

Introduction

To our Ukrainian friends,

We are so glad to have you here with us in Scotland, for however long you might stay. You have been through so much, and I hope that now you will be able to regain a sense of peace and stability. As your MP, I will do all that I can to support you.

My team and I have compiled this list of resources, which should be of some help for you in finding the support you need to get settled in. However, if there's anything else we can do to assist you can email me at drew.hendry.mp@parliament.uk.

Kind regards,



Drew Hendry MP

Member of Parliament for
Inverness, Nairn,
Badenoch & Strathspey

Scottish National Party
Foreign Affairs
Westminster Spokesperson

Elected representatives

Your councillors can help with issues such as social care, schools, housing, planning, waste collection, licensing, business support, registrar services and pest control.

You can find your local councillors here: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/councillors/name>

Your MSP can help you with matters that the Scottish Parliament is responsible for, including agriculture and fisheries, education and training, environment, health and social services, housing, justice and policing, local government and transport.

You can find your MSP here: <https://www.parliament.scot/msps>

Your MP can help with matters such as benefits, UK-wide tax and national insurance, immigration issues, energy, defence and data protection.

You can find your MP here: <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

Pensions

If you're over 66:

The UK pension age is 66. (Though it is 67 based on your date of birth if you are still of working age.) Depending on your income, Ukrainians coming to the UK can claim Pension Credit after reaching

pension age. Pension Credit can be applied for by calling the Pension Credit line on; **0800 99 1234**. – You can also apply for Housing Benefit as part of a Pension Credit claim.

If you're still working:

You may be entitled to benefits from the UK National Insurance scheme if you return to Ukraine as the we have a pension agreement. You are only entitled to a pension refund if you've paid in for less than 2 years. To claim a refund or transfer your benefits to Ukraine, you can contact the UK Government's International Pension Centre on: 0191 218 7777, and they'll be able to help.

Pensions can be complicated, so it's best to talk to a pension advisor. You can also get free advice from the UK Government's pension service on: 0800 731 0469.

Visas

The 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme gives special visa provision to Ukrainians to allow them to stay in the UK for up to 3 years. There is currently not a route to extend a stay via the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to allow for permanent settlement. However, the scheme will be continued for the full length of the war.

If you have a family or skilled worker visa, and the visa is coming to an end it is best to apply for the visa to be continued, or alternatively make an application under the 'Ukraine Extension Scheme' which gives the right to stay in the UK for an additional 3 years.

It is worth noting that years living in the UK under the 'Homes for Ukraine Scheme', the 'Ukraine Extension Scheme', and the other special visa schemes created for Ukrainians after the start of the war, currently don't count towards years needed living in the UK for permanent settlement. It's really important to keep this in mind when changing visas.

When making visa decisions it is always important to get specialist advice, and it is well worth speaking to the local Citizens Advice (CAB) team about next steps. CAB can be contacted on; 01463 237 664 or you can find their website here: <https://www.cas.org.uk/bureaux/inverness-badenoch-and-strathspey-citizens-advice-bureau>

Registering with a GP (doctor)

If you're registering for a GP for the first time, they won't have your medical records from Ukraine. You can only register if you're staying in the area for more than 3 months.

You can find your GP practice at; <https://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/gp-practices>

You'll then need to contact the practice directly to get a registration form so you can fill it out and return it to them. They may be able to help you with this.

Your GP can also help you if you are struggling with your mental health. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the Samaritans on 116 123.

Registering with a dentist

Not all dentists provide NHS treatment, you will need to ask the dental practice if they do.

Some dentists do both private (which is when you pay directly for treatment) and NHS treatment, they may only offer certain treatments if paid for privately.

NHS treatments still have a set series of charges for adults, however, some people don't have to pay. Some of the reasons you might not have to pay for treatment;

1. If you are, under 26
2. pregnant or have had a baby in the last 12 months
3. on a low income and receiving certain benefits

You can find your nearest dental practice here; <https://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/dental-services/>

Benefits

Ukrainians in the UK who here under any of the schemes set up after the start of the war can access all UK benefits.

This includes but is not limited to; Universal Credit, Child Benefit, Pension Credit, which are all run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Scottish Child Payments, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods, Child Disability Payments and Adult Disability Payments are also available and are run by Social Security Scotland.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the main working age benefit in the UK. It is available both in and out of work and is for people with low or no incomes. What you receive will depend on your age, relationship status and if you have any children. Housing payment support is often included as part of the Universal Credit claim process. How to claim can be found online at: <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim>

The DWP may give you 'Claimant Commitments'. These are things you will be asked to do to receive your Universal Credit, this can be things like looking for work for a certain number of hours. It is important to complete agreed claimant commitments, and to turn up for any appointments with the DWP on time, or the DWP may temporarily remove some of your benefit payments which is called a 'Sanction'.

Child Benefit

Child benefit is available to help with the costs of having children. It is available for anyone with a child regardless of employment status, savings or investments. It is usually paid once every 4 weeks. It is available for all children under the age of 16, or under the age of 20 if your child remains in full time education or training. To claim you will generally need a National Insurance Number (NI), support and help with making a claim can be obtained from the Child Benefit helpline, tel: 0300 200 3100.

Scottish Child Payments

Scottish Child Payment is available for people on certain benefits, including but not limited to Universal Credit or Pension Credit, if you are the main carer of a child under 16 years old. You'll get the payment

once every 4 weeks. Applications can be made to Social Security Scotland on freephone: 0800 182 2222

Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

These are available for women who are pregnant or people with young children to help towards the costs of being pregnant or having children. It is available for people on certain benefits. Call Social Security Scotland free on 0800 182 2222 for more information.

Child Disability Payments and Adult Disability Payments

This is available to help with the costs of being disabled for both children and working age adults, and is available regardless of income or employment status. Payments are based on the severity and the impact of a disability. More details about applying can be obtained from Social Security Scotland by calling free on: 0800 182 2222

Some but not all UK benefits are 'means tested' – This means the amount you receive and if you can get a benefit is based on your individual circumstances.

If you are unsure of what support you qualify for, it may be worth speaking to Highland Council's Welfare Support Team who give benefits advice and help. They can help tell you about available benefits, and can be contacted free on: 0800 090 1004

Applying for a National Insurance Number (NI)

Everyone in the UK from the age of 16 is able to apply or receives a National Insurance number. It is made up of series of numbers and letters, it always stays the same, and is unique to you.

If you are applying for benefits the benefits team will normally provide help with applying for a National Insurance number, otherwise it is possible to make an application for an NI online here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number/how-to-apply>

Help with Housing

In Scotland, there are three ways you can be housed: privately, in Local Authority social housing or in 'Homes for Ukraine' sponsored accommodation. The following information will cover all three of the possible options:

Information on homelessness and sponsor issues: <https://ukrainianrefugeehelp.co.uk/housing-issues/>

Information on moving to new sponsors: <https://ukrainianrefugeehelp.co.uk/moving-to-another-sponsor/> and here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/continuing-to-live-with-your-host-or-rematching-homes-for-ukraine>

Guide to privately renting property in the UK: <https://ukrainianrefugeehelp.co.uk/renting-privately/>

Shelter Scotland can provide expert Scotland-specific advice on housing issues: https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/about_us/contact_us

Apply for the Highland Housing Register (social housing): https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council_housing/244/apply_for_a_house/6

Anyone who is 16 years old and over may apply for a house by completing a Highland Housing Register (HHR) Application Form. The form you need can be found here:

https://www.albynhousing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Application_Form.pdf

Help with Education/English Lessons

There are various classes and resources available to help you and your children learn English and navigate the education system locally. You will find a selection of resources and class contact information below:

Information on education and English lessons for Ukrainians:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-iTI9_sb-U26oPic0RyVVOLxS4hdZeuVaQ_EE-zSfw4/edit

Information on English Classes can be requested from the contacts on this webpage:

<https://www.highlifehighland.com/adult-learning/where-do-we-work/>

Online classes are run by eSgoil and can be accessed here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1blvbeoWFq-V1yXixdkrYB0HT95a8dQwiLsZyv-e0zGg/edit>

The Open University runs courses for Ukrainians to learn English:

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/supporting-ukrainians>

Driving Licence Issues

Driving rules in the UK are controlled by the DVLA (Driving & Vehicle Licensing Authority) and there are strict rules around car ownership, insurance and taxation, and the right to drive. You will find information on these below:

At present, for the first 12 months of being resident in GB, Ukrainians can use their Ukrainian licence in GB to drive all classes of small vehicles authorised by that licence, both automatic and/or manual vehicles (car), unless the licence shows a restriction. You can exchange your licence here:

<https://www.gov.uk/exchange-foreign-driving-licence>

More on the specifics of this can be read here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ukraine-driving-licence-exchange/ukraine-driving-licence-exchange#the-issue>

More information on importing and keeping a Ukrainian vehicle in GB can be found here:

<https://ukrainianrefugeehelp.co.uk/driving/>

NB: The UK government is currently looking at extending the validity of Ukrainian driving licences to 36 months to match the visas they have been given:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ukraine-driving-licence-exchange/ukraine-driving-licence-exchange>

PLEASE NOTE: *“However, where a Ukrainian national stays in GB beyond their initial Home Office issued visa (potentially under indefinite leave to remain), they will be expected to follow standard processes to exchange their licence for a GB one.”*

Local Community Groups

High Life Highland run a number of classes & facilities across the Highlands relating to culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing. You can find out more information about their work here: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/community-centres/>