

Member Briefing – Ukraine

Purpose

This briefing provides information about the current crisis in Ukraine caused by the Russian invasion.

This is clearly a fast moving and constantly evolving situation, and this note is accurate as of 23rd March 2022. It will continue to be updated to reflect further information and intelligence as it becomes available.

Context

Russia invaded Ukraine on 24th February 2022. All Western nations have stated their solidarity with and support for Ukraine and condemned the actions of Russia, and specifically President Vladimir Putin.

The UK, EU, US and other allies have introduced a wide range of financial and non-financial sanctions against Russia, Russian businesses and individuals, including significant financial restrictions and the seizing / freezing of assets. A wide range of support has been offered to Ukraine, including defensive weapons, humanitarian support and the promise of further action.

Many businesses and organisations have suspended or cancelled trade and contracts with Russia, including retail, sports, culture and manufacturing. Energy (particularly gas) supplies have been reviewed and, in some cases, stopped, sponsorship deals annulled, and events, tours and the like cancelled.

The implications of these wide-ranging sanctions are already being felt across the world and, with the strong possibility of further sanctions being introduced over the coming weeks, are likely to impact for some time. In particular, significant price rises are already being seen in the cost of fuel, energy, materials such as steel, crops such as wheat.

National Response

In addition to the humanitarian aid being provided, the Government have announced schemes to aid Ukraine nationals and their family members.

[UK visa support for Ukrainian nationals - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Ukraine Family Scheme

The Ukraine Family Scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK.

If the applicant holds a valid Ukrainian international passport or an expired Ukrainian international passport with a formal extension stamp issued by the Ukrainian government, they will need to complete an application online, but do not need to attend an appointment at a visa application centre (VAC) to give your biometric information. This scheme allows Ukrainians to stay in the UK for 3 years

Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukraine

The government has announced plans for a new sponsorship scheme for Ukrainians without any family ties to the UK. The scheme will allow sponsors, such as communities, private sponsors, or local authorities, to bring those forced to flee Ukraine to the UK.

There will be no limit on this scheme and the UK will welcome as many Ukrainians as wish to come and have matched sponsors.

People arriving under this scheme will be able to:

- Live and work in the UK for up to three years
- Access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition

The scheme will open on Friday 18th March for visa applications from Ukrainians and immediate family members who already have named people willing to sponsor them. People wanting to be sponsors who do not know anyone personally fleeing Ukraine can also record their interest in being a sponsor.

[Homes for Ukraine – Homes for Ukraine – Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukraine \(campaign.gov.uk\)](https://campaign.gov.uk)

There are currently 150,000 people who have registered an interest in housing displaced Ukrainian individuals or families. We are not able to determine how many sponsors there are locally at this stage.

Local Context

Using the latest Census 2021 pre-publication data specifying the number of Ukrainians in each local authority, there were 70 people recorded as being Ukrainian. Not all of these will be eligible to bring family under the Ukraine Family Scheme as the statistics also include students and people who have arrived under the points-based system who do not qualify for the family scheme.

Breckland Council Response

A Working Group is coordinating and overseeing the Council's work relating to the implications of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

This will enable the Council to respond at pace, as details of the expectations on Councils from Government emerge.

1. Refugees support

The Council has a history of offering support for refugees, including recently to Afghan nationals, and will closely review needs and requirements with a view to doing so again to Ukrainian nationals where appropriate.

Local partners have agreed that we should actively encourage those from our local communities who wish to support Ukraine migrants to make financial donations to organisations that have a presence in the region. This is because collecting supplies can be a complex and time consuming. Transporting those goods hundreds of miles is also very costly and slow in comparison to the more immediate impact that financial donations can have on those in need.

We are currently reviewing the data we hold to see if we can directly contact people in the District who are recorded as being from Ukraine. This will allow us to directly make contact with them to see if they are in need of support helping family members in Ukraine, if this is not possible local employers will be contacted and a general communication will be made.

Commencing with the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme, Breckland Council and all Districts, working with the People From Abroad Team have pledged to contribute £4,300 per annum to be pooled to support those with rent shortfalls or housing need. Additional money will be made available should the partnership identify additional need through the current crisis.

We are working closely through the Norfolk partnership on the following workstreams:

- Systems data & reporting – to receive DHLUC referral data and manage it
- Housing and accommodation – initial housing checks, welfare checks and housing breakdowns
- Community setting – immediate help and support to access public services
- Statutory response – ensuring health needs are met and safeguarding managed

2. Accommodation

Breckland Council's Private Sector Housing Manager is leading a Norfolk wide group of Private Sector Housing Officers and Environmental Health Officers to develop the approach to inspecting properties identified through the NCC webpage or the national Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The Housing Team are attending daily countywide housing meetings to ensure a consistent and joined up approach is developed.

This inspection approach will be a pragmatic, risk based approach, that will ensure the properties are safe whilst minimising any delays of the inspections being carried out.

The Council is actively seeking to establish opportunities to provide accommodation, should it be needed, for Ukrainians within Breckland. This has led to discussions with the Housing Associations as well as with developers directly. In addition, this will be raised at the Private Sector Landlords Forum on 24th March 2022.

It is likely that residents will already have registered their self-contained accommodation on the Norfolk County Council website.

[Ukraine - Norfolk County Council](#)

3. Local Community

Community Tension updates are being gathered daily by the police, with no issues identified so far in Breckland. The Breckland Local Coordinating Group also monitoring the situation. The council will also seek to work closely with local partners, including from the voluntary and community sector, to help understand issues faced locally and to support their efforts to support local individuals and communities

4. Cyber Security

The assessed level of cyber threat to the UK has been raised, in anticipation of retaliatory action from Russia in response to sanctions. Many UK businesses and other councils have faced recent cyber-attacks believed to be linked to Russia, in some cases costing significant time and money to recover from.

Many actions are already underway in Breckland to improve our security infrastructure and readiness, including increased system testing.

5. Contracts & Investments

Like many councils, Breckland uses the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) to combine its gas and electricity requirements with other councils, schools etc. to obtain value for money.

ESPO have set up the framework agreement and we are able to join to combine our electricity and gas needs. Through this framework agreement, Total Energies supplies gas and electricity for any of the council's assets where gas and electricity is required including Elizabeth House.

It has been established that Total Energies undertake joint projects in Russia as such the council is reviewing its contract to understand the options available to us.