How to Support Ukrainian Guests in your Home

Conflict related trauma

With war comes fear, uncertainty, and trauma. People fleeing the war in Ukraine may have witnessed some terrible things; they may have seen or been victims of violence including sexual violence, lost their homes and belongings, been separated from friends and family, and possibly lost loved ones.

Trauma presents itself in different ways for different people, sometimes immediately after events, but often in the months and years that follow. People may be feeling disengaged, low in mood, their sleep and appetite may be affected, they may be showing signs of grief, anger, and general upset.

How you can help as a sponsor

As a sponsor, you are not expected to be a professional in trauma or mental health, but there are things we can do to create the best environment for people. By hosting a family or individual, you are already helping them to recover.

One of the best ways to support people is to listen to them and hear what their needs are. It is important to avoid asking for details which may trigger traumatic experiences. Try focusing on the here and now. What are their interests? What hobbies do they have, or do they belong to any faith groups? What do they like to eat and drink, and do they need support to access the food they like to prepare? It’s important they feel comfortable and safe in your home.

Cultural and language differences may discourage people from accessing services and it’s important people understand how the health, education, and employment system operates as this will support them to feel more in control. This information has been made available to people through the translated Welcome Pack, but you could continue to support and remind people of how these systems operate in the UK.

When the time is right, connecting your guests with a local community group may support them further. Torbay has a progressive Ukrainian support network.

Mental Health and Wellbeing for Adults

If you are concerned about someone’s mental health and wellbeing, there are several services available to people. Most of these services can be accessed via the GP, so it’s important people are registered. A list of adult mental health services can be found here: [Mental Health - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust](https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/mental-health/)

Talkworks [TALKWORKS | Mental Health Support for Devon (dpt.nhs.uk)](https://www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk/) is a free NHS service offering therapeutic support to people over 18 who are experiencing depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. The team have received funding to specifically support people arriving from the Ukraine and translators can be made available with appointments face-to-face or online.

For people who are experiencing grief, Cruise is a bereavement support charity [Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](https://www.cruse.org.uk/) who help people through the grief process.

Mental Health and Well-Being for Children and Young People

In Torbay, various free help is available to children, young people, and parents. Some help can be provided in schools, and people can talk to a teacher or school nurse to find out what help is available.

Most face-to-face mental health provision for children and young people in Torbay can be found here [Mental health | 0 to 19 Torbay](https://www.0to19torbay.co.uk/teens/mental-health/).

Looking After your own Emotional Wellbeing

Whenever we offer support to others, it’s important to know that we are in a good enough place to do this, and that we have our own support in place. Your emotional wellbeing may have been impacted through hearing the experiences of the people you are supporting, and you should know when and how to get help for yourself, too.

Torbay Council has arranged Trauma Informed training programmes for people supporting Ukrainian people. The course is four hours long and delivered online. Please email your interest in attending the programme to [refugeesupport@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:refugeesupport@torbay.gov.uk).

If you have questions on any of the topics discussed here, or need further advice, please email [refugeesupport@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:refugeesupport@torbay.gov.uk).