# stronger together

Practical Guide For Supporting Workers Affected

By The War In Ukraine









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## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine sending shockwaves around the world and creating a humanitarian crisis. According to UN estimates, by 25 April, more than 5.2 million people had fled the country.

This guide provides practical guidance to UK businesses to help in ensuring that workers affected by this conflict are protected from harm, supported in extremely difficult circumstances and have a positive recruitment and employment experience.

It is for use by employers, labour providers and recruiters in the UK and is particularly relevant for essential sectors employing large numbers of migrant workers such as food, agriculture, construction and care. Much of the guidance is transferable to recruitment into other countries.

At the time of writing, war continues in Ukraine creating fear and anxiety, especially for those who have family and friends in Ukraine, as well as practical difficulties for workers from Ukraine who live and work in the UK or are seeking to do so.

Groups of people affected include:

- Workers from the Ukraine or neighbouring countries who have been called up to fight
- Workers wishing to return home but are unable to
- Workers without eligibility to work who want to remain in the UK and need a visa
- Workers with eligibility to work who need an extension to their current visa
- Workers who were due to travel to the UK to work, but who now are unable to
- Workers in Ukraine unable to find work, and looking for alternatives overseas
- Workers with friends or relatives who are fighting on either side of the conflict
- Workers fearful for family and friends who live or work in Ukraine or bordering countries
- Visitors from Ukraine facing an extended stay in the UK and needing to understand what support they can access
- Russian workers in the UK, or those from Belarus or other neighbouring countries facing similar difficulties
- Any worker, whether or not they have personal ties to Ukraine, who may feel fearful or affected by the conflict.

We recognise that the war in Ukraine is not the only global conflict and that workers fleeing or affected by other conflicts may need similar support. Many of the practical steps outlined in Section 5 can be applied to other conflict/displacement situations and Stronger Together and its partners will consider the development of wider guidance on this topic.

## UKRAINANS ALREADY IN THE UK

Preliminary census data suggests there were over **37,500** people who were born in Ukraine living in England and Wales in 2021. Of the **29,631** visas issued under the seasonal worker's scheme in 2021, **19,920** – **67%** – were given to Ukrainians.

#### **IMMIGRATION ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE SERVICES**



Any individual in the UK who needs assistance with visas should contact **UK Visas and Immigration service** on 0808 164 8810 (select option 2) from Monday to Thursday (excluding bank holidays) 9am to 4:45pm and Friday (excluding bank holidays), 9am to 4:30pm. This is a free phone number, but network charges may still apply.



Free immigration advice for Ukrainian nationals is being provided by the **Ukraine Advice Project UK**. Email ukraine@freemovement.org.uk and the lawyers will try to allocate them to a volunteer.



**Ukraine Advice Scotland**, sponsored by the Scottish Government has a free legal advice line for Ukrainians and their families on 0800 995 6045, open on Tuesdays and on Thursday mornings, or by email: ukraine@justrightscotland.org.uk.

#### **EXTENDING/OBTAINING VISAS**

Ukrainian nationals in the UK who have temporary visas, including work, study or visit visas are able to apply to the Ukraine Extension Scheme. The scheme is free to apply, and successful applicants will get 3 years leave to remain in the UK with the right to work, study and access public funds. Ukrainians who had visas on or before 18 March 2022, or visas which have expired since 1 January 2022, are able to apply.

In addition to the opportunity to apply to the Ukraine Extension Scheme, Ukrainians already in the UK with a visa which is due to expire, may extend their stay by extending their visa or switching to another immigration route, where eligible, even if their visa does not normally allow them to do so – see more detail about how this applies to different routes in the table overleaf.

Workers should consider whether they want to keep their current visa or switch to the Ukraine Extension Scheme. The Ukraine Extension Scheme does not currently lead to settlement – this means that workers may not be able to count any time they spend in the UK with this visa as part of an application for indefinite leave to remain in the UK in future.



CURRENT ROUTE	CONCESSION FOR UKRAINIAN NATIONALS
Skilled Worker Visa	Workers can apply to extend their leave in the UK or apply for settlement if they meet the Immigration Rules. Full details can be found in the Skilled Worker visa guidance.
Seasonal Worker Scheme (SWS) visa	Workers will automatically have their leave in the UK extended to 31 December 2022. Must continue working in a job permitted by the route with the same Scheme Operator. Will receive a notification from the Home Office if this concession applies. Should engage directly with their Scheme Operator.
Temporary HGV jobs through the SWS	Workers will automatically have their leave in the UK extended to 31 December 2022. Must continue working in the same occupation with the same Scheme Operator. Will receive a notification from the Home Office if this concession applies. Should engage directly with their Scheme Operator.
Temporary pork butcher jobs through the SWS	Workers can request a temporary extension until 31 December 2022. May also apply through the Skilled Worker Route. If a temporary extension is applied for, will receive a notification from the Home Office that the concession applies. May also be eligible for the Skilled Worker route.
Student visa	Students can apply to extend their leave, switch to a Graduate visa or switch to another type of visa if they meet the Immigration Rules. Full details can be found in the Student Visa Guidance
Visitor	Visitors can apply to switch to another visa. Will need to meet the requirements of that immigration route.

#### UKRAINIAN NATIONALS WITHOUT ELIGIBILITY TO WORK IN THE UK

Ukrainians without one of the visas described in this guide, or other right to work in the UK, will be working unlawfully and those that employ them will risk civil or criminal penalties.

Employers should follow the guidance in An employer's guide to right to work checks to establish a statutory excuse for each worker prior to commencement.

Find practical guidance on the ALP's Immigration and Right to Work page, including the open-source Workforce Recruitment and Labour Supply guide, written with the UK Home Office.

Seasonal Worker Scheme workers who may have absconded or otherwise should engage directly with their Scheme Operator to discuss their options.

Workers without legal eligibility to work in the UK have virtually no employment protection rights and are therefore one of the groups most vulnerable to exploitation and modern slavery.

Should you identify an applicant who does not have the right to work in the UK, please signpost them to the Ukraine Advice Project UK or Ukraine Advice Scotland – contact details on page 3.

#### MILITARY CALL UP OF UKRAINIAN NATIONALS

If a foreign nationality worker is called up by their home country, there is no obligation on an employer under UK law to release workers and keep their employment open.

However good practice would be to keep the worker's job open, as you would be legally required to do if the worker was called up for UK military service. For example, an employer could decide to maintain the employment relationship and put the worker on unpaid "special leave" for an initial period of three months, after which point the situation would be reviewed on a rolling basis.

#### WHAT IF YOUR WORKERS WANT TO VOLUNTEER TO FIGHT IN UKRAINE?

Workers from Ukraine, the UK or any other country may voluntarily decide to join the Ukrainian (or Polish) armed forces without a legal obligation to do so (i.e., non-reservists).

UK nationals have been advised by the UK government not to travel to Ukraine. Additionally, the Foreign Office website suggests that untrained (non-reservists) individuals who volunteer to fight in eastern Ukraine might be considered as engaging in activities amounting to terrorism.

Employers have no legal obligation to hold jobs open or guarantee reemployment although they may decide to do so. Employers should ensure they apply the same principles to all their workers regardless of race or nationality.

# WORKERS FROM THE UKRAINE LOOKING TO ENTER THE UK

Ukraine has banned all male Ukrainian citizens from 18 to 60 years old from leaving the country. This regulation will remain in effect for the period of the legal regime of martial law.

This means that the majority of people fleeing Ukraine are women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and unaccompanied children. Many may be traumatised by their experiences, and still have family and friends in danger in Ukraine.

Their vulnerability may leave them with no option but to place trust in strangers, use informal/dangerous transport options to cross borders, and accept paying recruitment fees, unsafe working conditions and poor terms of employment.

A migrant charity has compiled a comprehensive page (in Ukrainian) for those considering leaving Ukraine. A summary of the general outlook for Ukrainians seeking refuge in the UK is provided by the Free Movement blog. A guide by the Work Rights Centre is updated as matters develop.

#### TRAVEL

Commercial flights from Ukraine were halted in February and most visa application centres are closed. People leaving Ukraine need to evacuate through a bordering country: Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Slovakia or Romania.

Travel to the border is difficult and may be dangerous. People may have to queue for very long periods at border crossing points.

In most instances it will be easiest, from an immigration perspective, for people to travel to a European Union Member State. They are already able to enter without a visa and EU Member States have agreed that Ukrainians will be able to live and work in their countries for a year or more.

#### **OBTAINING A UK VISA**

There are two options:

- The Ukraine Family Scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK.
- For Ukrainians who do not have family in the UK, the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme (Homes for Ukraine) allows sponsors such as employers to bring Ukrainians to the UK.

Both schemes are free to apply with no limits or caps, and successful applicants will be able to live, work and study in the UK and access public funds for up to 3 years. People with a valid Ukrainian passport, or an expired Ukrainian passport with a formal extension stamp, can apply online and are not required to attend a visa application centre.

People fleeing the war in Ukraine and arriving in the UK through either visa route can claim benefits immediately. Emergency regulations have been laid so people can access Universal Credit and jobs support from the first day they arrive. Find out more on GOV.UK and watch the social media explanatory animation in English or Ukrainian.

#### **UKRAINE SPONSORSHIP SCHEME (HOMES FOR UKRAINE)**

Individuals and organisations such as businesses, charities and faith groups can offer accommodation to Ukrainians arriving in the UK under the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, also known as 'Homes for Ukraine'.

Accommodation must be offered for at least 6 months and before any visa is granted, the Home Office will conduct checks on both Ukrainians and sponsors, including basic DBS checks on every adult co-habiting with Ukrainian guests and enhanced DBS checks on every adult where guests have children. FAQs are available.

Sponsors who already know a Ukrainian national (or immediate family member) who they want to sponsor, can help them apply for a visa.

Sponsors who don't currently know anyone to sponsor, may wish to get in touch with their Local Authority, charities, faith groups or local community organisations who are starting to make connections between individuals.

Sponsors are entitled to a government optional 'thank you' payment of £350 per month in arrears per residential address, for the duration of sponsorship and for up to 12 months. This payment is tax-free and does not affect benefit entitlement. Each guest will be eligible for a £200 interim non-repayable payment for subsistence costs.

Sponsors providing accommodation through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme:

- May not charge rent to their Ukrainian guests
- Should not require additional payments for energy or utilities
- Should not require payment in kind by asking them to perform such tasks as gardening, cleaning, decorating, DIY, or child minding. This does not preclude informal and willing contribution to household tasks
- May choose to give all or part of the 'thank you' payment to their Ukrainian guest(s)
- Should offer a welcoming and supportive environment.

The **Scottish** and **Welsh** Government's super sponsor scheme removes the need for applicants to be matched prior to being given permission to travel to the UK. Ukrainian individuals can apply through the usual form but should choose the Scottish or Welsh Government as their sponsor.

Successful applicants will usually be housed in a hotel while their wishes and needs are assessed and an onwards plan is made, which for many people may include placement with a host.

There is nothing to stop a person with a visa under the Homes for Ukraine scheme travelling to England any time they want.

## SUPPORTING YOUR WORKFORCE TO CONSIDER WHETHER TO OFFER ACCOMMODATION

Employers may find that existing workers are keen to support Ukrainians by offering accommodation in their homes. Support those workers by signposting them to guidance including this document, sponsor guidance and guidance on sharing your home with a lodger.

It would be helpful for employers to create a group where workers offering accommodation and those that they are sponsoring can meet each other and share guidance, issues and best practice.

Organisations and individuals can find more information on becoming a sponsor **here** and register their interest **here**.

#### FACTORS TO CONSIDER BEFORE OFFERING ACCOMMODATION

- Employers providing accommodation should not make this conditional on guests
  working for them. This does not preclude employers making offers of work where
  this is optional, the guest has the freedom to take or not take up the work and
  suffers no detriment if they choose not to or take up the work and subsequently
  leave the employment.
- Labour providers and employers should consider whether accommodation usually used for migrant workers is suitable for families, who are likely to make up the bulk of applicants under this scheme.
- How will the accommodation be funded? Rent may not be charged to the guest(s), nor may they be required to work in exchange for accommodation, and dependent upon government interpretation and the style of the accommodation offered, only one thank you payment per residential address may be claimed.
- Is the accommodation and surrounding area safe for children, the elderly or those with disabilities?
- Does the accommodation have adequate facilities for young families i.e., laundry, private bathrooms, safe outdoor play space?
- Is there reasonable access to schools, nurseries, childminders, healthcare and shops?
- Accommodation must be offered for a minimum of 6 months is this possible?
- Accommodation must be at least a room with adequate access to bathroom and kitchen facilities.
- Two people should not be in one room unless they are: adult cohabiting partners; a parent and child; two siblings of the same gender if aged over 10; two siblings regardless of gender if aged under 10. Individuals who didn't previously know each other should not be given the same room.
- Will you accept pets? Sponsors may state a preference.

Where someone wishes to rent privately, or when the sponsorship ends, guests will have access to public funds and will be able to rent a property like anyone else. Therefore they can choose to leave at any stage and live and work elsewhere and pay rent. If they need to, they'll be able to claim the housing part of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit.

#### **OFFERS OF WORK**

Employers able to offer work for people arriving from Ukraine, should email offerwork@homeoffice.gov.uk with their company name and contact details and how many roles they have available.

#### **APPLICATIONS FOR ASYLUM**

It is not possible to apply for asylum from outside the UK or get a visa for the specific purpose of claiming asylum.

People who do make it to the UK can apply for asylum if they have a well-founded fear of persecution or are at general risk of serious harm. If successful, they would be granted refugee status or humanitarian protection. The UN Refugee Agency says that nobody should be sent back to Ukraine at the moment even if their asylum claim is unsuccessful.

All Home Office country policy and information notes on Ukraine have been removed or withdrawn, suggesting that the government is still reassessing its policy on asylum claims by Ukrainians.



# PEOPLE FROM OTHER AFFECTED GROUPS

#### **IMMIGRATION**

Currently new visa routes and concessions only apply to Ukrainian nationals. Other groups of people who may be impacted by the conflict include:

- Those from Russia or neighbouring countries
- Those from Ukraine who are not Ukrainian nationals
- The Roma Gypsy population, many of whom have no ID papers
- International students, studying at Ukrainian universities

All of these groups require permission to work in the UK under one of the existing routes as described in Workforce Recruitment and Labour Supply.

#### GENERAL

Any worker may feel fearful or affected by the conflict, particularly if they have friends or relatives who are fighting on either side of the conflict, or who live or work in Ukraine or bordering countries.

See the 'During employment/supply' part of Section 5 for practical steps to help you support these workers.



## PRACTICAL STEPS TO ENSURE

## THE RESPONSIBLE RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OF THOSE AFFECTED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Responsible employers, labour providers and recruiters must have robust due diligence processes to uncover and remediate abuses within their operations and supply chains and ensure responsible recruitment and employment practices are in place.

As basic principles, businesses should ensure that they and their business partners (clients, labour providers, labour recruiters, sub-agents):

- Bring any new recruits into the business responsibly through existing suppliers where possible.
- Provide opportunities for new and existing workers to communicate any questions and concerns through a variety of communication channels.

The following are practical steps and considerations for businesses to take when recruiting and employing Ukrainian workers. Further general guidance is referred to from the S2G, RRT and ALP websites.

#### **DURING RECRUITMENT**

Preventing workers having to pay recruitment fees or related costs	Continue to apply pro-active steps to minimise the risk of any fees being charged to workers, and where evidence of fee-charging is discovered, follow a procedure to ensure repayment to workers.	RRT: 1. No Recruitment Fees are Paid by Workers				
Mitigating modern slavery risks	Deter, detect and deal with the risk of worker exploitation by following the guidance in the Tackling Modern Slavery in UK Businesses Toolkit.  Stronger Together has produced posters and worker questionnaires in Ukrainian, which are free to download.	S2G: Tackling Modern Slavery In UK Businesses Toolkit				
Ensuring terms and conditions and employment status are transparent	Ensure jobseekers have clear information, in a language they understand, about the nature of work and their terms and conditions at all stages of recruitment.  Ukrainian nationals seeking work may be signposted to the Just Good Work app – this is free to download and use, is in Ukrainian and gives jobseekers and workers critical information and advice for everything needed on the journey to work, from recruitment to employment and life in the UK.	RRT: 2. Recruitment is Transparent  Welcome! Guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK  Working in the UK video  – Ukrainian version				



Establish legal eligibility to work

Workers with an extension to their existing visa will evidence their right to work in the same way as they did previously. Once the visa has been extended, a new right to work check should be completed, prior to the expiry of the original visa. This will maintain an ongoing statutory excuse.

For people arriving under the Ukraine Family Scheme or Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, a new Annex F will be added to the Employers Guide to Right to Work Checks.

Travellers will be issued with a permission to travel letter.

On arrival, Border Force will stamp the passport with permission to enter the UK, valid for six months with no restrictions on taking employment or recourse to public funds.

Employers should manually check this document as outlined in the guidance to obtain a time-limited statutory excuse. These endorsements are included in the acceptable documents for a **manual** check under Annex A of the Employers Guide, List B, Group 1, Number 1.

During those six months, the individual will need to obtain a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) which will be endorsed with up to 36-month permission to stay.

Employers will need to carry out a follow-up check of those individuals who have time-limited permission to work in the UK.

Applying due diligence on labour providers and recruitment intermediaries

Continue to monitor the appointment and use of any labour providers/recruiters used to recruit and supply workers including:

- Checks before starting a relationship with an agency for example to verify that they (and any sub-agents), have the appropriate licence to trade
- Ensuring appropriate contracts and service level agreements are in place
- Ongoing monitoring (self-assessments or virtual audits where face-to-face audits are not possible) and worker interviews.

ALP: Immigration and Right to Work page

RRT: 6. Legal eligibility to work is established

ALP: Using Labour Providers – Due Diligence and Good Practice

RRT: C. Strategic Supply Chain Partnerships are Maintained

#### **DURING EMPLOYMENT/SUPPLY**

### Welcoming on arrival

Actively support workers to ease their transition into working in the UK:

- Ensure that workers are welcomed with a smile and treated as a person not a commodity or number
- Have people available that can speak in the workers' first language to answer any questions, ensure understanding and help to complete documentation
- If providing accommodation, take the workers to their accommodation and give them an opportunity to settle in. This will be their new home for the time they are working with you. It is a good idea to provide a welcome pack in the accommodation with basic necessities e.g., milk, bread, tea, coffee, toilet paper etc.
- Workers that are new to the UK will require information on working and living in the UK relevant to them e.g., they may need to open a bank account

Provide information on the local area, where to go shopping, doctor's surgeries, dentists, hospitals, social facilities and events, local website links with relevant information etc.

#### RRT: D. Workers are Treated as Customers

Welcome! – Guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK

#### Communication

Help your workers to keep up to date with events in Ukraine and how it affects them.

Consider how you will communicate updates in a sensitive and timely manner.

- Sign up to government updates
- Visit the ALP Ukraine Page
- Hold informal discussion groups and promote local support networks

ALP Support for the People of Ukraine webpage

Effective Communication Toolkit for Multi-Language Workforces



#### Welfare Lifeline 0808 808 8000 Workers may be victims of trauma or may have serious concerns about family and friends still in a war zone. - (Textphone :18001 0808 808 8000) Consider: Samaritans on 08457 Offering counselling services 90 90 90 to talk to a Providing guiet spaces to call relatives or friends in trained volunteer Ukraine Northern Ireland - Allowing workers to take time off at short notice Minding your head Providing assistance with translation and Scotland - Support in interpretation services for personal documents and Mind calls to do with immigration, travel or accommodation Wales - Mind Mental health can be a taboo subject in Ukraine. Make England - Mind sure workers know where they can go for help (the Hub of Hope is a good place to start). Just Good Work Workers may need more practical support to integrate Welcome! Guide for into life in the UK, particularly those with families who Ukrainians arriving in may need help to find appropriate accommodation, the UK access childcare and register children with schools and GPs. Your local authority is a good place to start for advice, as is the Just Good Work app and the Welcome Guide. Managing The situation in Ukraine may cause conflict in the RRT: 18. Opportunity conflict/ workplace between those with different views. and Treatment are Fair workforce Employers should consider ways to support workers of and Equal (in particular cohesion and any nationality who feel affected by the events, such as: Step 18.7) supporting RRT: 19. No. Reminding staff of policies on bullying and employees in the Mistreatment is Allowed harassment, and being prepared to deal with workplace potential conflicts between workers who may have opposing views on the events in line with these policies, including taking disciplinary action if necessary Being aware of the fact that workers who have links

Fair & equal opportunities and treatment

Continue to treat all workers equally, irrespective of their country of origin.

with Russia may be distressed about the situation. They may also experience hostility from their

 Proactive steps to support workplace diversity and inclusion such as appointing workplace 'Inclusion Champions', promoting cultural exchange events, and

with policies on bullying and harassment.

diversity and inclusion training.

colleagues, which should be dealt with in accordance

RRT: 18. Opportunity and Treatment are Fair and Equal

Accommodation	<ul> <li>Where accommodation is provided, ensure it is:</li> <li>Safe and hygienic</li> <li>Meets resident workers' basic needs</li> <li>Accords with relevant legislation</li> <li>Employers who regularly provide accommodation to migrant workers, will need to consider the specific needs of families and children when housing refugees from Ukraine.</li> </ul>	ALP Accommodation resources  RRT: 15.  Accommodation is safe and hygienic
Making grievance mechanisms accessible to Ukrainian workers	When issues do occur, ensure that workers from Ukraine can effectively raise a grievance, complaint or concern, and access remedy where it is substantiated.  Remedy may include changes to policies or procedures, staff training (or re-training), communication (or recommunication) of requirements, further investigation, disciplinary action, an apology or compensation.	RRT: 21. Access to Remedy is Ensured
Planning for/ managing end of employment	If the current conflict ends or stabilises, employers may find that workers from Ukraine wish to return home.  In some cases, this may leave UK employers with large numbers of workers leaving at the same time and such employers should have a contingency plan in place.  Termination of workers' contracts must be handled responsibly with workers receiving all outstanding pay and benefits to which they are entitled, including payment of all accrued but untaken holiday pay.	RRT: 23. Termination Rights are Provided

### **FURTHER SUPPORT**

Businesses can access further support and guidance from the following not for profit organisations:

Association of Labour Providers	Trade association promoting responsible recruitment and good practice for organisations that supply essential workers across primary and industrial sectors, food and general manufacturing, warehousing, logistics and the supply chain.
Responsible Recruitment Toolkit	Collaborative programme providing practical online guidance, resources and training on embedding responsible recruitment practices.
Stronger Together	Multi-stakeholder initiative that provides guidance, training, resources, and tools to support organisations to address modern slavery risks within their business and supply chains.

Please direct any questions, comments or suggestions to info@stronger2gether.org.uk.