

Toolkit for Churches Responding to the Crisis in Ukraine.

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Foreword from Archbishops of Canterbury and York

The attack on Ukraine is an act of evil, and we condemn it. The Church calls on all people of goodwill to join in prayer for the people of Ukraine and to work practically to support them in their hour of need.

We have been inspired by the warm response from churches and community groups. My colleagues have received many questions from individuals and parishes, asking what they can do to help.

We hope that in this toolkit there will be some useful answers. You will find information on the current situation, details of where you can most helpfully donate, practical support you can offer (particularly in relation to those who have fled to the UK), a guide to advocacy and prayer and theological resources.

In these days of uncertainty and fear, we pray that each of us might again turn to the Lord and receive God’s gift of peace, work for God’s justice, and know God’s reconciliation and love. May we choose paths not of hatred or destruction, violence or retribution, but God’s way of love and justice, mercy and peace. God bless you.

++Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

++Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

Information box

This toolkit has been prepared by the Faith in Public Life Department of the Church of England and [the Diocese of Canterbury](#). We have been overwhelmed with messages from churches and individuals concerned by what is happening in Ukraine and asking what they can do to help. We hope that this toolkit will be able to offer some resources and answers to what can be done by churches and individuals.

What's in this toolkit?

You will find below a brief guide to what is happening in Ukraine and the humanitarian response (please note that due to the fast evolving nature of events in Ukraine elements of this will need to be updated periodically).

There are details of some organisations and appeals that you can support to help with the work in Ukraine and in its bordering states.

You will also find information on how to work to support Ukrainians resident in the UK, those who are arriving through the family visa scheme and those who will be arriving through the announced humanitarian sponsor scheme, as well as some pointers on longer term support refugees might need.

We have a short advocacy section on things you can do to engage with policy and decision makers at both a local and national level.

Finally, we have included some prayer and theological resources for churches.

What you need to know about Ukraine and the humanitarian situation

The United Nations is preparing for up to [seven million internally displaced persons](#) and as many as five million refugees, which would be the largest war-related mass migration since the Balkan Wars of the 1990s.

Many of these refugees will wish to remain as close as possible to Ukraine or to join with family and friends in states with which they have a connection (particularly Poland and Hungary where there are pre-existing large Ukrainian diaspora).

Nevertheless, we anticipate that many refugees may choose to come to the UK, either due to family or personal ties, because they can speak English (which is a widely spoken second language in Ukraine), or simply because they believe it represents a safe and secure refuge.

There may be differences in the level of support required compared to other recent refugee movements to the UK. For example, while many of those who were forced to flee Afghanistan or Syria have little prospect of ever being able to return to the land of their birth and so are seeking a permanent home in the UK, it is anticipated that many of the Ukrainians leaving the current conflict will hope to return home once peace is restored.

On the other hand, the vast majority of the refugees who have left Ukraine are women and children, which may pose additional safeguarding concerns.

What support do Ukrainians who were already in the UK require?

According to the government

‘Preliminary figures from the 2021 Census in England and Wales identify approximately 37,530 people who were born in Ukraine and were ‘usual residents’ in England and Wales in March 2021.’

Other estimates put the number somewhere between 20 and 50,000 Ukrainian nationals who were in the UK before the war started.

Part of the reason for the variance is that many of these Ukrainians are in the UK on temporary visas, particularly on seasonal worker visas in the agricultural sector, and as students.

This will obviously be an incredibly difficult and worrying time for Ukrainians in this country and we encourage churches and individuals to provide pastoral help wherever it is needed. The government have announced changes to the visa system to help those who are already here and prevent uncertainties about what might happen to them once their visa expires.

If you know or work with Ukrainians in this situation, particularly those on skilled or seasonal worker visas or student visas you can direct them to the latest government guidance [here](#). Most Ukrainians ought to be eligible for a free visa extension until at least the 31st December 2022, however, this is subject to meeting terms and conditions attached to the visa. Do encourage people to apply early for visa extensions as becoming an ‘overstayer’ (staying beyond the terms of the visa without permission) can affect their rights and future ability to visit the UK. Please note that many Ukrainians are on visas which have no recourse to public funds, so are vulnerable to changes in their employment or personal situation.

If you are concerned that a Ukrainian is being exploited, or is in danger of being exploited, you may wish to report this. You can report this to the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700 or the GLAA on 0800 432 0804. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999. The Church of England’s modern slavery project, the Clewer Initiative, also have resources to help identify labour exploitation and cases of modern slavery [here](#).

What immigration routes are available to Ukrainian refugees

The UK government has been clear that, unlike EU states, they will not be waiving visa requirements for Ukrainians. This means that it is presently difficult for Ukrainian refugees to reach the UK except via two designated visa routes that have been designed for them. It is important to note that strictly speaking neither of these schemes are granting refugee status to Ukrainians but instead are providing three years of leave to remain.

The UK government has announced two routes for Ukrainians:

Ukraine Family Scheme

The **Ukraine Family Scheme** is open for Ukrainians who had been living in Ukraine on or immediately before 1 January 2022, and who have family legally settled in the UK.

The family member in the UK must be a British national, legally settled in the UK, an EU national with pre-settled status in the UK, or a refugee or someone with humanitarian leave. It is not available to,

for example, family members of those here on a seasonal worker or student visa. The full eligibility details can be found [here](#).

This scheme is open to a broader range of family members than usual family visa routes. The definition of family member for this visa has been expanded to include

- Parents
- adult children
- siblings
- grandparents
- cousins
- other immediate family who would not usually be eligible

It is not available to, for example, family members of those here on a seasonal worker or student visa. The full eligibility details can be found [here](#).

This scheme is currently open and is not capped (i.e. there is no upper limit to how many can come if they are eligible). The government claim it could be open to as many as 200,000 but this is highly unlikely. At the time of writing around 10,000 applications have been made and around 4000 such visas have been granted.

“Homes for Ukraine” Sponsorship Scheme

The UK government has announced that the “**Homes for Ukraine**” scheme will open in on the 18/03/2022. In the short term this will allow individuals and families to commit to sponsoring a Ukrainian individual or family in their home for a period of not less than six months. Ukrainians who arrive on this scheme will be given leave to remain for up to three years and will have full access to the labour market, the NHS and to some benefits (not including housing benefit). Volunteers who sign up will have to commit to sponsoring for at least six months and will not be able to charge for rent, but will be able to receive a thank you payment of £350 a month from the government.

This sponsorship will include what is called in policy making ‘naming’. Naming is a process whereby sponsoring citizens groups can nominate individuals that they know, for example an employee or former colleague, or a person they have identified through a congregation or charity they belong to. This is different from previous UK refugee resettlement programmes which have simply assigned families to community sponsorship programmes. It is still very early in the process, but we are working with partners and charities on different possible approaches to naming that will be able to identify Ukrainian refugees in need who can be sponsored here. If you have no links with Ukraine you can still register with the government supported charity RESET, who have created a [portal to match interested Ukrainians to potential sponsors](#).

Volunteers will have to be vetted, and the Ukrainians will also need to pass security checks. As of Monday 14/03/2022 you can register your interest and volunteer in principle to sponsor on the government website [here](#). Please note that this is a registration process designed to gauge the interest and availability of support. It does not commit you to the full scheme (applications for which will not launch until Friday 18/03/2022).

We have been asked whether clergy can volunteer for this scheme using clergy housing. Each diocese is different and will need to take its own legal advice, but we are working on this question and hope to be able to update soon.

All sponsors will need to check any legal, financial and practical restrictions on their property, including in equity release agreements and some mortgages. Again this will need to be updated in the light of forthcoming government guidance, so it is worth continuing to check the government's [information pages](#).

Hosts will be required to be vetted and be registered with the Local Authority. People arriving through the scheme will have been security checked in order to get their visa. If you are interested in these schemes we do encourage you to consider from the outset the best way to engage safely with this scheme. We have summarised some safeguarding considerations and resources [here](#).

In time the scheme will be expanded to larger groups and to sponsorship provided by companies, community groups and churches. If you are interested in your church or community group getting involved in this scheme you are encouraged to register via the [Sanctuary Foundation](#). This means you will receive updates about the scheme and also sends a message to the Government about the level of support available.

The Church of England has long experience of working on sponsorship schemes and we have a National Community Sponsorship Representative, Domenica Pecoraro [form link: domenica.pecoraro@churchofengland.org], who is available to provide advice to parishes and dioceses who may wish to take on community [sponsorship projects](#) to support refugees. There is more information on community sponsorship in the next section.

The government have launched their own [FAQ](#) on this scheme which provides some useful details for those with further questions.

This section will be updated as more details emerge.

Get Involved: How you can help

Immediate practical help

At present the single most productive thing you can donate is money to the charities that are already on the ground in Ukraine and bordering states.

There are two safe and secure ways where your gift can support those most in need:

The first is through the [Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal](#) which is supported by a number of charities including Christian Aid, the ecumenical relief and development agency of the British and Irish churches. Your gift will help provide food, bedding and temporary accommodation for people who have fled the conflict in Ukraine.

The second is through the [USPG-Diocese in Europe Emergency Appeal](#) which is looking to support the front line work of chaplaincies across Europe as well as Christian charities carrying out humanitarian work both in Ukraine and responding to the arrival of refugees in neighbouring countries.

Although we appreciate the willingness and generosity many wish to show in the charitable collection of toys, clothes and bedding we would urge you to avoid this approach as it is often inappropriate and not what is most needed on the ground.

If you, or someone you know, can speak Ukrainian, Russian, Hungarian, Polish, German, Czech, Romanian or Moldovan then those language skills could be very useful in translation work. That includes through [Translators Without Borders](#) who are supporting many refugees in translating and understanding forms and procedures.

Refugee sponsorship and longer term help and support

There are lots of ways in which you and your church can work to support Ukrainian refugees once they arrive in the UK.

If you, your church or your company would be interested in sponsoring refugees you are encouraged to indicate your support for doing so by signing up for the [Sanctuary Foundation](#). If you are an individual with a spare room and are prepared to sponsor an individual or family for six months you can register interest on the government website [here](#). This allows you to give an indication of your support for sponsoring families or individuals. It is an indication the government will use to gauge support, not a formal application or commitment. Formal applications will open from Friday 18/03. If you already know the name of the individual or family you can apply immediately through that scheme on the 18/03. If you do not know anyone and wish to be matched to someone coming from Ukraine you can register with the government supported charity RESET, who have created a [portal to match interested Ukrainians to potential sponsors](#).

Hosts will be required to undergo vetting and be registered with the Local Authority. People arriving through the scheme will have been security checked in order to get their visa. If you are interested in these schemes we do encourage you to consider from the outset the best way to engage safely with this scheme. We have summarised some safeguarding considerations and resources [here](#).

Potential sponsors should be fully aware of what they are being asked to do, and whether this is something that they are able to commit to. You will need to consider the impact that offering a room in your home could have on your life and what it may take to support an individual or family. We recommend that any potential host researches the support that people fleeing conflict may need and what is available in their area, or build connections locally to offer support prior to sponsoring.

The Church of England has a National Community Sponsorship Representative, Domenica Pecoraro [form link: domenica.pecoraro@churchofengland.org], who is available to provide specific advice and expertise on getting parishes involved in community sponsorship schemes. Although the specific schemes aimed at Ukrainian refugees are not community sponsorship schemes we would still like to encourage churches with an interest in refugee issues more broadly to inquire about whether they could take on community sponsorship.

Community sponsorship groups support refugee families through their first year in the UK to live independent lives, learn English, and access schools, benefits, healthcare and employment and participate fully in the community. These groups receive training and support from [Reset](#) (the

Government-funded national Community Sponsorship learning hub) through every stage of their journey and are also supported by their Lead Sponsor, who takes legal responsibility for the project.

There is lots of support which can be provided which stops short of full sponsorship. For example, you can sign up via the [Welcome Churches network](#) to their [Ukraine Welcome](#) scheme. This can help to provide a warm welcome for refugees looking for a community. Send trained volunteers to deliver a box filled with small gifts and local information to refugees who have recently arrived in your area and give a warm welcome to them over the first few months of their arrival.

Another way for churches to support refugees is a Local Welcome meal. [Local Welcome](#) makes it fun, easy and safe for churches to cook and eat with refugees on Sundays, in local schools. Local Welcome provides the cooking equipment, the food and the recipes. It's a great opportunity for refugees to practice English, and an easy way for congregations to offer practical support and friendship.

Advocacy

There are many things we can do ourselves by getting alongside and supporting refugees or providing donations. We know, however, that the challenges and injustices faced by refugees are bigger than what we can always confront locally. Some issues are innately international or linked to broader political and structural challenges. Seeking justice for refugees can also involve using our voice to convince politicians of the need for policies and actions that reflect a commitment to compassion and human dignity. Advocacy is taking up the call to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." (Proverbs 31:8-9).

The Church of England, through its national institutions and through the Lords Spiritual (the bishops who sit in the House of Lords) have a long history of engagement in the political process. However, we would always encourage every Christian concerned about refugee policy to seek ways of becoming involved.

We cannot entirely separate discussions of supporting Ukrainian refugees from the wider context of the UK's policies on asylum and refugees. The war in Ukraine represents a particular crisis, but there are many other vulnerable refugees in the world that we would hope to see the UK playing its part in assisting. Even as we are faced with the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine we must remember that many of the Afghan refugees evacuated last year are still in hotels awaiting permanent accommodation solutions.

We believe that the purpose of the asylum system must primarily lie in providing a compassionate system that operates in the best interests of the vulnerable. The UK has prided itself as a welcoming refuge from tyranny and oppression and was historically instrumental in informing and drafting international refugee conventions.

We believe that a just and fair migration system must always be mindful of human dignity, and look in all cases to recognise the essential humanity of those seeking refuge in our country. Christian teaching reminds us of our obligations to one another, and a need to see in every individual not a case or statistic, but a child loved in the eyes of God and owed dignity and respect.

We are, therefore, concerned by the direction of travel in government policy on refugees and asylum. Proposals in the Nationality and Borders Bill currently before Parliament would enshrine in legislation the existing two-tier system which divides the relatively small number of people who

arrive in designated refugee resettlement programmes from those who arrive by irregular means, travelling across Europe to reach the UK and claim asylum. The latter, even for legitimate refugees, will be deemed inadmissible and the government will attempt to remove them to safe third countries (which may not even be a country to which they have a connection). If it proves impossible to remove them within six months, access to asylum will be provided, but only as a temporary status, up to 30 months, with reduced rights and benefits, regularly reviewed, and the threat of removal.

This is based on the assumption that legitimate refugees can and should stop in the first safe country they can reach. The Ukraine crisis gives a very clear example of why that approach might not be appropriate or sensible.

The [UNHCR has said that these proposals](#) “would damage lives, be hard to implement and undermine international cooperation on refugee issues”. The Church of England has expressed serious misgivings about the government’s proposals, and we would urge Christians with concerns to continue to advocate, write to their MPs and work to counter these proposals.

More immediately, while we of course welcome the government’s opening of new routes for refugees from Ukraine we do need to continue to press for support for those who are arriving. For example, many if not all of those coming here will have experienced serious trauma and will require specialist support, not all of which can necessarily be provided by willing volunteers. There will need to be help developed for seeking employment and support – particularly for single adult households with children.

Prayer and theological resources

The first thing we can do is pray. On the morning of the invasion of Ukraine the Archbishop of Canterbury and York issued a call for people to pray for the people of Ukraine and Russia and for peace.

Please find below two prayers which can be used to pray for the situation.

We also have a page of [resources](#) including prayers and readings chosen for prayer services for Ukraine.

Prayer for the Peace of the World

*Almighty God,
from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed:
kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace
and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom
those who take counsel for the nations of the earth
that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward,
till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

A prayer for Ukraine

*God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.*

*Archbishop Justin Welby
Archbishop Stephen Cottrell*

The Diocese of Canterbury has opened a [Prayerbank](#), a space where prayers are offered and received, for refugees and evacuees.

Other prayers and theological resources that may be of use include:

- [Church of England prayers for refugees](#)
- [‘Refugee theology resource for churches and church groups’ from The Children's Society](#)
- [‘God With us’ resources from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland](#)
- [Bible Society – Refugees and the stranger. Resources and videos covering what the Bible says about refugees featuring theologian Paula Gooder](#)
- [United Reformed Church: ‘At home in a strange place’ - A collection of resources to enable, encourage and stimulate ‘sacred conversations’ on migration. For use in congregations and by small groups](#)
- [The Churches’ Refugee Network](#)
- [‘Liberation and Entrapment Project: Mission and Migration’ from the Mission Theology Advisory Group](#)
- [‘Migration in Missiological Perspective’ scholars explore wider issues of migration, transnationalism, and interfaith engagement as they relate to missiological thinking and practice](#)

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