

Funding to help Ukrainians living in Edinburgh

The Scottish Government has announced funding ahead of the Independence Day of Ukraine on Thursday.

The government says that more people who have been displaced by the war in Ukraine will be supported to integrate into communities, secure jobs and access mental health services, thanks to funding announced for Edinburgh-based third sector organisations.

Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council (EVOC), Volunteer Edinburgh, The Welcoming Project, Feniks and the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain's (AUGB) Edinburgh branch are sharing in more than £200,000 from the Scottish Government's Ukraine Programme funding pot.

Migration Minister Emma Roddick said: "People all over Scotland, and particularly in Edinburgh, have welcomed those fleeing the war in Ukraine into their communities, their schools and workplaces and their homes.

"Third sector organisations have been at the heart of this warm welcome, supporting Ukrainians every step of the way. They have hosted English lessons, created social hubs and helped people to access local services.

"They have also showcased what can be achieved when national and local government, and the third sector work together, and this funding will help make sure this important partnership working continues.

“As we look ahead to the Independence Day of Ukraine, our message to Ukrainians remains clear: we stand with you, and we want Scotland to be your home for as long as you need it.”

The City of Edinburgh Council Leader Cammy Day said: “Third sector organisations here in Edinburgh have been a cornerstone of the partnership effort to support displaced Ukrainians over the last 18 months. I’m sure I speak on behalf of all colleagues when I say that they have made a real and tangible difference to the lives of the people who have fled their country following Russia’s illegal war against Ukraine. It is right and proper that these organisations are set to benefit from the Scottish Government’s Ukraine Programme funding.

“I have seen firsthand the difference that these organisations make in our communities across a wealth of different areas. From language classes to support with health and wellbeing to helping people into work and education and so much more their impact cannot be understated.

“I look forward to working closely with our third sector partners as we move forward in supporting our Ukrainian friends in the capital.”

The following Edinburgh-based organisations will share in a total of £215,000 in Scottish Government funding for 2023-2024:

Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations’ Council (EVOC) – £50,000

EVOC (Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations’ Council) develops and promotes the interests and work of voluntary and community organisations across the city.

£50,000 in Scottish Government investment will help them provide ongoing support to Edinburgh’s third sector for the benefit of Ukrainian communities, including funding one of

four dedicated cross-sector staff members to support Edinburgh's Ukraine response. EVOC will continue to work closely with the City of Edinburgh Council on this, and also work across South East Scotland to build resilience and encourage networking across the region.

EVOC Chief Executive Bridie Ashrowan said: "This funding from the Scottish Government's Ukraine directorate will continue to help community and voluntary sector partners in Edinburgh to play a key role in the city's cross-sector response to the war in Ukraine. This investment is essential to ensure the response can be agile and expand on existing services like employability, mental health support, English language lessons and social activities."

Volunteer Edinburgh – £50,000

Volunteer Edinburgh aims to build strong social connections, reduce inequalities, and support vibrant communities through volunteers and volunteering activities.

This investment of £50,000 will allow Volunteer Edinburgh to continue to employ a dedicated Ukrainian Support worker, a displaced Ukrainian themselves, who in turn is supporting and coordinating their Community Taskforce Volunteers deployment across a range of interventions and services for Ukrainians in Edinburgh. This includes including ongoing work at Edinburgh Airport, volunteering support to partner organisations, provision of opportunities to improve English, wellbeing activities and access to volunteering roles.

Volunteer Edinburgh's Chief Executive Paul Wilson said: "Since the start of the war in Ukraine volunteers have been at the heart of our response, personally welcoming and supporting over 6800 displaced Ukrainians at Edinburgh Airport. This vital funding not only allows us to continue that work, but also other volunteer delivered support including English language conversation café's and wellbeing activities, as well

as support displaced Ukrainian people themselves to access volunteering as part of their further integration.

“Many Ukrainians are keen to give back to the country that has welcomed them while improving their own language and employability skills. Volunteering by Ukrainians themselves is playing an important role in that.”

The Welcoming Association Edinburgh – £50,000

The Welcoming Association Edinburgh has been supporting New Scots (asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants) since 2000 by ensuring they feel at home in their new communities to learn English, find jobs and access local services. They build community by connecting locals with New Scots through social and cultural exchange and collaborating with others to share knowledge and influence positive change.

Currently, the organisation supports 2,981 New Scots, 985 of whom are Ukrainians. It creates opportunities to find friendship, sustainable living, creativity, health, and well-being, connecting locals and Ukrainians through social and cultural exchange and collaborating with others to share knowledge and influence positive policy change to advance the needs of Ukrainians in Edinburgh.

Funding of £50,000 for 2023/24 will provide English classes, employment and health and wellbeing support.

Director of the Welcoming Association Tesfu Gessesse said: “As our Ukrainian participants celebrate their Independence Day on Thursday, 24th of August 2023, we also affirm our solidarity and unwavering continuous support to the community”.

Feniks – £50,000

Feniks Counselling, Personal Development and Support Services Ltd. is a grass-roots charitable organisation set up in 2007 to support Central and Eastern European (CEE) communities in Edinburgh and Scotland. They aim to address health inequalities, promote integration and support CEE communities' well-being and human rights. They provide culturally sensitive psychological support; community groups; advice and advocacy and immigration advice relating to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Feniks have been involved in supporting the Ukrainian community since February 2022. They have applied their 16 years of experience working with the CEE community to mobilise and empower newly arrived Ukrainian therapists and psychologists, and set up the Ukrainian Mental Health Support Project. Thanks to the Scottish Government fund, Feniks can offer employment to a Ukrainian community development worker and mental health workers. They provide much-needed practical and psychological support in settling in the Lothians and dealing with the trauma of the war and displacement. Scottish Government funding of £50,000 for 2023/24 will help support this work.

Feniks Chief Executive Magda Czarnecka said: "Feniks stands in solidarity with Ukraine and has leveraged 16 years of experience supporting Central and Eastern European communities to promote the health and wellbeing of Ukrainian citizens in Scotland.

"Employing Ukrainian community development and mental health workers, and mobilising the skills and expertise of ten Ukrainian mental health professionals since June 2022, has helped us offer crucial practical and psychological support and this has been possible thanks to Scottish Government funding."

Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB) Edinburgh – £15,000

AUGB are the largest representative body for Ukrainians and those of Ukrainian descent in the UK, and they develop, promote and support the interests of the Ukrainian community.

Since the start of the illegal war against Ukraine, AUGB Edinburgh has played an important role in supporting displaced Ukrainian people to settle in Edinburgh and throughout Scotland, and has worked with government, councils and the third sector to ensure that policy decisions support displaced Ukrainians.

Funding of £15,000 for AUGB Edinburgh will help them continue to support Ukrainian integration. They will also continue to provide information and advice, including through the employment of a Community Coordinator, and deliver weekly activities around themes of mental health, youth work, and the English language.