

Council support locals welcoming Ukrainians to Edinburgh

**More than 1,000 Edinburgh residents
have offered their homes to
Ukrainians fleeing war following an
appeal.**

Council officers are continuing to carry out background checks and property inspections as refugees continue to arrive in the capital.

The 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme was launched in March by the UK Government in response to the Russian invasion, which has since resulted in thousands of civilian deaths and prompted many to leave the country.

The scheme invites residents, charities, community groups and businesses to offer displaced Ukrainians entering the country a place to stay.

Following the appeal, 1,080 offers of accommodation have been made by people living in Edinburgh, according to a council report.

Edinburgh City Council has completed property inspections and disclosure checks on 400 potential hosts.

And it is possible a further 1,200 homes and hosts will have to be reviewed in the coming months as refugees continue to be rehomed in the capital, the report adds.

The latest figures released by the Home Office show 355

Ukrainians have been resettled in Edinburgh so far, with 524 visa applications granted.

Over 5,000 refugees have arrived in the city since the invasion, with 2,222 processed at the council's 'Welcome Hub' at Gogaburn House, which was established to support those travelling under Homes for Ukraine.

Alan Sufi and his family, from Kharkiv, were among the first people to arrive in Edinburgh from Ukraine and he has started a job as an interpreter supporting other refugees at the council's customer hub on the Royal Mile.

He said: "We have a home. I have my job. Within three days of arriving in Edinburgh my children were at school. The Bike Station gave us all bikes for free, so we've been able to explore the city. We've been to Newhaven Harbour and to Lauriston Castle. We've climbed Arthur's Seat and been to the beach. We were given a pass to Edinburgh Leisure and we've been enjoying that a lot. My children have joined a rugby group too.

"Edinburgh is a great place. It is full of history, tradition and monuments. Based on that you make associations about what the people will be like, but it's not so. I've found Edinburgh to be open and modern. But the weather – it is astonishing. On the day we arrived, it was windy and raining, sunny and snowy, all at the same time.

"In Kharkiv I was a photographer. It was also a great city, but I know it won't be the same, even when the war is over. It will need many, many years of recovery. But for Ukrainians, they carry home with them. They don't live there – Ukraine lives in them."

Council leader Cammy Day said: "Seeing families arrive and find their feet in Edinburgh has brought home the sheer scale of our city's ongoing response to this crisis.

“The city has already welcomed more than 5,000 people, with 2,222 arriving through the Hub. The majority of arrivals in the country have been landing here in Edinburgh. The scale of support we need to offer is huge and this is only increasing – from accommodation, interpretation and education, to host checks and health and social care, transport, counselling, and financial advice.

“We know that Edinburgh’s population swells in August so we’re already looking at how we can manage capacity and speaking to the Scottish Government about this. Because services will be under strain, we need to work together with our partners and those in the private sector so that all arrivals continue to receive what they need.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter

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