

Warm Scots Welcome Research

Summary of key themes from **in-depth interviews with Hosts***

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*For the purposes of this research, “host” or “hosts” refers to an individual or household offering accommodation to a guest either in the property they also live in, or another property that they own. Some hosts had also directly sponsored their guest/s to travel to the UK via the Homes for Ukraine programme. Other hosts found their guests via the Scottish super sponsor pathway, whereby the Scottish Government acted as the sponsor.

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Context and aims

- The Scottish Government, in partnership with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), is delivering the Warm Scots Welcome (WSW) programme to support people displaced from Ukraine, or 'Guests', arriving in Scotland under the UK 'Homes for Ukraine' sponsorship visa.
- Between August 2022 and February 2023, SG researchers conducted qualitative interviews to explore the experiences of guests and people hosting them in Scotland, as part of a wider programme of research to inform development of the WSW programme.
- This slide pack presents key themes from initial analysis of 20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with people hosting people displaced from Ukraine ('Guests') who had arrived in Scotland since March 2022, either through the Scottish super sponsor scheme or through individual sponsorship. The interviews were conducted between 23 August and 8 September 2022. A similar slide pack presenting key findings from initial analysis of interviews with guests (conducted between late November 2022 and early February 2023) is also available.
- The aim of the interviews was to hear from hosts (and sponsors) themselves about their experiences of hosting so far and their future hosting intentions.

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Methodology and key limitations

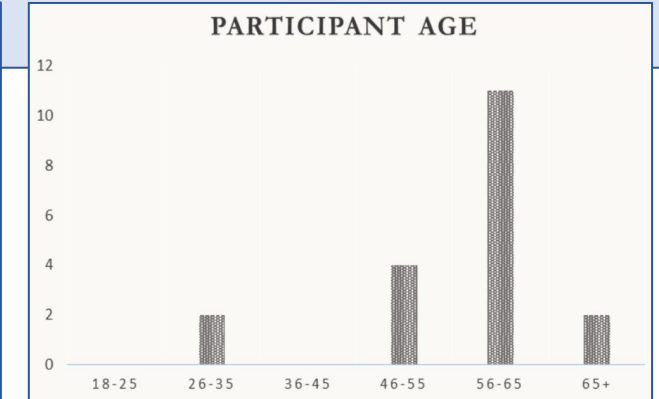
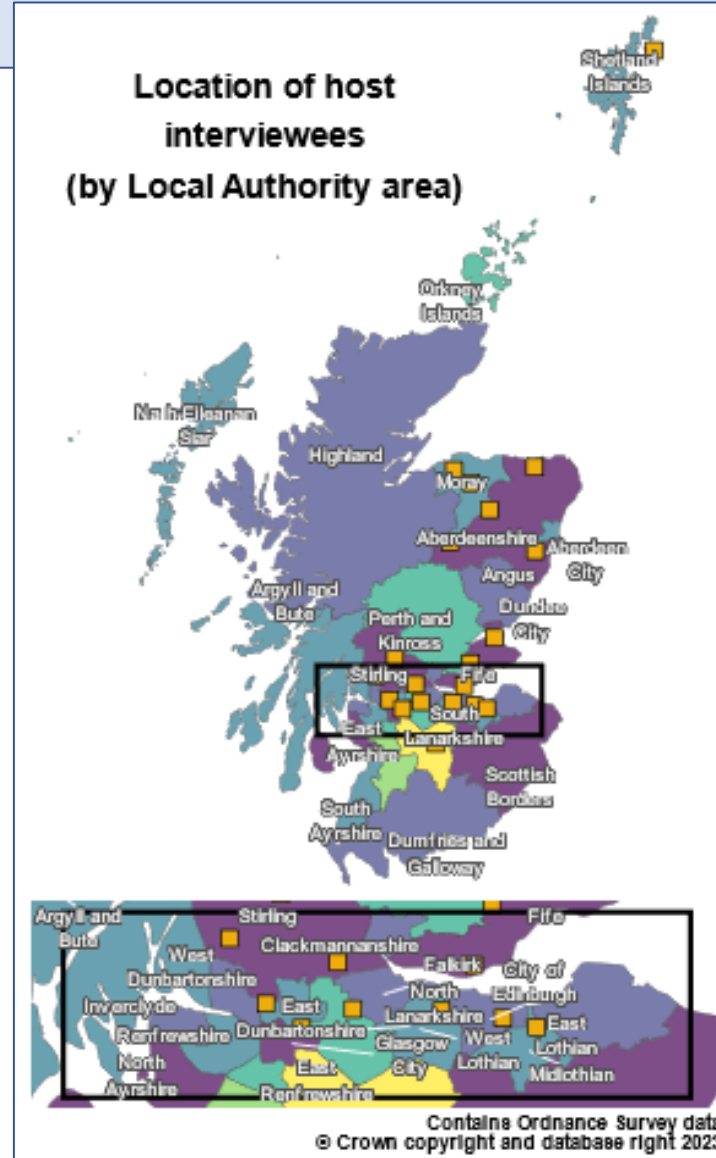
- Interviews lasted 1 hour and were conducted online by two researchers, one primarily taking detailed notes. Interviews were not recorded. The ethics plan was reviewed by Senior User Research and Social Research staff. Participants gave informed consent and all interviewers completed the Scottish National Trauma Training Programme to Level 2 (Trauma Skilled).
- A convenience sample of participants was recruited via third sector and local authority partners. Around 110 current, past and potential hosts filled out a 'recruitment screener' – a survey that allowed us to develop a picture of those 110 along with various characteristics such as location, living situation, stage in the journey, age, etc. This screener enabled us to invite as diverse a range of people as possible to speak with our researchers.
- The topic guide was informed by the questions and findings from the UK-wide [ONS survey of 17,702 adults registered as Homes for Ukraine Sponsors, conducted between 7-14 July 2022](#). Where appropriate, [relevant survey findings are presented](#) alongside the thematic findings from the host interviews. 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews were held online by SG researchers between 23 August and 8 September 2022.
- The focus of interviews varied and was participant-led. The small scale and qualitative nature of the research means findings are not intended to be representative but instead highlight important issues for the participants involved and provide insight into how and why a person might experience a particular phenomena in the hosting process, furthering our understanding of hosts' experiences and highlighting opportunities for service improvement. They do not reliably characterise a typical experience of being a host in Scotland.

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Characteristics of research participants

Of the 20 hosts participating in this research:

- **Most (17) were current or previous hosts.** The remaining 3 had had housing and disclosure checks completed and were awaiting a match/their guest's arrival.
- There were **11 women and 7 men** (gender unknown for 2). In two interviews, the participant's partner also participated.
- **Most (15) were offering accommodation in their own home;** 5 were offering accommodation in a property that was not their usual home.
- Most host interviewees were located in **towns or cities, and located across central or North-East Scotland.**
- **Most (13) were aged 56 years or older;** no participants were aged 18-25 or 36-45.



- People interested in the UK Homes for Ukraine scheme **had explored opportunities to host in different ways**, including using social media or a third sector organisation to find a guest.
- **Seven participants applied to host via the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme** – a pathway under Homes for Ukraine, in which the Scottish Government acts as the initial sponsor for a guest to travel to Scotland. 5

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Findings: Overview of key themes

The following slides present a summary of findings from the interviews with hosts, organised into the high level themes listed below. Quotes from participants are presented, where appropriate, to illustrate a range of experiences shared; they are not intended to be representative.

- [Motivation to host](#)
- [Communication \(with services and guests\) during matching and pre-arrival process](#)
- [Sources of information and support](#)
- [Expectations and preparations](#)
- [How the hosting experience turned out](#)
- [Provision of practical support](#)
- [Provision of pastoral care and support](#)
- [Relationships with hosts' family, friends and community](#)
- [Extending the hosting commitment](#)

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Findings: Motivation to host

"My motivation was a feeling of compassion and relation to the situation, and immediately thinking "that's us". I know Ukrainian people"

Humanitarian motivation to host: this was the main reason interviewees gave for offering accommodation to guests. They expressed a sense of empathy and identification with people fleeing Ukraine. **This is in line with the ONS survey which found the key motivation (94%) is to 'help people fleeing a war zone'**. The expectation of having an enriching experience by meeting/welcoming people was also mentioned as a motivator.

"We did it out of concern for these people. We worked with refugees from [X] during the earlier crisis there"

"We're fortunate that we're able to do that...We're financially stable and we've the space"

Practical motivation to host: While the monthly payment was generally not reported as a primary motivator, financial support was welcomed to reduce the financial burden of hosting and was a factor influencing future hosting decisions. Some hosts felt uncomfortable leaving space/properties unoccupied when there was a need. **Similarly, the ONS survey found around half (51%) were encouraged by having the space in their house to meet this need; 17% said they knew someone who needed accommodation under the scheme; 1 in 10 (10%) were encouraged by the monthly payments provided by the scheme.** Some interview participants viewed hosting as a practical alternative to Airbnb or private letting.

"Most of the time the house sits empty. We have always got a slight discomfort about keeping the house empty. We are conscious of housing needs and so on. Hosting seemed like a good thing to do"

"My rented place has two bedrooms, I don't need the second one, I had been trying Airbnb but didn't like that, so this was a good opportunity... £350 a month was also a good motivation"

"I'm not hosting to get this money, but I want to break even"

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Findings: Communication during matching and pre-arrival process

"A lot of verbal promises that were not thought through. Numbers coming across to Scotland exceeded expectations. No one doing anything at this end it seems...Definitely a frustrating process, because nothing is happening."

"Very difficult...you are trying to get info from families before making a decision but don't want an interrogation or a list of rules"

Communication during matching and pre-arrival: This was generally reported as a frustrating experience. Many participants had expected more and clearer communication from (and between) official channels during the matching process, as well as expecting quicker success in being matched. Most interviewees had ultimately found a match through third sector organisations, or privately through social media or informal connections, rather than through official matching services. **One-third (33%) of ONS survey respondents reported meeting their guests directly through social media. Other commonly reported routes included through a matching service (23%) and being introduced by a friend, neighbour or colleague (21%).**

Some hosts knew very little about their guests pre-arrival and would have liked more communication pre-arrival. Pre-arrival video calls helped some hosts feel fairly comfortable about the potential fit. There were some instances where hosts reported feeling they had been misled by guests pre-arrival. **ONS finds that across the UK 29% of hosts would find more contact with guests pre-arrival helpful.**

"I can't say a bad word about the resettlement team given the workload they are facing, but I had no information about the people arriving. Nothing about their circumstances"

"there wasn't anyone to speak to, switchboards didn't work properly, no reply from ministers, no follow-ups to enquiries, though some issues were resolved"

"We had two or three good video calls before they came, and we chatted by WhatsApp. I could not really say why it felt like a good fit, but it just did"

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Findings: Sources of information and support

“I found lists of things that need to be done (through my Facebook groups). Things like Universal Credit, biometric permit, job centre. DWP and the council knew much less than I did about what was available to people”

“[I] didn’t have any info I could rely upon and know was the truth... Like how to open bank account or get benefits, if I had got that wrong and caused delays to that, I was worried about that ”

“Whenever you do contact [the council] you sense their frustration and feel like you’re bothering them.”

Lack of information and support on how to prepare and how to get help after guests arrived was a common frustration. Interviewees reported obtaining much of their information – both in terms of emotional support and factual information – from social media, rather than official sources, in part due to challenges accessing the information they required from official sources. Some had become more regular social media users to access information they needed. Some expressed concern about the trustworthiness/accuracy of information sourced from social media. Local community connections and third sector organisations were a source of information and support for some. Some found official information and support helpful, but in general, not comprehensive enough to meet their needs. Others were a lot more critical in their feedback. **More than half of [ONS survey respondents](#) said they thought advice about providing support or dealing with challenges, signposting to available information, and information about Ukrainian culture would be useful.**

“A lot of resources are coming from [social media] groups rather than official sources”

“I used the government websites for the benefits and the documentation. The experience was alright but, particularly for children...it wasn’t really clear what we could or couldn’t apply for... There needs to be some sort of comprehensive list about the potential benefits [for guests] that goes out to hosts and maybe even a checklist.”

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Findings: Expectations and preparations

“I had none (expectations) whatsoever about hosting. I just felt like, let’s just do this, let’s just see how it goes”

“I only considered advantages for Ukrainian families, not disadvantages for my family”

“I like to think I will give the person enough space...They obviously have a lot to think about”. “I would like them to be comfortable enough [to tell me] if they don’t have enough space”. “I like to think we can talk about any problems that might arise, be open with each other”

Expectations about hosting: Some expected guests would have experienced trauma. Many expected there would be cultural differences and/or challenges communicating due to language. Some had considered the practical support they might need to provide. Some gave thought to the 'house rules' they would like to communicate and how they might manage any conflict that arose. Some said they had not fully considered the impact hosting might have on them or their family.

Preparing to host: A range of preparations were undertaken by hosts in anticipation of their guests arriving and what their needs might be with some investing a significant amount of time, effort and expense in preparing. Most preparations were of a practical nature such as buying items or making modifications to their home. Other preparations which interviewees spoke of included engaging with their local community and neighbours prior to guest arrival. Some sought out information and support to prepare emotionally for supporting people who may have been affected by trauma.

“You might have someone you don’t get on with, cultural differences, perhaps language difficulties. You might get someone who takes advantage of your hospitality or doesn’t respect your home.”

“It’s about giving them control and dignity as well” ...it occurred to me that this was like setting up to be an AirBnB host rather than having family to stay”

“I knew it wasn’t going to be easy” ...“I was preparing, just in case” [to deal with trauma]

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Findings: How the hosting experience turned out overall

“Very positive, I would do it again... We’ve gained a new social life”

“I expected more interaction [with guests]”

“experience of hosting has been much more difficult than expected...the [guest] family was in crisis before they arrived... and we’ve just been in the middle of it”

Interviewees’ experiences of hosting and their relationships with guests varied.

Some felt hosting had turned out better than anticipated – often due to getting along well with their guests. Some – who had expected it to be positive overall - found it much as they had imagined. Other experiences were a lot less positive, either from the start of the hosting arrangement, or due to deterioration in the relationship over time. Some felt the relationship and arrangements succeeded because their guests were living in a separate property, while others enjoyed the familial aspects of living with their guests. Some expected more social interaction with guests and were disappointed when this did not happen. Even when the experience had turned out well, some respondents described the ‘psychological toll’ of hosting. **Some of the challenges interviewees reported reflect challenges identified by respondents to the UK-wide [ONS survey](#), such as: agreeing house rules and arrangements with my guests (32%); getting to know and building relationships with my guests (31%); sharing a kitchen or other living space (31%); and, agreeing length of stay (22%).**

“They are really nice. I don’t think, it probably couldn’t have gone any better.” The same interviewee also described hosting as “draining”

“I’m not exaggerating when I say that we feel like family ... I can honestly say, hand on heart, we haven’t had any problems with them”

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Findings: Provision of practical support

“It was very hard work and very time consuming at first because we had to get the doctor, the dentist, the school (uniforms etc.) sorted out... I’ve had to do all the form filling and anything that requires talking to someone because her English isn’t good enough yet... I was at the job centre advocating on their behalf, speaking for her”

“She’s been able to deal with public authorities even when they’re being obstructive, unhelpful or unresponsive. She fights her corner. And eventually she usually manages to achieve results. This reduced the level of responsibility on us [the hosts] although we did give lots of help in early days”

Providing practical support to guests: Hosts provided assistance in a range of ways, from help with forms and applications, to accompanying to appointments and assistance with shopping and cooking. Hosts were generally surprised at the amount of time and effort they needed to spend to help the guests get set up with life in Scotland. Hosts were conscious of guests wanting or needing to move towards being more independent over time. [The provision of practical support reported by interviewees echoes findings in the ONS survey](#), in which almost all current or previous sponsors (99%) said they regularly provided some form of support beyond accommodation. This included showing guests around their new surroundings (reported by 92%); helping guests settle into the community (84%); taking guests to appointments (84%); helping their guests set up services such as a phone or bank accounts (93%); helping guests to register with healthcare providers (91%) and apply for their £200 grant (90%).

“We spent four days, from early morning till 9 at night, helping them to sort things out...it is a different thing when you are working through a whole country’s bureaucracy system.”

“I’m not her dad, I’ve done all I can but she’s an adult...I kind of feel I shouldn’t necessarily be doing everything for them; they have to be able to stand on own two feet.”

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Findings: Provision of pastoral care and support

“[guest’s] abilities are diminished, health issues, physical disabilities. I’ve ended up as an inadvertent carer... I’m a carer now whether I like it or not”

“I was almost like a counsellor, she [guest] needed to say lots of things, and I think that’s quite exhausting”

Providing care and/or emotional support to guests: Some hosts found themselves in a pastoral care role for which they felt unprepared. They felt guests were not getting adequate support from elsewhere. Some hosts were conscious of needing to allow space for guests to talk about their experiences, or had sought information to help them understand or support the guest emotionally. **In the [ONS Survey](#), 67% of current or previous sponsors reported providing emotional support.**

“The mental health, there’s big kinds of challenges and this takes a strain on the host families as well...There are people who this is going to be a big challenge for”

“Just be prepared for making space for conversations of any kind and that some stuff will come up. Talking about missiles during breakfast. You know, comes up, you are in the middle of something mundane and something just comes up. Just be prepared to give space for that to happen.”

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Findings: Relationships with hosts' family, friends and community

“There has been lots of support and willingness to help from neighbours – taking them to church, finding [items] for them, giving them contacts, finding out about English lessons...”

Support from neighbour – “initially she was ok with it, she really enjoyed it [giving English lessons]. But then it became more of a favour for me rather than teaching English, to give me a break.”

Interactions between hosting and the host's relationships with their family, friends and neighbours: Hosts' reported their own local networks had been largely supportive. Examples were given where the hosts' social relationships and community had helped them directly access support and/or opportunities for their guest that might otherwise have been harder to come by. However, for some, their hosting role had been the cause of tensions with neighbours and extended family. For some, the hosting arrangement created tensions between different family members within the host household.

“House on either side and house opposite – everyone was joyous and supportive. With one of the neighbours, they went absolutely ballistic, full frontal highly aggressive attack. Their understanding was that we would be living with them here. With that one family they were obviously fearful, all manners of accusations, naivety of the situation etc. I had to reason with them as best as I could.”

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Findings: Extending the hosting commitment

“Assuming things are going as they are now, we would probably host for 12 months ... After 12 months we would have to treat her like a lodger and ask her to make a contribution”

“If the family is in a position to be independent, we may get our house back or we may not. We believe we are in it for the long haul.”

Extending the hosting commitment: Some hosts indicated they would consider continuing to host beyond 6-12 months if required; they reported their decision would be influenced by factors such as what was best for the guest, and finances (with ongoing receipt of the monthly host payment considered increasingly important in the context of the rising cost of living). **ONS found that 70% of hosts who planned to provide accommodation for between 6 and 12 months said that continued £350 monthly payments would encourage them to keep hosting.** Negotiations for ending or extending hosting arrangements at the end of the initially agreed term had placed some host interviewees and their guests in a difficult position - **a challenge reported by 22% of ONS sponsor survey respondents** – some expressed a desire for guidance on this. Some host interviewees expressed concern about the lack of options available for their guests to move into their own accommodation in Scotland and the barriers they may face.

“Doors open for mum and child as long as she needs it but I don’t think it’s good for them in long term”

“Quite happy to host for a year or longer, concern after one year would be the money”

“Many people coming do not have a good credit rating, having to build it up fast. Needed for finding rentals. Will be a bigger mess”