Building an infrastructure for community led welcome in the UK

Learning from the mobilisation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme

Inclusive Cities
Policy Brief

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This briefing provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities for the development of infrastructure for community led welcome of newcomers in the UK.

It uses the rapid mobilisation of Homes for Ukraine (HfU) and other schemes as a starting point to understand how the UK can build long-term infrastructure to support community led welcome across schemes and arrival routes. It should be noted that the approach outlined is very much intended to function across migration governance schemes and that the Home Office's approach to 'bespoke' nationality-based routes sits in stark contrast to feedback from local authorities of the potential benefits, in particular for integration, from developing permanent resettlement and inclusion infrastructure which can function across schemes.

This brief was developed as part of a collaboration with Welcoming International, RESET, and following consultation with the 12 participating Inclusive Cities.

Summary

- Homes for Ukraine marks a rapid, large scale mobilisation of community led welcome in the UK. Significant upfront investment by the UK government provides an opportunity to improve and augment provision, drawing on the huge support and goodwill of the British public, notwithstanding some significant and daunting operational challenges.

- Homes for Ukraine (HfU) sits within an array of 'bespoke' resettlement and visa routes. There is an opportunity to reconcile these routes in order to build a more sustainable infrastructure for community led welcome in the UK — alongside and complementing resettlement routes and wider integration work. Sponsorship offers potential additionality to existing routes, rather than an alternative, and hybrid approaches could support both sponsorship and resettlement.

- Pooling resources in a 'place based approach' across programmes and schemes offers opportunities to significantly improve integration and inclusion outcomes as well as potentially generating better value for money and economies of scale.

- Building an infrastructure for community led welcome involves thinking about both initial challenges of arrival alongside longer-term integration and inclusion outcomes — developing clear, cross sectoral and community plans which cut across several services, notably housing, health, education, employment support and community development.

- The devolved nature of HfU provides opportunities for learning between the different approaches taken in the four nations of the UK, and the need to introduce a learning approach between local authorities and schemes remains paramount.

- Immediate improvements to HfU and community welcome would include:

    - Reforming the per capita funding formula to allow for better and longer-term planning

    - Equalising funding and support across schemes (in particular between HfU, Ukraine Family Scheme and in country extensions)

    - Supporting local authorities to develop housing strategy, including in relation to 'move-on'

    - Improving guidance in relation to safeguarding, in particular, in relation to accommodation and other checks and subsequent referral pathways and for unaccompanied minors

    - Improving support to hosts and newcomers, including in relation to the present increased cost of living

- Longer-term development of support for community led welcome and resettlement in the UK will require:

    - Recognition of a new long-term function for resettlement and community led welcome — supported by a funding settlement from central government and led by devolved, regional and local government and its partners

    - Comprehensive commissioning strategies for community led welcome across schemes and based on local need, including mapping of resources available, in order to build longer-term welcoming capacity in particular in relation to housing, safeguarding and mental health provision

    - Development of new models of support drawing on learning and best practice from both

resettlement and sponsorship, building on community and institutional assets

– Building in mechanisms for the inclusion of voices of lived experience within both planning and implementation

– Development of a learning and networked approach, drawing on available research and evaluation

– A clear and coherent, whole of government approach to both community led welcome and wider integration and inclusion policy

Understanding Homes for Ukraine and the UK context

The Homes for Ukraine Community Sponsorship Scheme was launched on 18th March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals and others normally resident in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and their immediate family members. As of 16th August 2022, 127,300 visas have been issued under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. At least one person has been sponsored to live in properties in each of the UK's 374 local authorities. The average local authority has 245 Homes for Ukraine visa holders connected to nominated properties there. Buckinghamshire, has the highest number of nominated authorities, with 1,526 Homes for Ukraine visa holders' sponsors naming their nominated property. London has 15,000 visas issued to individuals whose sponsor's property is in the capital, an average of 458 visa holders across London's 33 local authorities, 213 more than the local authority average for the UK (Walsh and Sumption 2022.) These regional breakdowns are distinctive from other routes, and understanding the regional distribution across schemes remains vital to planning across schemes and the capacity to take a 'place based approach.'[1]

The scheme is devolved and there are separate arrangements in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland including 'super sponsor' schemes run by the Welsh and Scottish governments. These function in parallel to the main scheme, though local authorities source accommodation, rather than through individual sponsors.[2]

A second phase of the scheme would allow for private and public institutions to act as sponsors, though it is unclear at present the timescale or if this provision will launch.

Homes for Ukraine marks a huge increase in community sponsorship in the UK. Prior to this scheme, the UK had welcomed 700 refugees through community sponsorship since 2016. It typically took 12–24 months for sponsorship groups to be approved to act as hosts in this scheme (Katwala et al. 2022) and there is some evidence that local authorities were reluctant to participate and approve applications (D'avino 2022) and some criticism that the scheme was overly bureaucratic. The new scheme has mobilised rapidly, hosted by a new department (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in England and devolved outside of England) and on a crisis footing. Some lessons have been learnt from the previous work to develop community sponsorship – including the focus on named partnerships in the HfU scheme, though this matching process has not been without risk.

The scheme has produced significant new responsibilities for local government and for communities, in particular for sponsors who act as hosts to new arrivals. There has been a very positive response to the scheme from many individuals and communities, demonstrating a clear desire to support and help newcomers and underlining the capacity that exists to develop community led welcoming schemes as a way of increasing capacity. At the same time, this rapid mobilisation has required similarly quick development of provision – bringing with it risks and the need to systematise and mainstream provision, in order that it is sustainable.

Homes for Ukraine sits within an infrastructure of parallel schemes – both other routes to support Ukrainians and 'bespoke' routes for other nationalities.

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1   Further detail on the regional breakdown of the scheme is available here: https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/qa-the-uk-and-the-ukraine-refugee-situation/

2   New applications to these devolved schemes are currently (as of July 2022) paused to new applicants, though pending applications are being processed

	UK Resettlement Scheme	Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme	Community Sponsorship Scheme	Homes for Ukraine
Funding	£20,520 per person over five years (with £8,520 for year one)	£20,520 per person over three years (with £10,500 for year one)	£9,000 per family raised by the sponsors	Local Authority funding equivalent to Afghan scheme (with £10,500 for year one). Sponsors will receive £350 per month.
Additional funding for services	£4,500 per child for education, £2,600 per person for healthcare, and £850 per person for English language provision for year one	£4,500 per child for education, £2,600 per person for healthcare, and £850 per person for English language provision for year one	£4,500 per child for education, £2,600 per person for healthcare, and £850 per person for English language provision for year one	Equivalent to other routes
Eligibility	Refugees must be identified through UNHCR and be classified as vulnerable	Priority given to 'those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan' and to the most vulnerable (referred by UNHCR)	Refugees must be identified through UNHCR and be classified as vulnerable	Individual must be a Ukrainian national or the immediate family member of a Ukrainian national, who was resident in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022.
Sponsorship criteria	N/A	N/A	Lead sponsor must be a charity or a CIC. Consent from local authorities is required and a resettlement plan must be agreed.	Sponsor can be anyone with six months' residency with appropriate accommodation, following security and safeguarding checks
Number of people aiming to resettle	5,000 refugees per year	5,000 in first year and up to 20,000 in the coming years	No specified number but annual figure approx. 100	Uncapped
Length of leave to remain	Indefinite leave to remain	Indefinite leave to remain	Indefinite leave to remain	Three years leave to remain
Housing provision	Local authorities responsible for housing	Local authorities / government responsible for housing (Afghanistan housing portal set up to identify self-contained property available for 12 months)	Sponsors must find suitable housing for 24 months	Sponsors must offer spare room or separate self-contained accommodation for at least six months

Table: analysis of government policy on existing resettlement schemes and current information on 'Homes for Ukrainians' provided by DLUHC, IPPR 2022

There are a number of parallel visa routes for Ukrainians including the Ukrainian Family Scheme (for those with family members in the UK) and the Ukraine Extension Scheme (for those in the UK on and prior to 18th March 2022.)

There are two notable points on these schemes in relation to community welcome. Firstly, in common with Homes for Ukraine, they are visa routes and sit outside of refugee protection schemes that have usually underpinned resettlement and community sponsorship routes. Secondly, unlike Homes for Ukraine, the family and extension schemes do not attract any local government funding, although local authorities have anecdotally reported similar levels of need between those arriving through Homes for Ukraine and the Ukrainian Family Scheme.

In addition to the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) for former Locally Employed Staff launched in April 2021 and remains open, though arrivals are limited and it is estimated that as of February 2022, 12,000 arrivals from this scheme remained in 'bridging hotels', impeding integration work and highlighting severe challenges in sourcing appropriate and cost effective accommodation, something which is found across schemes and which Homes for Ukraine's hosting model may be intended to address.

There are a number of other relevant schemes for which local government has responsibilities. These include the Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO) visa route, through which over 125,000 Hong Kongers have arrived in the UK.[3] The Hong Kong BN(O) scheme is significant not only as a consequence of the (relatively) high number of arrivals, but also as a consequence of the decision to invest in 'day one' integration provision (Rolfe and Chan 2022) establishing the principle of supporting integration alongside arrival. Dedicated integration funding is provided to local authorities and Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs), which is not commonly the case for other visa routes, or for resettlement where the funding can be used for longer–term integration work (such as ESOL provision) but is frontloaded towards meeting arrival needs.

Finally, there has been consultation by the Home Office on significant changes to the asylum dispersal system, where all areas will now be considered as asylum dispersal areas, with a funding agreement in place to support this for the first time.

It is vital to put the Homes for Ukraine scheme into its wider context, sitting alongside a range of 'bespoke' routes for resettlement and community sponsorship, operating within protection frameworks and through separate visa arrangements. Whilst each of the routes has its own features, aims and fundings arrangements, many of the integration and inclusion challenges are similar across schemes and therefore would benefit from a more holistic approach, in particular at the local level.

Some areas have called for a more 'place based' approach to the management of resettlement and community led welcome in order to develop the infrastructure and capacity needed, recognising the commonalities across schemes, whilst understanding that specific groups also have specific needs and assets.

How can we define community led welcome?

Community sponsorship approaches are defined by the involvement of private sponsors (either individuals or organisations) in the process of resettlement. Community led welcoming includes community sponsorship approaches, but also seeks to mainstream these ideas beyond specific schemes of sponsorship, into a more holistic understanding of both welcoming and community participation in the welcoming of newcomers, building on the idea of place–based infrastructure outlined above.

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative defines a number of core principles central to the development of community sponsorship approaches:

1. **Protection** – Community sponsorship sitting within the international context of protection and international responsibility sharing.

2. **Durable solutions** which aim to find permanent resolutions to refugee safety by offering 'safety, security and legal status to move on with their lives in a new country' prioritised for the most vulnerable.

3. **Additionality** – sponsorship routes should be:

    a, in addition to government resettlement routes,

    b, providing additional spots globally and

    c, adding to the quality of resettlement – including developing complementary pathways and partnerships to better and quicker integration outcomes

4. **Family reunification** – developing programmes which support reunification.

5. Focussed on **community building and volunteerism** in order to foster meaningful and lasting relationships between sponsors and refugees with impacts beyond individual relationships and extending into wider community support for the inclusion of newcomers.

6. **Ongoing partnership and accountability** to develop infrastructure to ensure ongoing dialogue between partners focussed on improvement, and development including through programme evaluation and monitoring.

(adapted from the GRSI Guidebook, overarching principles and policies)

Principles one and two are not strongly embedded in the Homes for Ukraine model. HfU is a visa rather than refugee protection scheme that focusses on short term placements (with a starting presumption of 6 months support by hosts) rather than permanence. Similarly, family reunification is not a core principle of HfU, by contrast, families looking to reunite are encouraged to go via the Ukraine Family Scheme, which does not enjoy the same levels of financial support.

These parameters are set by UK central government and are not within the competences of local government or Strategic Migration Partnerships to change.

3   It is estimated that 379,000 may arrive within five years, although with wide parameters of uncertainty, including amongst eligible migrants themselves in deciding whether to migrate (Migration Observatory, 2021)

However, from this can be derived important principles for local government at the intersection between community sponsorship and welcome, namely:

a. Developing complementary routes which sit across both resettlement and community sponsorship, building a shared infrastructure across both routes, at the local level

b. Local government as a convenor of partners – from both public, private and voluntary sector in order to develop shared solutions

c. Encouraging a culture of community empowerment, ownership and involvement drawn from the principles of community sponsorship

d. Embedding a learning, evaluation and development mind-set within this provision

In short, community-led welcome provides the opportunity to develop a permanent infrastructure for resettlement and integration in the UK, whilst drawing on the dynamism, new partnerships and community involvement offered by the sponsorship route in order to increase shared participation in welcoming.

It perhaps offers routes to addressing capacity shortages within non-community led routes (in particular in relation to accommodation), though this should not be the sole driver towards community led routes, which should work in suite with resettlement and other integration processes for in-country arrivals.

Community led welcome and the Inclusive Cities Framework

Community led welcome sits in the context of wider integration and inclusion policy. The UK has no countrywide integration strategy, though there are integration policies in the devolved administrations such as the New Scots strategy. Tools such as the Home Office's Indicators of Integration (2019) set out some strategies for measuring integration, though these are not, as yet, well embedded at the local level.

As a consequence of this, and of the divided lines of responsibility for integration policy making and implementation between central and local government the integration and inclusion aspects of community led welcoming have not been front and centre as they could be. The impetus of schemes tends to be on the immediate challenges post arrival, rather than on longer-term integration outcomes.

Building a long-term infrastructure of community led welcome could allow for a more embedded focus on integration and inclusion outcomes.

The Inclusive Cities Framework provides one way of conceptualising and implementing integration policy making and practice at the local level, divided into 5 ways of working and 5 thematic areas:

Principles

1. Provide local leadership to create change

2. Inclusion is a shared responsibility, delivered in partnership

3. Work with newcomers and longer standing residents

4. Use available data and evidence to understand the local context in order to identify core priorities, set goals, monitor impact and update strategies as needed

5. Take action at the local level, provide advocacy at the national level, learn from best practice internationally

Thematic areas

1. *Leading in the development of a shared local story of inclusion*

2. *Supporting and driving inclusive economic growth*

    a. Ensuring that the opportunities brought by newcomers are factored into strategic economic planning across the city with any support needed to leverage these identified and planned for

    b. Ensuring a skills development policy is in place, which builds on the assets provided by both newcomers and longer standing communities

    c. Developing English language provision that meets the needs of newcomers and the local economy

    d. Working with employers in order to open up employment opportunities to benefit from the assets of newcomer and longer standing communities

e. Promoting and upholding equitable rights and working conditions

f. Supporting and developing entrepreneurship

3. *Connecting communities*

a. Pro–actively supporting activities and initiatives which bring newcomers and longer standing communities together

b. Working to build trust within and between communities and public agencies, including the police

4. *Mainstreaming and building inclusive public services throughout the city*

a. Developing and implementing a targeted action plan to mainstream inclusion throughout the city — both the local authority and its partners

b. Developing services that are inclusive by default, working to provide equitable access to services for all newcomers wherever this is within the capacity of the local authority

c. Where data identifies gaps in outcomes for newcomers, providing targeted support aimed at addressing these gaps

d. Providing day one civic orientation to help all newcomers familiarise themselves with the city

5. *Encouraging civic participation and representation*

a. Promoting workforce diversity to ensure that public and other types of services are reflective of the communities that they serve

b. Actively promoting civic participation

c. Ensuring adequate information and legal advice are available to support newcomers, in particular in relation to naturalisation and regularising immigration status

Overview of local government responsibilities in relation to community led welcome

Analysis of learning from existing resettlement schemes identifies a number of local authority responsibilities in resettlement work, across a wide range of policy areas, alongside some additional functions specifically identified in relation to community led welcoming and community sponsorship (as outlined in DLUHC guidance 2022.)

1. **Strategic planning and programme management** including data sharing and management, commissioning, convening and coordination of partners and integration infrastructure

2. **Service delivery** in the following areas:

a. Initial orientation

b. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and language access

c. Education

d. Employment and supporting entrepreneurship

e. Housing (for resettlement) and access to welfare benefits

f. Health

g. Community integration

h. Information and legal advice

3. **Specific support for community led welcome**, above and beyond service delivery common to resettlement

a. Safeguarding checks of hosts[4] both accommodation checks and DBS checks

b. Provision of a backstop in case of any breakdown of sponsorship arrangements, or in case concerns are raised through checks, including help to secure or provide alternative accommodation, including provision or commissioning of rematching services

c. Support for volunteering infrastructure including ongoing training for hosts and support for guests

d. Initial welcome for Ukrainians at port of entry (where applicable)

4. **Monitoring, evaluation and learning**

4   As per the Homes for Ukraine guidance for England, 'The local council is responsible for initial checks, including at least one in person visit, payments to sponsors, ongoing support, school places, and information about the local area. Following the guest(s)' arrival, councils should confirm as soon as possible that the guest is well and that there are no welfare concerns or needs for care and support. Where there are concerns for the safety or welfare of a child, local authorities should follow their usual processes'

These functions can either be provided directly, or commissioned out to other service providers. In either case, the local authority function requires coordination amongst a large array of partners, as highlighted in this suggested partnership board (based on learning from the Syrian VPRS by Migration Yorkshire.) Structures may vary across local authorities, however, this is intended to give and overview of the type of convening necessary to support community led welcome.

Similarly, there is not necessarily a natural departmental 'home' for this type of work in local authorities.

Suggested membership for community–led welcoming partnership group (developed based on Jamroz and Tyler 2016 learning from Syrian VPRS programme)		
Suggested participant	External or Internal?	Proposed role
General Practitioner (primary healthcare) practices	External	initial check–ups and primary care needs
NHS England or Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	External	secondary health needs including mental health support
Public health	Internal	to coordinate screening
Housing local authority lead	Internal	coordination of housing procurement and devlopment of housing strategy, including 'move–on' plans.Coordination of accommodation checks
Housing providers (social housing providers, private landlords)	External	identifying suitable properties
DBS team (or equivalent)	Internal	Coordinating Basic and Enhanced DBS checks
Neighbourhood coordinator	Internal	identifying and mitigating potential community cohesion issues
Police (including Safer Neighbourhood Teams)	External	advice on safety, antisocial behaviour and community cohesion issues. Advice on any trafficking concerns.
Education and school admissions	Internal	plan for new pupils and engagement with new parents in the locality
Childrens' services	Internal	youth development and provision
Social services (Adults and Children's)	Internal	supporting vulnerable arrivals and those with additional needs as well as safeguarding needs and referrals
Interpreting services	Internal (or commissioned)	planning demand for language access
Local authority benefits (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support)	Internal (or commissioned)	planning for new arrivals' claims and coordinate with Jobcentre Plus
Jobcentre Plus local contact	External	arranging and coordinating benefits
Local colleges, universities and training providers	External	ESOL and other educational provision
Integration support casework providers	Internal (or commissioned)	delivery and overall coordination of refugee integration support and other services, for example, rematching
Local Prevent lead	Internal	advice on safety and community cohesion
Local third sector organisations	External	religious leaders, local community representatives including organisations representing hosts and volunteers as well as those representing arrival communities, as well as grassroots and newly formed groups
Advice providers	External	Advise on emerging immigration and other advice needs

This highlights the importance of the convening role of local government in community led welcome and resettlement. Local authorities (and in some cases Strategic Migration Partnerships) can play a crucial role in facilitating cross sectoral and cross service planning.

Short term challenges in the Homes for Ukraine model and mobilisation

Before turning to medium and longer-term challenges of the Homes for Ukraine model, it is vital to highlight some immediate concerns related to the way that the scheme functions and without which it is hard to move towards more pro-active and longer-term challenges and opportunities. These challenges are drawn directly from consultation with local authorities participating in the Homes for Ukraine scheme and academic researchers producing rapid evidence reviews.

1. **Disparity in provision based on arrival route** – From a local authority perspective, there is little difference in the support provided to those arriving on different routes and yet, whilst HfU arrivals receive funding to support, those arriving under the Ukraine Family Scheme are not matched with similar support, leading to discrepancies in the system which do not make sense at a local level. Indeed, those arriving the Family Scheme are likely to be more at risk of homelessness that those under HfU scheme (Vicol and Sehic 2022.) More broadly, the distinction between different arrival routes as determining levels of support is generally seen to lose meaning at a local level and can prove counter-productive to integration aims.

2. **Ongoing safeguarding risks** – Local authorities and researchers have identified significant safeguarding risks as part of the Homes for Ukraine programme. The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (Cockbain and Sidebottom 2022) outlines the following areas for concern as they relate to local authority practice in particular related to the 'lack of funding, information and support for local authorities, with the 'UK response…[leaving]… major gaps around information, resources and support both for Ukrainians in the UK and those involved with them via housing, work, healthcare, education and other social support. Participants commonly expressed concerns that local authorities were being under-resourced and under-supported to cope with new arrivals, many of whom may have quite complex needs.' Specifically in relation to Homes for Ukraine, concerns focussed on inadequate preparation for hosts with a clear lack of expectation management, training, guidance and support. 'Additional concerns were raised that the £350 month payment for hosting might incentivise sponsorship among people who are, at best, naïve and ill equipped and, at worst, actively unscrupulous and seeking to exploit refugees. Risks of domestic servitude were most commonly flagged, but fears were also raised that hosts might seek to exploit their guests in other labour markets, for their benefit entitlements, and/or sexually.' Safeguarding risks were identified for both actively predatory hosts and more opportunistic ones. The report identifies that these risks may be exacerbated over time, with conditions being 'subtly eroded' – highlighting this as a challenge beyond initial arrival checks. Language barriers, differences in cultural expectations, inherent power imbalances, economic constraints and lack of access to alternatives should things go wrong were identified as contributing factors to safeguarding risks.

3. **Consistency across local authorities** – Feedback from local authorities and partners demonstrates inconsistencies amongst local authorities in terms of engagement with the scheme. This included in some of the core roles for local authorities such as safeguarding checks. These are new responsibilities for many local authorities, mobilised at speed with little oversight. Whilst case studies of good practice give a sense of how things can be organised, it is important not to overstate this and to note the significant gaps within provision and the risks (to safeguarding as well as longer-term integration needs) that this poses.

4. **Capacity within the voluntary sector** – Similarly, whilst some case studies focussed on productive collaboration with voluntary sector partners, it is vital to note that in some areas there are severe constraints on voluntary sector capacity, meaning that local government felt unable to develop shared models due to either the strain already present on the sector (for example those significantly committed to supporting Afghan arrivals) or as a consequence of an absence of provision. This may particularly be the case in areas with low levels of prior experience of refugee resettlement and is particularly notable in the context of the expansion of asylum dispersal.

5. **Operational problems with housing capacity** – One of the proposed advantages of community sponsorship models is the additionality offered through opening up new housing provision otherwise unavailable through hosting. Several local authorities have noted severe issues with the breakdown of placements (both as part of HfU and significantly through the Ukrainian Family Scheme,) some evidence of 'hosting fatigue' (Perelli-Harris et al. 2022) and difficulties in operationalising rematching provision (for example, rematching may not be suitable immediately after a placement has broken down.) There are also some reported difficulties in managing internal local authority relationships between departments – in particular with housing departments. One anecdotal example of this are Housing departments stating that those whose placements have broken down are 'intentionally homeless' and therefore ineligible for support.

Research from the Work Rights Centre (Vicol and Sehic 2022) found that:

- 1 in 10 Ukrainians have been threatened with eviction at some point of their stay in the UK, with risks particularly high for those on the Family Scheme

- More than two thirds 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.

- 1,565 Ukrainian households were owed a prevention or relief duty from Feb-Aug 2022, 49.5% of these arrived under the Ukraine Family Scheme and 43% arrived under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. 69% of households presenting included dependent children.

- Collection of Homelessness Management information for Ukrainians is currently non–compulsory, with 90 local authorities failing to submit data and meaning that it is difficult to gauge the scale of those homeless or at risk of homelessness.

6. **Lack of caseworker support or adequate training within community sponsorship** – Resettlement models usually include the provision of a dedicated resettlement case worker to holistically support integration needs, including initial orientation provision. The role of hosts is necessarily more limited than a dedicated caseworker and may be more variable. One opportunity of this approach is the potential for community sponsorship to centre community ownership and the empowerment of hosts to support people (whilst adhering to principles of boundary setting and understanding of power imbalances.) However, whilst the scheme has drawn on enormous goodwill, there are likely to be significant gaps in knowledge, expertise and capacity in replacing case workers with volunteers. Provision of training for hosts (see Liverpool case study) is an additional function for local authorities and partners and would appear to be vital in building long–term capacity for community led welcome.

7. There is an important intersection between community led welcome and **engagement with statutory social care duties when higher levels of need are identified**. Whilst guidance is clear to outline that these statutory duties remain in force, there is some evidence that internal referral mechanisms may not work as hoped, in particular where services are already strained or at capacity. A plan to extend Homes for Ukraine to unaccompanied children highlighted concerns about the capacity of local authorities to expand their statutory child protection functions to these new programmes without significant additional support (LGA 2022.)

8. **The impact of inflation and the cost of living crisis** on the ongoing viability of the scheme – in particular in relation to calls to increase the £350 thank you payment in recognition of this. Anecdotally, some local authorities have taken the decision to increase this payment themselves in order to maintain placements. Longer–term, this may inhibit capacity to recruit new sponsors to the scheme and retain existing ones.

Medium to long–term challenges and opportunities for developing community led welcome

1. The UK **funding model** for resettlement and sponsorship (including, but not limited to Homes for Ukraine) operates on a per capita basis. This means that funding is provided per arrival and waxes and wanes with arrivals, inhibiting planning and longer–term capacity building and investment. Similarly, the funding settlement is only agreed for one year. Whilst the amounts may be (relatively) generous and constitute a significant investment in community led welcome by UK central government, this encourages short termism and planning on an individual, rather than structural basis. As a consequence of this, it is challenging for local authorities to proactively commission services, unless they are able to unilaterally decide to pool funds and commission in advance of receiving payment.

2. This inhibits proactive **development of the offer**, as a cross–institutional and mainstreamed function of local government, spanning across public, private and voluntary sector collaboration to build a sustainable strategy of welcome. Reactive and siloed funding arrangements mean that services are skewed towards the initial moment of arrival and immediate challenges of orientation, rather than focussed on longer–term integration and inclusion outcomes. This includes (but is by no means limited to) the following areas:

    a. Skills strategy including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) development and language access, including with a view to supporting and improving employment outcomes

    b. Targeted mental health support, including in relation to trauma

    c. Wellbeing support – for both sponsors and arrivals

    d. Developing mechanisms for community involvement and participation in decision making

Research by Work Rights Centre (2022) found that 32% have found employment in the UK, with the main barriers including difficulties with English, translating qualifications, alongside the absence of transport and childcare. Whilst, it should be noted that this is a higher employment rate than on comparable resettlement schemes, this still appears to be a missed opportunity at a time where there are significant labour shortages in the UK.

3. There is no obvious **departmental home** for community led welcome within UK local government, with variation across local authorities. Where there is no departmental lead, this inhibits the ability for local government to convene partnership groups, commission services and identify gaps, plan for new needs and develop new collaborations, including developing hybrid partnerships between public and private sector.

4. There is **limited learning** from previous schemes, between current models and between local authorities. Evaluations from, for example the Syrian VPRS have not been published, inhibiting opportunities for learning.

5. The de facto **devolution** of the Homes for Ukraine scheme means that different guidance and systems operate in the four nations of the UK. This can support the development of more place–based approaches to community welcome; however, it is important that lessons are shared within and between each of the models.

Case studies from local authorities

These case studies are intended to highlight areas of policy development, operational mobilisation and partnership development that have taken place during the mobilisation phase of the scheme.

Liverpool – supporting hosts in order to facilitate successful placements and promote empowerment and independence

Liverpool rapidly identified the need to provide separate support for arrivals and hosts. So far, this has included six online sponsor sessions, covering themes such as:

- Hosting
- Accessing school places and benefits
- Health and wellbeing
- Empowerment, power and independence co–delivered with RESET
- Meeting our new Refugee Hosting Co–ordinator

These sessions usually involve a 5–10 minute update from the Council, 20–30 minutes of speakers and 20–30 minutes of sponsor questions. These have been well received with good uptake and feedback, the sessions were initially open to both active sponsors and residents thinking about hosting, in the hope it would help people access the information they need before signing up. However later sessions have focussed on active sponsors working with a newly appointed Refugee Hosting Co–ordinator.

Liverpool also runs regular welcome drop–in for Ukrainian arrivals. Guests and sponsors attended the first session, however this was later restricted to refugees only with sponsors asked not to attend. The sessions have range of professionals (including DWP, housing, health and school admissions staff) and so guests have the opportunity to speak to these staff without their sponsor present. The aim of this is to promote independence and allow more opportunity for guests to raise any issues.

As a consequence of these decisions, Liverpool has split the support side by commissioning a resettlement support service to support guests and recruiting new staff to support sponsors, with the hope that refugees/ guests will feel more comfortable raising any issues they may have with their sponsor.

For Liverpool, separating the spaces and support available for guests and sponsors seems to be working well, though the real test for this approach will be whether guests find it easier to transition out of their sponsors accommodation at the end of the 6/12 months.

Greater London Authority – convening Voluntary and Community Sector partners to get timely information out there fast

The GLA noticed a gap in rapidly convening VCS partners and other in order to prepare for arrivals and map capacity and strategic gaps. They convened two online meetings with over 100 civil society online, including extending the invitations to SMPs outside of London. These convenings flagged up issues around safeguarding, homelessness, and gaps in relation to legal advice. The GLA agreed £50,000 of funding for Here for Good, allowing them to pivot their work from supporting people to get EU Settled Status to supporting Ukrainian arrivals and those in country. The aim of this rapid convening is to build partnerships with community groups and identify strategic gaps in provision, as well as to build platforms to share learning in a timely manner.

The Local Government Association has compiled case studies of collaboration with VCS providers in Somerset, Leeds, Cornwall and York.

Ukraine Advice Scotland– providing timely immigration advice and information across schemes

Given the proliferation of bespoke routes for arrival to the UK, timely immigration information and advice is vital in order to ensure that people can access the correct routes.

Ukraine Advice Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government and supported by Just Right Scotland to provide free, confidential legal advice and information to Ukrainians and their families on legal routes for seeking safety in Scotland. The service is available by phone and email and staffed by qualified solicitors and legal caseworkers. The advice services operate in English, but can provide legal advice in other languages, such as Ukrainian, Russian or Polish, via interpreters on the legal telephone helpline.

Bristol welcome hubs model — empowering community organisations to lead on local welcoming

Bristol City Council has joined efforts with Christian Action Bristol, Bristol churches and the Good Faith Partnership to create a network of Welcome Hubs.

A Welcome Hub is a community which:

- Supports Ukrainian refugees by providing food, community, and resettlement support through a weekly rhythm of daytime and evening activities in a community space.
- Supports refugee host(s) in Bristol by complementing their activities and helping them prepare for the hosting role in advance.
- Partners with Bristol City Council to provide physical space for them to bring in expert resettlement help for refugees.
- Is open to all refugees and hosts, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, or faith.

The Welcoming Hubs have been set up specifically to support Ukrainian refugees, though the plan is that this may broaden to include refugees from other nations.

A Welcome Hub primarily sets up events revolving around community and food (such as coffee mornings, children's groups, ESOL classes, etc.), and enabling resettlement (such as helping with various forms of registration and employment questions).

Welcome Hubs will support hosts in walking the line between treating refugees as guests—helping them recover, settle, and connect—as well as helping refugees become increasingly independent.

There are currently 16 Welcome Hubs that have opened or are opening imminently in Bristol. Bristol City Council supports welcome hubs with a small funding commitment, and in return, hubs commit to providing the services outlined above. Whilst the Hubs do not replace the more intensive case working and resettlement needs the idea is that they are able to complement this work through providing wider welcoming support, whilst providing trusted spaces which local authorities can site their support services. Finally, they provide a route to volunteer support for those who want to help, but do not have the capacity to act as a host.

Birmingham — 'move-on' housing strategy developed with Spring Housing Association

Birmingham City Council paired with Spring Housing Association to develop its 'move on' housing strategy. Spring works around the principles of person-centred services to support individuals to obtain, maintain and sustain accommodation long-term.

The strategy aims to support Ukrainian refugees to settle in the UK and to provide for the effective and efficient resettlement of Ukrainians arriving under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in the wider context of Birmingham City Council's vision and commitment to being a City of Sanctuary. It aims to provide a comprehensive, high-quality Housing Advice Service to Ukrainian refugees across Birmingham and Solihull to ensure they are aware of housing options available to them based on their personal circumstances, the housing routes available to them and to advise on housing related benefits, rights and entitlements in order to improve housing and integration outcomes which aim to increase refugees' self-sufficiency. Given the 6 month initial commitment for hosts under the Homes for Ukraine model, 'move on' support is a key function for local authorities. Whilst some placements may last beyond this time frame, rematching and identification of other housing options will be vital for the longer-term sustainability of community led welcome.

Northern Ireland — partnership with the Red Cross to support initial orientation at a 'one stop shop'

The Northern Irish Executive has centrally coordinated much of the Ukraine response and tasked LAs with creating Ukrainian assistance hubs that would provide tailored support. Currently operating three days a week in four locations across NI, they bring all of the main services providers (health, education, universal credit, housing and legal advice) under one roof with interpreters. There is a crèche on site with professional child carers so that parents can focus on things like enrolling their children in school, getting a GP, applying for Universal Credit. The centres operate on different days meaning that the same people can transfer to different sites. There have been some difficulties in finding sufficient interpreters. At the start, the Home Office attended, though this engagement has dropped off and so people have to make a separate journey in order to complete biometrics. The 'one stop shop' has been delivered in partnership with the Red Cross, whose role has been key: upon arrival to the hub ICRC sits down and figures out which services are needed, then hands beneficiaries over to a 'runner' who guides the person through the hub. Opening days, times and locations are constantly reviewed in line with visas granted, expected arrivals to NI and attendance at the centres. The Ukraine Assistance Centres have proven to be a very important resource to help Ukrainian people in Northern Ireland and The Executive Office expects to continue to operate them for as long as they are required. They are also investigating other ways to support Ukrainian people here, including helplines, online guides and support workers to help those with the most significant needs.

Lancashire – establishing an initial checks referral pathways

Establishing a 'checks' pathway for arrivals under the HfU programme is a major new responsibility for local government, ensuring the suitability both of hosts and accommodation. The Local Government Association compiled case studies and best practice from Buckinghamshire, Devon, Lancaster, South Derbyshire and Lancashire.

Lancashire's model focusses on the initial checks referral pathway, setting out pathways and target timeframes for:

- **DBS Enhanced Checks**: Enhanced DBS check undertaken for every adult residing within the Sponsor household by DBS Team *Target Timeframe to contact Sponsor: 48 hours*.

- **Initial Social Care Address Checks**: Each address checked for preliminary information T*arget Timeframe to complete checks: 7 days*.

- **Property Checks**: Property Inspection undertaken as per the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) Property Check Pro Forma. Target Timeframe to complete checks: 10 days.

Outcomes from checks are recorded on a sponsor database with Sponsor/Beneficiary Matches referred to Homes for Ukraine Family Support Workers. Based on the outcomes of the checks, a safeguarding assessment is prioritised with a target timeframe of 24 hours.

Where the safeguarding assessment is undertaken, the target timeframe is 7 days to record on the sponsor database, feedback to officers on relevant needs, adopting contingency plans where a placement is judged to be unsafe or unsuitable.

Coventry – bespoke support focussed on language, employment and skills development to promote independence and social links

Coventry's model aims to provide bespoke support, based on individual needs, co-ordinated from a needs assessment, which is completed shortly after arrival. The support to arrivals and hosts is centrally co-ordinated by Coventry City Council's internal Migration Team. This in house approach allows the team to develop relationships with all arrivals allowing trust to be built and any safeguarding issues to be known and dealt with swiftly.

The main operational activity has centred on an internal team co-ordinating a range of embedded provision to provide support around language and learning, employment skills/development and community and social links to promote people's independence:

Language and Learning – Coventry provides 8 hours of language support per week for levels 'pre-entry' through to Entry 3, which is accessible for all arrivals under the Homes for Ukraine and Family Schemes. An initial language assessment is completed within two weeks of arrival, to ascertain the various levels of English to be able to plan the provision accordingly.

Employment and Skills – A comprehensive needs assessment enables the provision of tailored mentoring and intensive employment support to help individuals access the labour market. Job Coaches provide support to tackle barriers to engaging in employment, training, education, and also referring into other pre-existing provision. Overall, 37% of all eligible adults have been supported into employment through the employment support offered. One of the early Homes for Ukraine arrivals secured a job working for Coventry City Council's Migration Team as a Project Support Officer, providing support to other Ukrainian nationals arriving through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Community and Social Links – The Association of Ukrainians Great Britain (AUGB) has a community centre in Coventry and a vibrant community, alongside support from an active Ukrainian Catholic Church. Together these organisations have supported the newly arrived guests by offering pastoral support, weekly coffee mornings with events such as outings and speakers, complementing support from the local authority.

Ukraine Family Scheme – Coventry has sought to extend as much of the provision and all the group activities to those arriving on the family scheme with the exception of the welcome payments. They have also tried to resolve some of the housing issues by acquiring sponsors for accommodation.

Information, orientation and advice – Coventry run weekly drop-in sessions for Ukrainian arrivals at the Central Library offers, welcome payments, induction and advice including a range of support from employment coaches, bespoke support for Ukrainian young people to access education and training, benefits advice, matching and re-matching service and issuing temporary bus passes (initially for up to 8 weeks). On occasion bespoke sessions have been held with representatives from Banks, Youth Clubs, and organising city tours. A number of host webinars have been delivered to sponsors whose guests have already arrived in the city. This provides the opportunity to update hosts with latest guidance and support available to them and their guests.

Policy Implications for supporting Community Led Welcoming in the UK

These policy implications capture the potential for long-term change on community welcoming in the UK, building on the rapid mobilisation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme to develop permanent and long-term infrastructure. The policy implications reflect some of the short-term challenges of the implementation of the HfU scheme, but are predominantly focussed on longer-term development of community led welcome.

Policy implications are focussed on local government and partners, but recognise the overall need for an ambitious new agenda of community welcome that is:

- Adequately and flexibly resourced at scale by central government and led at devolved administration, regional and local level in partnership with civil society – including a new, funded, role for Strategic Migration Partnerships to support integration planning (as exemplified through the Hong Kong BN(O) funding arrangements.)

- Part of a coherent, whole of government strategy which draws together work on community led welcome, resettlement and integration, balancing the departmental aims of the Home Office, with others – including but not exclusively DLUHC, DWP, DFE, BEIS, MoD, Health and Social Care and MoJ and their devolved equivalents.

- Reviews systemic barriers to the development of community led welcome – as part of a broader consideration of integration strategy. This may be considered as part of a New Burdens Assessment.

- Recognises a new long-term function for community welcome, alongside refugee resettlement, and plans for a permanent function, resourced accordingly – which aims to move beyond reactive and crisis-led mobilisation.

- Draws in new partners – in particular in continuing to explore the potential role of institutional sponsors in providing further additionality to any next phase of the scheme

1. **Build on the appetite and momentum demonstrated by the Homes for Ukraine scheme to build longer-term welcoming capacity**, using existing crisis-focussed resources to build a more a permanent infrastructure, focussed on long-term capacity building and recognising welcoming as a long-term responsibility of local government. This includes identifying and resourcing a departmental 'home' for community led welcome, developing the convening role of local government and regional Strategic Migration Partnerships, to bring together both internal and external partners and developing the inclusion offer at the local level based on the Inclusive Cities framework and focussed on long-term outcomes. The Hong Kong BN(O) approach of 'day one' integration support provides a model to be mirrored across schemes, with resources pooled to support these outcomes where possible.

2. **Develop a commissioning strategy for community led welcome across schemes and based on local need** A number of the local authorities highlighted here (Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Greater London Authority and Liverpool) have been able to proactively pool (and in some cases project their income from) various bespoke resettlement schemes in order to allow for proactive planning and development of longer-term infrastructure. This approach does contain risk, for example some local authorities who commissioned long-term casework support for resettlement incurred costs during the Covid pandemic as arrivals were halted and yet contracts still needed to be honoured. Improvement of the funding protocol by central government away from per capita funding to support for infrastructure could significantly improve this situation and provide a more 'place based' focus,[5] as well as capacity for economies of scale. Regional commissioning frameworks, supported by SMPs, would be another model which could aid local authorities in identifying suitable partners, diversify the range of partners involved and improve outcomes.

3. **Map resources available from individual funding schemes** and look to see how matched or aligned philanthropic, private sector and other public sector funding sources (such as public health, health, education, community safety etc) could help to meet capacity gaps across the system locally. One issue inhibiting this is that local authorities are often required to 'bid in' to central government pots of funding, rather than supporting areas based on need.

4. **Improve guidance to housing departments**, in order to tackle immediate concerns about people being considered as intentionally homeless. Over the longer-term, local authorities should be supported to **create a housing strategy for resettlement and community led welcome**, which considers questions across schemes and works with partners to map existing resource, open up new housing pathways and considers alternative approaches to supporting people to stay in accommodation through creating a blended approach to suitable housing provision and options. These may include:

   - Developing ongoing support for existing and new hosting arrangements, including potentially secondary migration and relocation

   - 'move-on' arrangements such as the 'top up' use of discretionary housing payments, rent deposit and guarantee schemes

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5   This approach is in line with the 'place based' approach currently under consultation by the Home Office with regional partners, albeit this does not predominantly focus on DLUHC administered schemes such as Homes for Ukraine

– joint procurement of new housing options including in partnership with potential institutional sponsors and partners

– Dedicated housing support (see Birmingham case study)

Whilst development of this strategy at the regional and local level will undoubtedly do much to help longer–term integration outcomes, and ease pressures across schemes, it remains important to recognise that many of the housing challenges are structural and will only be resolved through national policy change, for example in relation to benefits rates and Local Housing Allowances (Brown et al. 2022.)

5. **Improve safeguarding provision** by strengthening partnership working including:

a. Developing clear safeguarding pathways with both Child Safeguarding partnerships (and equivalents) and Safeguarding Adults Boards (and equivalents) with an identified point person joining partnership groups

b. Improve guidance on checks and share best practice between local authorities in order to improve consistency

c. Work with colleagues in Public Health to develop a prevention led model of safeguarding

6. **Develop new models of support** in order to increase and improve the quality and diversity of those able to host, including:

a. Dedicated training and guidance programme (including at regional level) – including dedicated support for hosts, separate to that provided to newcomers.

b. Peer support and development of 'circles of welcome' – moving away from individual models of sponsorship to community wraparound support. Alternatively, including the naming of at least one neighbour or other member of the community in support of an application alongside the sponsor.

c. Continuation of ability for sponsors to 'name' the refugee(s) who are welcomed, which has given more control to the community welcoming refugees and more certainty for the person being sponsored, albeit in the context of need for improvement to safeguarding as outlined elsewhere and whilst recognising the potentially unequal access to such services that naming requirements can bring.

d. Dedicated casework support[6] pooling support for resettlement and working in a hybrid model across community led welcome and resettlement.

e. Building on the assets of community groups and volunteer infrastructure (for example through welcome hubs models outlined in the Bristol case study)

f. Benefitting from the assets of institutional sponsors, for example in building new routes in employment and supporting skills development (building on international experience.)

7. Develop mechanisms for **including the voices of lived experience** within planning and implementation – both arrivals and hosts, including hosts from within diverse communities and provide support for the diversification of community led welcome, with a focus on empowerment principles:

a. Nothing for someone without them

b. Be mindful of the power you hold

c. Listen to challenges and concerns

d. Make clear what you can and cannot do

e. Be aware of your own boundaries and limitations

(RESET Homes for Ukraine Toolkit for Sponsors)

8. **Align work on community led welcome with wider strategy on newcomer inclusion and integration**. For example, by encouraging the embedding of local authority wide guidance on the integration areas as outlined in the Inclusive Cities Framework, or equivalent frameworks, using new roles for SMPs and pooled funding for local authorities to develop comprehensive action plans covering the service areas needed to adequately support inclusion, including the convening and leadership roles of local authorities in bringing together partners, whilst supporting the monitoring and evaluation of these approaches.

9. **Develop a learning and networked approach** – in the first instance by using learning and experience from previous schemes (for example, Syrian VPRS and evidence from previous examples of community sponsorship) – including supporting regional collaboration, training and support, for example via a new, expanded role for Strategic Migration Partnerships in capacity building.

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6   (the value of which is outlined in Brown et al. 2022)

Resources

- [DLUHC guidance (for England) and links to Welsh and Scottish Government guidance](#)
- [Information for arrivals to Northern Ireland](#)
- [ONS Homes for Ukraine Sponsor survey](#)
- [Ukrainians Welcome](#) – joint initiative of British organizations fighting slavery and human rights aiming to provide useful information on the safety and life of displaced Ukrainians in the UK
- [NACCOM Hosting Good Practice Guidance](#)
- [LGA Homes for Ukraine Lessons Learned](#)
- [RESET Local Authority Toolkit](#)
- [GRSI Guidebook for Community Sponsorship](#)
- [Welcoming International Resource Library](#)

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INCLUSIVE CITIES

Inclusive Cities is a knowledge exchange initiative supporting UK cities and their local partners to achieve a step-change in their approach towards the inclusion of newcomers.

Drawing on innovative ideas and practices from Europe and the United States, Inclusive Cities aims to support the development of an approach to inclusion which is strategic across the city administration. This approach consistently uses positive messaging to develop an inclusive narrative for the city which informs and drives practice and is local authority led, working in close partnership with business, public and voluntary sector organisations to achieve shared goals.

Inclusive Cities is supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/inclusive-cities

THE GLOBAL EXCHANGE ON MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

The Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity is an ambitious initiative at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) opening up opportunities for knowledge exchange and longer-term collaboration between those working in the migration field.

www.compas.ox.ac.uk/global-exchange

ABOUT

This briefing was authored by Jacqui Broadhead (COMPAS), based on feedback and consultation from the 12 participating Inclusive Cities at a roundtable discussion in May 2022 and feedback from a roundtable discussion in October 2022 with cities and other key stakeholders.

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www.welcominginternational.org

CONTACT

For more information contact Jacqui Broadhead:

Jacqueline.Broadhead@compas.ox.ac.uk

part of

COMPAS
Centre on Migration,
Policy & Society

UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

School of Anthropology
University of Oxford
58 Banbury Road
Oxford, OX2 6QS

E. info@compas.ox.ac.uk