

Welcome to Cheshire West and Chester

Here is some information about the area to help you get settled.

You are likely to have a lot of questions as you get used to life in the UK. Cheshire West and Chester Council is here to help so please feel free to ask us anything. You will have a named contact at the Council who is there to support you and your sponsor.

There is also a useful national welcome pack, with English, Ukrainian and Russian versions available, and we would recommend that you look through this.

- [National welcome pack](#)

For further information which is updated regularly there is a dedicated section on the Council's website, visit: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ukraine.

For a directory of local services and support for residents in Cheshire West and Chester visit: www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

Money

£200 interim payment

Each guest arriving in the UK from Ukraine as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme only is entitled to a £200 interim payment to cover subsistence costs.

The payment will be in the form of a PayPoint voucher, which can be cashed at many local shops, or a Post Office Pay Out voucher, which can be cashed at any post office.

The Council will contact guests and sponsors to arrange the payment.

British Red Cross payment

The British Red Cross is offering Ukrainian arrivals via Homes for Ukraine and the Family Visa Scheme financial support upon arrival into the UK (up to a maximum of

six people per family). This has to be claimed within 14 days of arrival into the UK and a passport and visa stamp have to be provided to claim the funds.

Call 0808 196 3651 (Open 10am-6pm every day).

Benefits

Initially your sponsor may be able to help you contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as well as help you to register with a doctor, school, bank, or obtain a National Insurance number or other services.

The national welcome pack for Ukrainian arrivals contains more information about benefits and useful links.

- [UK benefits information](#)

In addition, the Council offers advice and emergency funding in a crisis (the Help for People in Local Emergencies, or HELP, scheme).

- [Council benefits information](#)

Work and education

Employment

The Council is working with employers in the borough on local job opportunities and more information will be provided.

The Council's Work Zones are also available to help people find a job, with Work Zones located in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich.

In the meantime, we will support refugees with accessing benefits. Refugees here though the Homes for Ukraine Scheme are also entitled to an interim payment of £200 for subsistence costs when they arrive in the borough. This will be made available as soon as possible on arrival.

- [Work Zone information](#)

Job opportunities are also available on external websites like United for Ukraine, where you can search for jobs or where employers can post jobs.

- [United for Ukraine | Employment and support services](#)

Education

It is important for Ukrainian children to go to a school that is local to their sponsor household so that they can build a friendship group in the area. They will be able to immerse themselves in a new language with good role models to help them build verbal English skills – written English can follow later.

All children living in the UK have a right to go to school in England and the same access arrangements apply to refugees.

Advice on navigating the English schools admissions system is included in the national welcome pack for refugees from Ukraine and also on the Council's website, where you will find information on catchment areas for schools, special educational needs, further and higher education and also early years and childcare, as well as how to apply for a school place.

- [School admissions information in the welcome pack](#)
- [Local school admissions information](#)

Staying connected

Transport

Information about bus services in Cheshire West and Chester is available on the Council website, including links to timetables, route maps and concessionary travel.

There is also information about train services in the area, with links to help plan your journey, book tickets and get ideas on how to explore Cheshire by rail.

- [Bus services](#)

- [Train services](#)

Mobile phones

We know communication with family and friends will be really important to you.

It is unclear whether all mobile phone networks will work initially, your sponsor may be able to help you with this.

The British Red Cross is offering Ukrainian arrivals via Homes for Ukraine and the Family Visa Scheme free pre-loaded SIM cards and can provide mobile phone handsets if required.

Call 0808 196 3651 (Open 10am – 6pm every day) to enquire about SIM cards and mobile phones.

Some mobile phone companies are also offering help. This includes Three, which is offering pre-loaded pay-as-you-go SIM cards for Ukrainian refugees, which you can pick up in their stores, and Vodafone, which is inviting applications from registered charities to access free handsets, monthly calls and 20g of data for six months for Ukrainian refugees.

- [Free SIM cards at Three](#)
- [Vodafone](#)

Health

Registering with a doctor

You will have the same access to healthcare on the NHS as all UK residents. Your sponsor will be able to help you to register with your local doctor, known as a general practitioner, or GP, as soon as possible after your arrival to the UK.

A GP can offer medical advice, provide a diagnosis and prescribe medicines. They will be able help with any long-term medical conditions you may have and make sure your medication is managed effectively. They can also refer you to other health

services if you need more specialist help. Registering at a GP practice also enables you to access healthcare support from a wide range of health professionals, including a nurse, pharmacist, physiotherapist, healthcare support worker or care coordinator.

You can also use NHS 111. If you're worried about an urgent medical concern telephone 111 to speak to a fully trained advisor.

Depending on the situation, they can find out which local service can help you, connect you to a nurse, emergency dentist, pharmacist or GP and arrange a face-to-face appointment if they think you need one or they can help you get self-care advice.

NHS 111 is also available as an online service, 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

- [NHS 111 online](#)

COVID-19

There are currently no legal restrictions in place related to COVID-19 but people who live and work in Cheshire West and Chester are advised to follow local guidance:

- Get fully vaccinated - it's shown to be safe and effective against the virus, including new variants, and is the best way to keep yourself from getting seriously ill. It also reduces the risk of passing the virus on to someone else.
- Be kind and considerate of others who may be feeling extremely nervous about COVID-19.
- Continue wearing face coverings in crowded indoor areas where social distancing cannot be followed, such as supermarkets and on public transport, in health and social care settings, such as hospitals, care homes and GP surgeries, and where it would make others feel more comfortable.
- Try to meet others outside where possible.
- Regularly ventilate your home particularly when you have visitors.
- Continue to practice good hand hygiene, in particular hand washing.

- Stay at home if you feel unwell, particularly if you have one of the three main symptoms of COVID-19 – a new continuous cough, loss or change to your sense of smell or taste or a high temperature, and stay at home for five days if you test positive for the virus.
- [Government advice](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine advice in Ukrainian and Russian](#)

Mental health

There are different mental health services to support you in Cheshire West and Chester.

Adults and older people with mild or moderate-to-severe symptoms of anxiety or depression can access talking therapies through Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services. Visit: www.nhs.uk/help to find a local service.

Anyone who is feeling anxious or stressed can access support through a text message conversation. Text 'BLUE' to 85258 to reach a trained volunteer who can offer free and confidential support by text message 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

People struggling with emotional distress who consider themselves in a self-defined crises can visit Café 71, a crisis café in Chester. The café, open from 10am to midnight, is a welcoming environment for people to connect with others who are experiencing similar problems. Ring 01244 393139 or visit 71-77 Anne Street, Chester, CH1 3HT.

If your mental health gets worse and you feel unable to cope then it is important to access support quickly. Ring the urgent mental health crisis line on: 0800 145 6485, which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Culture

Cheshire West and Chester is a varied borough with a thriving city centre in Chester, a number of bustling town centres and beautiful rural areas and villages.

Most towns and bigger villages offer a range of shops and services, including supermarkets or convenience stores, post offices, pharmacies, hairdressers and more. Your sponsor will be able to tell you what is available on your doorstep.

The Council provides a number of cultural services, including libraries, which offer free internet access and social groups and events, as well as traditional book lending.

The Council's website features information on local libraries and services, including advice on language resources.

- [Library information](#)

Ward councillors

Each area of Cheshire West and Chester, or ward, has a local councillor. It is their role to represent members of their community and act as a bridge between residents and the Council. They can help to offer guidance and support about Council issues and signpost advice.

[Find your councillor](#)

Further enquiries - refugeesupport@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk