



Responding to the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine

Our parishioners have responded generously to the needs of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine by providing goods and financial donations.

Now we turn our minds to hosting Ukrainian refugees who come to the UK.

This document addresses key points, what is needed and how best to respond.

Please read CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network) document <https://www.csan.org.uk/ukraine/> from which much of the following is taken.

Prayer Is Essential

Loving God,
We pray for the people of Ukraine,
for all those suffering or afraid,
that you will be close to them and protect them.

We pray for world leaders,
for compassion, strength and wisdom to guide their choices.

We pray for the world
that in this moment of crisis,
we may reach out in solidarity
to our brothers and sisters in need.

May we walk in your ways
so that peace and justice
become a reality for the people of Ukraine
and for all the world.

Amen.

(<https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources/A-prayer-for-Ukraine>)

Donate

We recommend donating money to CAFOD (who are a part of the Disasters Emergency Committee). CAFOD will be working through partners including our sister organisations Caritas Ukraine and Caritas Poland, on the ground. Please note we do not advise donating or transporting goods.

<https://cafod.org.uk/donations/picker?defaultuniversalstype=single&Appeal=123770>

Sponsoring a Ukrainian refugee (or family) as an individual 'Homes For Ukraine'

This Government scheme allows British people to host a refugee family in their homes for six months or more. We encourage this but only after careful consideration. We recommend that people find out as much as possible about both the practicalities and other possible impacts of hosting refugees.

- The government has FAQs regarding the practicalities on its website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions>
- The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) have been supporting people to host refugees for many years: <https://www.jrsuk.net/ukrainian-refugee-hosting-faqs/>
- Get in touch with a local refugee support group or charity, who will be able to advise you.
- Caritas Westminster is looking into providing training through JRS on hosting – so get in touch with your local Caritas Development Worker, you can find their details here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/our-development-team.php>

To Sign Up

The Government scheme is open to those who already know a refugee family they would like to host. Most people will not be in this category. However even though you don't know a Ukrainian person you can still host. Do this by registering your interest. We recommend RESET (a leading Community Sponsorship of Refugees charity) who have a website where individuals can register to be matched with Ukrainian person or family. Go to: <https://www.homesforukraine.org.uk/>

To Sponsor refugees as a Community Group

The Government scheme and the RESET website mentioned above are only set up for individuals who wish to sponsor (although organisations can register their interest on the RESET page).

Now is the time for your parish to consider taking part in the general Community Sponsorship scheme, and work towards finding a home and a welcome for a refugee family from Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, Yemen...

Go to <https://resetuk.org/> to find out more, and contact your Caritas Westminster Development worker too!

The Parish Community

Even though accommodation will necessarily be provided by an individual household the involvement of the parish community is still required. Skills such as befriending, catering, introduction to local amenities and schools will be needed.

Remember Ukrainians already present in the UK

Where there are Ukrainians already in your communities, be aware of their needs, both pastoral and physical.

- Many Ukrainians are in the UK on temporary visas and should be able to get these extended – they will need to check the advice and act quickly.
- Ukrainians on visas which do not allow them to apply for benefits (No Recourse to Public Funds) may be particularly vulnerable, for example of becoming homeless, or being exploited. See the link above for signs that someone is being enslaved.
- Ukrainians will be anxious to bring their family members over and the Government has set up a scheme to allow this, but it will not apply to everyone – see the information on the CSAN resource <https://www.csan.org.uk/ukraine/>

Be Conscious of the Risk of human trafficking

On Tuesday, an open letter was sent from a group of organisations working in the field of Human Trafficking. It was signed by Karen Anstiss, manager of Caritas Bakhita House. The letter highlighted the risk that those who have fled Ukraine, to Poland and Romania, may be at risk of being trafficked for the purposes of exploitation and slavery.

As always please be vigilant of the signs of human trafficking and modern slavery, which can be found on our website here:

<https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/human-trafficking-what-are-the-signs-to-look-for-769.php>

Volunteering to help refugees in the UK

Not everyone can host a refugee, but we need people to help support a refugee or asylum seeker.

We are able to help find volunteering roles and anyone interested should fill in this form: <https://www.caritasvs.org.uk/volunteer-to-support-afghan-refugees.php> (NB - this form was originally created to help find volunteers to support Afghans arriving last summer, but it is a general form for anyone wishing to volunteer with refugees.)

The Nationality and Borders Bill

The House of Lords has voted against key clauses of the Government's Nationality and Borders Bill. The Bill will soon return to the House of Commons, where the Government is likely to reject many or all of the Lords' proposed amendments. JRS UK has produced a briefing asking MPs to support the Lords' amendment to prevent the creation of differential treatment of refugees depending on how they arrived in the UK. We urge people to write to their MPs on this matter. The JRS briefing can be found here: <https://www.csan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NandB-Bill-JRS-briefing-Mar22.pdf>