

Response to the 2023 Homes For Ukraine Parliamentary Inquiry

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Introduction

1. **Founded in 2014 as the knowledge exchange arm of the University of Oxford's [Centre on Migration, Policy and Society](#) (COMPAS), the [Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity](#) (GEM) is an initiative facilitating knowledge exchange, collaboration and social impact. Since 2017, GEM has supported 12 UK cities (Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Liverpool, Peterborough, London, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Coventry, Newry, Mourne & Down, Newport and Sheffield) and their local partners to achieve a step-change in their approach towards the integration of newcomers through our [Inclusive Cities](#) programme.**
2. **Since the introduction of the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme, GEM worked with the 12 participating cities to understand how local authorities have supported the integration of Ukrainians in their city as well as the challenges and opportunities they have faced in relation to HfU. We are submitting evidence to share key findings from our consultation with local authorities and review of the research literature on HfU.**
3. **Summary of the evidence.**

a. HfU mobilised an unprecedented number of people but created inequalities among Ukrainians and is contributing to uneven local authority provision and outcomes among refugees and newcomers in the UK.

i. HfU marked a dramatic shift in the ambition of community-led welcome schemes, dwarfing the scale of previous and existing community sponsorship and resettlement schemes in the UK, thanks to (1) the scheme's flexible requirements and swift procedure; (2) limited responsibilities placed on sponsors; (3) uncapped nature; (4) the ability for sponsors to 'name' refugees to welcome; (4) informal matching mechanisms.

ii. HfU created inequalities among Ukrainians in the UK since arrivals under the Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme do not benefit from the same support as HfU visa holders.

iii. HfU sits alongside a range of resettlement and sponsorship schemes which operate by different criteria and different funding arrangements, resulting in uneven local authority provision for refugees and newcomers.

b. Local authorities have played an important convening role in the implementation of the scheme, but they are encountering several challenges in fulfilling and sustaining this role, including:

i. Conducting sponsor and accommodation checks, with long-term safeguarding remaining an issue.

ii. Providing adequate and sufficient cultural orientation, training resources, and support across areas.

iii. Supporting HfU visa holders find alternative accommodation when placements break down or to 'move on'.

iv. Setting up economies of scale in procurement and commissioning to support the housing and labour market integration of Ukrainians and their broader long-term integration.

- v. Inadequate funding to meet the needs of displaced Ukrainians as local authorities are supporting Ukrainians across HfU, the Ukraine Family Scheme, and the Ukraine Extension Scheme but receive funding only for arrivals under HfU.
- c. *Key challenges ahead include:*
- i. Building a permanent infrastructure for community-led welcome that (1) is embedded within the functioning of local authorities, (2) complements but does not replace government-led resettlement, (3) is accessible to all Ukrainians and other refugee groups, (4) is sustainable, and (5) makes provision for longer-term integration and inclusion outcomes through the development of clear, cross sectoral and community plans which cut across several services.
 - ii. Developing a long-term housing strategy for Ukrainians across schemes.
 - iii. Developing a long-term labour market integration strategy for Ukrainians across schemes.
 - iv. Providing clarity over extension of visas across schemes to maximise integration support and outcomes.

The objectives of the scheme and how it was set up

4. HfU marked a dramatic shift in the ambition of community-led welcome schemes, dwarfing the scale of previous and existing community sponsorship and resettlement schemes in the UK, due to its flexible requirements, swift procedures, uncapped nature, and financial support from central government—key features that contributed to high buy-in from hosts and guests.

- a. HfU is an example of community-led welcome—an umbrella term to indicate those initiatives where individuals and communities welcome and integrate refugees and newcomers (Reset, 2022). Community-led welcome programmes include community sponsorship schemes where governments admit refugees whilst private sponsors (individuals, groups, or organisations) provide the financial, social, and emotional support to welcome and integrate them (Bond and Kwadrans, 2019). From 2016 to 2022, 815 refugees were welcomed by over 300 community groups under the UK Community Sponsorship Scheme (Reset, 2022). By contrast, more than 170,000 individuals fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine arrived in the UK as of the 31 October 2023 under HfU (Home Office, 2023). This is just an example that shows how HfU by far surpassed the scale of previous and existing community sponsorship and resettlement schemes in the UK.
- b. Key features of HfU that resulted in high buy-in include:
- i. *Flexible requirements and swift procedures.* Anyone with spare accommodation can express interest to act as host. The matching of hosts and guests can be done informally via social media and hosts can 'name' refugees they want to welcome in their homes. Guests can move to the UK as soon as they are granted visas by the Home Office, without needing to wait for the local authority to conduct checks on hosts first. By contrast, the matching procedure under the UK Community Sponsorship Scheme takes longer as refugee families are first identified by UNHCR and then matched to a community sponsorship group by the UK government (Reset, 2022).
 - ii. *Limited responsibilities placed on sponsors* (Fratzke, 2023). HfU hosts are expected to provide housing only for a minimum of six months. In contrast, the UK Community Sponsorship Scheme requires individuals to first form and then apply to be recognised as a community sponsorship group, raise £9,000 per refugee family, and show evidence that there are enough volunteers in the community group to provide various types of support beyond accommodation, before they are matched to a refugee family (Reset, 2022).
 - iii. *Uncapped numbers.* Contrary to other resettlement schemes run by the UK government in the past (e.g., Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme launched in January 2014 to resettle 20,000 vulnerable refugees), there is no limit to the number of people that can be granted visas under the HfU, which means buy-in from potential sponsors is not limited by design (Reset, 2023; Reset, 2022).
 - iv. *Funding from central government.* HfU hosts received a monthly 'thank you' payment for housing guests of £350 for the first year and £500 after 12 months. This incentivised private individuals to sign up to the scheme who felt some degree of support from the government. In contrast, the UK Community Sponsorship scheme requires community sponsorship groups to fundraise £9,000 before they can host a refugee family (Reset, 2022)—a requirement that can deter potential hosts from engaging with the scheme. Furthermore, central government allocated local

authorities a one-off £10,500 funding per person settling in their area under HfU (reduced to £5,900 per person for arrivals entering the UK after 1 January 2023) to allow local authorities to support hosts and to provide services to foster the integration of HfU arrivals. By contrast, under the UK Community Sponsorship Scheme, local authorities are allocated only £4,500 for children aged 5 to 18 and £2,250 for children aged 3 to 4 for the first year, and can claim £850 ESOL funding for each adult refugee arriving through community sponsorship, with direct funding is available for local authorities to claim for years 2–5, determined on a case-by-case basis (Home Office, n.d.).

5. While ambitious and mobilising a high number of people and actors, HfU created inequalities among Ukrainians in the UK and sits alongside a range of parallel resettlement and sponsorship schemes which operate by different criteria with different funding arrangements, resulting in uneven local authority provision for refugees and newcomers—a situation that highlights the wider need for a permanent infrastructure for resettlement.

- a. HfU visa holders benefit from various types of support, including but not limited to:
 - i. Rematching with a new sponsor when the local authority deems accommodation unsuitable, when safety checks fail, or in situations of placement breakdown.
 - ii. Council tax discount and 'thank you' payments for sponsors.
 - iii. Support from local authorities to find accommodation to 'move-on'.
 - iv. One-off £200 payments for guests.
 - v. ESOL classes since local authorities are encouraged to use the one-off central funding councils are allocated per person settling in their area under HfU to fund guests' education and skills support.
- b. This support is not available to:
 - i. Visa holders under the Ukraine Family Scheme, who therefore are more vulnerable (British Red Cross, 2023; Broadhead, 2022). For example, the 2023 British Red Cross report indicated that as of 27 January 2023 865 Ukrainian households were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty due to unsuitable or unavailable accommodation on arrival, with nearly two thirds (540) of these being households on the Ukraine Family Scheme.
 - ii. Ukrainians who entered the UK without a visa and therefore have no access to public funds, and are at risk of exploitation, trafficking, and destitution. Ukrainians can travel to the EU without visas. There have been reports of Ukrainians without visas crossing the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland (Cockbain & Sidebottom, 2022; British Red Cross, 2023). The 2023 British Red Cross report highlighted that approximately three quarters of casework for Ukrainian nationals by Red Cross refugee support in Northern Ireland is for people who have arrived with no visa.
 - iii. Visa holders under the Ukraine Extension Scheme.
- c. HfU sits alongside a range of other resettlement and community sponsorship schemes which:
 - i. Support certain groups to access safety and refuge in the UK (e.g., the Hong Kong British National Overseas visa route, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, the Community Sponsorship Scheme, and the UK Resettlement Scheme).
 - ii. Operate within different protection frameworks and through separate visa arrangements, have their own features, aims and fundings arrangements. This means that local authorities manage a wide range of schemes for refugees and newcomers. The fact that these schemes come with different levels of support from central government contributes to uneven welcome and integration provision by local authorities, resulting in different outcomes for newcomers (Broadhead, 2022; Reset, 2023).
- d. This situation shows the wider, urgent need for a permanent infrastructure for resettlement, convened and led by local government, rather than parallel bespoke schemes that effectively create inequalities and uneven outcomes among displaced individuals and families (Reset, 2023; Broadhead, 2022).

6. Cultural orientation, training resources, and support provided by central and local governments to hosts and guests were insufficient and varied considerably from area to area.

a. In theory, HfU places limited responsibilities on hosts who are expected to provide housing only (Fratzke, 2023). In practice, hosts found themselves having to provide a variety of support, including helping guests apply for welfare benefits, access interpreters, ESOL classes, and school places for their children (ONS, 2022). While knowing English, hosts often had limited experience and training in how to interact with governmental agencies and engage in administrative procedures (Tomlison et al., 2023). The 2023 report by More in Common showed that support and guidance from both central government and local authorities to hosts has been insufficient. Of the 1200 hosts surveyed by More in Common:

- i. 36% of the hosts said they were provided some help from local councils but could have been supported more and 17% said local councils had not given nearly enough support.
- ii. 45% of the hosts said they were provided some guidance from central government but would have benefited from more help and 36% said they weren't provided nearly enough guidance.

b. Hosts did not receive adequate cultural orientation about Ukraine, and they often lacked knowledge of Ukrainian history and culture, which resulted in guests encountering negative stereotypes (Galpin et al., 2023).

c. Galpin et al. (2023) found that Ukrainians struggled to access welfare support such as Universal Credit and childcare benefits, or healthcare due to language issues and limited guidance, training, and orientation on how to navigate formal services in the UK.

d. Based on our consultation with the 12 participating cities in GEM's Inclusive Cities program (Broadhead, 2022), we found that the cultural orientation, training resources, and support available to hosts and guests varied considerably from area to area. For example, Liverpool council rapidly identified the need to provide separate training, orientation, and support for hosts and guests. Liverpool provided online training sessions for sponsors on various themes such as accessing schools, benefits, and healthcare and how to empower and support guests in becoming independent. Alongside, the council runs regular welcome drop-in sessions for Ukrainian arrivals who can discuss issues without their sponsors being present with a range of professionals. Liverpool's case study shows how the governmental support provided to hosts and guests has depended on the pro-activeness and ad-hoc responses of local governments. These findings are confirmed by the 2023 More in Common report documenting the type of local council support hosts received. Of the 1200 hosts surveyed by More in Common:

- i. 29% did not receive support with language lessons.
- ii. 52% did not receive support find school places for Ukrainian children.
- iii. 53% did not receive help applying for benefits.
- iv. 65% did not receive help find employment for Ukrainian guests.
- v. 74% did not receive support find accommodation in the private sector.

Arrival numbers and checks

7. The lack of a centralised mechanism to match hosts with sponsors raised concerns over trafficking and exploitation (Cockbain & Sidebottom 2022) but the ability for sponsors to 'name' the refugees to welcome contributed to higher arrival numbers.

a. The 'naming' policy allowed potential sponsors and Ukrainians to mobilise independently to find a match using digital technologies (e.g., social media) (More in Common, 2023; Fratzke, 2023).

b. The 'naming' policy allowed civil society organisations such as Citizens UK or Reset to aid the matching process, mitigating concerns over trafficking and exploitation (More in Common, 2023).

c. The HfU naming feature also gave more control to the community welcoming refugees and more certainty for the person being sponsored (Reset, 2023).

8. The informal matching mechanisms meant that there was a vital role for local government in providing safeguarding checks, but local authorities faced various challenges in conducting these, with long-term safeguarding remaining an issue.

- a. Informal matching mechanisms raised several safeguarding risks, including:
 - i. Families settling in unsuitable accommodation since guests can move to the UK as soon as they are granted visas by the Home Office, without needing to wait for the local authority to conduct checks on hosts first (Vicol & Sehic, 2023).
 - ii. Domestic servitude (Cockbain & Sidebottom 2022).
 - iii. Domestic abuse (Crawford & Smith, 2022).
 - iv. Sexual exploitation (Cockbain & Sidebottom 2022).
 - v. Child neglect and abuse (Simpson, 2022).
 - vi. Guest exploitation for benefit entitlements (Broadhead, 2022).

- b. While more research is needed to understand the scale at which these safeguarding risks materialised, responses to freedom of information requests obtained by the New Statesman from 117 councils representing around 50,000 Ukrainian arrivals under the scheme reveal a concerning picture (Bindman, 2023):
 - i. 39 councils cited instances of relationships breaking down due to the host being 'unable to cater to the guest's needs' (Bindman, 2023).
 - ii. Of the 100 councils that responded to the relevant request, 53% reported at least one instance of matches breaking down because of 'inappropriate behaviour from host' (Bindman, 2023).
 - iii. 17 councils said that relationships had broken down in their area due to 'child safeguarding concerns' (Bindman, 2023).
 - iv. 62% of councils said that on at least one occasion they had to escalate concerns of illegal or inappropriate behaviour from both hosts and guests to either the police, social services, the Department for Housing, Levelling Up and Communities or the Home Office. One third of councils said reported hosts to the police for reasons including 'exploitation, domestic servitude, fraudulent sponsorship or controlling behaviour', or to social services for reasons including 'child's safety, expectation of work, children being left without appropriate supervision'. (Bindman, 2023).

- c. Challenges encountered by local authorities in conducting safeguarding checks include:
 - i. Poor communication with central government resulting in delays between the time the Home Office approved visas and the time local authorities could conduct sponsor checks, leaving Ukrainian families vulnerable to exploitation and homelessness (Vicol & Sehic 2023; Machin, 2023).
 - ii. Lack of data validation mechanisms resulting in local authorities spending precious time investigating bogus addresses (Vicol & Sehic 2023).
 - iii. Insufficient, unclear, or inaccurate guidelines and information around checks (Vicol & Sehic 2023).
 - iv. Limited guidance on what to do when safeguarding issues arise (Vicol & Sehic 2023, Cockbain & Sidebottom 2022; Broadhead, 2022).
 - v. Long-term safeguarding remains an issue due to lack of clarity in terms of ongoing monitoring of placements and of provisions for flagging, escalating, and addressing concerns related to safeguarding concerns, including risks of domestic servitude, guest exploitation for benefit entitlements, and sexual exploitation (Cockbain & Sidebottom 2022; Broadhead, 2022).

Funding provided for the scheme

9. The one-off £10,500 central funding local authorities are allocated per person settling in their area under HfU (reduced to £5,900 per person for arrivals entering the UK after 1 January 2023) is (1) limiting local governments' ability to set up economies of scale in procurement and commissioning to meet the needs of Ukrainians across all visas schemes, and (2) showing the need for a long-term permanent infrastructure at local authority level to meet the integration needs of refugees and newcomers, rather than piecemeal and programme-based funding.

a. Based on our consultation with the 12 participating cities in GEM's Inclusive Cities program (Broadhead, 2022), we found that local authorities play an important convening role in community-led welcome schemes such as HfU as they bear responsibilities for (1) strategic planning and programme management; (2) service delivery in areas such as ESOL, education, employment, housing, or access to welfare benefits and legal advice; (3) support for guests and hosts in the form of rematching, safeguarding checks, training and orientation; (4) monitoring and evaluation. These functions can either be provided directly by local authorities or commissioned out to other service providers. Lack of a long-term funding settlement means that local authorities may be subject to financial risk in commissioning and procuring services which, in the current financial climate, limits capacity for innovation and economies of scale (Broadhead, 2022).

b. Local authorities are supporting displaced Ukrainians across HfU, the Ukraine Family Scheme, and the Ukraine Extension Scheme. In our consultation with the 12 participating cities in GEM's Inclusive Cities program we found that Coventry, for example, extended the in-house integration services (e.g., language provision, employment support, rematching accommodation) to those arriving on the Ukraine Family Scheme. The fact that local authorities receive funding only for Ukrainians under the HfU has left councils frustrated and with limited resources to support Ukrainians who arrived in the UK via the Ukraine Family Scheme and those who extended their visa through the Ukraine Extension Scheme (Vicol & Sehic 2023). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that local authorities are also managing a range of other resettlement and community sponsorship schemes running parallel to HfU. This situation, combined with the HfU per capita funding arrangement, is making it difficult for local authorities to meet the arrival and long-term integration need of different cohorts of refugees and newcomers (Broadhead, 2022).

c. Absence of long-term funding security for local authorities means that staff are working on rolling contracts and in the context of the cost-of-living crisis they are looking for more secure jobs (Vicol and Sehic, 2023). Staff turnover means local authorities lose valuable expertise (Vicol and Sehic, 2023).

10. Limited voluntary sector capacity in some areas prevents local authorities from developing collaboration to meet guests and hosts' needs.

a. During our consultation with the 12 participating cities in GEM's Inclusive Cities program, we found instances where local governments established productive collaboration with voluntary sector partners (both religious and non-religious) to enhance access to alternative housing, provide immigration legal advice to guests, or wider orientation and support to guests and hosts (Broadhead, 2022). For example, Greater London Authority convened meetings with voluntary and community sector partners to get timely information and accurate guidance on the HfU to the voluntary sector. Bristol City Council joined efforts with Christian Action Bristol, Bristol churches and the Good Faith Partnership to create a network of Welcome Hubs to support both guests and hosts. Welcoming Hubs are meant to complement the integration services made available by the local authority by providing wider welcoming support and trusted spaces which local authorities can site their support services.

b. However, we found that in some cases local governments felt unable to develop shared models due to either the strain already present on the voluntary sector (for example those significantly committed to supporting Afghan arrivals) or as a consequence of an absence of provision (Broadhead, 2022).

c. This situation highlights how long-term funding needs to target not only local authorities but also the voluntary sector.

11. The cost-of-living crisis is impacting both guests and hosts, and some local authorities are 'topping up' thank you payments to help them cope with the crisis.

- a. In the survey by ONS published in December 2022, 18% of hosts reported the cost-of-living crisis was affecting their ability to provide support on the scheme 'very much', compared with 9% in July 2022. As of August 2023, 67% of hosts said that the rising cost of living is affecting their ability to provide support to guests to some extent (ONS, 2023).
- b. The cost-of-living crisis is impacting Ukrainians, and Universal Credit is insufficient to mitigate the impact of the crisis and is preventing Ukrainians under the HfU to meet basic necessities (British Red Cross, 2023).
- c. Some local authorities 'top-up' thank you payments to sponsors to help meet the cost-of-living crisis and support hosts continue provide accommodation (Vicol & Sehic, 2023). However, this approach is creating confusion and different standards among neighbouring areas (Vicol & Sehic, 2023).

Challenges and future risk

12. Building a permanent infrastructure for community-led welcome that (1) is embedded within the long-term functioning of local authorities, (2) complements but does not replace government-led resettlement, (3) is accessible to all Ukrainians and other refugee groups, and (4) is sustainable in the long term, and (5) makes provision for longer-term integration and inclusion outcomes.

- a. Such infrastructure is needed in order to:
 - i. Contribute towards a coherent government strategy on community-led welcome, resettlement and integration (Broadhead, 2022).
 - ii. Capitalise on the appetite to welcome refugees demonstrated by the unprecedented mobilisation of people under HfU (Broadhead, 2022).
 - iii. Provide even welcome and integration support and provision to refugees regardless of nationality (Broadhead, 2022).
 - iv. Enable local authorities to support both the short- and long-term integration of refugees (Broadhead, 2022).
- b. Based on our research, key steps to build a permanent, sustainable infrastructure for community-led welcome at the local authority level include:
 - i. Creating a central government departmental home for community-led welcome within local authorities supported by adequate, long-term funding. The absence of a departmental home 'inhibits the ability for local government to convene partnership groups, commission services and identify gaps, plan for new needs and develop new collaborations, including developing hybrid partnerships between public and private sector' (Broadhead, 2022, p. 10).
 - ii. Developing clear, cross sectoral and community plans at local level which cut across several services, notably housing, health, education, employment support and community development, in order to address initial challenges of arrival alongside longer-term integration and inclusion outcomes (Broadhead, 2022).
 - iii. Building in mechanisms for the inclusion of voices of lived experience within both planning and implementation (Broadhead, 2022).
 - iv. Fostering knowledge exchange on good practices and peer learning among all those actors involved in community-led welcome—from local authorities and sponsors and refugees themselves to voluntary sector organisations and volunteer (Broadhead, 2022; Fratzke, 2023).

13. Developing a long-term housing strategy for Ukrainians across schemes.

- a. There are serious concerns over increasing rates of homelessness and destitution for Ukrainians across schemes who are facing several barriers in finding housing. Several factors drive this process. Drawing from the ONS survey data published in December 2022, the British Red Cross (2023) reported that of the HfU visa holders:

- i. 67% could not afford to rent privately.
 - ii. 64% could not provide a guarantor.
 - iii. 57% could not afford a deposit and other up-front payments.
 - iv. 54% could not provide necessary financial documents.
 - v. 51% could not provide valid references.
 - vi. 43% had no suitable properties in the area.
- b. Other barriers to housing include:
- i. Bias or discrimination against Ukrainians by landlords or estate agencies (ONS, 2023).
 - ii. Inability to pass landlord checks. Opora, a network assisting Ukrainians, reported cases where landlords requested evidence of work or tax history stretching back years despite only having moved to the UK after Russian's invasion of Ukraine, putting in precarious housing situations even though newcomers with stable source of income and savings (Das & Townsend, 2022).
 - iii. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis (British Red Cross, 2023).
 - iv. Failure to be re-matched by the local councils with other hosts when accommodation is unsuitable or in situation of placement breakdowns (Vicol & Sehic, 2023; British Red Cross, 2023).
 - v. Hosts' uncertainty over whether the thank you payments will be extended to the third year (British Red Cross, 2023).
 - vi. Visa holders under the Ukraine Family Scheme are more vulnerable to homelessness and destitution since local authorities are not formally expected to rematch them to a new sponsor when their housing arrangements break down or to help them find accommodation to 'move on' (British Red Cross, 2023). This shows that a long-term housing strategy needs to support Ukrainians across schemes.
- c. Responses of local authorities to help HfU visa holders access alternative accommodation have been inadequate. Of the over 1200 hosts surveyed by More in Common (2023), only 12% of respondents had their local council help them find accommodation—demonstrating the lack of a long-term housing strategy.
- d. Local authorities have a statutory duty to prevent homelessness and the lack of a long-term housing strategy has resulted in 'local fixes' to support HfU visa holders across housing, including:
- i. Partnerships with voluntary sector organisations to support HfU visa holders to 'move on'. During our consultation with the 12 participating cities in GEM's Inclusive Cities program (Broadhead, 2022), we found that Birmingham City Council paired with Spring Housing Association to develop its 'move on' housing strategy which aims to provide a comprehensive, high-quality Housing Advice Service to visa holders under the HfU across Birmingham and Solihull to ensure they are aware of housing options available to them based on their personal circumstances, the housing routes available to them and to advise on housing related benefits, rights and entitlements in order to improve housing and integration outcomes which aim to increase refugees' self-sufficiency.
 - ii. Rent deposit schemes by which the local authority provides the tenancy deposit and sometimes the first month's rent. As noted by British Red Cross (2023), 'eligibility criteria vary from place to place, and in most areas, these schemes are restricted to people who have a local connection to the local authority area, thus excluding many who have arrived through the Ukraine Visa Schemes'. (p. 20).
 - iii. Rent guarantee/bond schemes by which 'the local authority provides the landlord with a written guarantee that the scheme will cover unpaid rent or damage, known as a bond, instead of a cash deposit. Any rent unpaid or damages incurred would then need to be paid out through the bond by the local authority' (British Red Cross, 2023, p. 20).
 - iv. Tenancy brokerage by which local authorities negotiate tenancy agreements with private landlords to incentivise them to let to Ukrainians. Vicol and Sehic (2023, p. 26–27) highlighted the creative approach of Bristol City Council which 'made the ambitious move to guarantee monthly rental payments for landlords letting to Ukrainian arrivals, as well as giving them a £1,000 thank you payment, providing 6 months' rent in advance, and putting up money to assist with repairs and maintenance'.

- v. Top up thank you payments to incentivise hosts to continue offer accommodation to guests (Vicol & Sehic, 2023). For example Vicol and Sehic (2023, p. 26) found that 'North Northamptonshire County Council and Essex County Council announced increases to the thank you payments allocated to HFU hosts, from £350 to £550 a month [with] the latter announc[ing] one off payments of £500 for hosts that would continue to have Ukrainian guests stay with them for all or at least part of December 2022'.
 - vi. Offers of relocating visa holders outside their councils where accommodation is available (Vicol & Sehic, 2023). However, local authorities participating in the study by Vicol and Sehic (2023) observed that Ukrainian families were reluctant to consider relocating, given that they had already started to integrate locally, find jobs, and enrol their children in schools.
- e. These 'local fixes' varied greatly from area to area depending on local authorities' expertise in engaging in these practices, availability of private accommodation, and the capacity of the voluntary sector with whom local authorities could develop shared models (Broadhead, 2022; British Red Cross, 2023; Vicol & Sehic, 2023).

14. Developing a long-term labour market integration strategy for Ukrainians across schemes.

- a. Ukrainians under the HfU and Ukraine Family Scheme are experiencing challenges accessing employment, facing downward mobility, and deskilling (Walsh & Sumption, 2023; Vicol & Sehic, 2022; Galpin et al., 2023). Walsh and Sumption (2023) analysed ONS data published in April 2023 on visa holders entering the UK under HfU and the Ukraine Family Scheme and found that:
 - i. 61% were either employed or self-employed in the UK.
 - ii. Of this 61%, 68% said they did not work in the same sector as they had done in Ukraine.
 - iii. The most common sectors of work were hospitality (23%), information technology and communication (10%), and manufacturing (9%). However, these percentages did not align with their preferred sectors.
- b. Barriers to labour market integration include: difficulties with English, difficulties getting their qualification recognised, difficulties accessing transport (particularly for those in rural and semi-rural areas), absence of childcare (of particular importance given that more than 70% of visa holders under the HfU and Ukraine Family Scheme are women), discrimination and xenophobia from employers (Vicol & Sehic 2022; Walsh and Sumption, 2023; Galpin et al., 2023; Mueller-Hirth et al., 2023). At the roundtable on refugee accommodation convened by British Future in partnership with the British Red Cross and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration on the 8 November 2023, a British Red Cross caseworker from Ukraine acting as panellist also highlighted the difficulty to provide references from previous employers due to displacement as another major barrier.
- c. During our consultation with the 12 participating cities in GEM's Inclusive Cities program, we found that local authorities have developed diverse initiatives to foster Ukrainians' labour market integration. Coventry has developed an in-house bespoke programme to enhance Ukrainians' labour market integration through provision of free language training, job coaches, and employment orientation via drop-ins (Broadhead, 2022). In other cases, local governments collaborated with the voluntary sector. For example, Bristol City Council joined forces with the voluntary sectors to create Welcome Hubs hosting community events providing labour market integration support, including language, employment, and skill development (Broadhead, 2022).
- d. The voluntary sector has taken independent initiative in providing employment and skill development programmes to Ukrainians across schemes, in some cases supported by funding from the central UK government. The STEP Ukraine programme delivered by World Jewish Relief and the British Council is an example of this. STEP Ukraine is designed to help Ukrainians across schemes to find employment that matches their qualifications by providing free English classes and free employment support with a dedicated employment advisor (World Jewish Relief, n.d.).
- e. The diversity of initiatives led by local governments and the voluntary sector indicates there is a clear need to build new routes in employment and develop a strategy promoting the labour market integration of Ukrainians across all visa schemes and local authorities.

15. Providing clarity over extension of visas across schemes to maximise integration support and outcomes.

- a. HfU, Ukraine Family Scheme and Ukraine Extension Scheme offer temporary rather than permanent resettlement as visas under these schemes expire after three years and it is unclear whether the visas will be extended.
- b. This situation has implications for Ukrainians' long-term integration, regardless of visa scheme for three main reasons:
 - i. The uncertainty clashes with the future intentions of Ukrainians in the UK. Walsh and Sumption (2023) analysed ONS data published in April 2023 on visa holders entering the UK under HfU and the Ukraine Family Scheme and found that more than half (52%) of adults surveyed said they intend to live in the UK most of the time, even when they feel it is safe to return to Ukraine and most adults (70%) described their personal connection to the UK as being 'somewhat strong' or 'very strong'.
 - ii. Lack of clarity and certainty over one's visa prevents newcomers to make long-term planning and investing time and energy in the skill development and employment services made available to them by local authorities and the voluntary sector, hampering integration outcomes (OECD, 2023).
 - iii. Uncertainty over visas means that prospective employers or landlords are turning Ukrainians down, further aggravating existing housing and employment challenges, as remarked by a British Red Cross caseworker from Ukraine acting as panellist at the roundtable on refugee accommodation convened by British Future in partnership with the British Red Cross and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration on the 8 November 2023.

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