

A Warm Scots Future

Policy Position Paper Executive Summary

September 2023

Introduction

The Scottish Government has worked in partnership with local authorities, the third sector and local volunteer and business communities to provide a Warm Scots Welcome to displaced people from Ukraine arriving through the Super Sponsor Scheme since March 2022.

The war against Ukraine has forced millions of people to flee their homes in search of safety. While the conflict continues, homes and critical infrastructure in Ukraine have been damaged and destroyed. It is time to consider the strategic focus of the next phase of Scotland's Ukraine response and focus on a longer-term and more sustainable approach.

From a Warm Scots Welcome to a Warm Scots Future

Scotland remains committed to welcoming and supporting displaced people from Ukraine and will build on this by focusing on integration to better support people who arrive in Scotland.

To aid this transition, five strategic priorities have been identified to guide the next phase of Scotland's Ukraine response.

1. A trauma informed, holistic and rights-based approach to long-term integration, in line with the New Scots refugee integration strategy
2. Reduce reliance on welcome accommodation
3. Boost long-term, settled housing that leaves a legacy for Scotland
4. Pursue clarity on routes to settlement, family reunification and repatriation
5. Continued partnership and collaboration, ensuring good governance and recognising the lived experience of displaced people from Ukraine

Commitments to further and future funding are not within the scope of this policy position paper. However, the Scottish Government recognises the challenging economic conditions within which national and local government and third sector partners are operating, and will work towards delivering the strategic priorities set out in this paper.

Strategic Priority 1 – A trauma informed, holistic and rights-based approach to long-term integration, in line with the New Scots refugee integration strategy

The next phase of Scotland's response will draw on the holistic and rights-based approach to successful integration set out in the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 – 22.¹ This is underpinned by five principles: integration from day one, a rights-based approach, refugee involvement, inclusive communities, and partnership and collaboration.

¹ [New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy 2018 - 2022 \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

This is important so displaced people from Ukraine in Scotland are able to live full and independent lives, exercise their rights, have their needs met and to have opportunities to be active members of communities.

Strategic Priority 2 – Reduce reliance on welcome accommodation

The provision of welcome accommodation has been at the heart of Scotland's ability to offer immediate sanctuary to displaced people from Ukraine. However, we know that access to a settled home supports integration and better longer-term outcomes.

Welcome accommodation is intended to provide safe, temporary accommodation to those arriving under the Scottish super sponsor scheme. However, the Scottish Government and our partners have been clear that we do not want anyone to stay in welcome accommodation longer than necessary.

To reduce reliance on welcome accommodation, displaced people from Ukraine have to be able to make their own choices about where and how they want to live. This includes ensuring they have the information they need to understand the benefits of hosted accommodation, as well as having clearly defined parameters to welcome accommodation. The Scottish Government will therefore continue to work with our partners to reduce the length of stay in welcome accommodation and further support integration into communities.

Strategic Priority 3 – Boost long-term, settled housing that leaves a legacy for Scotland

Access to settled housing has been highlighted as one of the most difficult challenges facing displaced people from Ukraine - as it is for many thousands of people across Scotland.

The Scottish Government's vision for housing, set out in the Housing to 2040 vision and principles², is that all people in Scotland live in high quality, sustainable homes that they can afford and that meet their needs.

The Scottish Government and partners will work to support displaced people from Ukraine to access longer-term housing in this wider context.

Strategic Priority 4 – Pursue clarity on routes to settlement, family reunification and repatriation

When the Scottish super sponsor scheme was paused to new applications in July 2022, the Scottish Government committed to reviewing this decision. To support this, we developed a set of seven criteria against which plans to reopen the scheme to applications could be considered.

² [Housing to 2040: vision and principles - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-to-2040-vision-and-principles/pages/1-introduction.aspx)

The most recent review against the seven criteria took place in June 2023, but the majority of the seven criteria had not been met so the decision was taken to maintain the pause to new applications.

The Scottish Government will continue to assess the decision to pause the scheme to new applications using the seven criteria and any other relevant factors. These assessments will take place in six monthly intervals, with the next review scheduled for December 2023.

The lack of certainty about the future immigration status of displaced people from Ukraine, arriving through any visa route, is having a negative impact on their ability to make decisions about their future. Currently, Ukrainian visas are valid for 36 months from the date of issue. The UK Government has not provided any clarity on what options will be available to displaced people after this.

The Scottish Government is clear that displaced people should be able to remain and be supported in Scotland for as long as they need to be. This includes a need to establish clear routes to settlement in Scotland for those who wish to stay here.

There is also a need for a clear route to voluntary repatriation for those who choose to return to Ukraine, many of whom will return with vital skills to help rebuild the country.

Strategic Priority 5 – Continued partnership and collaboration, ensuring good governance and recognising the lived experience of displaced people from Ukraine

Scotland's Ukraine response to date has been delivered through strong partnership and collaboration across the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council, local authorities, the third sector, community groups, business communities, the NHS, schools, colleges and universities. This has been aided by the generosity of the people of Scotland who have volunteered as hosts and provided other forms of support.

Ensuring a strong collaborative and partnership approach is taken offers better and more consistent support for people arriving in Scotland. The lived experience of displaced people from Ukraine is central to the collaborative approach and the Scottish Refugee Council has worked with local communities to help establish a Ukrainian Collective³ to represent displaced people from Ukraine living in Scotland.

In the next phase, the Scottish Government will continue to work with its partners to strengthen this approach.

Next Steps

The Scottish Government and its partners, including COSLA, local government, the third sector, community volunteers, business communities and the wider public

³ [Supporting Ukrainian communities in Scotland - Scottish Refugee Council](#)

sector remain committed to welcoming and supporting all those fleeing war and persecution.

The high number of people arriving from Ukraine in a short period of time presented a unique challenge that required a unique response. However, as the emergency nature of our response subsides, the five strategic priorities set out in this paper will guide and inform our continued support for displaced people from Ukraine, alongside others who have sought sanctuary in Scotland.

The next phase will continue to be one of partnership and collaboration between the New Scots partners - Scottish Government, COSLA, the Scottish Refugee Council - as well as local authorities, third sector and third sector interfaces, community and diaspora groups, and displaced people themselves.