

# Information for Ukrainian nationals arriving in the UK

*This document contains information to help Ukrainian nationals who have recently arrived in the UK understand their rights and find out about services they can access.*



## Immigration status

Depending on what visa or immigration status you have been given to enter the UK, you may need to access immigration advice from a qualified immigration adviser about extending this or making a different kind of application in future.

Legal aid can help meet the costs of legal advice and representation but is only available for certain types of applications and for people who cannot afford to pay for a solicitor privately. You can search for a solicitor in the UK on <https://solicitors.lawsociety.org.uk/> by selecting “Legal Issue & Changing Countries” and entering your postcode, town or city. Or for a legal representative regulated by the UK’s Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) through the ‘Find an Immigration Advisor’ search function via this [webpage](#). You can also email [ukraine@freemovement.org.uk](mailto:ukraine@freemovement.org.uk) explaining your situation and requesting free immigration advice.



## Benefits & financial

The state provides basic welfare benefit payments for people who are unable to work, who are looking for work but have not yet found a job, or who are on a low income. This is called **Universal Credit**.

**Universal Credit** is a payment from the government to help you and your family live in the UK. It’s paid monthly and you need to apply for it online.

Universal Credit can be used to pay for your living expenses such as food, clothing, transport, household bills and anything you want to buy.

Your Universal Credit payment is made up of a standard allowance. Any extra amounts that apply to you, for example, if you have children; a disability; a health condition which prevents you from working; or need help paying your rent, will be added in addition.

If you have questions about how Universal Credit works you can call:

**Universal Credit Full Service** 0800 328 5644  
**Citizens Advice Help to Claim** 0800 144 8 444

## How do I start a Universal Credit application?

When you complete the online application, the website will tell you if you need to go to a local Job Centre. When you go to the Job Centre, you will meet a 'work coach'. They will help you apply for a National Insurance Number (NINO), if you do not have one. This is a unique and personal number. It takes about 2-6 weeks for a NINO to come. It will be sent to you in the post.

If you are joining a Universal Credit claim with your partner their claim will be suspended. **It is important to be aware that after making a joint claim, your partner's Universal Credit may be stopped for around five weeks.**

If you already have a national insurance number and a bank account, you can ask your work coach for advance payment. This payment is a loan and will be repaid by deducting from future payments of Universal Credit. If your partner is working, you may still be able to get extra help by applying for Universal Credit jointly and your partner's income will affect how much money you receive.

## What do I ask for at the Job Centre?

**You can ask for an interpreter for Job Centre appointments** if you need one. **It is important you understand what you need to do and when.** If you do not do what the Job Centre asked you to do, some or all the money you receive may be stopped (this is called being 'sanctioned').

## If you have children

There is a difference between Universal Credit and Child Benefit:

**Child Benefit** is money paid to parents or other people who are responsible for bringing up a child. You can apply for Child Benefit for children under 16, and sometimes for older children (aged 16-20) if they are in approved full-time education.

You can download a Child Benefit form from this website: [www.gov.uk/child-benefit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/child-benefit/how-to-claim)

## Should I open a bank account?

Universal Credit is paid into one bank account, yours or your partner's. To receive Universal Credit or other benefits yourself, you need to open a bank account. To open a bank account, you need to go to a bank and show documents that prove: **Identity; Immigration status and Address.**

If you do not have a bank account, you can get your first payment as a voucher. This is called 'government payment exemption service'. You will need to tell the Job Centre why you have not been able to open a bank account. This can take a long time, so it is better to try and open a bank account first.

## Where can I try and get other financial support?

- Charities in the UK might be able to help by providing you with basic essential items or food if there are delays with accessing financial support. You can search for your local foodbank via this <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/>. You can search for other charities offering financial support via this <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/> and also search online for Ukrainian charities in the UK such as the Association of Ukrainians of Great Britain [www.augb.co.uk](http://www.augb.co.uk).



### How can I get help with housing?

You may need to ask the government for help with housing. **To ask for help with housing for you and your family you need to go to the Local Authority** (also called your local council) for help if you are homeless or threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days. You can find which is your Local Council by entering your postcode on this website <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

You can request help from your Local Authority if your accommodation is overcrowded, in a poor state of repair or you are at risk of violence. The Local Authority should carry out a 'homelessness assessment' to establish what kind of support you need and what they can offer.

The Local Authority will ask for evidence to assess your needs such as:

- Evidence you have Leave to Remain in the UK
- Evidence of 'priority need'
- Evidence that you are not homeless through any fault of your own
- Evidence of a 'local connection'

#### **What are priority needs?**

To assess who is most in need of help the Local Authority will want to know if anyone in your family is a child under 18 years old; anyone in your family is pregnant; or if anyone is 'vulnerable' (this may be because of disability, serious health condition or because they are at risk of domestic violence).

#### **What is a local connection?**

Most Local Authorities apply a residency test, or wider local connection test, as part of their qualification criteria to go on the waiting list. A 'local connection' may usually be established through living or working in an area, or through have close family living in an area.

Once you have somewhere to live, you will need to sign a 'tenancy agreement'. This is a legal contract between you (the tenant) and the landlord who owns the housing (this might be the local authority, a housing association, or a private individual). Your tenancy agreement sets out the rights and responsibilities of the tenant and the landlord. It will also state the date you can move in, how long the contract is for, how much the rent is and when you must pay it.

### What types of housing will I be offered?

The housing you are offered may not be in the place you want and the quality of this housing may not be what you expect. Housing is usually outside of the city centre and can be in tall buildings with many floors and many flats in the same building. Many Local councils face a shortage of housing and often need to look for accommodation far away from where you currently live. This may be in another city. If you have a large family, please be aware that there are limits on the amount of housing benefit you can claim. This varies depending on the size of your house and where you live.

If you are renting a house that is too expensive you will need to ensure you top up your rent from any other income you have (work, welfare support) to avoid rent arrears. You may be able to ask the Local Authority for financial help (a Discretionary Housing Payment) if you need temporary support while you look for cheaper accommodation or are waiting on money to be paid to you.

Not every local authority will be able to provide financial help and it depends on your family's individual circumstances. You may need to move to a cheaper part of the country to afford accommodation.

### What if I do not want the accommodation I am offered?

If you receive accommodation support from your Local Authority, you will have limited choice about the housing you are offered. **It is important not to refuse an offer of accommodation from the Local Authority**; otherwise the Local Authority can find that you have chosen to be homeless which the legislation calls being 'intentionally homeless' and they may refuse to help further.

You may be able to ask them to reconsider their decision but it is advisable to first accept accommodation offered to ensure you have a place to stay then take legal advice on your housing options. Money for your housing is included in your application for Universal Credit. If you move address, you will need to tell the Job Centre.

### Can I rent private housing?

Private housing can be found through local lettings agents and on property listings websites such as Right Move and Zoopla. The types of privately rented housing available will differ across the country. When you have found a house or flat you will probably need to put down a deposit, before signing a 'tenancy agreement'.

For further advice on your housing needs: **Shelter** - 0800 800 4444 [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)



## Healthcare

The National Health Service (NHS) provides health services to people living in the UK. Most of these services are free.

### How do I register with a doctor?

In the UK, family doctors are called General Practitioners "GPs". A GP is the first doctor you will see when accessing healthcare. To receive medical treatment, you and your children must **register with a GP as soon as possible, even if you are not ill.**

You need to find GPs that are near where you are living and can use this website to find one: [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/LocationSearch/4).

You will be asked to fill out a registration form and bring identification and proof of your address if you can. Please note ID (Identity Document) and proof of address is **not necessary** for registering with a GP. You should **not** be asked about your immigration status.

### How do I register with a dentist?

Some dentists offer NHS treatment and private treatment. You should register with a dentist as an NHS patient and let them know if you are receiving benefits, in which case your check-ups and necessary treatment will be free. Note that **getting dental treatment before receiving Universal Credit can result in charges.**

### Can I get extra financial support with a health condition?

You might get additional money from Universal Credit if you have a health condition that means you are unable to work or prepare for work.

If you are on a low income you may be eligible to apply to the NHS low income scheme for help with health costs such as prescriptions, dental care and eyesight tests. You can ask your GP practice about this or apply online <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/help-with-health-costs/nhs-low-income-scheme-lis/>

### What do I do in a health emergency?

If you have an accident that requires immediate medical treatment you need to go to the nearest hospital that has an Accident and Emergency (“A&E”) Department which are open 24 hours a day or if you are seriously ill and cannot travel you can call for an ambulance by calling “999”.

### Is there support for my mental health?

Mental health problems range from the worries we all experience as part of everyday life to serious long-term conditions. Anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression are the most common problems.

In the UK it is quite common for people to seek advice about concerns with mental health. Your doctor (“GP”) is trained to give guidance and treatment on emotional and mental health as well as physical health.

For further support: **Mind** 0300 123 3393 Text 86463 [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
**Samaritans** 116 123 Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### Is there support for my sexual health?

You have the right to access free services that help you get information and help about your sexual health. If you would like information about sexual health, speak to your GP. Contraception can help you avoid unwanted pregnancies. In the UK, you can ask your doctor for a contraceptive method that suits you. This is between you and the doctor, no one else needs to know that you are accessing these services.



## Children's schooling

It is important that you make sure that your child goes to school. If you do not there could be legal consequences. Primary school (5-11 years) and secondary school (12-18 years) education is free. You need to register your child with a school if they are five years or older. The school should be near your home.

### How do I register my children for school?

Before your child can start school, you must meet with the school and fill out forms. Each Local Authority has different procedures for applying for school places. If you are not sure how to register, ask at your local school who can give you information.

### You are entitled to an interpreter for this meeting.

You need to bring proof of address, any identification that you and your child have (BRP, passports, visas) and the child's birth certificate, if they have one.

You can find information on applying for primary school places here: [www.gov.uk/apply-forprimary-school-place](http://www.gov.uk/apply-forprimary-school-place).

You can find information on applying for secondary school places here: [www.gov.uk/apply-forsecondary-school-place](http://www.gov.uk/apply-forsecondary-school-place).

### Is there financial help for travel, school uniforms, and school meals?

Free school transport may be available if you live a certain distance away from your children's school. School Uniform Grants and Free School Meals might be available if you are on a low income or receiving certain benefits. You will need to **ask your Local Authority about grants** and financial support. The available help is different between Local Authorities.

### Children who have arrived without parents

If children arrive in the UK without their parents and are living with relatives or friends it is important that the adult carers contact their Local Authority <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council> to inform them of this. The Local authority would then complete an assessment and determine the suitability of the arrangement and any support that may be needed. It is important that anyone receiving Ukrainian children in this manner notifies the Local Authority as soon as possible to get this process started. <https://frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/what/children-living-with-relatives-or-friends/>

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### Domestic abuse

'Domestic abuse' is a term used in the UK to describe any violence or abuse used to exercise or gain control and power over a partner or family member. It is a **crime** in the UK. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, verbal, emotional and financial abuse.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse you are entitled to protection and can access a safe place to live – this is called a refuge. If you experience **domestic violence or abuse** in your relationship and want to leave your relationship, there are places you can go to for help.

**Emergency Services** Always call **\_999** if you or someone else is in immediate danger.

**National Centre for Domestic Violence** **0800 970 2070** [www.ncdv.org.uk](http://www.ncdv.org.uk)

### Sex and consent

Men and women are treated the same under the law in the UK. The age of consent for sexual activity in the UK is 16. It is illegal for people under 16 to engage in a sexual activity, even if both people are under the age of 16.

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Scan this QR code on your phone to visit this website and find out more information and British Red Cross services in the UK <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/get-help-as-a-refugee/help-for-refugees-from-ukraine>

