

Opora

This is a regular update on Opora activities and developments to the sponsor community registered with Opora.

Platform statistics

Over 17,000 registered Ukrainian guests and UK sponsors (evenly split), over 2k matches already reported with over 1k visas already issued as a result!

There are thousands of Ukrainians still looking for help and we are seeing an increase in Ukrainian registrations with more spaces now requested than are on offer, so if you are still able to help or know anyone who is looking to be a sponsor, please encourage them to sign up! Please remember to 'remove' your listing if you have already found a match or matched elsewhere or are no longer in position to sponsor - this helps keep the active offers current, and help Ukrainians in their search

If you have matched using Opora, please do go through the 'linking' process to connect with your guest - many of the post-arrival assistance offers including employment opportunities that we are working on will only be available to those that have been verified as a match. Step by step guides on how to do that available on our site: <https://www.opora.uk/hfuguide>
You can also update the status of the visa application including to 'guest arrived in the UK

Free travel suspension

With the support of our partners, we have already been able to help many many hundreds of Ukrainians reach the UK with fully paid travel (funded through our partner's employee and other donations). Another positive development is that more and more visas are being issued on a daily basis.

While this is great news for our community, the resulting travel demand has made it hard for our partners' volunteers to process requests as quickly as they come in, despite working late into evenings and over weekends and holidays. To stop further backlog, together with our travel partners we have taken the hard decision to suspend further bookings of travel assistance until further notice, and we are working through any pending requests.

Our teams have also come up with a list of free travel routes leveraging train and other options, so if your guests are looking for assistance, please point them to our Telegram channel where a community of over 10k Ukrainians are helping each other, and where they can get almost instant support in their native languages. Link to the TG channel: <https://t.me/oporauk>

Emergency change of sponsors

There is currently no formal process in place from the Government for change of sponsor whether the guest is already in the UK or pre-arrival. If you are unable to host your guest (change of circumstances, council did not approve your housing, etc) and your guests already have visas, but are still outside the UK - please advise them to contact UKVI and confirm how to proceed. From our community's experience, the likely recommendation from UKVI will be for them to find a new sponsor and reapply again.

If your guests or someone else's guests are already in the UK but find themselves without a sponsor (council didn't approve housing post arrival, you are in touch with someone whose relationship with sponsor broke down), contact your council and the council of the guest's initial sponsor. Ukrainians in such a position are at risk of becoming homeless and the local council has a statutory duty to provide advice and/or resources appropriate to the circumstance.

Offering home to someone without formal sponsorship is possible, the visas do not prevent Ukrainians from living anywhere in the UK however outside the formal Homes for Ukraine scheme you and guests would be subject to standard tenancy laws and arrangements etc, and safeguarding needs to be ensured and considered very carefully for both sides as these arrangements would not be facilitated by the Council or the Government.

We are working with a few Local Authorities to show how our platform may be able to help Local Authorities who are responsible for changing of sponsors (though guidance from the Government on this is still not clear, many Local Authorities are proactively looking to establish processes to help). We will soon introduce an option for you as sponsors to indicate whether you would be willing to take someone in who is already in the UK and needs a new sponsor, and how your Local Authority could facilitate this. We will email you when this is available.

Helping guests with post-arrival arrangements

We designed the Opora platform in a way that reflects the strong demand from Ukrainians and our belief in retaining as much agency over their lives as possible, and this includes post arrival. We recommend sharing our Opora and government arrival guides with your guests, and assisting in navigating any things they need - but please do ask and engage your guests in any decisions or processes that affect them first (like which bank account to use, how to apply for BRP etc). Both guides available on our website <https://www.opora.uk/arrival-guide>.

Additional assistance and partnerships

We are leveraging the Opora platform to not only help Ukrainian guests and UK sponsors connect, but to offer assistance from our partner, from baby supplies, employment offers and others in the works.

Our platform provides a tailored and scalable way to reach Ukrainians arriving in the UK, ensuring offers of support go directly to those in the relevant locations or groups for the most positive impact.

If you can help Ukrainians arriving in the UK rebuild their lives sustainably via employment offers, or any other assistance and support - or know anyone who could - please get in touch! Our team will discuss with you how best to reach the most relevant groups / locations / skills via our platform. Thank you for your continued support of Opora and for what all of you are doing to help fellow Ukrainians.

Please follow our story and updates on Instagram to share and spread positive stories.

Thank you

The Opora Team