

Secure Status for Ukrainian Displaced Persons in the UK and EU

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Of the 6 million Ukrainians displaced to European countries, around 4% came to the UK (4th in terms of number of arrivals after Germany, Poland and Czechia). Around 210,000 people arrived under Ukrainian Schemes and 121,600 remained in the country. Public opinion and sentiment in the UK is in favour of this support (6 of 10 UK adults would confirm long-term support to Ukrainian refugees). However, displaced Ukrainians face difficulties in securing long term status in host countries despite special provisions for temporary immigration status.



About the research

In July 2025, Dr Olena Chub, visiting Associate Professor, and Professor Dr Devyani Prabhat of University of Bristol Law School held a workshop with NGO's, legal advice groups, and lawyers who work with migrant communities to gather best practice and evidence on how to support displaced Ukrainians. This briefing outlines four key recommendations for policymakers:

1. Provide for longer periods of time (automatically renewed) under the special Ukrainian visa and visa extension schemes
2. Permit the time periods under each scheme to count towards the residence requirements for long term secure status (such as indefinite leave to remain in the UK or permanent residence in EU countries)
3. Specifically secure the welfare and long term legal status of children who are displaced
4. Support NGOs working closely with community members to provide legal advice or resources to displaced community members



Key findings

- Special visa or residence schemes devised by the UK and EU members for Ukrainians have had tremendous beneficial impact in securing safety for displaced Ukrainian nationals. Shown in Anna's story (below), this is primarily a labour-active population who contribute to European economies.
- There are concerns about workforce disruption if workers in critical sectors only have short term status. The risk of increased reliance on emergency housing, social services, and NHS mental health support puts pressure on public services. A surge in late asylum claims or applications for leave outside the rules, increases Home Office backlogs and places strain on the legal system.
- The short 18-month terms of residence extension undermine most educational courses, apprenticeships, tenancies and job contracts.
- Ukrainian schemes at present exclude Ukrainians from obtaining any long term secure status. Displaced Ukrainians did not emigrate choosing a type of visa and they have no route to settlement in their host countries.
- Ukrainian nationals could apply for another type of permission (for example, work, study or family visas) should they meet the eligibility criteria for that route. But there are many challenges in these pathways.

Case Study: Anna

Anna is a single mother with a child, works as a care assistant in an elderly care home, currently on a fixed contract. Her employer would like to retain her but cannot sponsor due to salary threshold restrictions. She is active in the local Ukrainian community centre, volunteers in school, fluent in English yet she finds herself in legal limbo owing to short term status with contestant worry about being removed, and fear of destabilising her son's life and education. She could lose her job and become ineligible for tenancy, leading to homelessness and hardship. She fears disruption to her child's education and wellbeing with potential safeguarding concerns.

(Case Study provided by the Scottish Refugee Council)



Policy implications

- **Extension Schemes:** extensions of stay in host countries should be automatic and of a long enough duration. The case study of Anna illustrates how certainty and stability is crucial so that housing, work and education can continue.
- **Routes to Secure Status:** permit the residence periods under the visa schemes to contribute to long term secure status. Displaced Ukrainians should be able to proceed to long-term residence with rights to work, rent and study.
- **Children's Rights:** Ukrainian children (as well as adults) are traumatized by war, and deserve continuous education and mental health support rather than further compulsory displacement. All children should receive support (education and health including mental health) without any requirement of evidence of legal status.
- **Support for NGOs in the community:** Local government and public sector should support NGOs already working with the community who provide support with: housing and homelessness; tenancy schemes; funding for immigration support; space and resources for community based assistance; legal advice, access to data and guidance for immigration processes. A positive example is that of the case study below.



Case Study: Bristol City Council

Bristol City Council used Homes for Ukraine tariff funding to support Ukrainians renting privately by incentivising landlords to rent to them. Key interventions included:

Setting up the Homes for Ukraine Tenancy Scheme, acting as a point of contact for tenants and providing the deposit on behalf of displaced Ukrainians.

Landlords received a range of financial incentives such as a £1,000 thank you payment, six months' rent paid in advance, funds for repairs and maintenance.

The council has secured over 60 rentals below the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for displaced Ukrainians across Ukraine schemes, as of the time of fieldwork.

(Case Study from British Red Cross (2024) 'Finding a Safe Home: What can we learn about solutions to refugee accommodation from the Ukraine response?')

Further information

Prabhat, D. (2023). MacDermott Lecture 2023: Confounding the Rule of Law: conflating immigration, nationality, and asylum in the UK. [Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly, 74\(3\)](#).

Prabhat, D., & Seeberg, M. L. (2024). 'Firm but Fair'? Migrant Children's Rights through Dramaturgy and Nation Branding in Norway and the UK. [Comparative Migration Studies, 12\(1\), Article 35](#).

Chub, O. (2025). Constitutional Rights' Defence in Wartime Ukraine. [International Law after the Ukraine War](#). Ed. J. Giblin et al. Routledge.

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The names and identifying data in the case study have been changed to protect personal information.

The policy brief was co-produced with civil society and legal service providers working with Ukrainian displaced nationals in Poland, Czechia and the UK:

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