involved in assisting guests to find and secure work. Hosts reported frustrations on behalf of their guests, commenting that for those who had been successful in their chosen professions in Ukraine or had owned businesses were being offered jobs that were not in line with their qualifications and level of experience. This was positioned by hosts predominantly as a result of a lack of English language or that their qualifications and skills were not recognised in a UK context and therefore not transferable. There was the sense that whilst people were being made to feel welcome and offered work the work available was limited and, in some cases, not appropriate.



“ She goes to the job centre and for all this talk about how they want high skilled immigrants, she is a very high skilled immigrant. What does she get offered a? A waitressing job. And you just think, come on guys, really? ” —Host

Relationships

“ I think we’ve got on better than I expected. I expected it to be quite bumpy and then be very different to how they have been. And I think the only thing that has been is slightly tricky is with my own family, to make sure that they don’t feel pushed out or excluded.” —Host

In addition to the practical elements of hosting, hosts also had to navigate the day-to-day living arrangements within their home. Hosting schemes often advertise hosting as a ‘nice’ experience, showing pictures of people cooking together and participating in activities – in trying to appeal to those who may consider hosting organisations are also setting expectations about what the hosting relationship will be like, this is not always helpful or realistic.

Literature shows ‘affection sharing’ is perceived as an essential feature of hosting and is seen as something that emerges naturally from sharing a house, around which the relation between hosts and guests is constructed.⁸⁸ In previous research it has been found that hosts actively look for a connection with guests and feel personally responsible for offering the required support and for guests’ emotional well-being. In research looking at specific hosting programmes for survivors of modern slavery, it was identified that hosts often gain as much from the experience as the guest. Hosts described the benefits of hosting from their own perspective not that of those they were hosting, these benefits included learning about new cultures, trying new food and the sense of doing something good.⁸⁹

“ On top of the fact that you know, if you moved into my house, that would be challenging, you know, because you have different habits. So, there’s the layer of, they’re just different people with different habits. Then there’s the layer of the culture difference. And then on top of that, which I hadn’t really been told that much about, is the layer of the sort of difficult situation they find themselves in and the difficulties they’ve had just getting here. You know, just sort of incredible trauma after the first months of the war and all of that. I hadn’t realised how much that would affect me. Yeah, that has been more challenging than I had envisaged.” —Host

It was obvious that hosts were emotionally invested in the HfU scheme and wanted to help. Hosts went above and beyond what the HfU scheme expected. These extra things included changing their home and lifestyles to provide a temporary home for those feeling conflict. Some hosts travelled to pick guests up from a third country, altered their family routines - explaining to grandchildren their room would not be available for the time being, and in one case moving host children out of the family home to accommodate guests. Some moved home offices and re-purposed shared family spaces to make room, with others redecorated and purchased new furniture to facilitate the number of guests arriving.



“ My parents live next door but one and so that was the obvious solution. They’re elderly and they would not cope with having strangers come to live with them. But I was thinking could they cope with one of their grandchildren coming to stay in their spare bedroom.” —Host

Hosts in previous research focussed on the intimate connections created through the daily acts of cooking, sharing a meal or learning to communicate with their guests.⁹⁰ This was seen within this research as well. All hosts described doing a range of normal household activities together including food shopping, eating and cooking together, watching television (although this was limited depending on language comprehension), dog walks, day trips, bike rides, gardening, attending Ukrainian events and cafes together, playing games, participating in sport together, attending places of worship, offering informal help and explaining things as they arose, establishing community networks outside of the home and helping with language skills. Offering the opportunity to connect with things that guests would have done at home was viewed as important and three hosts spoke of guests transforming garden spaces and growing a range of produce.

“ And then (guest name)’s family have a small holding. So she’s into gardening and taking over our garden, and she’s growing stuff. She did three months’ work in three hours and the plants – oh!” —Host

Two hosts referred to drafting a hosting agreement, but the majority did not specifically mention putting agreements in place, rather they described having conversations about expectations with them as things arose. It was felt that the pre-arrival conversations, where these had happened, between hosts and guests had given enough initial information and shared understandings and expectations. One host actively wrote down house rules and went through these with their guest, citing previous training from another hosting organisation that had proposed this as best practice.

Hosts interviewed as part of other research expressed feelings of frustration when their guests displayed behaviours that they did not expect.⁹¹ This was also observed in this research. Whilst hosts and guests had started to form relationships via the matching process, they did not know each other or what it would be like to live together and share space. Whilst hosts were willing and did make exceptions and adjustments, frustrations and challenges directly with guests were noted. These included:

- guests wanting their own space and not engaging with hosts as much as was wanted
- guests getting up for work and waking hosts
- loud conversations (at unusual times)
- guests not involving themselves in activities offered by hosts
- guests not being receptive to host suggestions
- eating at different and unusual times
- communication misunderstandings
- different parenting styles and expectations of children’s behaviour
- in one case, the expectation that because the hosts were being paid to have guests, they could treat their home as they wished



In addition to these direct guest challenges, hosts also commented on the impact hosting had on their emotional availability for themselves and their own families, the physical and emotional lack of space for them within their own home, and the fact that via hosting the war felt closer and more real and the emotional toll this took.

“ Like the last week with all the bombings in Kiev. You know you feel... I mean, it's exaggerated, I come home and I feel I'm in a warzone because basically the anxiety levels are through the roof.” —Host

Regardless of the perceived positivity of relationship, from a host perspective, there is a power dynamic and in essence a conditionality to all hosting – unwritten household expectations, an expected way of doing things and of engaging with those who are hosting. Hosts may not be aware of some of these elements until they face them within a hosting situation.

Whilst a hosting agreement may not have solved the challenges hosts referred to setting shared expectations could have encouraged hosts to think and consider the ‘unspoken rules’ of their home and the conditions surrounding their hosting offer.

Previous literature notes that hosting is based upon the daily exchanges between the host(s) and the guest(s), which revolves around the mundane experience of family life.⁹² Changes in relationship over the duration of a hosting agreement are to be expected. Hosts described the first few weeks post arrival as all-consuming as they navigated all that needed to be done. During this time guests were incredibly reliant on hosts not just for their accommodation but to understand and navigate all the UK systems. Hosts reflected that guests appeared more settled and more ‘at home’ when they were able to contribute back to the home – doing odd jobs around the house, financial contributions to food, cooking for hosts, helping in the gardening and with cleaning were all contributions hosts described guests making to the home.

Sharing space and living with anyone can have its challenges and these will look different at different stages during the hosting agreement. Host and guest routines have to be navigated and a new ‘normal’ within each household needs to be constructed.

Cost of hosting on hosts

“ It's not free to have two extra people in your home and we spent an awful lot on travel at the beginning and an awful lot in supporting them in the first few weeks.” —Host

The Office for National Statistics data showed 45% of hosts had assisted guests financially.⁹³ Certainly hosts participating in this project reported having to financially support guests in the first few weeks after they arrived in the UK as welcome payments and the set-up and subsequent payment of Universal Credit was slow. The government does not apply the ‘thank you’ payments to the other visa routes established for Ukrainians and two hosts, who sat outside of the HfU scheme (their guests had arrived via the Family Scheme and not the sponsorship route) received no ‘thank you’ payments or financial support for hosting.

“ Just absolute nightmare getting them set up on Universal Credit took eight weeks. They had no money for eight weeks and so we were supporting them obviously in that time. But that is a huge thing, isn't it? Not everybody can do that.” —Host



Other hosting schemes identified in previous research did not offer a financial incentive for hosts as standard.⁹⁴ Those that offered financial support did so via reimbursement for costs directly associated with hosting rather than a lump sum payment.

No host had calculated the direct financial cost of hosting but there was the perception that host costs had increased since hosting. Most felt the payments received covered the extra costs they had, however this was not the case for those hosting more than two guests. Hosts welcomed the ‘thank you’ payment and its intention but, as outlined in the motivation section, this was not something that primarily influenced their decision to host. Hosts commented on the payment being a flat rate and that this system didn’t make sense to them, given that those hosting one individual would receive the same amount as those hosting five.

“ It does seem a bit strange whether you have one person or three, that it’s the same amount, it might have made more sense if there would you know, if was something extra per person, not necessarily double, but something more. I mean, we’re OK with just two people, it has sort of a diminishing returns if you take in more people.” —Host

“ I’m not motivated by the finance but given that this is finite you’d expect there to be logic in the scheme, and it seems illogical to me. It didn’t have any impact on the decision. It is £2.31 per day, per person, and I’ve got five people. It goes nowhere towards the initial cost there is for five people’s lives.” —Host

The main consideration raised by hosts in relation to financial cost was the potential heating and energy prices rising, especially as winter approached. One host family decided to pass the £350 ‘thank you’ payment directly to their guest who was unable to work due to childcare.

Travel associated with setting up the various registration and support processes was identified as an in-kind cost that hosts made for their guest. Many hosts referred to multiple trips in the car to facilitate guest needs – two had driven to other European cities to meet and pick up guests and one had driven several hours to get a guest to an interview for a University place as buses and trains were unavailable.

Hosts had experienced upfront costs associated with preparing the home for guests, purchasing travelling to pick guests up, paying for guests travel to the UK and, in one instance, loaning money to a guest for a return trip to Ukraine.

“ We chose to purchase some items specifically for our guests so had upfront costs which weren’t covered. We also financially supported and provided food in the first few weeks which isn’t financially supported.” —Host

All hosts provided basic household items, such as oil, milk, bread, toilet rolls, condiments etc.. As guests began to receive benefits and work, they were in a position to both support themselves more and financially contribute to the household, increasingly buying their own food which reduced hosts financial expenditure.

Costs and investment were wider than financial and as referenced in the previous sections the time, energy, practical and emotional investment all ‘cost’ hosts. One host commented that it felt like the government were using hosting as a money saving exercise as accommodating people in local authority housing, should it be available, would have had a far higher price tag than the monthly ‘thank you’ payment.



Impact of hosts future participation

Certainly, from those participating in this research, not all hosts would be willing to consider hosting again, under the HfU scheme or other hosting programmes. Seven (22%) directly said they would not host again, 11 (35%) said they would and 12 (39%) said they would possibly consider hosting in the future. Hosts were not convinced that they would be able to host other nationalities within their homes and felt that perceived cultural, religious and gender-based norms would not fit within their home.

“ To be brutally honest, I think I possibly wouldn’t have because it’s been in the background of what’s going on in Syria and Afghanistan. I haven’t really understood it or engaged in it. You know what it’s like when you listen to the news and stuff - there’s always some story going on and I don’t even know where some of the places are. I probably wouldn’t have, but because of that, just because I hadn’t really engaged with it as much. But it does make me think now about that. And now I think: why haven’t I done that and would I do that in the future? And I think I’d like to say I would, but I don’t know.” —Host

“ I mean I’m not adverse to having anyone with needs coming. It was just expressing a concern that I might be more reserved. You’re more cautious about it if a family of five with a completely different world view descended on us. That might be different, whereas your people coming from Ukraine have a slightly different world view. But it’s not so radically different.” —Host

“ I think in my mind, most refugees from Syria are young men. Now. That’s probably a lie. There’s probably loads of families, women and children that are here. But in my mind it’s mostly young men and so we wouldn’t have ever hosted a young man in our house. It just would be inappropriate with three teenagers. Maybe that’s a cop out. I don’t know.” —Host

For those who would consider hosting again, they were willing to consider other nationalities, but this would not be something they would consider or be prepared to do soon. For the hosts who considered hosting in the future was a possibility, 39% expressed that this offer would come with conditions, including needing time in their home alone (or with their family unit) and that they would only consider hosting again once their children had left home as the disruption to family life, whilst manageable, had been considerable and not considered fair to repeat.

“ I think my concern would be a cultural one. I think it’s probably true of a lot of people, and it’s not a racist comment, but bringing an Islamic family into our home for example, might be more difficult, or a Jewish or Hindu family. I think those things would worry me. I think humanity would be at the top of my list. You know, I want to help people, but I would be concerned about the impact on them and on us, with that sort of degree of cultural difference. So, I wouldn’t say no, but...” —Host



Insights and key considerations for future schemes

Overall, it was seen that hosts participating in this project had gone above and beyond what they were expected to do under the HfU scheme, as advertised. However, without this the scheme may arguably not have worked as well. Hosts involved in this research appeared to have been overly generous with their time, energy and available financial resources and wanted to provide a welcoming space for their guests. The relational nature of offering hospitality via hosting is not unconditional. Hosts have entered the hosting agreement that is temporary in nature and whilst they want to help, they will have parameters around this, as discussed in the Stage 3: Transition and exit.

“ I think we’ve got on better than I expected. I expected it to be quite bumpy and then be very different to how they have been. And I think the only thing that has been is slightly tricky is with my own family, to make sure that they don’t feel pushed out or excluded.” —Host

The speed at which the programme was designed and rolled-out meant the lines of responsibility were not clearly established and whilst they altered throughout the HfU scheme hosts in most cases became de facto support workers.

The state was not able to provide for the practical and day-to-day needs of guests and relied on the hosting relationship to provide the majority of this. This, as evidenced in this project, was a considerable burden and one that was amplified by the fact that hosts often had more than one guest residing with them.

Because an act of hosting and hospitality is time-limited and often inspired and motivated by a specific person, in a specific situation that directly speaks to the host transferring this to someone else is not easy. Research shows that hosting is highly dependent on the bonds and relationship created between guest and host and when guests are seen as new family members, hosts find it difficult to transfer this relationship to someone else, even if other forms of support were available.⁹⁵

Hosting programmes must consider in detail the multitude of practicalities involved in hosting, including the emotional, spatial and financial impacts and work alongside hosts and guests to successfully communicate and navigated these.

Table 2: Overview of Stage 2 practicalities of hosting key considerations

Key considerations for future government run schemes

- Clearly demarcate responsibility for different actions and expectations (for example housing vs. visa application) in programme design.
- Provide adequate and timely safety checks and vetting for hosts and potential guests.
- Engage organisations already working in the hosting and resettlement sector to assist in the design and development of programmes and schemes.
- Provide an adequately trained and resourced hotline or local service provider to answer calls and field queries from those considering hosting.
- Adequately financially reimburse hosts to increase host pool.
- Ensure pathways out of hosting schemes are in place and appropriately funded.
- Work with stakeholders to design a uniform hosting scheme which can be replicated during times of need.
- Develop or share cultural orientation tools and learnings from previous resettlement programmes for hosts and guests.

Key considerations for local authorities involved in implementing hosting schemes

- Employ designated staff to support hosts and guests.
- Distinguish between support worker and host role in programme design.
- Offer assistance with processes relating to Universal Credit payments.
- Invest in infrastructure around assisting guest to learn English, transfer qualifications to UK context and access skills-based training to give them the best opportunity to secure employment when able to.
- Work with local partners, the third sector and NGO's to incorporate existing knowledge on community-based resources, support entities, and volunteers who can help hosting schemes succeed.

Key considerations for future NGO and third sector hosting schemes

- Adopt or adapt host training protocols to ensure cultural orientation takes place for new hosts and guests.
- Adopt or adapt existing tools to help facilitate guest-host matches.
- Incorporate host and guest individualised goals and planning into matching and screening process.
- Institute and help develop guest-host contracts as standardised practice.
- Offer guest mentors and host mentors to existing hosts and guests.
- Create a network among hosts to offer support and community.
- Offer host support and be clear about where support is available.
- Assist hosts to assess their own networks and support systems that may be available to them during hosting.
- Consider how to support host retention – this could include host debriefs and periods of host renewal between guests.

Key considerations for hosts

- Be realistic about time and monetary commitments required.
- Set expectations for shared spaces in the home.
- Discuss move-on plans before matching and during stay (both with hosting organisation and guest).
- Connect with prior hosts or hosting mentors when resources are needed.
- Understand who you can contact for support, both practical and emotional (for example, government guidance and hotline (if available) and support offered by hosting organisation).
- Discuss and understand guest expectations for match prior to move-in.
- Read governmental resources on hosted population and participate in cultural orientation and host training.



Stage 3: Transition and exit

This research has identified four areas as relevant in relation to guests effectively transitioning away from and exiting out of the HfU scheme:

- Parameters and timeframes
- Host commitment
- Available move-on options
- Exit strategy

The four areas are discussed and critiqued based on the project findings and other available literature, documents and research and their feasibility. The section concludes with a brief discussion of the impact of exit planning on hosting schemes, outlines insights from this research and proposes key considerations that should be considered to ensure effective exit and transition strategies are included and planned for in all hosting schemes by a range of stakeholders.

Parameters and timeframes

The HfU scheme was advertised initially, as a six-month emergency hosting programme and was due to end in September 2022, six months after it was established and launched. In essence the scheme is being used a reception policy for Ukrainians fleeing conflict and was only ever intended to be temporary. Whilst the hosting scheme offered an initial six-month timeframe those arriving in the UK via this mechanism were also able to apply for a Biometric Resident's Permit (BRP) that allows them to reside and work in the UK for up to three years. There is no right to settlement in the UK via this programme and it is not yet clear what will happen at the end of the three years.

Understanding the length of time hosting is available for is important for all involved in a hosting arrangement – for hosts, guests and any third agency supporting the process.

“ You know, you make a commitment, and you have to stand by that. So, six months was the minimum commitment, and we didn't make any commitments beyond that until they'd been with us a couple of months and we were like, this is fine they're really nice we can cope with this.”
—Host

Hosting cannot be and should not be viewed as unconditional hospitality, nor is it a permanent solution.⁹⁶ It provides a temporary stay that can assist with the integration and inclusion of refugees into society.⁹⁷ Previous research shows that hosting schemes act as stepping-stones for guests.⁹⁸ Schemes running across the UK offered a range of timeframes depending on the scheme and the population group being hosted, with schemes offering placements lasting from one night, up until one year.⁹⁹

Length of placement and the uncertainty of what would happen next are reported as negatively impacting guests' feelings of safety.¹⁰⁰ A previous report that outlines hosting

schemes available across the UK found 13 out of 18 stated schemes offered time-limited support that was known and agreed ahead of both host and guest committing to the agreement. The CSS programme required an initial commitment of two years and community groups involved had to identify and secure suitable housing ahead of a family's arrival for a minimum of two years.¹⁰¹ Whilst this time frame was identified as reassuring for guests, they continued to express concerns about what would happen at the end of this period should they be unable to stay in their home.¹⁰²

“ Because I thought it would be challenging, I basically said to the [Volunteer Matching person] and to my guest that I would do six months, which is the minimum requirement, but I would make no promises after that...” —Host

The HfU scheme has followed the same time-limited approach as other hosting schemes. Whilst all guests were aware the offer of hosting was for six-months, hosts reported that relationships altered, and guests began to disengage as the six-month mark approached if conversations had not addressed how long guests were able to stay.

“ They thought they could only stay with us for six months. So almost as soon as they arrived they started saying we need to find accommodation, we need to find somewhere to live..” —Host

Whilst hosting schemes are a way of guaranteeing accommodation for a certain time and facilitating access to local services, there is however a lack of long term focus on how social inclusion could be achieved in the receiving community.¹⁰³

“ By the end of the year, I hope they have jobs, the children are happy and settled. If he had the basics: a car, a job, and good enough English to communicate in an employment situation, I would much feel better about the prospect of moving on.” —Host

Host commitment

Initial data gathered via a survey of hosts by the Office for National Statistics showed that 10% of HfU hosts committed to providing short-term emergency accommodation, 23% intended to provide accommodation for longer than 12-months, 65% were happy to provide longer-term accommodation until an alternative was found and 19% reported being willing to provide more permanent accommodation.¹⁰⁴

The same government survey found 70% of hosts intending to host for six to 12 months said the extension of the ‘thank you’ payment would encourage them to host for longer with some stating that more support would be required if they were to extend. However, as identified earlier in this report it did not appear that an increase in money or the continuation of monthly ‘thank-you’ payments would encourage or motivate hosts involved in this research to continue hosting beyond the timeframes they had prepared for and felt able to offer.

Clarity on the commitment and timeframes hosting is available for is essential, however this must go hand in hand with clear exit strategies and pathways – these are equally important for guests and hosts.

“ We signed up for the six months, but, presuming things carry on as they are there are no major changes to the way she’s operating and living with us, we’re willing to extend that certainly, for another six months, and possibly longer as well.” —Host

Elsewhere, as in the CSS, accommodation was sought for a minimum of two years, in order to offer guests the feeling of stability.¹⁰⁵ Research has shown longer-term solutions, post a hosting arrangement, are essential if hosting is to be an effective stepping-stone and springboard.¹⁰⁶

HfU hosts involved in this research recognised early in the process that it may not be possible for guests to stay for only six-months and that more time, or a way of successfully exiting the hosting arrangement was needed.

“ I think we were open to the longer, I think I we were sort of hopeful that they would want to become independent and move on in the sort of six month window.” —Host

A third of hosts involved in this research reflected that they had signed up for the minimum six months and this is what they felt they were able to offer. Even though the original expected commitment was six-months, initial survey data from the Office of National Statistics showed one in four hosts said they would be happy to continue hosting. Similar numbers also said they would consider hosting for over a year if needed.¹⁰⁷

“ And it’s just supporting her here, giving her somewhere safe to be and that situation is an unknown quantity, isn’t it? I suppose we are resigned is not quite the right word, but we are philosophical about the fact that it could be very long term and you know, and I would say we’ve got to go through this winter at the very least.” —Host

However, all hosts also referenced feeling the tension between wanting to offer a time-limited hosting arrangement and the realisation there were often no obvious or available move-on options for their guests, as discussed in the following sections.

Four hosts made the decision to offer accommodation to those they were hosting for the total period they had been granted leave to stay in the UK (via the Biometric Residents Permit (BRP) this leave is a total of 3-years) should this be needed. Including those hosts who had committed to host for the duration of their guests BRP, 64% of hosts responded that they would extend their hosting arrangement to a year or were happy to agree for hosting to continue for as long as it was required.

“ This is your home, and you can stay for three years. So, I think that helped them.” —Host

Many of those interviewed reflected that as relationships were going well with guests, considerations of extending their commitments were made easier. However, all hosts interviewed were cognisant that living together was not a long-term solution and sharing their space, even if they saw this as the right thing to do and was taking its toll in various ways.

“ It’s been the same when we’ve had international students because we’ve had them long term as well and when they go, it is a sigh of relief and we’ve got our house back and we’re family again...Not to say we don’t love having them here because they are lovely and we do love having them here. The house just feels really full.” —Host

Practical factors that encouraged hosts to extend their commitment to guests were identified in this research and included children being registered in schools and at universities and wanting to offer them stability for a school year, especially if ages of guests coincided with major exam years. The other main consideration for extending hosting was the lack of appropriate move-on options available and this is discussed further in the following section.

“ The one thing we’re very mindful of is the fact that when they’re in full time education not disrupting their studies that is really important this time of the year. They know we are happy to continue until the end of the academic year to give them the safety and security that they need to focus on their studies.” —Host

Hosts had on average been hosting for four-months at the time of interview or completion of the survey and all were very aware of the lack of options available to their guests should the hosting placement stop. Hosts obviously felt incredibly responsible for those they had hosted and got to know in the time they had shared their home. As outlined in Stage 2: ‘Practicalities of hosting’ section, hosts invested a lot of time, energy and resource into guests and making sure hosting was successful and were aware of the lack of move-on options available for their guests. There was a sense from hosts that the administrative and governmental systems were letting guests down and over-reliant on hosts generosity.

Hospitality, as a conditional act, is based on an unequal power-relation: the power of the host prevails over that of the guest.¹⁰⁸ The decision to continue or stop the hosting arrangement is all within the control of the host and this can create tension between the individual(s) being hosted and the host – research shows us that those being hosted are aware of this dynamic and do not want to behave in any way that may put their accommodation at risk.¹⁰⁹

“ We would really like it if after the six months we do, that the family then find a house. But we’re now in the fourth month and we accept that might not be possible. And we’ve said to them we would like it and we need to start looking and everything. But we do acknowledge we’re not going turn them out.’ —Host

There was a consensus from hosts participating in the research that no-one would be ‘thrown-out’ of host homes, but a realisation that there were realistically limited options available, and this made hosts feel a bit trapped in their situation. Hosts did report that there was a tension between what they and their families needed (both those living in the home and wider, such as adult children and grandchildren) and what their guests needed and that at times the sacrifices being made were hard.

During interviews, hosts stated that they had not been as committed to or invested in other refugee crises. Hosts acknowledged that this difference was likely related to the media’s contrasting presentation of other crises and that they struggled to identify a clear way

to contribute to the cause. Hosts recognised the disparity between the response to the Ukrainian crises and previous crises (specifically Syrian and Afghani). This proved to be an area of reflection and tension for hosts as they realised and verbalised that they may not have considered offering hosting to other nationalities based on perceived cultural differences.

Available move-on options

Guidance published for guests, hosts and local councils outlines options post the six-month hosting period and where the responsibility for securing on-going accommodation sits.¹¹⁰ These are outlined as:

- Remaining with host
- Finding another host via the scheme
- Finding another host via your own personal connections
- Renting privately
- Contacting voluntary sector organisations for assistance

Government guidance recommends hosts and guests discuss, consider and plan together for the next steps at the four-month mark.¹¹¹ Hosts are advised that if none of the options are available, they should assist guests to contact the local council. Guests are made aware that to access local council help they may need to consider moving to a different area.¹¹²

Currently for those hoping to stay in the UK, research shows there is the need to provide appropriate housing and accommodation options, beyond the initial offers from sponsors.¹¹³ Previous research undertaken shows that for guests involved in hosting programmes, the question of where they will live next, and the prospect of another move, has the potential to add to the uncertainty they are facing.¹¹⁴ Hosts described the feelings of frustration at the lack of move-on options available and the resulting pressure to continue the hosting arrangement. What began as a short-term, six-month commitment has become a situation where guests may become homeless if they are unable to continue their hosting arrangements.

“ We would really like it if after the six months that the family then find a house. But we’re now in the fourth month and we accept that might not be possible. We’ve said to them we need to start looking and everything. But we do acknowledge we’re not going turn them out. It’s really tricky...” —Host

Whilst potential next steps following the six-month hosting period are outlined in government guidance, it appears that they are limited in their practical application and feasibility. It is not a foregone conclusion that private rental options, new hosts or local council resources will be available in the vicinity where guests have been hosted. Other reports show that local conditions, such as the high costs of private rented accommodation, and the lack of employment and training opportunities, will mean that guests will be unable to remain in the area.¹¹⁵

“ You know, when we were looking, there were three possible places. I rang up one of them and they said normally they would get 15 people interested. They’d had 65 people interested in this flat. So there is no chance, no chance of them finding somewhere.” —Host

Other research conducted with guests being hosted by the HfU scheme found that guests themselves report that they have little or very little confidence in their ability to find accommodation in the private rental sector, citing high rents, high deposits, and other financial barriers such as the need for guarantors.¹¹⁶

“ You’ve got people on Universal Credit and landlords not wanting to accept that. We’ve run a few agents who have been really unhelpful. No empathy or help at all for the families.” —Host

An evaluation of CSS showed accommodation was hard to find for those dependent on benefits, especially in urban areas.¹¹⁷ A survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics study found that 45% of Ukrainian refugees in the UK had reported facing barriers to accessing the private rented sector.¹¹⁸ Hosts reported landlords being unwilling to rent properties to guests who were on benefits. Statistics from the National Private Landlord Survey (2021) show 45% of landlords with less than five properties are generally unwilling to rent to benefits claimants. This percentage reduces for landlords with five or more properties but is still 37% and indicative of a barrier guests face.¹¹⁹

Hosts generally perceived private renting was not a viable option for those they were hosting, suggesting that availability and affordability of properties in local areas are punitive factors.

The three main barriers directly relation to guests that impacted their ability to move-on from a hosting placement were identified as not having a good enough grasp of English, not being able to secure work and accommodation options being out of the area they had settled in.

A lack of English language skills was a barrier identified by hosts that was impacting guests’ ability to secure work that was either well paid or comparable to their level of employment in Ukraine. Data from the Office of National Statistics gathered in relation to the three visa schemes available to Ukrainians indicated 63% of adults who had found work were not working in the same sector they had in Ukraine.¹²⁰

“ The barrier is language, so that’s why they’re going to classes as the man doesn’t speak any English. His wife has a rudimentary command of English, so they are both learning and clearly they won’t be able to get any employment until such a time as they’ve got a better command of English.” —Host

From those interviewed, 11 hosts (35%) reported guests were working. Not working and not having a sustainable income was identified as having a knock-on effect of limiting guest choices in relation to what they can afford in relation to accommodation. For those guests who had secured work if their next accommodation required a move out of area hosts were concerned that increased costs of travel for all the family to attend both places of work and school, may mean rent would become unaffordable. The size of some of the guest family units also meant that entire rental properties (for example 3+ bedrooms) be required and again these were hard to find and likely to be expensive.

“ Well, it’s very difficult. We live in a little village and [guest name] works in the village and [guest daughter name] is at school in the village, so we’re quite limited and there’s very, very few rental properties here, so they could go a little bit further afield, but still need to be really within distance of the school and work.” —Host

Exit strategies

The practicalities of exiting a hosting arrangement are complex and the options available to Ukrainians are limited. This research shows that consideration has predominantly been given to seeking private rented accommodation and investigating local authority options. Expecting hosts and guests to navigate these pathways without support is not appropriate or fair.

As a recent by-line in a The Guardian newspaper article highlighted the issues now being faced by both hosts and guests - *‘People all over the UK welcomed refugees into their homes under a government scheme. The children got school places; the adults found jobs. But the commitment was for just six months – and time is up’*.¹²¹

What exit and transition options are available to Ukrainians whose hosting arrangements are coming to an end are not completely clear or universally applicable – to a large extent what is offered will be dependent on what is available locally.¹²² The government have recognised more needs to be done to support those from Ukraine and has recently announced an extra £650million support package that will:

- increase ‘thank you’ payment to hosts hosting for more than 12 months (£350 - £500)
- give £150 million additional funding to local authorities to help support guests move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness
- establish a £500 million fund for local authorities to acquire housing stock for those fleeing conflict¹²³

Hosts are being encouraged to continue their hosting arrangements; however, it is understood that this was not the original agreement and may not be possible. It is also hoped that the recently announced government incentives, as outlined above, will encourage more hosts to come forwards to assist with initial hosting matches, or rematches when initial hosts have reached their limit.¹²⁴ Whilst this is not truly an exit from hosting it is an extension of the original agreement and is currently offering a viable onward accommodation option to guests.

Numerous news articles have raised the issues being faced by hosts and guests at the point of the six-month initial hosting arrangement concluding.¹²⁵ Finding appropriate and affordable long-term independent accommodation for guests is proving challenging and the government has been petitioned by the Sanctuary Foundation to reconsider its approach and ensure long term accommodation provision is in place.¹²⁶

The UK is amidst a national housing shortage. Local authorities available housing stock is decreasing and yet the demand is increasing.¹²⁷ The government guidance advises guests to seek local authority help should a continued stay with their host, a re-match or private rented accommodation not be available. In the current context these are unlikely to be viable options. Whilst the local authority has a duty to house Ukrainians there is practically no specific centralised programme or way of accessing any available housing stock to do this. It is however, positive that in the government’s new package of support money has been allocated for local authorities to identify more housing stock that aims to house 4,000 people

by 2024 and that there is further budget to secure housing and prevent homelessness for those transitioning out of the HfU scheme.¹²⁸ How these come to fruition is yet to be seen and will need to be closely monitored to gauge success and outcomes.

A recent report predicts that as many as 13,220 Ukrainians may face homelessness across the UK.¹²⁹ Other data produced by the DLUHC (2022) shows that nearly 2,000 Ukrainians, previously hosted via the HfU scheme have already presented to local authorities as homeless – the majority of whom had children with them.¹³⁰ Whilst initially more homelessness was being observed in those on the family scheme recently there has been an increase in homelessness amongst those who have participated in the HfU scheme, and this has been attributed to coincide with the initial six-month hosting commitment ending.¹³¹ It is not clear from the data available if all of those presenting have been able to access accommodation services but certainly media reports have highlighted the increasing risk of homelessness facing those leaving hosting.¹³²

A report looking at the UK's response to Ukraine proposed ways exit and transition away from hosting easier and more feasible, including allowing the transfer of the 'thank you' payment to move from host to a private landlord, establishing a deposit guarantee system (this could utilise local authority payments from DHLUC) and offering incentives for private landlords.¹³³ As far as we are aware these have not been considered further or instigated.

Whilst some hosts reported starting to investigate exit options with guests, hosts generally expressed that they did not have faith in what would actually be available for their guests to access. Requiring another move once guests have settled in an area, in some cases found employment, or were attending English classes and have children who are attending school was seen as less than ideal, especially if it would again be for only a short period of time. Other research identified that guests voiced concerns about accommodation locations and that this directly made daily lives more difficult.¹³⁴ In relation to the HfU scheme, guests often wanted hosts that were close to other family members and friends and a move away from this community and support mechanisms was undesirable.

“ And I basically said: “you're alright, you can stay, don't worry about it. If you get the point where you feel you'd like to move on then I will help you find somewhere.” We've left it at that, so we haven't really discussed it. I mean, when the six months comes up, it might come up again. They might mention it. It's not a problem to us, because they're not a problem to us.” –Host

These are not new conundrums for hosting programmes and previous research shows there are limited exit options and transition pathways for people out of hosting situations. Hosting is intended to provide a safe space whilst decisions about next steps are made. Clarity on what those next steps can feasibly be is important for all involved in the process to understand. What this looks like will be different for every guest, depending on their status in the UK and their access to the options available.¹³⁵

Insights and key considerations for future schemes

“ Although many hosts are willing to extend the original six-month arrangement, and many guests are happy to remain where they are, we face the possibility of losing the incredible goodwill that has been the hallmark of this scheme if no ongoing options are available”.¹³⁶

It appears whilst the HfU was designed as an immediate response to a very real and immediate need consideration was not initially given to what happens in the longer-term for guests accessing the scheme and for hosts offering their homes.

There is no clear transition plan for those exiting a hosting arrangement under the HfU scheme.

Whilst the government guidance is offered to hosts and guests, there is no long-term, feasible plan in place. The government developed and designed the HfU scheme as an immediate response to the conflict in Ukraine, HfU was not intended to be a long-term solution. The new support package announcements may ease the issues being faced by those accessing the HfU scheme, as highlighted in this report. However, the impact of these interventions will need to be closely monitored and measured to see if they succeed in reducing homelessness and offering viable longer-term accommodation solutions.

In essence government thought Ukrainians would be able to rent their own homes, be rematched to another host family or return home. This research identifies and proposes that amidst hosting fatigue, a reduction in news coverage of the war, rental market price increases, the continuation of war and a national lack of local authority housing stock - these options are not currently proving workable.

As this research shows a large number of guests are not going to be able to move-out of their hosting arrangement at the six-month mark. Whilst the intention to provide initial safety and residency for three-years should not be criticised, the apparent lack of thought and follow-up planning in relation to longer-term accommodation options and support for Ukrainians residing in the UK and unable to return home is lacking and threatens to undo the groundswell of willingness to host. The HfU scheme offering the right to residency and the right to work does not practically equate to the essential element of being able to access accommodation.

Whilst extending hosting arrangements relieves the burden on other, limited housing options it should not be viewed as a long-term solution and the current HfU scheme places an over-reliance on hosts and presents a tough moral dilemma – the terms and conditions of what they signed up to have changed and the decisions they are being asked to make have a very real and direct impact on those they have come to view by and large as family.

“ The housing precarity faced by Ukrainian refugees today is not an isolated episode, but the outcome of years of under-investment in social housing stock, which have left councils struggling, and previous refugees from Syria and Afghanistan stuck in temporary accommodation for over a year”.¹³⁷

It is a testament to the generosity of hosts that many have been willing to extend their original hosting commitment. In all cases, hosts confirmed to us that they would ensure wherever possible guests would not be made to leave without having any other solutions in place.

Some hosts found this a hard burden to carry and felt that their hospitality was being taken advantage of, not by guests but by the government and the lack of foresight that had been given to practically implementing the exit options available.

The potential knock-on effects are significant and risk impacting the viability and effectiveness of the HfU scheme and other schemes in the future. Those considering hosting may be put off once realising the commitment is likely to be longer than six-months, guests may not engage with the process once they realise there is no clear pathway into longer-term accommodation, even if they have secured employment and public attitude towards Ukrainians may alter if they are seen to be adding to the stress of the housing situation.

Whilst it may be that Ukrainians wish to return home this is not a feasible or viable option for many currently and we need to address the current situation to prevent future homelessness.

Hosting should not be a replacement for access to appropriate statutory housing options and specialist support services and should not become part of the homelessness pathway to be relied upon by local authorities.¹³⁸ Hosting programmes need to find the right balance of supporting both guests and hosts so that placements feel like places of safety but also ensure that hosts do not feel trapped in a situation where they are the only ones able to provide accommodation. From interviewing hosts in this project, it has been identified that a lack of clarity around length of placement, the lack of future accommodation options, and feelings of guilt amongst hosts complicated move-on procedures. These are important learnings and features that must be considered and navigated in all hosting programmes.

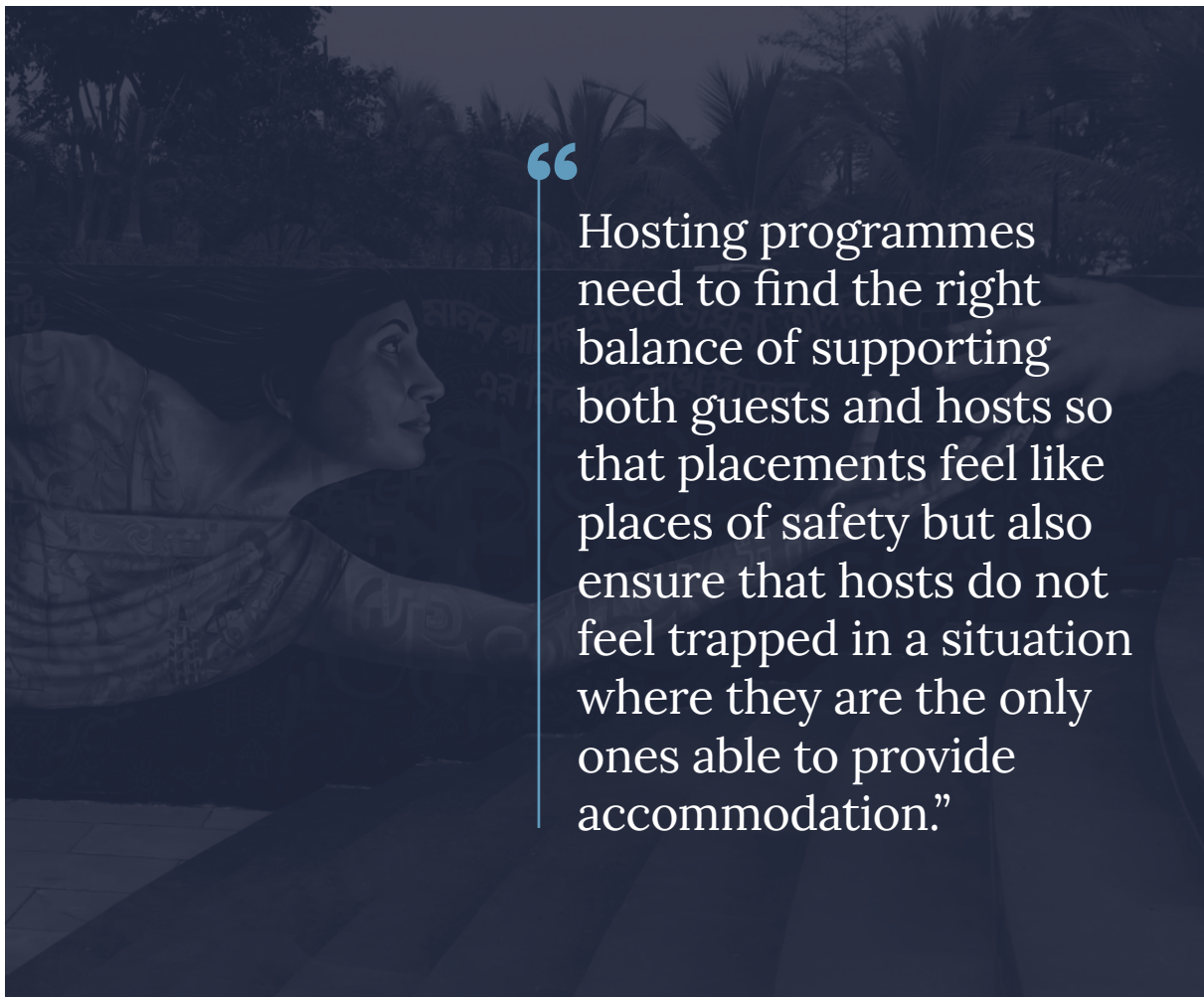


Table 3: Stage 3 transition and exit key considerations

Key considerations for future government run schemes

- Develop a ‘hosting’ scheme national framework that shifts the programme from being an emergency response to a set of standards inclusive of move-on and transition period.
- As a component of this, develop core goals for outcomes of hosting programmes and work to align the program with goals.
- Find or provide a suite of suitable housing options for guests and a structure for accessing to facilitate case worker and guest navigation.
- Connect integration programming to hosting schemes.
- Support the right to work for those accessing resettlement and hosting schemes.
- Create tax incentives for hosts and private landlords to encourage renting to social benefits recipients as a move-on pathway out of hosting.

Key considerations for local authorities supporting implementation of hosting schemes

- Develop a renters insurance scheme that can be used by Ukrainian housing benefit recipients to access the private rental market.
- Name and task individuals responsible for facilitating housing transitions in partnership with stakeholders and guests.
- As a component of this role, establish check-ins and time frames to ensure timely move-on discussions are had and acted on.
- Facilitate and enable conversations with landlords and private home-owners to secure alternative housing arrangements using collective bargaining/advocacy.

Key considerations for future NGO and third sector schemes

- Ensure hosting schemes are well advertised and that potential hosts understand the opportunities to contribute.
- Find and promote opportunities to share the needs of arriving displaced persons.
- Establish local mentorship scheme between experienced and new hosts.
- Establish local mentorship scheme between previous guests and new guests.
- Adopt or adapt local authority housing resource guides to share with guests in the transition period.
- As a component of integration services, develop meet and greet mechanisms such that individuals are introduced to the wider community throughout the hosting period, developing connections with potential new landlords, host, or employers to facilitate a smooth transition.
- Ensure guest voice is heard in move-on and transition planning.
- Incorporate housing transitions into more mainstream housing service provision to ensure that hosting participants are not silo’ed and have access to a suite of housing options.
- Consider assisting with access to legal advice and support for guests to consider longer-term settlement options.

Key considerations for hosts

- Establish set meeting times to discuss move on plans before and during guest hosting process.
- Communicate with appropriate organisation (local authority or hosting organisations) to ensure implementation of move-on plan is in place and progressing.
- Find resources and support to help process the experience of move-on and loss.
- Establish boundaries and expectations for post-exit relationship with guest.
- Ensure guest voice is heard in move-on and transition planning.

Discussion and conclusion

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was catalysed by a significant world event. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia was broadcast across the globe and widely condemned. Whilst promoted as a humanitarian pathway, HfU did not use the asylum system already established in the UK but created an exceptional visa pathway specifically for Ukrainians. The scheme was posed as offering initial practical support and temporary accommodation until Ukrainian refugees could get back on their feet and support themselves or return to Ukraine. The fact that the scheme was developed and advertised by government and that it was intended to be time-limited encouraged hosts to participate. Additionally, the fact that Ukrainians were able to seek benefits, employment and remain for up to three years showed the government were invested in its success.

Effective hosting schemes require the investment of a range of stakeholders to be successful. In the case of the HfU scheme the government, local authorities, third sector, NGO partners and members of the public have needed to engage and perform different roles.

To run effective hosting schemes that can attract and retain hosts and appeal to guests, this research has identified a range of areas pertinent for hosting programmes to consider and outlined a series of insights and key considerations for each stakeholder involved in the process.

Areas identified have been assigned to one of three stages – recruitment and enrolment, practicalities of hosting and transition and exit. Whilst we have viewed this process via the lens of the HfU scheme each of the three stages conclude with a series of key considerations, relating to the government, local authorities, NGO partners and hosts themselves. The key considerations outlined can be applied to any hosting programme working with any population group.

Whilst there have been administrative challenges, a lack of support and training for hosts and a lack of realistic move-on options for guests this research has identified that short-term hosting arrangements, within the homes of the British public has, despite initial concerns, been largely successful. The HfU scheme and its success should set a precedent of how we as a society can respond to such crises and provides the foundations of a model that can be considered for the future and for other cohorts of people.

This research reflects the significance of how the crisis was framed, the portrayal and perception of the deservingness of those needing help, and the motivations for seeking refuge as presented by the media and the government in host decisions to participate. The media portrayal of the situation and the offer given to Ukrainians by the government, whilst appropriate is uncommon: people fleeing different crises are portrayed differently in the media, often negatively in line with dominant anti-migrant and hostile environment rhetoric (take for instance, current reports on Albania) and are often not offered appropriate housing, support, access to the labour market and leave to remain.

“
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This research shows the impact of the media and the governmental approach on individuals decision to host. The scheme established and launched by the government provided a clear structure and avenue via which hosts could practically participate and play their part. This research indicates that the media coverage and the advertising of the HfU scheme enabled and prompted the involvement of hosts who largely had not considered hosting previously.

Mobilising connection and action are big challenges for any hosting scheme. Overarching motivations for hosts must be explored and understood as part of any hosting arrangement. The proximity of Ukraine and the sense that this offered hosts more of an affinity with those they were offering to host came through very clearly in this research. Perceptions were shared with interviewers about Ukrainian culture and the fact they were perceived to be a ‘hard-working’ people with similar culture [to British people]. Whilst these assumptions were not always met with reality, they provided a basis and rationale for hosts as to why they were willing to host Ukrainians but hadn’t and, in some cases wouldn’t, consider hosting different nationalities in the future. The perceived relational and cultural connection with Ukraine was apparent in this research and how other schemes develop cultural connection and understanding with those they host will be important.

It is encouraging that many hosts involved in this research had not actively considered or participated in hosting previously. Whilst some hosts expressed anxiety about hosting other population groups the experience of hosting via the HfU scheme has begun to challenge perceptions and preconceived ideas. With the right narrative, clear structures and systems, training and support, people may be encouraged to reconsider their positions on specific groups of people they see as deserving of assistance.

Third sector and NGO hosting programmes often present hosting as an opportunity for a shared cultural and emotional learning experience, one in which people can connect to others and participate in intercultural exchanges.¹³⁹ This may not always be a helpful presentation and as hosts involved in this research intimate forming of these mutual relationships are not always forthcoming and host expectations are not always met. This research identified that hosts had the potential to become demotivated when relationships with guests and placements were not as they expected, for example, if guests didn’t opt to participate in ‘normal’ family life, did not want to eat together or wanted their own space. Hosting schemes need to consider how they present the realities of hosting and how sharing space practically works after the initial ‘honey-moon’ period is over. What can start as an initial seemingly altruistic act can change during the hosting process and programmes need to account for this and support guests and hosts at the time it occurs.

Offering space and safety with no parameters and no expectations of anything in return is not a fair or reasonable expectation to make of hosts. It is unrealistic to assume that hospitality will be able to be offered unconditionally, whatever the intention of those hosting.¹⁴⁰

“Offering space and safety with no parameters and no expectations of anything in return is not a fair or reasonable expectation to make of hosts.”

Those working within the hosting sector should consider how they can feasibly work to replicate the media portrayal of the conflict in Ukraine and how this captured the hearts and minds of people. Consideration should also be given to how to need to present the realities of hospitality and sharing space so this can be understood and prepared for by both guests and hosts.

Ideas about deservingness have been found to directly influence hospitality and conditions the direction, quality and form hosting takes.¹⁴¹ A refugee's perceived deservingness is established by their gender, race, class and this is maintained throughout their integration into a new country as they face the tension of evidencing that, they are vulnerable enough to be hosted and yet have the potential to become economically independent and contributors to society. The establishment of government pathways and specifically the HfU scheme clearly showed that Ukrainians were considered as people who were deserving of assistance and hospitality. This is not the case for many other nationalities who are seeking refuge and shelter in the UK.

Whilst all hosting arrangements are temporary for hosting to be as effective as possible there must be understood, viable and accessible routes for people to transition onto their 'next phase'. This 'next phase' will largely depend on an individual's rights to remain in the UK and their access to welfare benefits and services but must be considered and realistically understood by all involved, hosts, guests and those assisting with matching, placing and support activities.

What events would prompt the government to embark on another similar scheme, for other population groups and if they would have the appetite for such schemes in the future is unknown. Those involved in the hosting sector must continue to lobby for government for safe and legal routes of entry into the UK for other population groups. With these routes in place and access to the labour market, benefits and health systems for those arriving hosting could provide a viable accommodation option. With the right surrounding structures and systems in place (for hosts and guests) hosting for a range of population groups could flourish and provide guests with the initial welcome and safety they need.

The scheme and how it has been delivered provides valuable insights for national government, local government, third sector and NGO hosting schemes to consider in the future as they develop and deliver hosting programmes for a range of different people. Certainly, a major take-away from this research is that access to a centralised programme, for both hosts and guests, is a viable solution to providing temporary accommodation for new populations. For future hosting programmes to be successful, it is imperative that the same attempts are made in encouraging host participation through intentional framing, government support, and ease of access. Certainly, the majority of hosts interviewed for this project had little, if any, previous experience of hosting guests within their homes prior to involvement in the HfU scheme and yet were drawn to do so. The events in Ukraine captured people's hearts and minds and a well-publicised HfU scheme offered people a practical and very real way to get involved and make a difference.

Research overview

This research was commissioned by Hope at Home and Commonweal Housing.

Via this project we aimed to gain a better understanding of people's motivations for opting in or volunteering to use their homes to host, specifically in response to the war in Ukraine. From the information gathered we wanted to identify useful insights to impact the development of current and future hosting schemes by both non-government organisations, the third sector and government agencies.

Research approach

This was a rapid piece of research with data collection completed within three months. The research employed a mixed methods approach and utilised both primary (interviews and surveys) and secondary (evidence review) data. The study received ethical approval from the Rights Lab REC sub-committee.

Primary data collection

Participants were able to choose to participate in one of two primary data collection methods and could opt to complete a survey or to participate in a semi-structured interview. Two surveys were available, one for those who had or were currently hosting and one for those who had signed up to host but were yet to receive a guest.

Surveys and the interviews questions focused on gaining an understanding of why people had chosen to host. Themes relating to hosts experiences of hosting, including practical elements of the HfU scheme, identifying, and matching with guests, the support in place for guests and hosts, financial benefits, challenges, interactions with other crises and their motivations for being involved were the themes explored. Host demographic information was collected, and hosts were asked basic questions in relation to those they had hosted. No identifying information about those being hosted was sought or collated. The question set used was developed and agreed in conjunction with Hope at Home.

Secondary data collection

An evidence review was conducted and information accessible online in relation to the 'HfU scheme' and grey material - relevant sectoral reports and media articles, specifically outlining the approach of government to the Ukraine crisis was identified.

Recruitment

Recruitment of participants was managed by partner organisations who used their networks to advertise the research opportunity. A webpage for the project was established and provided those considering participating with further information, instructions for participating in an interview and links to the surveys. The questionnaires were managed via an online portal (JISC).^h

^h Jisc online surveys - <https://www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/>

Participant criteria

Participant criteria matched the criteria set by the UK government for the HfU scheme.ⁱ Participants self-selected and were required to be adults, over the age of 18, have no criminal record, be British citizens (or have leave to remain for at least 6 months) and have spare room available for at least 6 months.

Conducting interviews

Potential participants completed a secure online form registering their interest to participate in an interview and gave consent to be contacted by the research team to arrange this. Ahead of interviews participants were emailed the Project Information Notice which included information about how data collated would be used, stored and retained as well as information about how they could withdraw from the project. A consent form was also sent and completed ahead of interviews occurring. The question set was also available to participants ahead of the interview. At the start of interviews researchers confirmed with participants that they had agreed to the interviews being audio recorded and transcribed. For those interviews occurring online participants were informed they did not have to use their cameras and that no video recording was occurring. A chance to ask any questions about the study was given to participants.

Data analysis

Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The research team anonymised and cleaned transcripts of any identifiable data (e.g. names, place names, identifiable guest information). Transcripts were analysed alongside the coding protocol. Surveys were free-text and analysed using thematic analysis techniques as well. Researchers developed a coding protocol in NVivo to organise and analyse the data. The coding protocol consisted of a hierarchy of codes clustered into categories or meta themes. Descriptive and interpretive accounts of the categories of data and thematic relationships between codes were identified.

Parameters and limitations of the research

Sampling and generalisation: The researchers were reliant on the reach and networks of partner organisations to advertise this research opportunity. As it was a rapid piece of research, we aimed to reach a sample size of 25 participants. Whilst this number was exceeded (P=35) research findings are considered to give insights of hosting experiences rather than a full representation of all hosts who have participated in the government scheme, caution is advised with generalising findings.

Participants: Participants self-selected and opted to participate in the research and share their experiences of hosting.

Point of view: This research focuses on the experience of the hosting programme from the point of view of hosts. Interviewing guests and learning about their experiences was not within this projects remit. This report should be read in conjunction with reports that have directly sought the opinions and experiences of those Ukrainians who have accessed the HfU scheme.

We are aware that the HfU scheme is being reviewed and revised. Changes to the scheme have been made during this project however all information relating to the scheme is correct at the time of writing.

ⁱ Who can record their interest? <https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine>

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