'Homes for Ukrainians, hotels for everyone else?' Exploring the differential treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

By Holly Judson

Thesis corrections

Minor corrections made at the request of the internal and external examiners on 11/11/25.

1. Changes have been made to instances of secondary referencing to reduce similarities to the Burrell (2024) article in Antipode. All the issues highlighted have been addressed, with the majority of these being in Chapter 3 (Literature Review).
2. The positionality section in Chapter 4 has been expanded to outline how my own identity as the researcher has shaped this project (pages 44-45).
3. A clearer referencing system has been used to identify participants. As highlighted in Table 2 on pages 37-38, H, G, and C will be used after the participant's number to indicate whether the participant is a host, guest, or charity worker.
4. In the conclusion (6.5) of Chapter 6, a paragraph has been added to justify why these themes were chosen and grouped in this way.
5. The typographical error (a track change left unresolved on page 26) has been amended.

Abstract

In March 2022, the British Government launched the Homes for Ukraine scheme as a direct response to the Russian Invasion, encouraging British citizens to host Ukrainians in their homes. This thesis provides an insight into the experiences of British hosts and Ukrainian guests in the UK. It examines how the treatment of Ukrainians differs from that of other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Thirty-one interviews have been conducted with hosts, guests, and organisations supporting the scheme, alongside months of volunteering with a charity supporting refugees and asylum seekers. While this is a government scheme, hosts and local organisations have primarily supported Ukrainian guests from their arrival to the current day. Focusing on the scheme as a snapshot reveals much about the broader treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Ukrainians have been treated differently from the outset, from the establishment of the scheme to the rhetoric used in the media, due to their whiteness and Europeanness. Their identities meant that Ukrainians were perceived as 'deserving' refugees and were provided a sense of home, purposefully withheld from other refugees. Although the scheme has many challenges and a longer-term solution is required, it signals a new approach to accommodating refugees, which is unlikely to be replicated.

Key words

Homes, homeland, hosting, refugees, Homes for Ukraine, identity, time

Word count – 34,992

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Relevance

On the 24th February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In a speech shortly after the Invasion, Putin justified the attack, emphasising that Ukraine is not just a neighbouring country, “It is an inalienable part of our history, cultural and spiritual space” (Putin, 2022), drawing upon imperial thinking and Russian nationalism, while undermining Ukrainian identity. Russia has been widely condemned by the international community, with the Invasion having a catastrophic impact on Ukrainian communities. Over 8 million people have fled Ukraine, and a further 3.7 million people are internally displaced (UNHRC, 2023). Citizens have consistently been caught in the crossfire in Russian drone and missile attacks, with over 167,200 houses destroyed or damaged (Kyiv School of Economics, 2023). Like many countries across Europe, the UK implemented support for Ukraine. The British Government rapidly established the Homes for Ukraine scheme on 14th March 2022, allowing Ukrainians to enter the country safely and be hosted by a British family. This led to the arrival of around 223,000 Ukrainian refugees (Samuel et al., 2025) through the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme. By 31 March 2024, the highest number of Ukrainians arrived in London (17%) and the Southeast of England (17%), with the East Midlands hosting 6% (Migrant Observatory, 2024).

1.2 Gap in the literature

There has been a breadth of geographical research on various aspects of human migration and mobility (Ehrkamp, 2017); however, there is currently limited literature on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2022 and is still ongoing. This thesis will explore the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in the UK as a consequence of the War, rather than the War explicitly. This thesis aligns with the growing field of refugee studies, which encompasses topics ranging from the causes of displacement to legal frameworks, integration, and exclusion (Bloch, 2019), as well as current debates about immigration in the UK and within the discipline. This thesis aims to fill a gap in the literature by analysing the role of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and how hosts have impacted the lived experience of Ukrainians in the UK. Despite the publication of some geographical literature on the experiences of Ukrainian refugees (see Burrell, 2022, 2024; Crossley, 2023), much of this focuses on the role of the state or the media, whereas this project focuses on the interactions between hosts and guests and considers larger questions about differential treatment by focusing on individual people and their experiences.

Concentrating on the scheme as a snapshot reveals much about the broader treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Ukrainian refugees have clearly been treated differently from the establishment of the scheme to the rhetoric used in the media, so questioning how and why this has happened reveals much about how whiteness and Europeanness are valued. This builds on existing literature about whiteness and racial hierarchies (see El-Enany, 2020; Mayblin, 2017), explaining why certain groups are considered more deserving of asylum status.

1.3 Research aims and objectives

Aims

- To what extent have Ukrainian refugees been treated differently from other groups of refugees and asylum seekers, and how has this influenced their experiences?
- To understand whether it would be possible to use policies implemented for Ukrainian refugees on other groups of refugees and asylum seekers in the future.

Objectives

1. How do the identities of Ukrainian refugees shape both the support they receive and society's perception of them?
2. To what extent has the Homes for Ukraine scheme shaped the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in terms of home and belonging, and facilitated their integration into existing communities?
3. How have the multiple temporalities embedded within the Homes for Ukraine scheme shaped the experiences of Ukrainians in the UK, and how might these shift over time?

1.4 Significance of the project

The War in Ukraine began in February 2022 with the Invasion of Russian forces; however, tensions with Russia have been rising since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. The two countries have a deep, entangled past, which has been documented in a range of historical and geographical literature (Dragneva and Wolczuk, 2016). The War in Ukraine has reshaped global power dynamics and deepened tensions between Russia and the West, much like the Cold War. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson emphasised that it is "the biggest war in Europe since 1945" (Boris Johnson, 2022a) and has caused a significant refugee crisis. Researching the War in Ukraine provides an insight into

contemporary forced migration and the hosting schemes implemented. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is unique in many ways, so exploring its intricacies brings attention to the differential treatment of Ukrainians compared to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, this project examines whether the Homes for Ukraine scheme can be replicated for other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. It aims to expand on existing geographical literature related to home, care, belonging, and borders, but from the perspective of day-to-day hosting relationships. Furthermore, the word ‘home’ is included in the scheme's name, highlighting that home was at the forefront of the scheme, an idea that will be explored in more detail in chapter 6. It outlines the main successes and challenges of the scheme and considers how it could be improved to ensure that refugees feel secure in times of uncertainty. As the scheme heavily relies on their generosity, listening to hosts' experiences is essential.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis examines the differential treatment of Ukrainian refugees in the UK, with a focus on hosting relationships and integration. Chapter 2 will outline the Homes for Ukraine scheme and how it diverges from the broader migration policy landscape, as well as expand on historical relationships between countries. Chapter 3 will explore a range of geographical literature on home, hosting, migration, time, gender and race, which will be used to understand the treatment of Ukrainians. Chapter 4 will outline the qualitative techniques used, explain why these were chosen, and discuss the key strengths and limitations of the process, as well as the necessary ethical considerations. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 form the analysis. Chapter 5 focuses on the identities of Ukrainian refugees and how their race, gender, and class led to their differential treatment and perception as deserving refugees. Chapter 6 explores the social and spatial aspects of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, from the sense of stability and safety provided by the hosting home to the variations in experiences across the country. Chapter 7 examines how the scheme has evolved over the last three years, from its establishment in 2022 to the shift towards private renting and the recent movement back to Ukraine. Finally, Chapter 8 will conclude the thesis, reflecting on the key successes, whether the research aims have been met, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 – Context

2.1 British asylum policy

As the table below shows, British asylum policy has become more restrictive over time, with Governments increasingly focusing on how to deter refugees and asylum seekers from arriving. Goodfellow (2019) explains that immigrants are scapegoated and increasingly blamed for various issues. However, the creation of a 'hostile environment' has failed to discourage asylum seekers from arriving. The number of people claiming asylum in the UK is driven by geopolitical events, as asylum seekers mainly come from countries with political and military conflicts (Migrant Observatory, 2025). Overall, the implementation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme represents a departure from the hostile treatment of other groups, as Ukrainians have been welcomed into the UK, a trend that will be explored throughout this project.

Policy	Key aims
1951 Refugee Convention	Britain was one of the founding signatories of the Refugee Convention, which defined the term "refugee" and outlined the rights and assistance a refugee is entitled to receive (UNHRC, 1951). Initially, the rights were implemented for post-World War Two European refugees but were extended to all refugees in 1967.
1987 Immigration Act	Also known as the Carriers' Liability Act, this act required carriers (ship and aircraft owners) to pay the Government if passengers arrived in the UK without proper documentation (UK Government, 1987). This was one of the first movements towards restrictive policies, due to rising migration from former British colonies.
1999 Immigration and Asylum Act	This act distinguished people seeking asylum from people with refugee status (Sales, 2002), causing more stigmatisation (Chunilal, 1999). It also reduced benefits and access to housing (Grey, 2023) and marked the beginning of borders being extended into society. Additionally, asylum seekers were dispersed across the country, typically in economically and socially deprived areas (Malloch and Stanley, 2005).
2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act	This act continued to lessen support entitlements for people seeking asylum. Housing and financial support could be refused if people did not claim asylum within 72 hours of arrival, causing more reliance on charities (Grey, 2023). Webber (2004) explains that many people did not know where to go or were unable to speak English so were denied support. Detention was expanded, as the Government focused on deterrence.

2014 Immigration Act	The Conservative Government focused on reducing overall migration to the UK whilst penalising those living here illegally (Grey, 2023). This was the creation of a "hostile environment": policies implemented intended to make it more difficult for migrants to live in the UK (JCWI, 2023). Asylum seekers' access to housing, healthcare, work, education and bank accounts was affected. Taylor (2022) explained that border control became part of everyday life.
2016 EU referendum	During the EU Referendum, immigration was positioned as a significant issue in the UK (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017). The rhetoric of a "refugee crisis" was utilised as a reason for leaving the EU (Goodman and Narang, 2019), with migrants being blamed for straining services. Furthermore, refugees and asylum seekers were positioned as a security threat (Virdee and McGeever, 2018).
2022 Nationality and Borders Act	This aimed to deter "illegal" entry into the UK and end the use of people smugglers (Grey, 2023). It planned to remove people with no right to stay in the UK. A two-tier system was implemented to differentiate between asylum seekers entering the country by regular and irregular routes (UK Government, 2022). Tougher security has been put in place at the France-UK border to stop small boat crossings (Migrant Observatory, 2025).
2022 Rwanda Plan	In 2022, the Home Office announced the Rwanda scheme, in which "illegal" asylum seekers from safe countries would be sent to Rwanda (McKinney et al. 2024). The aim was to deter people from arriving across the English Channel; however, the European Court of Human Rights intervened. The Labour Government scrapped this plan in 2024.
Current situation	Seddon (2025) explains that the Labour Government have proposed to reduce immigration by tightening work visas, creating longer residency waits, ending care visas, implementing stricter student rules and tougher English tests. The Labour Manifesto (2025) stated aims to make the system "controlled, selective and fair", although net migration is only growing.

Table 1 – Key International and National Asylum Policies – See Grey (2023)

2.2 Support for Ukraine

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine began on 24th February 2022. Although this project does not focus explicitly on the events in Ukraine, the timeline below provides context on the events leading up to the Invasion.

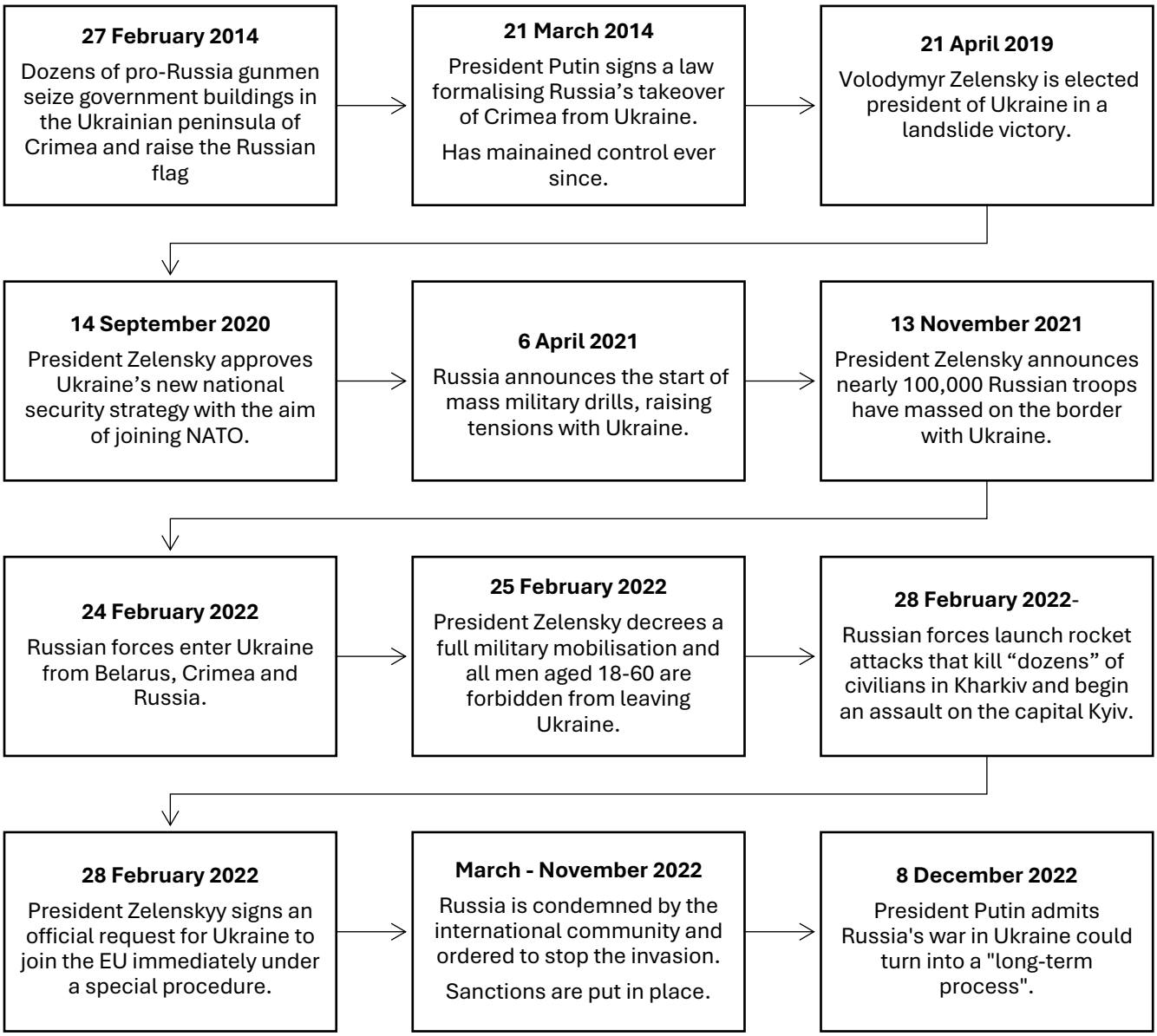


Figure 1 – A timeline of the Russian Invasion. – See Walker (2023)

2.2.1 International support for Ukraine

The War in Ukraine triggered a vast humanitarian crisis, leading to millions of people escaping their homes in search of security amid the threats of bombing and invasion (Oviedo et al., 2022). The EU enacted the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for the first time in March 2022 to provide immediate protection for people displaced by the Russian Invasion (European Union, 2022). International organisations and nation states have a responsibility to abide by their humanitarian and legal commitments (Ehrkamp, 2017), many of which have been established since the Second World War (Shuman and Bohmer, 2014). This includes the 1951 Refugee Convention, which outlined the rights and assistance refugees are entitled to receive from other states (see Table 1). The

implementation of the TPD meant that countries such as the UK had a responsibility to accept Ukrainian refugees. International organisations have played a central role in establishing national programmes and have generated a response of acceptance. Furthermore, European Governments have played a significant role in arming Ukraine and sanctioning Russia (Moise, Dennison and Kresi, 2023), despite not being directly involved in the conflict.

2.2.2 The Homes for Ukraine scheme

The establishment and duration of the scheme will be discussed further in Chapter 7, while this section outlines the implementation at the government level. The UK has taken in 223,000 Ukrainian refugees over the last three years (Samuel et al., 2025), which is significantly higher than, for example, the 29,000 Afghans who were resettled in the UK after the withdrawal in 2021 (Jorgensen et al., 2024). The support provided for Ukrainians has been described as a "bespoke humanitarian support package" by the Home Office (2023), with citizens being encouraged to invite refugees into their homes (Crossley, 2023). The British Government has provided financial support to private individuals housing Ukrainian refugees (OECD, 2022), making it feasible for someone with a spare room to host a Ukrainian refugee or family. Additionally, Ukrainian refugees have the right to work, can access benefits and can travel outside of the UK, unlike other groups of refugees or asylum seekers.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme is the first time that private hosting has been utilised in a UK government policy (Gunaratnam, 2021, cited in Burrell, 2024). Hyndman (2022) explains that the scheme expands on the Canadian model of private refugee sponsorship. Since the mid-2010s, private hosting, also known as 'Homestay,' has become increasingly popular across Europe (see Bassoli and Luccioni, 2023; Monforte et al., 2021, cited in Burrell, 2024). In some cases, hosting may be a temporary arrangement, but in others, it is an ongoing process. Burrell (2024) identifies clear links to the 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrat "big society" agenda, which encouraged communities to take more active roles and responsibility for their local areas. Meanwhile, the responsibility for Ukrainians has disproportionately fallen on local people and organisations to shape refugee incorporation and belonging (Watson, 2024), rather than the Government, which established the scheme.

2.3 Britain and Russia

From the beginning of the War, British leaders have been forthcoming with their support for Ukraine despite the deep history between Britain and Russia. This history is complicated, with the two countries being both allies and foes at different points. Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations date back to the sixteenth century (Campbell, 2019). The two countries were allies during the Napoleonic Wars; however, they began to view each other as competitors for global expansion, leading to growing distrust. Tensions escalated in the late nineteenth century, marked by the Anglo-Afghan Wars and the Crimean War. Nevertheless, Britain and Russia were allies against Germany during the First and Second World Wars. However, by the end of the twentieth century, tensions had grown over their ideological and geopolitical differences. The Cold War (1947-1991) was a period of tensions between the capitalist United States and its allies (including Britain), and the communist Soviet Union (including the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) and its satellite states. The two superpowers were engaged in a global competition for influence, involving proxy wars, propaganda, and espionage. Although there was no direct conflict, tensions escalated over this period, bringing the World to the brink of a nuclear conflict. Despite the de-escalation following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, distrust has persisted. Tensions have not reached the extent of the Cold War, but apprehension has continued due to the Salisbury nerve agent attack in 2018 and Russian operatives in the UK (Campbell and Armstrong, 2025). In addition to the Annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. These events have shaped British views of Russia and will likely contribute to a desire to help Ukraine. The long history between Britain and Russia has a profound impact on the present and the future, which will be explored in Chapter 7. Currently, Anglo-Russian relations are strained; however, this has the potential to change depending on the resolution of the War.

2.4 Ukraine and Russia

Tensions have been rising between Ukraine and Russia for years, especially since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Putin and Russian nationalists believe the land is rightfully theirs due to their historical links and previous control within the Soviet Union (see figure 2). Kirby (2023) and Nagourney et al. (2023) emphasise that Putin wrongly assumed he could sweep into Ukraine and immediately assert Russian power; nonetheless, the Ukrainian people were underestimated as they have stood their ground (Sovsun, 2022). Some Ukrainians feel strong ties to Russia, as 17.3% of Eastern Ukrainians today are ethnically Russian (Ukraine Census, 2001). Conversely, Knott (2022) suggests that identity in Crimea is complex, and many people identify as Ukrainian, which makes them

willing to defend their country, as it is their homeland. Ideas of home and homeland will be explored in Chapter 6, concerning the experiences of Ukrainian refugees.

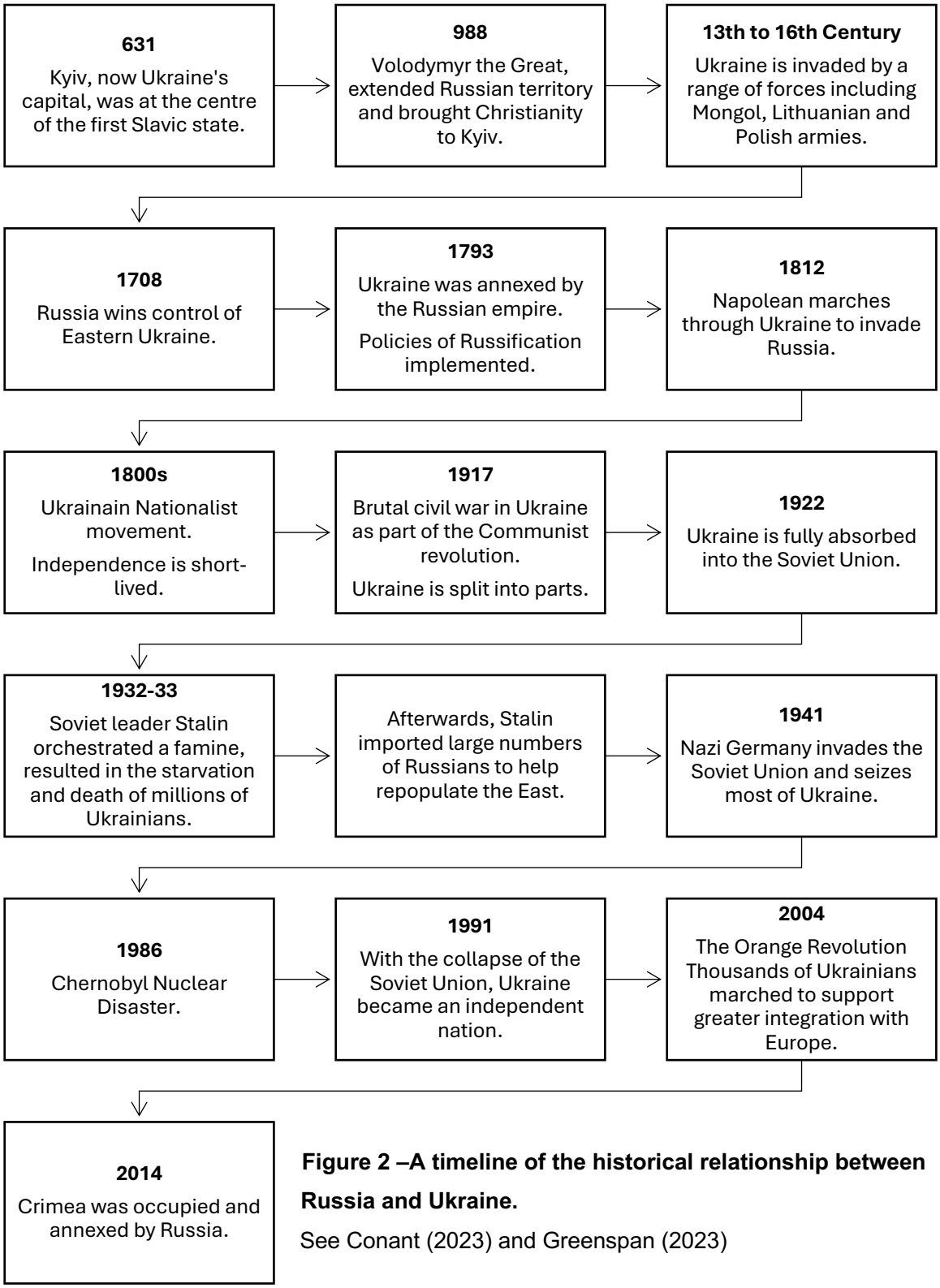


Figure 2 –A timeline of the historical relationship between Russia and Ukraine.

See Conant (2023) and Greenspan (2023)

Chapter 3 - Literature review

3.1 Introduction

This project intends to expand on existing geographical research about refugees. Although this project is geographically focused, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, literature from other social science disciplines will also be explored. It slots into the growing field of refugee studies, which has emerged since the 1980s when Charles Keely (1981) argued that agendas for world development should acknowledge international refugee crises. Previously, the experiences of refugees had been rarely documented within academia. However, Black (2001) argues that for the first 20 years of its existence, refugee studies failed to produce work that had any influence on the policy world. Chatty and Marfleet (2013) explain that the formation of refugee studies was a belated recognition of the scale of mass displacement worldwide and the failure to address this historic issue. Since the end of the Second World War, the number of refugees has increased significantly (Bloch, 2019), underscoring the importance of this research. Some key areas of the discipline include Richmond's (1993) work on push and pull factors, Brambilla's (2015) work on state bordering practices, and Castles' (2003) work on who can migrate. This project aims to develop aspects of refugee studies in a meaningful way to analyse the impacts of policy on refugees and investigate how these can be improved in the future.

Academic literature concerning the War in Ukraine, notably the Homes for Ukraine scheme, is developing. However, Berg and Zschomler (2025) have discussed how the Homes for Ukraine scheme reinforces hierarchies of belonging through border controls, with Ukrainians deemed deserving. Daoust and Dyvik (2024) consider the home as a space of sanctuary, acknowledging that private hosting occurs across Europe, while Brown et al. (2024) examine the right to housing for refugees in general. Other research areas include the Homes for Ukraine scheme as a community-led welcome (Broadhead and Turcatti, 2024) and the impact of Cold War memories on the perception of Ukrainians (Jones and Kogut, 2025). These papers introduce themes discussed in the analysis chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7). Moreover, two notable papers in a similar vein to this project are by Burrell (2024) and Crossley (2023), who both explore the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in the UK. Burell (2024) considers the responsibility of hosts to support their Ukrainian guests, while Crossley (2023) outlines that this form of hospitality is conditional and highly gendered, and the role of the media. Burrell (2024) identifies some

of the key critiques of the scheme and highlights how the care and responsibility for Ukrainian guests have fallen to their hosts, rather than the state. It provides a deep insight into their unique experiences and suggests that more state oversight is needed, particularly as many hosts have little or no experience helping vulnerable people. Overall, this paper provided a new viewpoint on the experiences of hosts through the scheme, as much of the existing research focuses on the role of the state or the experiences of Ukrainian guests. This paper by Burrell (2024) has significantly influenced this project, as it forced me to consider how the scheme needs to adapt for the future and how this will specifically impact the role of hosts, which I have explored in section 7.3.2.

The main areas of literature that will be explored are home, homeland, and migration. The paper will begin by analysing the significance of the home as a space. Then, it will consider existing literature on hosting before analysing how this scheme has differed from the experiences of previous refugees and asylum seekers. Then, conceptual themes of gender, time, and race will be examined.

3.2 Home

The Home is an inherently geographical concept and a significant space for everyone. Blunt and Varley (2004) explain that the home is a rich and important site for geographical study, revealing a broader sense of belonging and identity, as well as a space of sanctuary (Daoust and Dyvik, 2024). Although homes in geography have typically been conveyed as places of safety (Rose, 1993), the home has historically failed to be a safe space, especially for women (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Harrington, 2010). Crossley (2023) explains that women's safety and belonging are entirely conditional, and women are expected to assimilate to the nation-state's expected ideals and control. For some, the home is a site of oppression and violence (Blunt and Varley, 2004). For others, home is a contested concept (Meers, 2021), as illustrated by Black feminist scholarship, which shows how 'home' can be a site of abuse, resistance, exploitation and escape (Hooks, 2015). This section will explore the extreme and everyday notions of home through domicide and domopolitics, both forms of the prefix 'domo' from the Latin *domos*, meaning house. These ideas will then be applied to the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in the UK.

3.2.1 Domopolitics

The State plays a pivotal role in shaping responses to global conflicts and determining the acceptance of refugees. 'Domopolitics' focuses on how states are governed as a home. It emphasises the connection between citizens, communities, and the state (Walters, 2004). Nations are reimagined as "cohesive and homely" (Darling, 2011a:263). Domopolitics encompasses a range of policies and strategies aimed at securing the home for its citizens, typically associated with stricter border control and immigration policies. Walters (2004) suggests that increased bordering and the development of home and state policies have further interwoven the home and the nation as sites of securitisation, while Brickell (2012) explains that the home can be a multi-scalar concept stretching beyond the house to identify with a country or "homeland". Burrell (2004) emphasises the importance of the homeland for migrants, as it provides them with a sense of identity. Governmentality typically constructs the international realm as distinct from the domestic; however, they have become increasingly entangled (Brickell, 2012). The Homes for Ukraine scheme involved refugees becoming guests and being invited into British homes as a new form of accommodation provision, leading to concepts of home and nation becoming further intertwined in an overt example of domopolitics, something explored more in Chapter 6. Moreover, increasing domopolitics has led to nationalist controls over areas such as immigration policy, purposefully excluding groups to 'protect' others. This has created 'everyday bordering', which has criminalised migration, entrenching it into everyday life (Lopez and Dalceggio, 2024), such as through landlords when renting (see Clare et al., 2022). Although domopolitics is intertwined with bordering practices, it focuses on protecting the nation like a home rather than just restricting people at borders. Ukrainian refugees provide an exception; however, they highlight the further entanglement of the home and the state.

3.2.2 Domicide

If domopolitics refers to the ways in which ideas of the home are entangled with politics and power relations, then *domicide* refers to the harm caused by the loss or destruction of homes. Domicide is defined as the "planned, deliberate destruction of the home causing suffering to the dweller" and the persistent subjective experience of pain and mourning (Porteous and Smith, 2001:19). The term 'domicide' could be applied to multiple areas; firstly, the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, as cities have become the main battlefield with civilians targeted by missiles and strikes in the form of 'Urbicide' (Kononov, 2023). This links to the idea of homeland because these civilians are trying to protect their homes and the wider homeland by fighting back. Hewitt (2009) explains that the domestic foundations

of the city have become central to modern warfare: through physical damage to homes, the dehousing of residents, and by causing death and injuries in homes. Raid planning is designed to exploit the most vulnerable areas of housing, with domestic space becoming "ground zero" in the bombing of settlements (Hewitt, 2009). Harker (2009) has critiqued Porteous and Smith's (2001) definition of domicide because it does not fully define what sort of home is being destroyed and calls for further academic work on the extreme and everyday dimensions of the home.

The images of destruction in Ukraine circulated within the media show the physical impacts of the Russian bombardment and the brutality of Russian warfare (Martikainen and Sakki, 2024). It is easy to visualise Russia's aggression through the physical destruction of people's homes. Furthermore, it is this domicide in Ukraine which has led people to flee on a quest for a safe home for their families. Home unmaking is the precarious process by which material and/or imaginary components of the home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently damaged or even destroyed (Baxter and Brickell, 2014). Refugees, including Ukrainians, face the challenge of rebuilding their homes in a new country, which will be explored in section 5.2.2. They must come to terms with the fact that their home has not just been left behind in another place; it has been left behind in another time, "irrevocably lost both spatially and temporally" (Jansen and Lofving, 2009: 15).

Secondly, in the UK context, 'domicide' is associated with the externalisation of the UK border in Calais. Van Isacker (2019) frames the evictions and destruction in Calais through domicide as a denial of homemaking capacities. Although domicide is typically associated with extreme events such as war and genocide, it can also manifest through everyday acts of violence (Nowicki, 2014). Ansems de Vries and Welander (2016:1) explain that domicide is utilised as a part of a wider "politics of exhaustion". This cycle of eviction, destruction and re-occupation in Calais reinforces a continual sense of precarity (Mould, 2018; Van Isacker, 2019). Refugee camps, such as those in Calais, are brutally policed but simultaneously places of intimate homes for people fleeing from danger. These camps are sites of alternative or 'other' notions of home, where the boundaries are messy and deeply personal (Blunt and Varley, 2004). The concept of 'necropolitics' (Mbembe, 2003) posits that some people's lives are deemed worth less than others (Mayblin, Wake, and Kazemi, 2020). In Calais, asylum seekers are denied the material infrastructure needed for survival and denied homemaking abilities (Van Isacker, 2019). This treatment is dehumanising, and they are often depicted in the media as a dangerous 'other' to justify this poor treatment. Although domicide is typically associated with the

destruction of home, it can also be the denial of homemaking for people who have already had to flee their homes. People forced to migrate are met with violence at every stage, from the destruction of their homes to a denial of homemaking to eviction.

3.3 Hosting

Due to the destruction of people's homes taking place in Ukraine by Russian forces, private hosting has been utilised to house Ukrainian refugees in the UK and other European nations. The literature on private hosting of refugees is limited but slowly growing, largely due to its prominence in supporting Ukrainians (Herpell et al., 2024). This thesis will investigate the existing literature on hosting, from its assumptions to its impact on both hosts and guests. However, hosting is not a long-term solution, especially as the War continues and Ukrainians want their own space, as will be explored in section 7.3.

3.3.1 Assumptions of hosting

The emergence of hosting as a form of welfare provision is shaped by several assumptions. Upon their arrival, refugees must have their immediate needs met. Haase et al. (2023) explain that housing is an urgent need for refugees, and private households offering assistance provide a viable solution. Subsequently, the responsibility to help refugees has largely fallen on private individuals (Burrell, 2022). Support has shifted from the state's responsibility to a mix of services at various scales and a heavy reliance on society (Ilcan and Connoy, 2021). Kisby (2010:490) argues that a welfare mix is "dangerous, a genuine belief that charities and volunteers, rather than the state, can and should provide numerous services". However, if implemented successfully, a welfare mix will maintain the advantages of both provisions. Jelinkova and Ochrana (2023) noted that the Czech Republic's limited experience with refugees hampered their ability to provide effective assistance, and it relied heavily on crisis teams and volunteers to offer short-term solutions. Therefore, action must be taken on different scales to create long-term solutions (Podgórska et al., 2023). Although the assumption is that the state plays a central role in hosting arrangements, the hosting of Ukrainian refugees has predominantly been provided by individuals.

Hosting can be considered a form of hospitality, as Farahani (2021) explains; it involves the sharing of time and space. This process actively shapes the home as a cultural and political site formed by broader geopolitical events (Mason and Hughes, 2024). Jordan (2024) outlines four characteristics of hosting: hosts and guests have an existing connection, hosting burdens hosts; refugees are often vulnerable to exploitation; and

hosts and guests have distinct roles. These assumptions provide an overview of hosting, highlighting potential issues with hosting arrangements that can be discrete or overlapping. Bassoli and Luccioni (2023) suggest that most Ukrainians had no prior acquaintance with hosts, which contradicts Jordan's (2024) belief that hosts and guests have an existing connection. Many Ukrainians were assigned a host family rather than a relative or acquaintance already in the country, influencing where they stayed (Brucker et al., 2023). Additionally, host and guest may not always be distinct roles, as there have been instances of reverse hospitality where young refugees care for old hosts (Birger et al., 2024). There is a range of assumptions about hosting because the Homes for Ukraine scheme has diverted from traditional hosting by family and existing support for refugees.

3.3.2 Expectations of hosts

Alongside the range of assumptions on hosting, a range of expectations of hosts and their roles has been outlined. At the forefront, hosts are service providers (Birger et al., 2024) who offer refugees appropriate accommodation (Ran and Join-Lambert, 2020), provided they have the necessary space to do so. The Homes for Ukraine scheme relies on people's goodwill (Machin, 2023) and desire to help (cited by Burrell, 2024). In a survey conducted by the ONS (2022), sponsors explained that they were motivated to volunteer as they wanted to help people flee a war zone (94%), and they had the space to do so (79%), while only 8% of sponsors were motivated by the financial payment. This suggests that people wanted to help out of goodwill rather than having an ulterior motive, or at least that is what they portray publicly. Tomlinson et al. (2023) clarify that many hosts were motivated by their personal background and connection to the plight of refugees, while others had distant links to Ukraine themselves. Additionally, hosts may have wanted to support Ukraine due to lingering Cold War tensions, flagged in section 2.3. The role of the host is complex, as there are expectations to provide a family-like relationship (Monforte et al., 2021), which can be challenging with a stranger. The host establishes the terms under which hospitality or welcome is extended (Derrida, 2000). Hosting has been reconceptualised as an essential form of hospitality. Hosts provide a range of support for their guests, including helping them access services, settle into the community, navigate transport, learn English and find work (ONS, 2022). Hosts act as facilitators, leveraging their social capital to help their guests (Herpell et al., 2024). Overall, hosts have a diverse but fundamental role in assisting refugees in settling in and providing them with a safe place to stay, with the Homes for Ukraine scheme being entirely reliant on this hospitality.

3.3.3 Impacts on refugees

Geographical research is being conducted to explore the impact of hosting on Ukrainian refugees (see Burrell, 2024, 2022; Crossley, 2023). Homes are places of safety, so refugees are left vulnerable and isolated when their homes are taken from them (Hollenbach, 2010). Moreover, forced migration disrupts social networks people have forged, leading to separation from familial relationships and a loss of connection to the community (Bunn et al., 2023). Grace et al. (2018:904) emphasise that refugees and asylum seekers face periods of "violent uncertainty", often due to forced displacement and financial precarity. To maintain refugee well-being, the re-establishment of a sense of safety and belonging is necessary, which are feelings usually associated with the home (Lloyd et al., 2018). Refugees demonstrate remarkable resilience, adapting to significant stress or trauma (Windle, 2011) by developing various coping mechanisms, including religiosity (Oviedo et al., 2022; Roszak, 2022). Likewise, Bystrom et al. (2023) have observed refugees finding strength within themselves and adopting a mindset that helps them cope. Despite the internal strength of many refugees, people displaced by war are more likely to face mental health challenges such as PTSD and depression (Liddell et al., 2022; Oviedo et al., 2022) and have greater healthcare needs due to the trauma (IMF, 2022). Similarly, Ager and Strang (2008) highlight the importance of prioritising refugees' mental health within healthcare, as it plays a significant role in their future integration. Long (2001:14) highlights the need to "document the ways in which people steer or muddle their way through difficult scenarios, turning 'bad' into 'less bad' circumstances". Understanding how refugees adapt to a new country and learn to cope offers valuable insights into effective support.

Hosting has the potential to produce uneven gendered dynamics between hosts and guests (Crossley, 2023). These unbalanced power relations (Herpell et al., 2024) could further disempower and harm refugees (Monforte et al., 2021). Hosts could potentially perpetuate racial and social inequalities unintentionally, framing guests as vulnerable victims who rely on the help of more powerful actors (often middle-class and white) (Monforte et al., 2021), a topic explored in Chapter 5. Hosting could retain the belief that a superior rescuer is needed (Ryan and Tonkiss, 2022). Darling (2011b) explains that refugees are often framed as victims in need of care; therefore, it is essential to give them agency. However, hosts have been a valuable part of this process, filling the gaps in state provision (Podgórska et al., 2023). This support has had a positive impact on their Ukrainian guests; however, it is essential to be aware that the relationship can be disempowering and that homes are not always safe places.

Building on this argument, Badgett and Folbre (1999), Olwig (1998) and Young (1997) have described the domestic not as a unit of harmony as previously illustrated, but as a potential site of struggle and conflict. Price (2002:40) suggests that the “ideological scripting of the home as intimate and safe makes violence against women difficult to see”, with women often tolerating violence so as not to signal a deep failure or collapse of the home. Despite their personal challenges, women often feel that it is their responsibility to keep the home together, particularly for the sake of their children. This could be considered a form of “domicide” (see Porteous and Smith, 2001) because their safety is destroyed in their own home. This may be due to wider structural forces of unhomeliness, alienation and homelessness (Brickell, 2012) and affects already vulnerable people such as migrant women. Moreover, a woman experiencing a threat of violence in her own home could be considered homeless as she is living in a space unfit for human habitation (Pleace et al., 2021). While women may feel “homeless at home”, domestic violence can ultimately lead to homelessness in an objective sense as they escape (or are ejected) from their violent homes (Wardhaugh, 1999: 91). For women, the home may not be a safe place for them, which can be multiplied for female refugees. Therefore, they must have a safe place to live away from gendered exploitation. Section 5.4.2 will consider the experiences of home for female refugees in more detail.

3.3.4 Long-term hosting

Despite evidence showing that the short-term hosting of Ukrainians has generally been a success, provisions need to be established to support these people in the longer term (IMF, 2022). Zetter (2021) outlines that refugees stay longer in host countries than previously, primarily due to ongoing conflicts and instability. While hosting can be fulfilling, it is also a demanding and challenging experience (Tomlinson et al., 2023), so it is not viable to expect this to continue in the long term. Monforte et al. (2021) emphasise that hosting is filled with ambivalent moments of conditional hospitality, highlighting that the arrangement is temporary and has an endpoint. Rosello (2001) and Rozakou (2012) stress that the power of the host prevails over that of the guest, so the hosting arrangement will end when the host decides. Both Tomlinson et al. (2023) and Machin (2023) have outlined the lack of assistance from the government in implementing a long-term solution, with Machin (2023) emphasising how eager the UK government was to take these people in the first place. This contrasts with the typical government attitude towards migration, as they usually seek to assert control, as highlighted in Section 2.2. The planning of provision of longer-term housing for refugees represents a considerable challenge (Duszczyk and Kaczmarczek, 2022), particularly as the War has no clear

endpoint and housing remains difficult to obtain throughout the UK. Moreover, Bird and Amaglobeli (2022) explain that even if the War were to end today, many refugees would not be able to return immediately. This highlights the contention that the Homes for Ukraine scheme needs to shift towards longer-term housing to continually support Ukrainians.

3.4 Migration

Migration is an inherently geographical process because it involves the movement of people across the globe. Ukrainian refugees are a recent example of people being forced to flee due to conflict and violence. This section will examine how Ukrainian refugees have been treated compared to other groups and consider the treatment of Afghan refugees. The themes of gender and race introduced in this section concerning migration will be explored in more detail in sections 3.5 and 3.6, as well as in chapter 5.

3.4.1 Differential treatment

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme has been described by Machin (2023) as uncharacteristically generous, as Ukrainians have access to a range of benefits and systems which refugees and asylum seekers are typically excluded from (Crossley, 2023), including hosting, the right to work and access to benefits. The acceptance of Ukrainians could be seen as an exceptional case, as 75% of people surveyed supported allowing Ukrainians to come to the UK without a visa (YouGov, 2022), despite growing hostility towards other migrant groups. According to a survey by the Migrant Observatory (2023), 37% of the British public believed that migration to the UK should be made more difficult for asylum seekers, whereas this was the case for only 14% of Ukrainians. Most of those surveyed (56%) sympathise with people making channel crossings by boat, compared to 39% who say they have little or no sympathy (Global Advisor Survey, 2021). Although people are sympathetic towards asylum seekers, this has not always been translated into active assistance, as we have seen with Ukrainian refugees. Moise, Dennison and Kresi (2023) highlight the potential for a ‘spill-over’ effect as attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees could affect attitudes towards other groups. However, there has been an increase in riots and protests around the housing of migrants and asylum seekers in recent years, as well as the recent legal case against hotel accommodation in Epping (see Davies, 2025). Di Simone (2024) highlights the recent riots across the UK and emphasises that the rise in right-wing beliefs and the growth of the Reform Party have led to refugee and minority communities feeling isolated and unsafe.

The outpouring of sympathy and support towards Ukrainian refugees, both in the media and by the public, has been entirely different to the reactions to other wars and refugee crises, such as in Syria and Afghanistan (Bajaj and Stanford 2022; Gallant 2022). The unequal treatment of refugees in Europe has become a normalised practice, meaning it is tolerated, if not deliberately pursued by policy (Haase et al., 2023). El-Enany (2020) argues that UK immigration systems are an ongoing expression of the British Empire and have consistently created exclusionary policies towards racialised peoples, while Shepherd and Wilkinson (2021) explain that the UK asylum process has become one of the harshest to navigate in Europe. Grosman and Raadschelders (2024) emphasise that the EU and US have a range of overt and covert ways to limit migrants of colour, which is driven by anti-immigration attitudes perceiving them as a threat to the European way of life (Sinclair, Granberg and Nilsson, 2024; Lawlor and Tolley, 2017), which will be discussed more below. There has been a heavy emphasis on the "whiteness" and "Europeanness" of Ukrainian refugees (Ajana, Connell and Liddle, 2024). De Coninck (2022) explains that cultural factors have led Anglo-Americans to feel closer to Ukrainian refugees and consider them more deserving of aid and less threatening due to similarities in religion, belief systems, ideologies, and worldview. Ukrainians have been portrayed as more civilised and 'like us' compared to asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa (Ellison & Andrews, 2022). Furthermore, these discourses have created categories of deserving versus undeserving migrants (Karyotis et al., 2021; Lopez and Dalceggio, 2024). Ukrainian refugees are portrayed as deserving of the help they have been given, whereas other groups have been alienated due to their cultural differences, despite being in arguably similar situations.

When discussing the treatment of Ukrainian refugees by the UK government, it is crucial to understand how other groups have been treated comparatively. The experiences of Afghan refugees after the Taliban regained control in 2021 are particularly illustrative. The British military evacuated approximately 17,000 people from Afghanistan between April and September 2021 (Walsh and Sumption, 2021), which led to the establishment of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). As part of this resettlement scheme, the Home Office temporarily provided Afghans with emergency 'bridging accommodation', mostly hotels, until individuals' needs were assessed and long-term solutions were arranged (Powell, 2021). This process has been incredibly slow, and a year later, 9,500 people were still in hotels (Quinn, 2022). Mistlin (2021) explains that in March 2023, the government announced the closure of hotels, requiring refugees to find alternative accommodation. There was a lack of services and a scarcity of resources to support new arrivals, which contrasts with the treatment of Ukrainians. There have been numerous criticisms, ranging from the evacuation being initiated too late to the failure to assist them

upon arrival, which has been perceived as a “betrayal of Afghan allies” (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2022; Anonymous, 2023). Additionally, concerns were raised by campaign groups when several Afghans who had fled the Taliban were due to be removed on the first flight to Rwanda (Thompson, 2022). The Government portrayed itself as humanitarian, rescuing people from Taliban rule while maintaining its commitment to the hostile immigration environment (Lopez and Dalceggio, 2024). The government has prioritised its global perception over its responsibility to assist these people in danger, as evident in the revelation of the super-induction imposed on the press following the data breach (see Gunter and Seddon, 2025).

3.5 Race

The term ‘race’ was first used in the 17th century and is a historical means of social classification and differentiation that attempts to essentialise political and cultural differences by linking physical traits and social practices (Gregory et al., 2009). Focusing on race creates harmful generalisations and discrimination, because not all members of this constructed group will act the same way. According to Gregory et al. (2009), the meaning of ‘race’ has roots in forms of colonial classification, where Europeans and Americans fabricated cultural and behavioural traits that legitimised their own superiority while exploiting others. “Whiteness” became the category for those who were civilised and fit to rule (Zimring, 2016). Furthermore, Darwin’s ideas of ‘natural selection’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ centre around harmful depictions of race, which were later developed into the concept of eugenics, which shaped the horrific actions of the Nazi party, as well as the crimes of British and French imperialism. This was recently explored by Shukman (2025) in relation to far-right groups in the UK who still promote this type of eugenics. Race has been used to perpetuate racial divisions and create superiority for white, European people who are already in a privileged position due to the history of colonialism.

Recent geographical scholarship has interpreted race as a social construct, presenting critical understandings of race rather than viewing it as a biological fact. Geographers focus on how race intersects with other aspects such as class and gender, as well as how race shapes social relations and spatial patterns (Nayak, 2011). Geographies of race examine how race impacts access to resources, power, and opportunities (Mehan, 2023). Ideas of development are founded on the racial hierarchies produced by colonial thinking, which are intertwined with migration and mobility (Peck, 2023). Bastia and Skeldon (2020:9) highlight that “Migration and development as a sub-field still have a long way to go in paying sufficient attention to the historical relationship of domination and

discrimination that are related to race and ethnicity". However, work is being done on the migration-development nexus to explore how people's movement intersects with gendered, racialised and class-based hierarchies (Bastia and Skeldon, 2020).

3.5.1 Refugees and race

As discussed in section 3.4, concerning the differential treatment of refugees, certain groups are preferred due to their race. Ford (2011) explains that ethnic groups are treated differently, with race and cultural proximity being key factors. Refugees are not just seen as people in need of safety but are assigned racial labels that shape how they are perceived. For example, when people from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq arrived in the UK, they were framed in the media through a lens of cultural and religious differences. They were treated with suspicion and heightened security concerns (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018). Likewise, migrants from Eastern Europe have been depicted as a threat and 'poorer and rougher' than their Western European counterparts (Lulle et al., 2018). One reason for this is the historical tensions between East and West Europe, as explained by Burrell (2009) in the context of Polish Migration. On the other hand, policies, institutions and people have taken a different stance towards Ukrainian refugees compared to other groups of refugees in Europe (Esposito, 2022). This creates hierarchies of victimhood and deservedness. Eastern Europeans are not exempt from racism, but their whiteness gives them an advantage over other groups (Fox, 2013). Race plays a key role in how refugees are perceived and subsequently treated, but as seen with Ukrainians, it is flexible.

However, refugees are not just treated differently due to their race by individual people; they are also excluded by the systems in place. Gregory et al. (2009) explain that racism is prejudice, discrimination or hierarchical differentiation towards a person or a group due to their race, either by an individual or an institution. The migration system keeps people in a vulnerable position (Giglioli, 2021). Mayblin, Wake and Kazemi (2020) emphasise that although states have a responsibility to fulfil their legal obligations to those seeking asylum, it is highly racialised and purposefully excludes people. Migrants seeking sanctuary are racialised and thus imbued with unmodernity, viewing them as more easily extendable (Mayblin, 2017). For example, the migration system produces subjects with limited rights who may be incorporated into the labour market in an inferior position and are likely to be exploited (Fabini, 2017; Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2013). They may be excluded from the welfare system due to their immigration status (Könönen, 2018), which can lead to exploitation.

3.5.2 British identity

Since the 1981 British Nationality Act, British citizenship has been closely tied to the nation-state and severed from imperial connections (Patel, 2021). Although this act did not explicitly mention race, it did racialise ideas of belonging. It limited migration from non-white commonwealth countries and created a hierarchy of citizenship (Mayblin, 2017; Goodfellow, 2019; El Enany, 2020). This came at a time when political responses to post-war immigration were violent and hostile (Patel, 2021; Ward, 2004). Barker (1981) explains that 'New racism' arose in the late 1970s and 80s, where politicians criticised biological ideas of race to naturalise ideas of community and culture. Likewise, Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) argue that this new racism projected ideas of human difference to rigidify racial categories and assert the impossibility of coexistence. Race is used as a political tool to create division and attempt to redefine Britishness as whiteness. Furthermore, racialised groups have been encouraged to adopt a "British way of life" with assimilationist policies to preserve British identity (Anthias and Yuval-Davies, 1992). However, it is vital to consider identities such as race and gender as intersectional and entangled, rather than in isolation.

3.6 Gender

Cultural understandings of gender "vary through space and time, and these understandings relate to the position of women in different societies" (Moore, 1988:12). Within feminist scholarship, patriarchy refers to the system in which men as a group are constructed as superior to women as a group, assumed to have authority over them (McDowell, 1999). Therefore, in papers written by men, women are often defined as irrational, emotional, dependent, and private, compared to men, who are portrayed as rational, scientific, independent, public, and cultured (McDowell, 1999). The feminist movement, which began in the late 19th century, challenged these traditional norms. Although it is associated with securing the Right to vote, it also outlined broader concerns about women's rights to education, paid employment, sexual freedom and financial self-sufficiency (Blunt and Wills, 2000). Feminist geography has sought to expose social and economic inequalities in the workplace, household, and other areas of society and advocate for change. Geographical research on gender has grown significantly since its origins in the 1970s, exploring how gendered social processes are linked to space, place, and scale (Warf, 2010). Prior to the 1980s, few female scholars and limited research explored women's experiences (Fluri, 2015). However, in the 1990s, gender studies experienced significant growth, with notable contributions from Butler (1990), Rose (1993), Massey (1994), and McDowell (1999). Gender research has had a significant

impact on several geographical subdisciplines, and intersects with other sociopolitical categories such as race, class and sexuality (Fluri, 2015). Gender is associated with power relations and access to resources that affect mobility patterns, such as migration, and divisions of labour in the household and workplace (Warf, 2010).

3.6.1 Gender: Migration, Home and War

Social practices and particular sites and places are interconnected with gender (McDowell, 1999); therefore, places become coded as masculine or feminine, which naturalise gender difference (Bondi and Davidson, 2006). For example, the private sphere is often associated with women, and the public world is often associated with men (McDowell, 1999). While men have traditionally been encouraged to "earn a good living," women are still expected to "keep house" (Mertes 1992: 58). Men are perceived as the head of the household and make most of the decisions (Oraimi and Antwi-Boaten, 2023). Meanwhile, housework and childcare were seen as a woman's 'sacred' duty (McDowell, 2013), with women's domestic labour being reproduced daily. Section 5.4.2 will expand on the experiences of home and homemaking for Ukrainian women in the UK. Johnston (2020) emphasises that many migrant women are unable to work, but when they do, these jobs are often confined to domestic and care work. An estimated 74% of migrant domestic workers are women, which means for many women, their place of work is their place of residence, which can create unequal power dynamics and leave women vulnerable to labour exploitation, particularly since 40% of national labour laws do not protect domestic workers (ILO, 2015). Migrant women also face a range of barriers, including the non-recognition of skills and qualifications from their home country, and childcare responsibilities (Forum, 2022), being expected to balance work and childcare.

Gender plays a crucial role in migration, influencing the reasons behind moving, who migrates, who stays behind, migration patterns, available opportunities, and the resources available to them (Migration Data Portal, 2024). However, gender is often overlooked in migration discourses, with violence against women frequently dismissed as an issue of the 'private sphere' (Biswas et al., 2023). The decision of women to migrate is often driven by the need to flee from violence (Menjívar and Drysdale Walsh, 2019). The Mixed Migration Centre (2018) highlighted that 27% of migrant women left Afghanistan with domestic violence as their main reason for going. Gender-based violence is a prominent reason for leaving and is inflicted during the journey to find safety (see Women's Refugee Commission, 2019). Menjívar (2011) explained that women experience various forms of violence with varying levels of intensity due to their social position. The violence does not

just happen on an individual level; women are more likely to experience legal violence from the asylum system (Menjívar and Drysdale Walsh, 2019). At the end of 2023, women and girls accounted for an estimated 49% of all refugees and asylum seekers globally (UNHCR, 2024); however, women and girls make up 74% of all registered victims of human trafficking (CTDC, 2025), highlighting that migrant women are disproportionately affected by violence. Furthermore, female refugees cited concerns about belonging, attachment, and community (Morrice, 2011), suggesting that they still feel like visitors, even years after being “given leave to remain” (Kumsa, 2006).

Typically, women are excluded from decision-making regarding war (Al Oraimi and Antwi-Boateng, 2023). Weuger (2011) argues that our historical conception of war has been exclusively from a male perspective. Meanwhile, Cohn (2013) suggests that men decide to go to war to protect the nation, women, and children; however, Weuger (2011) points out that the nature of war today has changed in terms of who fights in the war, as well as who is targeted by enemy forces. Men and women play different roles; men must join the military, while women assume responsibility for the community (Oraimi and Antwi-Boaten, 2023). Women are often stereotypically portrayed as mothers, while men are typically depicted as fighters (Ellner, 2022). However, during the Second World War, women played a vital role, supporting the war effort through nursing and factory labour, a role that has been repeated in subsequent wars. Gendered laws determined who stayed to fight, who left, and who lived or died (Cohn, 2013), as evident in Ukraine today. Refugees escaping from military operations often conform to traditional gender and age stereotypes, with women, children, and the elderly being guided to safety by younger or middle-aged men (Ellner, 2022). Powell (2001) stresses that women are always victims of war that men have created throughout history; even if they are not involved in the fighting, they pay the consequences. Under patriarchal systems, the loss of a husband is not only an economic loss for the widow and her children but also the loss of social status and influence (Akyol, 2022). Ukrainian refugees, as women and children, are seen as legitimate because they are victims, unlike men of fighting age.

3.7 Time

Geographers have extensively discussed time and temporality. Geographers explain that space and time are mutually constituted (Ho, 2021). Time-geography originated in the 1970s in the work of Torsten Hägerstrand, who explained that individuals are linked by a broader social structure (Hägerstrand, 1970). Later, Massey (1994) introduced the concept of ‘space-time,’ and Harvey (1989) outlined the concept of ‘time-space

compression,' which remains significant within contemporary geographical literature. There is an underlying assumption that time and space cannot exist without one another (Dodgshon, 2008; Moran, 2012). Everyone is constrained by space and time, but it can be considered from a particular location, as well as the spaces of social interaction and a broader socio-historical context (May, 2001). As time is typically considered in relation to space, there is limited literature solely on time. Still, it is a growing area of research and will be utilised in this thesis to discuss the importance of time for refugees. Time and temporality are central to conceptualisations of development, capitalism and globalisation (see Harvey, 1989; Low and Barnett, 2000; Raghuram, 2009). With the introduction of mass production and mass consumption, time became a commodity controlled by certain groups (Wolfe Tefera, 2021). Furthermore, time can be raced, classed and gendered because it is socially produced. The 'content of time' needs to be studied to explore more diverse cultural perspectives (Clifford et al., 2008), as much of the literature focuses on industrial and capitalist societies rather than how it affects different social groups.

3.7.1 Waiting for refugees and asylum seekers

Time and temporality are significant themes for refugees and asylum seekers, as they typically face extended periods of waiting, which will be explored more in Chapter 7. There is a growing body of literature on the experiences of time for refugees; however, much of this work fails to consider the diverse range of experiences refugees face (Wolfe Tefera, 2021). Refugee lives are actively imagined and constructed through various time-spaces with dynamic and unequal interrelationships (May and Thrift, 2003; Page et al., 2017). Refugee migration involves a complex subjective experience of time, but it is also ordered and direct, as they are frequently forced into a state of limbo, immobility and waiting (Wolfe Tefera, 2021). Time is used as a restrictive bordering and migration management tool, and refugees are forced to wait for the "right" time to attempt to cross the border or seek asylum (Wolfe Tefera, 2021). Phillimore and Yi (2021) emphasise that government policies of uncertainty perpetuate systematic insecurity, creating harm directly and indirectly. In the UK, this involves extended waiting for a decision on whether they will be allowed to remain (Brekke, 2004), with many having to launch appeals for unsuccessful claims. There is no set timeframe for asylum claims to be processed, so many asylum seekers are left in a state of waiting for years. Governments across Europe are increasingly pursuing immigration policies which seek to exclude migrants arriving from the Global South (Achiume, 2019). Politicians and the public deem some human lives to be worth less than others, due to embedded colonial, racially hierarchical worldwide views (Mayblin 2017; Mignolo, 2009), highlighting that waiting and time are

racialised. The UK Government has restricted asylum seekers' welfare and working rights to reduce economic “pull factors” (Mayblin, 2016). However, there is no empirical evidence that welfare or work acts as a pull factor (Mayblin and James, 2016).

Migration has long been associated with uncertainty and risk (Williams and Balaz, 2012); however, forced migration and waiting for asylum are particularly problematic. Grace et al. (2018:904) introduce the idea of ‘violent uncertainty’ and explain that the impacts of insecure immigration status have a significant effect on the health of migrants. Levels of asylum support are so low that they have been referred to as a form of “slow violence” (Nixon 2011, cited in Mayblin et al., 2020). The everyday has become a site of intense harm, of slow violence (Nixon, 2011), where refugees are “kept alive but in a state of injury” (Mbembe, 2003:21). The individuals have no control over the endpoint (Chase, 2020). The uncertainty and the conditions in which individuals must wait are associated with wide-ranging mental health problems (Bronstein et al., 2023; Dupont et al., 2005). Furthermore, this harm impedes an individual’s ability to integrate once refugee status is received (Laban et al., 2008). Phillimore and Yi (2021) explain that the longer the wait for a successful asylum decision, the greater the effect on health, and the more difficult it becomes for them to integrate into society. The speed of integration is often used as a measure of success (Wolde Tefera, 2021), with integration being framed as something refugees need to achieve; however, it is a long-term, generational process. Additionally, Boccagni (2012) argues that refugees are not bound to a fixed time and space because they live in two or more ‘worlds’ with ties to their country of origin and destination. Meanwhile, Burrell (2008) suggests that sustaining ties to one’s homeland shapes their temporal life. They do not sever their ties to their countries of origin even when they move to another country (Boccagni, 2012), and understandably, they will want to retain elements of their culture in a new place. Therefore, the future and the past are significant in migration and shape the present situation. Refugees and asylum seekers face a range of challenges due to the hostile asylum system, leaving them vulnerable and unable to establish themselves in a new place for an extended period of time.

3.8 Chapter summary

Overall, this chapter has explored the existing geographical research central to this study, focusing on the themes of home, hosting, migration, race, gender, and time. This project will build upon existing literature on the Homes for Ukraine scheme (see Burrell, 2022, 2024; Crossley, 2022). The literature on the private hosting of refugees is limited, as this

approach has only recently been utilised in a government scheme, but it is slowly growing (Herpell et al., 2024). Geographies of home are central to this project, from hosting and domopolitics seen in the UK to ideas of homeland and domicide in Ukraine. Geographies of migration provide context for the differential treatment of Ukrainians compared to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, themes of race, gender, and time have been introduced in relation to the experiences of refugees to frame the subsequent analysis chapters (Chapters 5, 6, and 7). The literature introduced in this chapter provides the premise for the following chapters to understand why Ukrainians have been treated differently and how this has impacted their experiences. It aims to fill a gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of Ukrainian guests and their hosts from their perspective to understand the main successes and challenges of the scheme. Due to the ongoing nature of the War, this is an evolving topic, so the following findings are accurate as of September 2025.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Interviews were conducted with 31 hosts, guests, and organisations supporting the Homes for Ukraine scheme to determine how it worked, as well as the main successes and challenges. Additionally, five months of volunteering were spent with a charity supporting refugees and asylum seekers, allowing me to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. The aim was to understand why Ukrainians have been treated differently and how this has affected their experience, as well as the potential to implement a similar scheme for other groups of refugees and asylum seekers in the future. Hyndman (2007) suggested that engaging with people outside the formal sphere of the state is vital to forming a more realistic view of refugees, an idea I have applied to my work. It was essential to speak with participants from diverse backgrounds and with varying views to create an informed opinion on the experiences of Ukrainian refugees. As these topics involve vulnerable individuals, it was essential to take an ethical approach (Dempsey, 2018); therefore, ethics has been built into the project from its inception. This chapter outlines the qualitative research methods used in this project, from the reasons why these methods were chosen, to how the data was analysed, and how this process could be improved.

4.2 Research design

For this research project, qualitative research methods were used to explore the lived experiences of Ukrainian refugees and their hosts, alongside volunteering with refugees and asylum seekers for five months to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. Having a mixed-methods approach allowed me to explore this topic in depth and triangulate findings to ensure their accuracy. Qualitative research was chosen because it provides insight into people's feelings and the depth of their experiences. Interviewing is the most widely used method in the field and can be considered woven into the discipline (Hitchings and Latham, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were used to encourage participants to share their experiences and investigate complex behaviours, opinions, and emotions (Longhurst, 2009). Hitchings and Latham (2020) explain that interviewing is a helpful technique because it is flexible and can be used to question various people in multiple settings. Semi-structured interviews can be adapted during data collection to explore unexpected findings. Valentine (2005:111) emphasises that interviews provide

'rich, detailed and multi-layered' responses, which unfold conversationally, allowing participants to discuss topics they feel are essential (Longhurst, 2009). Participants can expand on relevant points, allowing the researcher to reflect on opinions they may not have considered previously. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary technique because they provide flexibility and consistency for comparison.

Participants had direct experience with the Homes for Ukraine scheme, including hosts and organisations that supported them. They played a central role in supporting Ukrainians from when they arrived in the UK to the present day. The aim was to interview adults from across the country who have hosted Ukrainian refugees for at least six months, as this was the minimum timeframe set by the Government. This study aims to consider the War in Ukraine from the perspective of British hosts and Ukrainian guests to provide a new viewpoint. It expands on existing geographical literature related to home, care, belonging, and borders, but from the perspective of day-to-day hosting relationships. Considering Ukrainians' lived experiences allows us to evaluate why they have been treated differently and how this upholds theories about race, gender, and class. The interpretations of hosts are essential to this because they chose to participate in the hosting process. Hosts have been selected as the main participants because they offer a unique perspective on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, including the main successes and failures.

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Participant criteria

As intended, the participant criteria were adults who had hosted Ukrainian refugees for at least six months and were willing to discuss their experiences. The sampling approach was purposive, as I wanted to speak to people who could best answer my research questions because they had specific hosting experiences. Serra et al. (2018) explain that purposive strategies allow for a well-informed selection to create information-rich samples. Participants also included people working for organisations facilitating the Homes for Ukraine scheme or generally supporting refugees. Geographically, the participants were diverse, with some living in rural areas and others in cities. As Ukrainians lived across the country with their hosts, speaking to people from different regions to see how their experiences compared was essential. The number of Ukrainian guests also varied; some were hosted alone, while others were with their entire families, depending on the host’s capacity. Furthermore, the hosting duration was vastly different, with some sticking to the six months as initially intended, whereas others are still hosting their original guests three

years later. Some participants hosted multiple people for a shorter time before their guests returned to Ukraine or found independent housing. Speaking to people with various experiences was essential to gain a more rounded perspective of the scheme. Overall, I interviewed 31 participants.

Participant	Gender	Location	Host (H), guest (G), Council or Charity (C) *	Profession
1	Male	Norfolk	Host	Former MP
2	Female	Sussex	Host	Lawyer
3	Female	Yorkshire	Host	Student
4	Female	Nottinghamshire	Host	Scientist
5	Female	Kent	Charity	Refugee Resettlement Manager
6	Female	Sussex	Host	Engineer
7	Female	Sussex	Guest	Unknown
8	Female	Cotswolds	Host	Retired (former teacher)
9	Male	Nottinghamshire	Host	Retired
10	Male	Nottinghamshire	Council	Community Officer
11	Male	Nottinghamshire	Host	Businessman
12	Male	Nottinghamshire	Host	Engineer
13	Male	Nottinghamshire	Host	Ex-Army
14	Female	Nottinghamshire	Host	Artist
15	Female	Nottinghamshire	Host	Retired
16	Male	Sussex	Host	Army
17	Female	Cotswolds	Guest	Architect
18	Male	Sussex	Host	Lord
19	Female	Nottinghamshire	Host	Retired (former GP)
20	Female	Bedfordshire	Host	Retired
21	Female	Yorkshire	Charity	Social Integration Coordinator
22	Female	Sussex	Charity	Inclusion Manager
23	Male	Sussex	Council	Community Manager
24	Male	Nottinghamshire	Charity	Branch Chair

25	Male	Sussex	Charity	Asylum Hotel Support Coordinator
26	Female	Sussex	Charity	Charity Lead
27	Female	Sussex	Guest	Ukrainian Coordinator
28	Male	Sussex	Charity	Charity Lead
29	Female	Sussex	Charity	Policy development Manager
30	Female	Sussex	Charity	Team member and Lead for Asylum Seeker Hostel
31	Male	Sussex	Charity	Charity Manager

Table 2 – Participants interviewed

*Throughout the analysis chapters below, H, G, and C will be used to indicate whether the Participant is a host, guest, or charity worker.

The recruitment process for charities involved finding the email addresses of organisations supporting Ukrainians from their websites. Initially, I focused on Sussex and Nottinghamshire, as I was already familiar with some charities and hosts in those areas. I broadened my search to national organisations and other prominent groups. The email process was straightforward; I could target organisations supporting Ukrainians directly. Although many responded, an interview was not always feasible, as these charities are often understaffed and underfunded (CAF, 2024). The recruiting process for hosts differed from that of organisations, as hosting information is unavailable online. Initially, I contacted public figures, such as MPs and Lords, who have spoken openly about hosting and are contactable through an email address. I managed to arrange interviews with an MP and a Lord. The most effective method for finding hosts was through snowball sampling, which leverages existing social networks to identify potential hosts. Additionally, Nottinghamshire County Council were helpful and put me in contact with hosts, so multiple participants were accessed through them.

Initially, potential participants were given an information sheet (appendix B) outlining the project and what would be expected of them to put them at ease (Longhurst, 2010). The sheet outlined the thesis's key aims and how this applies to their role as hosts. The participant information sheet also explained that participants were being asked to give up 30 minutes to an hour to discuss their experiences of hosting and the Homes for Ukraine scheme in general, and questions were provided in advance upon request. It also explained that the interview would be recorded and later transcribed, with information

about how their data would be stored and when this would be deleted. Providing this information in advance allowed any questions to be asked via email before the interview, although they were summarised during the interview to ensure understanding and consent.

4.3.2 Location of interviews

The location of interviews is crucial, as Crang (2005) explains, because specific locations alter the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee. The intention was to conduct interviews in public spaces such as coffee shops, which are neutral areas with other people around. Although it was anticipated that the interviews would occur online and in person, the vast majority took place online. All participants were given the option, but many decided to conduct the interviews on Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Online interviews provide a neutral space for conducting the interview, aiming to make the participant feel comfortable and safe (Madge and O'Connor, 2002). Stewart and Williams (2005) suggest that the physical separation of online interviews means participants are likely to reveal more information. Conducting qualitative research online has become increasingly common since the COVID-19 pandemic (Brown, 2023; You, 2021), as people have become more accustomed to holding online meetings.

4.3.3 Interviewing

This project has taken a longitudinal approach, as interviews with organisations and charities were conducted in Autumn 2023, as part of my undergraduate dissertation, and interviews with hosts and guests were conducted in Spring 2025. The aim was to speak with guests, hosts, and supporters of the scheme about the main successes and challenges, to understand the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in the UK, and how these experiences changed over time. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, with some questions being asked in every interview and others being asked when relevant. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to discuss topics they found significant. For example, one participant only answered two or three of the questions; however, we had a lengthy discussion about the history of Ukraine and how this motivated him to help Ukrainian refugees, which provided context on the War. The main themes discussed were motivations to host/help, positive aspects, negative aspects, relationship with guests and the support received. The interviews were conducted in English, so questions were sent in advance to individuals with English as a second language or those who wished to prepare in advance. It was essential that all participants feel at ease and comfortable answering the questions (see Haukas and Tishakov, 2024).

Example of interview questions for hosts

1. Why did you decide to host Ukrainian refugees?
2. What were the main successes and challenges of hosting?
3. How did you support the people you were hosting?
4. What have you found the most surprising about hosting refugees?
5. Would you be open to hosting refugees again?
6. Overall, do you think the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been successful?
7. Do you think the Homes for Ukraine scheme could be adapted and replicated for other groups of refugees and asylum seekers?
8. What does the word ‘home’ mean to you?

Figure 3 –Example of the questions asked during the interviews with hosts.

Building rapport is vital, as people are more likely to disclose if they feel listened to and comfortable. Trust is established when researchers work openly, honestly and transparently (Minkler, 2004), so building a good rapport with the participants was vital. Although interviews do not guarantee the truth, they offer insight into what people do and think (Longhurst, 2009), which is helpful, as the Homes for Ukraine scheme is all about people’s actions and experiences. How participants explained their experience was a key element in understanding the scheme's successes and the main areas for improvement. Martin and Elwood (2000) suggest that interviews are not only an opportunity to gather information but also a means for participant observation. People reveal how they feel through their body language and reactions, so it was essential that I was engaged in the conversation and could pick up on these cues. However, completing the interviews online did mean that some of this body language was lost, which makes it more challenging to interpret.

4.4 Volunteering

For five months, I volunteered at Refugee Roots in Nottingham to gain insight into the experiences of other refugee and asylum seeker groups compared to Ukrainians. This organisation “helps asylum seekers and refugees build relationships and navigate the complexities of building a new life in the UK” (Refugee Roots, 2025). They run several weekly sessions, from art classes to sports teams and cooking groups. I volunteered at the Conversation Café, an hour-long session run in collaboration with Nottingham

Playhouse, where we discussed various topics to help refugees practice their English skills. These weekly sessions not only helped participants improve their English, but they also provided a sense of community and a chance to meet people in a similar situation. I aimed to observe the sessions and gain a deeper understanding of the participants and their experiences. Although it was not a formal study, it helped me gain insight into their day-to-day lives and the struggles they may face. Throughout the process, I kept detailed notes reflecting on conversations and the dynamics within the group. This helped me refer to previous sessions, as some of these notes may have linked to themes from the interviews. Overall, this experience taught me that language classes are valuable not only for conversation skills and communication, but also for providing a sense of community.

Volunteering is under-discussed in participatory methodological practices, but it is a valuable tool for gaining more insight into a group of people (Goerisch, 2017). Volunteering typically focuses on gaining access to a research population (Parr, 2000; Watts, 2012) or building rapport (Parr, 2011). While volunteering was used to learn more about refugees and asylum seekers, I did not conduct any interviews with attendees. Mills (2013:20) explains that there is a need "to question and consider the role of volunteering in research more broadly", as O'Neill (2001) emphasises that the voluntary sector has been considered in research, but the role of volunteers has not. Feminist geographers have critiqued participatory methodologies, arguing that they can be disingenuous and promote uneven power exchanges (Goerisch, 2017). In the same way that researchers hold power when conducting research, so do volunteers, as they support vulnerable people. However, Katz (1994) highlights that all forms of fieldwork are messy, conflicting and complicated, which can be mitigated but not avoided. Therefore, approaching research in this field requires a reflexive approach to continuously and consciously deal with bias and power dynamics (Hagen et al., 2022). Although volunteering as a methodological practice can cause uneven power dynamics, it also has the potential to create work that explores the experiences of vulnerable, underrepresented groups when conducted ethically.

4.5 Data analysis

Semi-structured interviews were used for all participants to allow flexibility and comparability for the analysis process. Immediately after the interview, I wrote down some reflective notes, including general information and my immediate thoughts and opinions, so that when looking back at the interview transcripts, I would know how I felt initially. These were minor details, such as their punctuality, eagerness to be interviewed, or body

language, to provide a clearer image of the participant. Most interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams, so the transcription function was utilised. Although these transcripts were imperfect and required editing, they allowed full concentration on the discussion during the interview (Kitchin and Tate, 2020). These transcripts were verbatim, so I listened to the recordings and edited them to ensure they accurately depicted participants' comments.

Reading through the transcripts allowed me to become familiar with the content. Then, the initial coding process took place, during which I highlighted points the participants had emphasised alongside the main successes and challenges outlined about the scheme. The coding method involved paying close attention to the data to understand the deeper meaning of the text (Cope, 2010). Next, I began considering the key themes mentioned across the interviews and decided to focus on thematic analysis: a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a dataset for new insights (Elliott, 2018; Thomas, 2006). I followed Clarke and Braun's (2013) six-phase thematic analysis framework to identify the key ideas. They were transferred onto mind maps to allow connections to be easily identifiable (Crang, 2005). Rather than picking out random points, it was essential to "produce concepts that seemed to fit the data" (Strauss, 1987:28) and consider how this triangulated what I had learnt while volunteering. Patton (2015) stresses that researchers must not let their preconceptions interfere with identifying key themes. A cross-coding process enabled me to verify the findings, consider new ideas, and ensure that all themes accurately reflected the ideas presented in the interviews. Refining the themes enables the ideas to be interpreted in the context of theory, a crucial aspect of analysis.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical research is an essential part of the process and should be considered at every stage (Miggelbrink et al., 2022), a perspective with which most researchers would agree (Morris, 2015). However, it is vital for qualitative research because it directly involves participants. The key principles that underpin contemporary research ethics are: respect for participants, preventing harm, safeguarding participants, and gaining informed, voluntary consent at the outset (Hall, 2009). Before collecting any data, ethical approval was obtained from the University's ethics panel to ensure that all necessary steps were taken (Appendix C). However, Aldridge (2012) and Martin (2007) argue that gaining approval before conducting research assumes that the power relations between the researcher and participants are static, which is not the case. Therefore, a more

responsive ethics approach is needed to accommodate the changing positionality, power relations and uncertainties that may arise (see Hall, 2009). Ethical decisions must be made based on contextual priorities, rather than abstract standards (Hammett et al., 2022); therefore, a responsive approach would allow for this to be reevaluated throughout. Formal ethics procedures may feel like box-ticking, prioritising risk management over addressing the issues (Tolich and Fitzgerald, 2006), so we must move away from thinking about this as a static process (Miggelbrink et al., 2022).

Conducting interviews involves collecting detailed and personal information from participants, so they must understand how the data will be used and that confidentiality will be maintained. This informed consent is characterised by the researcher's respect for participants' integrity and awareness of their vulnerabilities (Burgess, 2007); therefore, it is essential to ensure that participants understand what is being asked of them from the outset. This was achieved by sending clear information sheets and consent forms (Appendices A and B), which included details such as safe data storage and anonymisation, to participants. I reiterated these details before the interview to ensure they understood. Participants were aware that they were being recorded for transcription purposes, and I made this clear when I began recording. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the project at any point, but they needed to do so at least a week before the deadline to ensure I removed any traces from the thesis. Due to the project's emotionally sensitive nature, participants were informed of the key themes the interview would cover to ensure they felt comfortable, and specific topics were avoided to minimise distress or unease. Participants could discuss these topics if they chose to, but I did not ask explicitly. They could stop the interview at any point or ask to skip over a question. Although this did not happen, the option needed to be there.

Richardson and Godfrey (2003; 349) state that "the nature of a relationship between an interviewer and a participant is inherently exploitive", because the researcher wants to collect data. Therefore, participatory and collaborative methods could be utilised to ensure that power is balanced and knowledge is produced together (Manning, 2018). To achieve this, the researcher needs to engage with marginalised 'others' instead of just researching on them, marking a shift away from the colonial legacy research has been built upon (Manning, 2018). When volunteering with refugees and asylum seekers at the Conversation café, it was vital that the participants were not pressured into participating in the research; however, I did discuss the project with them and asked for their opinions on the topic. Although informal, this process widened my perspective and allowed me to engage with their ideas. As mentioned in Section 4.4, it was essential that uneven

exchanges of power were not created when volunteering (Goerisch, 2017), which I considered throughout the process in a responsive approach.

4.7 Limitations

Despite this research providing a new perspective on the experiences of hosts and guests in the Homes for Ukraine scheme, it has several limitations. While many participants lived in Sussex and Nottinghamshire, due to existing connections and awareness of local organisations, this allowed for a deeper exploration of these specific areas. By focusing on Sussex and Nottinghamshire, I could consider the various aspects of support Ukrainian refugees received in that area, from their hosts to charities and the council, building a bigger picture of their experiences. If this project were longer and I had been able to interview more participants from across the country, it would be interesting to see how this support varied, which would enhance the arguments in section 6.3. I considered the role of self-selection bias, as I expected participants to have predominantly had positive experiences and wanted to discuss that; however, they held mixed opinions on the scheme. Although researchers typically desire larger participant numbers, the 31 interviews I completed were successful, and I had reached the saturation point, with the answers beginning to become repetitive. So, this was a useful sample size because the later interviews started to confirm what I already knew rather than producing new ideas. The responses are not necessarily generalisable because they reflect particular people's behaviours, opinions and emotions (Longhurst, 2009). However, this project has analysed the depth of people's experiences, striving to produce authentic and reliable accounts rather than general results.

4.7.1 Positionality

Positionality refers to the ways in which a person's identity, personal values, views, and location shape their understanding of the world (Sanyal, 2020). All knowledge is shaped by specific circumstances (Rose, 1997), so it is not possible for the researcher to completely remove themselves and their opinions from the results. DeLyser et al. (2010:4) highlight that "qualitative research is a process that begins with the researcher […] who is shaped and influenced in ongoing ways". McDowell (1992:409) believes that we should "recognise and take account of our own position" and write this into the research, as it is an intrinsic part of the process. Acknowledging the potential power imbalance and reflecting on positionality is crucial for researchers. The researcher holds a "privileged" position by deciding what questions to ask, directing the flow of discourse, and interpreting

the material (McLafferty, 1995). Therefore, it was crucial to acknowledge my positionality while conducting this research, as it influenced the questions chosen and how the data were interpreted, ultimately shaping the project's direction. For example, preconceived ideas may become embedded in the research, so it was essential to approach it with an open mind and listen to participants with empathy and a willingness to learn from them. The questions chosen were open, allowing participants to discuss the topic they felt most passionately about, shifting the power towards them. While bias cannot be removed, it was essential to enable the participants to lead the conversation, and for me to engage with their perspective. Furthermore, volunteering positioned me simultaneously as an outsider and an insider (Mullings, 1999), as I attended the session every week but did not have the same lived experience. Acknowledging my privileged position and being open to learning about people's experiences was important.

My positionality, as a White, English woman, has fundamentally shaped this project. As an English researcher, I approached this study as an outsider to the experiences of Ukrainian refugees, since I am not a refugee myself and hold a more privileged position. Therefore, it was essential that this topic be approached with sensitivity, particularly when speaking to Ukrainian guests. Due to my inability to speak Ukrainian, I was only able to converse with Ukrainian guests who were also fluent in English, which likely limited the people I was able to speak with. However, it was easier to speak with English hosts due to our shared identity, which made it easier for me to understand their perspective. My identity as a woman made it easier for me to build trust with female participants. Although our experiences are not comparable, it helped to create an empathetic space for them to share their experiences. This was particularly important for this project, as most Ukrainian refugees are women and children. Additionally, as a student researcher from the University of Nottingham, some participants may have been more willing to speak to me because I was representing a larger organisation. If I were to undertake a similar project in the future, I would ensure that my positionality is considered throughout, as it shapes both the process and the outcome of the research.

4.8 Chapter summary

For this project, a qualitative approach was necessary because the aim was to explore the intricacies of people’s experiences. Interviewing was chosen as the primary research method because it provides an opportunity to speak to people in detail about their experiences. This provides a broader understanding of the Homes for Ukraine scheme's

success, offering insight into its day-to-day operations. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method, but ethnographic research in the form of volunteering was also utilised to provide general context about the treatment of other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Ensuring that the research process was ethical, reflective, and rigorous was a priority, particularly given the sensitive nature of the topics covered.

Chapter 5 – Identities

5.1 Introduction

Ukrainian refugees have experienced differential treatment compared to other groups of refugees through the Homes for Ukraine scheme due to their perceived cultural similarities to white British residents. Ukrainians were seen as relatable, so hosts were happy to welcome them into their homes. This is due to the intersections of their class, race, and gender identities, although participants often discussed these factors euphemistically, as discussed below. Although race clearly intersects with other factors, it is challenging to untangle and discuss its aspects individually. Far-right language is becoming more prominent in the media, on social media platforms, and by politicians, with a clear anti-immigration message; however, Ukrainian refugees have been singled out and treated very differently. Mickelsson (2025) explains that Ukrainian refugees are seen as 'deserving' as they are predominantly white, female, perceived to need protection, rather than a security threat, and share cultural features with other Europeans. This illustrates a shift in the perception of Eastern Europeans, who were previously viewed as a threat to immigration and as less developed, arguments used to justify the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union in 2016. It also reflects Cold War suspicion of Eastern Europe and perceptions of criminality, as mentioned in section 2.3. This notion of deserving vs non-deserving refugees will be explored throughout this chapter.

This chapter consists of three sections that explore different aspects of the identities of Ukrainian refugees, including class, race, and gender. The class of the Ukrainian guests was highlighted numerous times, with "Europeanness" being used as a proxy for class. The acceptance of Ukrainians was attributed to their cultural similarities because they were also European. Although the whiteness of Ukrainians was not explicitly mentioned, multiple participants alluded to their race and suggested that this facilitated integration into the community. Section 5.3.2 explores whether the hosts would accommodate other groups of refugees and asylum seekers, with their identities dominating the discussion. Lastly, the acceptance of Ukrainian women and children played into existing stereotypes, but the nature of war simultaneously subverts these roles.

5.2 Class: Europeanness, language and education

5.2.1 Emphasis on class and education

Hosts repeatedly mentioned that their guests were highly motivated, educated, and keen to support themselves.

“Ukrainians are really hardworking. They don’t want to live on charity. They’re really well educated” (Participant 6 - H)

Here, Participant 6 (H) highlights that the Ukrainians they have met are keen to establish themselves and do not want to be reliant on their hosts. Although this is a generalisation, hosts have a predominantly positive perception of Ukrainians as individuals, as well as of their society, which represents a shift away from Eastern European stereotypes. Ukrainians are perceived as hard-working and willing to support themselves, suggesting that they want to integrate and contribute to society, and that this process will be easier for them due to their educational and cultural similarities. Crucially, this is something other groups of refugees are accused of not wanting to do, thus emphasising that Ukrainians are an exception to the rule. Mickelsson (2023) highlights that Ukrainians have consistently been portrayed as more well-educated and willing to work than other groups. This invokes a hierarchy of refugees, placing Ukrainians on top because they are well educated and seen as similar people, reinforcing elitist Western ideas that view educated migrants as more valuable and ‘superior’ (Ford, 2011). Furthermore, this could alienate other groups of refugees, because they are being compared to Ukrainians, who are seen to have a similar culture and are European, thus having a greater advantage.

“They were very much into bigging up Ukraine and what they did. Certainly, any qualifications would have to be redone over here. They’re not seen as equivalent” (Participant 9 - H)

Despite Ukrainians being well-educated, Participant 9 (H) highlights that their qualifications are not recognised as equivalent in the UK, suggesting that although they are ‘superior’ refugees, they are not British. This maintains a sense of British superiority and paternalism: “social policies aimed at the poor that attempt to reduce poverty and other social problems by directive and supervisory means.” (Mead, 1997). In this case, paternalism justifies actions towards refugees as being for their ‘own good’, when they limit their choices and freedoms (Lenard, 2022). Although framed as deserving, Ukrainians are still caught in paternalistic structures, such as being dependent on hosts.

This impacts other groups of refugees significantly more, with restrictive work rights, rooms in hotels and a lack of integration support, which disempower them further. Even though Ukrainians have been welcomed, they have participated in courses to convert their qualifications, supported by local organisations. Some participants explained that their guests held high-level jobs in Ukraine but were unable to secure similar positions here. Some hosts expressed frustration, as they were aware of the positive contributions their guests, who had been nurses or doctors, could have made to their community, a commonly held view (Makarova, 2025). A willingness to adapt to the situation is apparent. Participant 6 mentions that some women have taken lower-level jobs at cafes and garden centres, and Participant 25 (C) explains that professional people took on cleaning jobs to support their families. Although this is not unique to Ukrainians, it is common for migrants to be overqualified for their jobs and to undertake work to support their families (see Landolt and Thieme, 2018).

Although this must be challenging for Ukrainians who have previously had high-paying professional jobs, it exposes the differential treatment of Ukrainians compared to other groups because they can work formally. Meanwhile, different groups of refugees and asylum seekers are forced into the informal sector, which is often exploitive, precarious and leaves them vulnerable (Lewis et al., 2015). Crossley (2023) argues that Ukrainians can access various benefits and systems from which refugees and asylum seekers are typically excluded. The ability to work is paramount because it enables financial independence (UNHCR, 2022; Backman et al., 2021) while helping refugees develop a sense of identity and belonging, which is crucial in the long term. Ukrainians can have their own income, so they are not reliant on their hosts or the state, and they can move into their own property, creating a sense of home.

5.2.2 Europeanness

“There are a lot of similarities, and that’s why there has been so much sympathy for Ukraine” (Participant 19 - H)

During interviews, hosts repeatedly emphasised the cultural similarities of their guests, attributing this to the scheme’s success, due to their European background. Due to their geographical proximity, Europeans may feel more involved in this conflict as it is closer to home than Wars in the Middle East (Moise et al., 2023). Neighbouring countries may feel a greater responsibility to help refugees because the War is happening nearby, meaning a greater number of refugees arrive. Participant 4 (H) explained, "I’m originally from Poland, so I felt like maybe I should do something”. They spoke about having a shared history as

nations and a similar language and traditions. This made Ukrainians relatable to them, increasing their desire to help. Additionally, their own background as migrants led them to want to help others.

Several participants emphasised that the Europeanness of Ukrainians made them more relatable, and they felt more sympathetic because they could see the impact on people "like us". Their Europeanness is used as a proxy for whiteness, with participants finding it easier to discuss their class than their race. Rooke and Carver (2025) state that Ukrainians are typically addressed in a humanising way, with MP Michael Gove stating in 2022 that "everyone in the United Kingdom continues to be in awe of the bravery of the people of Ukraine", evoking a sense of solidarity as a nation supporting Ukraine and highlighting the belief that Ukrainians are deserving of help. This directly contrasts with perceptions of Eastern Europeans, who have been depicted as a security threat and 'poorer and rougher' than their Western European counterparts (Lulle et al., 2018). Politicians have used the Eastern European migrant as a symbol of uncontrolled immigration. This narrative dominated the Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum, as Politicians played on racialised immigration structures and feelings of national belonging (Virdee and McGeever, 2018). While the racialisation of Eastern European migrants was present before Brexit, Blachnicka-Ciacek and Budginaite-Mackine (2022) clarify that this normalised the exclusion. The racialisation of refugees and asylum seekers will be discussed in section 5.3. Whereas Ukrainians are not grouped with other Eastern Europeans, they have been viewed as deserving and innocent victims seeking sanctuary in nearby countries.

Media coverage has played a key role in the perception of Ukrainian refugees, with news articles highlighting the Europeanness of Ukrainians, as well as their Christianity and whiteness. Images of innocent people fleeing, primarily women and children, have been shown, which humanises them and evokes a sense of sympathy (Martikainen and Sakki, 2024). An ITV reporter, Lucy Watson, commenting on the Ukraine conflict from Poland, said, "This is not a developing, third-world nation, this is Europe" (McCloskey, 2022, p.140). This quote expresses surprise that a war could happen in a European nation, rather than in a less developed country elsewhere. War is often seen as distant and happening to people who are different from us, so it is less important. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed surprise at how similar they found Ukrainians to be.

"She's very cosmopolitan. She's very westernised, just sort of like anyone else" (Participant 2 - H)

The term ‘cosmopolitan’ was also used by Participant 8 (H), suggesting that they are sophisticated and belong to all parts of the world, rather than being restricted to one country (OED, 2025), alluding to their class and race. The term positions Ukrainians as belonging in Western spaces and as more than just victims of the War; they have agency. Additionally, it emphasises their Europeanness and ability to travel the world, which evokes their deservedness because they are seen as belonging in Europe, and similar to ‘us’.

5.2.3 Language barrier

Language is a key element of integration as it allows people to communicate effectively. Many organisations have provided language classes for Ukrainians. Still, some guests have struggled with this, making it more challenging to integrate into their local community and find a job equivalent to their previous job in Ukraine. Class plays a significant role in the services people can access and the education they receive. In the context of the War, not only are they more likely to have the means to leave, but they may also be able to speak the language of their host country. Wilkinson and Garcea (2017) state that competence in the official language of a resettlement country is key to successful integration. It enhances communication and relationship building with the broader society in the long term (Tip et al., 2019).

“Suddenly, they’ve gone from quite a high class in their own country to what would be considered a low class here. Having to navigate that and deal with that amongst everything else that comes with being resettled in a new country” (Participant 5 - C)

Class clearly impacts the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers, from the struggles of lower-class refugees to the power of the elite migrants. Ukrainians may want to prove themselves in the UK, despite the language barrier. Language is a significant barrier for refugees arriving in the UK, as securing a job often depends on being able to communicate effectively. Volunteering at a language class for refugees drew attention to the importance of language skills and is essential for creating a sense of belonging. These classes provide a sense of community as participants can meet new people in a similar position. Seeing participants gain confidence and contribute to the sessions more over time was rewarding. Attending these classes showed that refugees were eager to belong and have agency. Although Ives et al. (2022) suggest that a poor ability to speak the host

language can limit attendance at language classes, it can be argued that these spaces should also be treated as community spaces. Participant 17 (G) explained that her mother enjoyed the English language classes and meeting other Ukrainians, but the lessons were not frequent enough, so she did not pick up the language well enough to work, leading her to return to Ukraine. This movement of people back to Ukraine will be discussed in more detail in section 6.4. More funding is needed in this area, although the support provided by local organisations and hosts is clearly beneficial. The host's class also plays a significant role in the support they can provide, as they have the space and resources to help, a sign of their own cosmopolitan nature.

5.2.4 Summary

This section has explored the significance of class in the treatment of Ukrainian refugees in the UK. Ukrainians have been treated differently due to their 'Europeanness', as the public felt more sympathetic because it was closer to home, and they are seen as similar people. Hosts were keen to discuss their level of education, as they were from a developed nation and deserved help. Language and access to equivalent jobs remain barriers for Ukrainians still living in the UK; however, language classes and support from local charities have played a crucial role in supporting them.

5.3 Race: Whiteness, Culture and Coloniality

5.3.1 Whiteness

The key to the formation of this scheme was the acceptance by hosts, who viewed Ukrainians as similar to them due to their European identity and whiteness. While the Europeanness of Ukrainians has been discussed in section 5.2.2, their race cannot be overlooked. El-Enany (2020) suggests that European citizenship is interlinked with whiteness. Ajana, Connell and Liddle (2024) note that there has been heavy emphasis on the "whiteness" and "Europeanness" of Ukrainian refugees. However, participants generally avoided speaking about race and instead talked about it euphemistically, focusing on class and culture instead. Participants likely did not want to say the wrong thing, especially as they knew they were being recorded. Discussing a topic like race can be challenging, as it often makes people uncomfortable. Furthermore, British cultural norms around politeness mean that topics such as race are often avoided, as mentioned by Eddo-Lodge (2017), who suggests that racism is embedded in British society.

“I think it’s easier to accept people who look like us.” (Participant 14 - H)

Here, Participant 14 (H) suggests that Ukrainian refugees are easier to accept because they look like us. Hosts could visualise Ukrainians in their homes and neighbourhoods and felt they would fit in because they looked the same, as most participants were white and British—whiteness functions as a marker for deservedness. The familiarity, due to their whiteness, created a greater sense of empathy, so people were willing to help them. Participant 3 (H) testified that “Ukrainians just became part of the neighbourhood. We thought of them by name, not as strangers”. Due to their race and class, Ukrainians have been humanised and treated as individuals rather than a mass of people and a danger. They have been integrated into the community, primarily through the efforts of hosts, so they are not perceived as outsiders. Local community members knew Ukrainian guests by name and were willing to help them through hosting, donations, and local charities. Although Fox (2013) argues that Eastern Europeans are not exempt from racism, their whiteness gives them an advantage over other groups. Racism towards Eastern Europeans is flexible and shaped by context, leading them to be praised and stigmatised at different points, as mentioned in section 5.2.2. Esposito (2022) clarifies that there are hierarchies of victimhood and deservedness. Ukrainians represented the ‘superior’ refugee, and this is predominantly due to their whiteness.

“It has exposed the racism […] refugees who are white are treated very differently” (Participant 22 - C)

Participant 22 (C) stressed that we have been happy to accept Ukrainians, but we are not as forthcoming with people from Afghanistan, Syria, or African countries. These people are seen as outsiders and are alienated due to factors such as skin colour and religious dress. Mayblin (2017) and Mignolo (2009) highlight that some human lives are deemed worth less than others due to embedded colonial, racial, and hierarchical worldviews. As noted in section 3.5, “whiteness” became the category for those deemed fit to rule (Zimring, 2016). Moreover, refugees from the Middle East or African nations are immediately racialised and viewed as a security threat (see Kundnani, 2014). Depiction in the media and rhetoric used by politicians plays a key role in this, as they portray these groups as threatening, culturally incompatible and an economic burden (Lawlor and Tolley, 2017), influencing public perception. The unequal treatment of refugees has become a normalised practice and is deliberately pursued by policy (Haase et al., 2023). This is a form of racism because refugees are treated completely differently due to their race, through the systems in place and by the public. Thousands of people volunteered to

help Ukrainians; this has not happened for any other group. Ukrainian refugees are the exception due to their whiteness, and more broadly, how they are perceived due to this.

5.3.2 Hosting other groups

Despite being willing to host Ukrainian refugees, many participants stated that they would be reluctant to host refugees or asylum seekers from other countries. This was surprising, as they had made considerable effort to support their Ukrainian guests, and many discussed how fulfilling the experience had been.

"I'm not sure I would take someone from Saharan Africa or the Middle East with all its problems at the moment because culturally, I just think it would be too difficult" (Participant 2 - H)

This quote from Participant 2 (H) draws attention to the cultural differences between themselves and people from other parts of the world. Although they do not explicitly speak about race, it implies that they would not accept people from Saharan Africa or the Middle East due to cultural factors, with race as a part of that. However, they likely meant to speak about sub-Saharan Africa instead, as they are typically framed as the archetypal "illegal migrants". Participant 12 (H) also noted that they would only consider someone from a similar background to themselves, as they want the guest to be a good fit. Having hosted a refugee from Iraq, Participant 12 (H) emphasised that hosting Ukrainians was easier because they had more common ground and could relate to each other. In contrast, they found hosting a woman from Iraq more challenging. It is crucial to remember that refugee experiences are shaped by individual agency and situated experiences, rather than being defined solely by national identity. The assumption that people from different cultural backgrounds are inherently incompatible with hosts reflects racial stereotypes and essentialism: characteristics are fixed without the possibility of change of social reorganisation (Grosz, 2012). It assumes that identity is fixed, rather than socially constructed, and causes migrants to be framed by racialised discourses. At the same time, Ukrainians are perceived as compatible because they are European, which encompasses both race and class. Furthermore, being European is often adopted by the middle class, who may have had the opportunity to travel and identify with multiculturalism over nationalism (see Fligstein and Polyakova, 2011). Equivalent schemes for other groups do not exist in the UK, so it is difficult to know how successful they would be; however, it relies on people willing to host.

“To be living under the same roof as somebody with such different ways of life from the outset would be extremely challenging for both parties” (Participant 5 - C)

Participant 5 (C) works for Migrant Help, a charity that supports refugees and asylum seekers. It aims to protect people affected by displacement and exploitation and help them access services, including accommodation and financial support, as well as plans to tackle their individual needs (Migrant Help, 2025). Having worked with refugees from various backgrounds, she explained that hosting people from other countries could be challenging because living with people from the outset would require both the hosts and guests to adapt significantly. She described that people with a similar way of living can be amicable from the outset, which is why it has worked well for Ukrainians. Due to her background working with refugees, she emphasises how intense hosting arrangements can be and acknowledges the damage hosting could do if not implemented correctly. As mentioned in section 5.2, language is a key element of this. A language barrier makes communicating more difficult for hosts and guests, so language classes are vital. Whether hosting would work for other groups must be approached from an individual level, rather than generalising groups, as it would not work for everyone.

“I think it really enriched their lives and changed people’s ways of looking at things for a while” (Participant 8 - H)

Hosting Ukrainians changed people’s perspectives because they viewed refugees as ordinary people in need of shelter and support, rather than outsiders. Participant 8 highlights that the Homes for Ukraine scheme broadened people’s views. Many participants indicated that it was a rewarding experience and that they enjoyed learning about Ukrainian culture from their guests, given their limited pre-existing knowledge. Moise, Dennison and Kresi (2023) indicated that attitudes towards Ukrainians could influence feelings towards other groups. Hosts could become more open-minded towards other groups because they have personal experience of helping refugees and can see the impact this has on their guests. However, as mentioned above, this was not necessarily the case.

5.3.3 ‘British values’

Some participants raised the importance of ‘British values’ and suggested that this encouraged them to host. This mirrors the nationalistic terminology used by politicians, and particularly by anti-immigration parties such as Reform, to exclude people (see

Farage, 2016). It also links back to paternalism, as these politicians portray migrants as vulnerable and heavily dependent on the state to justify restrictive policies (Piemontese and Sigona, 2025).

"We were once again this protecting country taking Ukraine under our wing, and it gave us that sense of pride and patriotism" (Participant 3 - H)

This quote from Participant 3 (H) highlights that helping Ukrainians gave people a sense of pride and boosted feelings of nationalism. The UK was seen as a benevolent and globally significant country by helping people in need. Ukraine has relied on military support and aid from the UK and other countries such as Germany and the USA (Kiel Institute, 2025), which frame these countries as significant geopolitical powers. The phrase "protecting country" evokes a sense of power and mirrors the terminology used in the Second World War, depicting Britain as a defender of democracy, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson claimed that "For centuries, our United Kingdom has had a proud history of welcoming people from overseas, including many fleeing persecution" (cited in Rooke and Carver, 2025). It was his government that established the Homes for Ukraine scheme in 2022. In this speech, Johnson uses the possessive pronoun 'our' to include the audience and assumes that everyone feels the same way (Rooke and Carver, 2025). Rooke and Carver (2025) explain that Labour and Conservative politicians often reference our 'long' and 'proud history' of welcoming those in need with 'compassion'. This aims to foster a sense of national pride and highlights the positive aspects of history. Moreover, the War in Ukraine has been portrayed as personal, primarily due to its location in Europe. Due to their whiteness and Europeanness, Ukrainians have been treated differently from other groups of refugees and asylum seekers because they are 'like us' and fit into ideas about being British.

"Our values and tolerances are changing. People do not necessarily have British values" (Participant 9 - H)

Participant 9 (H) uses the term 'British values' to emphasise that British society has changed negatively. While he did not use this to alienate people who have not been born in the UK, Participant 9 (H) uses the term to suggest that problems are being caused because people do not have 'British values', and that the nature of Britain is changing due to the influx of people into the UK. He admitted that every generation thinks the younger generation is not "pulling its weight", raising a broader point about perceptions of migrants being seen as a threat to British society. British values are defined as democracy, the rule

of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different beliefs and faiths (Department of Education, 2024). While this suggests inclusion, it excludes people and defines who belongs in the UK. British values are a socially constructed concept to judge whether someone belongs or not. Sandeline (2014) explains that politicians have used the term “British values” to promote social cohesion, which can create an exclusionary form of nationalism. Although Ukrainians are often regarded as good refugees, they are still not perceived as British. As discussed below in section 7.3, Ukrainians have been left in a state of precarity as the War continues, and their future is uncertain. While the British Government have been uncharacteristically generous towards Ukrainians, it is unclear what will happen in the future as Ukrainians currently do not have the right to live here permanently.

5.3.4 Summary

This section has considered the role of race, with a particular focus on whiteness, ‘culture’ and colonial imaginations. These factors have subsequently led to the differential treatment of Ukrainians, as they were regarded as easier to accept and more deserving of help. Moreover, Ukrainians have been recognised as individuals rather than intimidating or threatening, as seen with other groups of refugees. Although participants spoke about the positive experiences of hosting Ukrainian guests, many stated that they would be reluctant to host people from other countries, due to perceived cultural differences. Given that the scheme relies on people wanting to host, it is unlikely that this could be implemented for other groups of refugees. Participants used the term ‘British values’ to simultaneously emphasise that helping Ukrainians gave them a sense of pride, and to determine who belongs in the UK and who does not.

5.4 Gender: acceptance and duty

5.4.1 Acceptance of women and children

About 90% of Ukrainian refugees are women and children (IMF, 2022). They fled the War in Ukraine to find safety, while their husbands, fathers and brothers stayed behind to fight. People were more willing to host them because women and children are viewed as less threatening. The Homes for Ukraine scheme relies on people choosing to host, which is a critical aspect to consider.

“I made a decision very early on that I am happy to host women and children, but I’m not happy to have husbands” (Participant 8 - H)

“I would never accept a man” (Participant 4 - H)

Participant 8 (H) notes that some hosts were eager to welcome women and children, but were less inclined to accept men. This was repeatedly mentioned in interviews, with Participants 4 (H) and 16 (H) mirroring this sentiment. Interestingly, participants framed this as a key consideration, emphasising that hosts have the power in the relationship and the arrangement ends when they decide (Rozakou, 2012; Rosello, 2001). Moreover, this supports Crossley (2023), who noted that hospitality is highly gendered and conditional. Hosting is a form of hospitality (Mason and Hughes, 2024). It is an uneven relationship because the guests are reliant on their hosts and their desire to continue hosting. These statements indicate that the hosting arrangement was conditional, depending on the identity of the guests.

Multiple participants described their excitement at hosting families and young children, as they had retired and their children had moved out. While Participant 20 (H) clarified that she did not have children of her own, she enjoyed the experience of having children around. Furthermore, multiple participants explained that it was rewarding to help a family and see the children adapt to living in the UK. Women and children are generally seen as non-threatening and in need of protection. This portrays them as deserving victims, creating more empathy. They were seen as “safe” and welcomed into people’s homes. For some, they became extended family, while for others, it was a more temporary arrangement, but their gender played a significant role in the level of acceptance. Fekre (2023) highlights that Ukrainians were often portrayed as women, mothers, and accompanied by their children, sisters, or elderly relatives. This portrayal places the family at the centre and humanises them. By focusing on their role as a mother, a sister or a daughter, they are “like us” and worthy of help. However, online, there has been a strange fetishisation of Ukrainian women. For example, Povoroznyk (2023) reported that some people have fixated on their looks, which is particularly problematic as it mirrors the Soviet fetishisation and sexual violence of Ukrainian women. Therefore, Ukrainian women must have agency and be recognised as more than just their appearance.

Men are seen as undeserving, while women and children are frequently viewed as deserving (Rooke and Carver, 2025). Although this is primarily for white women as children, race also determines whether refugees are seen as deserving, emphasising the

intersectionality of their identities. For instance, Muslim women are not seen as deserving (see Kundnani, 2014). Gendered stereotypes portray male refugees as dangerous. In 2022, former Prime Minister Boris Johnson critiqued men under 40 who had arrived on small boats for “taking up our capacity to help genuine women and child refugees” (Rooke and Carver, 2025), suggesting these men are not genuine refugees. Furthermore, these narratives of deservedness are perpetuated by the media, framing male refugees and asylum seekers as a threat, linking them to crime and illegal activities (Martikainen and Sakki, 2024). Additionally, far-right discourses depict men who have fled war as cowards, whilst simultaneously describing them as aggressors and security threats (Migrants’ Rights Network, 2024). This intersection of race and gender stems from colonial beliefs, portraying them as backwards and violent, as well as oppressive towards women (Migrants’ Rights Network, 2024), creating a narrative that they will not fit into British society and are framed as outsiders.

“They had been told that 300-plus single men were coming, and so people were concerned about their girls” (Participant 25 - C)

Participant 25 (C) described the protests at a local hotel taking in asylum seekers, as people were concerned about their girls; however, the same community welcomed Ukrainian women and children. While this is a different situation, it shows the stark contrast in reception towards asylum seekers and refugees due to their gender, which also ties into perceptions of race. Male refugees are frequently described and depicted as a large, anonymous group creating a sense of invasion or chaos; meanwhile, female refugees are shown as vulnerable and powerless individuals (Hansen et al., 2021; Ryan and Tonkiss, 2022). The differential portrayal of male and female refugees influences public perception. Furthermore, at recent protests at asylum hotels, protestors have cited violence towards girls as their key reason (see Symonds, 2025), portraying male asylum seekers as dangerous and a threat to their society. Additionally, Taylor (2025b) recently reported that the Government intends to reduce the amount of accommodation available to asylum seekers, which would leave thousands homeless, clearly rejecting male asylum seekers.

5.4.2 Gender roles

Families have been split across Europe due to the War in Ukraine. Gender roles have shifted, as women assume the responsibility of looking after their family members and

establishing themselves in a new country. However, it has reinforced the differences between men and women, as their husbands fight in Ukraine.

"It's seen as a man's duty" (Participant 3 - H)

Due to conscription laws, men between the ages of 18 and 60 are prohibited from leaving Ukraine (Bird and Amaglobeli, 2022). In times of War, gendered laws determine who stays to fight and who leaves (Cohn, 2013). Participant 3 (H) explained that one of their guests frequently spoke about how proud they were of men fighting for their country, despite being a man who had fled Ukraine. They described it as a "duty," which suggests that they are obligated to fight to protect their homeland. This obligation is entangled with stereotypes surrounding masculinity. Oraimi and Antwi-Boaten (2023) emphasise that men and women play different roles in war; men must join the military, while women take responsibility for the community, reinforcing the traditional view that men are fighters and women are mothers (Ellner, 2022). However, many Ukrainian women have taken an active role in the War, serving in the military, as journalists, or as community leaders (UN Women, 2024). This marks a shift away from the patriarchal assumptions about War, as women are not just victims; they have agency.

In times of war, citizens are expected to fulfil specific roles to protect the nation, despite many of them having no prior military experience. Young men are forced to enter a war zone and embody a stereotype, placing a huge emotional burden on them. These traumatic events are likely to have a lasting effect on them. Participant 20 (H) claimed that many teenage boys are desperate to stay in the UK because they "don't want to kill people". This stresses the harsh reality of what these men are expected to do as part of their "duty" and the sanctuary living in the UK offers. It signifies the loss of childhood, as teenagers are expected to fulfil social constructs of masculinity and 'step up' at a young age.

"You've got that shift of dominance over to the mum, a single person making all the decisions without the normal dynamic they would have" (Participant 10 - C)

Participant 10 (C) highlighted that family dynamics have shifted due to the War. They noted that male dominance is still apparent within Ukrainian culture; however, the War has changed this, as women are now often in charge of the family. This represents a shift away from traditional gender norms, as it is typically men who are the head of the household and make most of the decisions (Oraimi and Antwi-Boaten, 2023). Women

have stepped in to sustain family units. However, Participants 1 (H) and 17 (G) claimed that this caused issues within hosting relationships because there were suddenly two women and their children in one house, who were used to doing things their own way. They were both accustomed to having their own homes and might have different approaches to areas of parenting, such as mealtime, bedtime, or discipline. These seemingly small actions become more challenging to exercise in another person's home, leading to feelings of homelessness (Brickell, 2012), as guests do not feel comfortable or at home. Although Ukrainian women may have more power due to the absence of their husbands, homemaking processes are an important aspect of their lives in the UK, especially for those with children. This could reinforce traditional values because their initial focus was on childcare and housework, which is seen as a woman's duty (McDowell, 1999). However, this will likely shift in the longer term as many Ukrainians have found jobs and can support themselves financially, creating a sense of independence.

5.4.3 Summary

Women and children were seen as less threatening, so people were more willing to welcome them into their homes. Stereotypes play a key role in this, as men are depicted in the media as a threat, while women and children are seen as deserving victims. However, it is difficult to speak about gender separately from their race and class identities. The War in Ukraine has marked a shift away from traditional gender roles but simultaneously reinforced the differences between men and women. Women have assumed responsibility for their families while their husbands are away fighting, in addition to homemaking and supporting their children, thereby gaining a new sense of agency.

5.5 Chapter summary

Due to their identities, Ukrainian refugees have been seen as more deserving than other groups of refugees and have been treated differently. Their intersectional class, race and gender made them more relatable, so people were happy to welcome them into their homes. A key element of this is their Europeanness, as the British public perceived them as similar to themselves. Hosts were keen to discuss their Europeanness and class because they were seen as more deserving of help, but struggled to discuss their race. However, some participants were blunter and suggested that it is easier to accept Ukrainians due to their race, because they were seen to integrate more easily, as they look similar. These racialised views portray Ukrainians as more deserving of help,

specifying that they belong, while others do not. The media and rhetoric used by Politicians play a key role in this, as Ukrainians have been seen as individuals, rather than an anonymous, threatening mass of people. Furthermore, women and children are seen as less threatening, due to stereotypes, so people were more willing to welcome them into their homes. This support from hosts is essential to the scheme's functioning, so it would not work for other groups in the same way due to concerns about their identity. Overall, this chapter has aimed to convey the intersectional nature of Ukrainian refugees' identities and how this has influenced their differential treatment through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Chapter 6 – Social-spatial factors

6.1 Introduction

The Homes for Ukraine scheme involved hosts from across the country welcoming Ukrainian refugees into their homes, with the word ‘home’ being in the scheme's name, highlighting its importance. They have been distributed in both urban and rural areas across the UK, rather than being concentrated in a specific location (Gonzalez-Leonardo et al., 2024). This is a stark difference from the treatment of other groups of asylum seekers and refugees, who are segregated in hotels and hostels, waiting for their asylum claim to be processed, often for months or years, which links to ideas of domopolitics discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter aims to consider how this differential treatment has impacted the experiences of Ukrainian guests. Significantly, Ukrainian refugees have been allowed a sense of home by their hosts. The Homes for Ukraine scheme diverges from other schemes in the UK, and by focusing on its uniqueness, it reveals much about the differences between the scheme and the treatment of other groups of refugees and asylum seekers.

This chapter will be divided into three main sections exploring the spatiality of Ukrainian refugees and themes of home. Firstly, it will explore the meaning of home, from its definition to broader themes about homeland to homemaking practices. Secondly, it will outline the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in urban and rural areas, considering the main differences and how support varied. Community support has been vital, both through hosts and the support of local organisations. Finally, it will analyse the movement of people, considering how Ukrainians have travelled to and from Ukraine over the last three years, with some choosing to return to Ukraine permanently. Other Ukrainians have moved to other European countries, where they have been offered refugee status, unlike other groups of refugees and asylum seekers.

6.2 Meaning of home

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Home Office established the Homes for Ukraine scheme in February 2022 to support those seeking refuge from the War. The scheme's name includes the word ‘home’, highlighting that home was at the forefront of the arrangement.

6.2.1 Defining home

During the interviews, all the participants were asked to describe what the word ‘home’ meant to them. Many participants were surprised as it diverged from previous questions about their hosting experience. After collecting their thoughts, they described home as a physical structure associated with feelings of safety, as well as a broader homeland, being the country from which they originated.

“Home is a place of safety and shelter. It’s love, a place of protection, a place where you feel comfortable” (Participant 11 - H)

“Home is a space where you can make what you want, rather than having things imposed on you” (Participant 20 - H).

Participant 11 (H) explained that home is deeply entangled with people’s feelings. He highlighted that a home is a place of safety and “where you feel comfortable”. Other participants corroborated this idea, although some focused more on the material aspects of home, rather than the emotional aspects. For example, Participant 3 (H) mentioned particular possessions that make the space more personal. A home is a physical structure, so understandably, some people describe its material aspects. Participant 8 explained that they had lived in their home for 40 years, so the physical nature of their home and garden is comforting due to its familiarity. Additionally, the theme of time arose on multiple occasions, with some participants specifying that the memories they had of being in their home with family and friends made it a special place.



Figure 4 – Word cloud of words used to describe ’Home’

Figure 4 shows the words participants used to describe 'home', with the most frequently used words being safety (11 times), comfort (6 times), and family (5 times). These are all positive terms, highlighting that home is a space where people should feel happy, comfortable and able to relax. For many people, how the space makes them feel and having certain people around them are more important than the physical structure or their belongings. This supports Tuan's (2004:164) claim that "home is a place that offers security, familiarity and nurture". As mentioned in section 3.2, homes in geography have typically been conveyed as places of safety (Rose, 1993). Although 'home' can have different meanings, participants generally agreed that it is a space of safety and comfort, which aligns with existing geographical literature (see Varley, 2004; Rose, 1993). However, the home is not always a safe place for women and can be a site of violence (Blunt and Dowling, 2004) or exploitation (Hooks, 2015).

6.2.2 Homemaking for refugees

War and violence destroy people's homes, creating insecurity and leaving people to live in danger and fear. Ukrainian refugees have left their homeland to find safety and sanctuary for themselves and their families. Refugees are forced to flee their own country and seek safety elsewhere due to fear of persecution, conflict or violence (UN General Assembly, 1951). As outlined in section 3.2.2, this is a form of domicide, as people's homes are destroyed (Porteous and Smith, 2001). They have left everything they know behind to find safety in another country, especially for people who lived in cities, which Russian forces have targeted as a form of Urbicide (see Kononov, 2023). Participant 5 (C) emphasises that "they're fleeing for their safety and to protect their children, and most people would do the same". Refugees may not have a home to live in; however, the right to adequate housing is a Human Right (UN, 1948), so everyone should have somewhere safe to stay.

"For the refugees, where *is* home?" (Participant 8 - H)

Refugees are forced to leave their home country due to violence or conflict to find safety. Participant 8 (H) explained that she felt passionately about helping refugees and asylum seekers because they are displaced from their homes and have lost everything. She spoke about wanting to help Syrian refugees in the past, but services were not in place to support this. As a retired individual with the space to host, she felt a responsibility to help because, in a similar situation, she would want to be helped. Although Participant 8 is

speaking about refugees in general, who have left behind everything they know, Ukrainians clearly have been allowed a sense of home where others have not. The Homes for Ukraine scheme provided a safe environment for Ukrainians to build resilience and settle into living in the UK with the support of a host. Hosts have welcomed Ukrainians into their homes for at least six months, with many continuing to do so for longer, providing a sense of stability. Hosts have been service providers (Birger et al., 2024), supporting their guests with various aspects, from job applications to accessing services, navigating public transport, and facilitating the settling-in process. Meanwhile, other groups of refugees are denied the ability to make a home through hostile asylum systems. Therefore, the treatment of Ukrainians is extraordinary as their sense of home has been prioritised, at least discursively. As discussed in sections 7.2/7.3, asylum seekers are left in a state of precarity as they wait for their claim to be processed, often for months or years, whereas Ukrainians have been offered spaces in people's homes from the day they arrive in the UK. Homemaking is a significant process because homes are a space of safety and comfort, although this could be challenging to achieve in someone else's home. Refugees are vulnerable because they have experienced war or violence, so having a safe space is paramount for their well-being, particularly as many of them will have young children. Despite the language of home, Ukrainians may not feel 'at home' as they are in their host's space. The scheme has led to a situation for some people where neither the host nor the guest feels at home.

"We ran from the war, even though we did not want to leave our home" (Participant 17 - G)

Given the choice, most refugees would want to stay in their homeland in peace rather than be forced to move. Participant 17 (G) explained how difficult it had been for her family to start from scratch in a new country and that they are keen to return to Ukraine whenever possible. Despite having a positive experience with her host and enjoying living in the UK, she repeatedly acknowledged that it was not home. Refugees remain tied to their homeland, despite creating a home in a new country (Burrell, 2004). Migrants must remake their homes in the place they have moved to, drawing on memories of the places they have left (Ahmed et al., 2003). Many would have preferred to stay with friends and family, but it is no longer safe. This contradicts the language used by anti-immigration politicians and groups, who suggest that everyone is desperate to be in the UK. For example, in 2016, Nigel Farage emphasised the strain on public services due to immigration because "you've got no idea in five years […] how many people will actually be living in the country?" (quoted in Hart and Winter, 2021), aiming to create a sense of

fear and using divisive language to justify policies of exclusion (Musolff, 2016). Farage examines the impact on public services because it resonates with people, as it is something that everyone accesses (Musolff, 2016). Furthermore, this framing links immigration debates to spatial competition over access to housing, school places, or hospital treatment, reinforcing the idea that these resources are scarce due to migrants using them, rather than a lack of funding. The hosting scheme avoided these concerns because, at least initially, Ukrainians were not in their own house.

6.2.3 Homeland

Home can be a specific place, but it can also be a wider attachment to a nation.

“A place of safety. It is a refuge. I think of Britain as home as well”. (Participant 9 - H)

Participant 9 (H) suggests that he associates home with Britain, as it is where he has lived for his entire life and so feels connected to the nation. This supports Brickell’s (2012) idea that home can stretch beyond the house to identify with a country or ‘homeland’. Likewise, Participant 4 (H) explains that she has always thought of Poland as home, but her son was born in the UK, so this is his home. Participant 4 (H) implied that she has two homes, where she was born and where she lives now, which supports Blunt and Bonnerjee’s (2019) argument that home can be in different places simultaneously. It is not as straightforward as where your house is located; it is intertwined with the past and where you feel a sense of connection. Participant 4 (H) explained that although she enjoys living here, in her own eyes, she will never be British, as she grew up in Poland and has family there, so she remains tied to Poland. Defining home is easier for people who have lived in one country compared to refugees or migrants who have an attachment to multiple countries. Furthermore, some participants suggested that it was easier to identify with a country if they had family and friends living there, as even after moving elsewhere, people still return to see loved ones. The homeland is entangled with feelings of “memory, identity and belonging” (Blunt and Dowling, 2006:199). Despite having lived in both, people may feel they belong in one country more than another.

“They have seen the country they identify with so strongly destroyed” (Participant 10 - C)

Participant 10 (C) stressed that Ukrainians have seen their homeland destroyed since the Russian Invasion in 2022, and before that, with the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Many

citizens have fled, particularly from areas of Eastern Ukraine, leading to displacement within Ukraine and across Europe for millions of people. Cities have become the main battlefield, with civilians targeted in a form of ‘Urbicide’ (Kononov, 2023), as explained in section 3.2.2, leading to the destruction of homes, death and injury of civilians (Hewitt, 2009). Therefore, the future appears uncertain, as thousands of people will have no home to return to and will be left in a state of precarity, which will be discussed more in section 7.4. Ukrainian refugees must come to terms with the thought that their home has not been left behind in another place; it has been left in another time (Jansen and Lofving, 2009). Images of Ukraine's destruction have been heavily circulated in the media, showing the physical impacts of the Russian bombardment and the brutality of Russian warfare (Martikainen and Sakki, 2024). Moreover, it is easy to visualise Russia’s aggression through the physical destruction of people’s homes. Media images play a key role in shaping public attitudes. Russia is framed as an aggressive nation targeting Ukraine, creating a sense of sympathy for Ukrainians because the brutality is evident. The danger to Ukrainians is clear, fuelling a sense of urgency at the beginning of the War to help them. Hosts may have felt a responsibility to help Ukrainians, which, although well-intentioned, can create a sense of British superiority and paternalism (see Mead, 1997). Furthermore, despite not being a member of NATO, Ukraine is viewed as an ally, with the Government providing a range of humanitarian and military support. The British Government has supported Ukraine from the beginning, alongside other Western nations, which has contributed to rising tensions with Russia, as explained in section 2.3.

6.2.4 Summary

The name of the ‘Homes for Ukraine scheme’ emphasises its primary aim: to welcome Ukrainians into people’s homes. Homes are typically associated with feelings of safety and comfort. Refugees are forced to leave their homeland; however, they might still associate that place with home. Nevertheless, this may change over time and hold a different meaning to second-generation migrants who have lived in the UK their entire lives, as highlighted by Participant 4 (H). Ukrainians have been allowed a sense of home in the UK by living with host families, which differs from the treatment of other refugees and asylum seekers. However, it is difficult to feel at home in someone else’s house, so they may not feel fully settled until they have their own home. However, Ukrainians have been able to settle more and create a sense of safety and stability, which is typically denied to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers.

6.3 Rural/urban

During the interview process, it became clear that Ukrainian refugees had very different experiences depending on whether they were hosted in rural or urban areas. This plays into broader racialised and class-based assumptions about different areas of the UK, as highlighted in Chapter 5. Ukrainians have settled across the country, moving to areas where their hosts were already living (Brucker et al., 2023). This is a different allocation system from other groups, as they still have limited choice about where they live, but this is dictated by where their host lives rather than by the state. However, they are dispersed compared to other refugees and asylum seekers, who may live in a diaspora or are grouped in hotels. Diasporas often influence where migrants choose to settle (Beine et al., 2011). Diaspora networks play a key role in the arrival and integration of migrants (Haug, 2008); however, for Ukrainian refugees, hosts have fulfilled this role by helping their guests settle in and establish themselves in the UK. Although the Homes for Ukraine scheme ensured that refugees were distributed across the UK (Gonzalez-Leonardo et al., 2024), with Ukrainian guests having little choice about where to live in the initial hosting arrangement, this is a more passive method of distribution than seen with other groups.

6.3.1 Experiences in rural areas

Rural areas have provided more community support due to the prevalence of existing social networks. These areas tend to have more space to host, as houses are generally larger; however, the remote locations make accessing other services more challenging.

“They moved into our annexe at first, and a couple of years later they ended up moving into one of the cottages we have on site” (Participant 3 - H)

Participant 3 (H) explained that she lives in the Yorkshire Moors with her family and has a large house with grounds, providing ample space to host. She acknowledged that they are in a privileged position to have so much extra space, but maintaining the premises can be challenging. Due to the property's remote location, it would have been difficult for the guests to find a place to work, so the family also offered them jobs in cleaning and gardening. Although this caused tensions between the two families as they lived and worked together, the arrangement was mutually beneficial. Many Ukrainian refugees have been hosted in rural areas, as hosts could support another family. The countryside is often associated with the upper class, a connection that stems from historical factors. Wealthy families owned large estates, which linked the rural environment to upper-class status. Conversely, globalisation has led to the neglect of the rural, with people wanting to live in

urban centres (Hogan, 2004). Subsequently, the rural poor have been left behind, lacking skills, capital and access to resources (Killick, 2001). Rural-urban migration has led young people to leave rural areas in search of better employment and opportunities. Currently, it is regarded as a desirable destination for those seeking to escape the city. The countryside is associated with wealth, and hosts need the space and ability to look after Ukrainian guests, so many of them live in rural areas. Participant 3 (H) supports this argument, as they own other properties, so it was straightforward for the Ukrainian guests to live there. The Homes for Ukraine scheme relies on people who want to host and are able to do so; many hosts who fit these criteria live in rural areas.

"We set up a bit of a community in our village" (Participant 6 - H)

Here, Participant 6 (H) highlighted the community support from the village, which was repeatedly mentioned, as the hosts were surprised by how much their local community came together to support the Ukrainian guests. Events like coffee mornings and church groups were established to support the new arrivals. Participant 8 (H) implied that even people unable to host still wanted to help in some way, so they donated clothes and other items. This support was vital as it made Ukrainians feel welcome and accepted in the community. Migration patterns have shifted, with fewer migrants residing in urban areas and becoming more geographically dispersed (White, 2011). However, rural residents tend to be more right-wing than urban residents, as evidenced by recent elections (Claassen et al., 2024). These right-wing beliefs have led ethnic minorities to be excluded from the English Countryside due to "racism borne out of ignorance rather than familiarity" (Dawney, 2008). The racism and exclusion documented in rural areas may be due to sweeping generalisations based on stereotypical assumptions (Dawney, 2008; Neal, 2002), because they have not interacted with people from different backgrounds. Therefore, these people are less likely to help refugees with other identities, highlighting that their class, race and gender affect how refugees are treated, as explained in Chapter 5. Their identities influence whether they are perceived to 'fit in' with the existing community. However, Moore (2019) explained that once residents interacted with migrants, they became more accepting, viewing them as hardworking individuals who benefited the local economy. Therefore, immigration can positively impact small rural communities.

"She took care of us. She showed us the neighbourhood and took us for drives to show us places we might need. It was easy" (Participant 17 - G)

Participant 17 (G) noted that moving to a new country was unsettling because she did not know anyone; however, once her host introduced her to other people in the village, she felt settled and supported. The importance of community will be explored in more detail in the section below; however, this was more prominent in rural areas with a closer-knit community. Participant 6 (H) explained that many Ukrainians now rent in the village or nearby areas. Even though their hosting arrangements have ended, they still want to stay in the area as they feel settled and supported.

"The countryside in Ukraine is very poor, so people didn't want to live there. It is difficult to get around if you don't have a car. So, when they move, they move to bigger places" (Participant 27 - G)

Here, Participant 27 (G) presents a contrasting view, indicating that the Ukrainians she supported did not want to live in the countryside. They associated it with poverty and a lack of opportunities—a different view from the British idealised view of the countryside. Nevertheless, many young people in the UK are leaving villages and small towns for education and job opportunities in larger cities, leading to depopulation and population ageing. Many participants fit into this demographic as they were retired and had space in their house because their children had left home, and thus could host. Participant 27 (G) highlighted that navigating rural areas without a car is challenging, so guests often relied on their hosts, which can lead to isolation. She specified that this made her life more challenging as a community organiser because some guests could not attend events or even make it to their appointments at the job centre. Rural communities are also more likely to lack language courses, job support and integration programmes, which refugees may require to feel settled. Participant 8 (H) also pointed this out, explaining that she was aware that Ukrainian refugees might not want to move to a rural village. Sponsors have reported several challenges of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with difficulties helping guests access public services being a key one (ONS, 2022). Rural communities often rely on agricultural and seasonal work, which may not fit with refugees' qualifications if they have lived in urban areas. Although rural areas provided support through the existing community to help Ukrainian guests, remote locations can leave them feeling isolated and unable to access other services and employment opportunities. Subsequently, guests may have more space in the home but feel less 'at home'.

6.3.2 Experiences in urban areas

In urban areas, it is easier to access services and support from organisations. However, it may be more difficult to establish social connections and afford to live in the same area after the hosting arrangement ends.

"She said we really want to be in London, and the benefit of that is they've got the property to themselves" (Participant 2 - H)

Participant 2 (H) explained that she owns a house in Brighton and a flat in London, so once the Ukrainian family arrived, they could choose where they lived, a rare case. As they had lived in a city in Ukraine, they chose to live in London, and Participant 2 (H) implied that it worked well because they both had their own space. This supports Participant 27's (G) point that Ukrainians wanted to be in urban areas because that is what they were used to. Cities are seen as places of opportunity, where it will be easier to access employment and a range of services, as well as being more diverse with higher levels of inward migration. In the past, cities were seen as sites of poverty and industrialisation; however, more recently, cities have become hubs for innovation and diversity. Cities may have existing Ukrainian diasporas, which may attract other Ukrainians to move there. People may feel isolated and lonely in rural areas, whereas in urban areas, there are existing cultural communities.

"I live quite close to the centre of Nottingham. It's easy to introduce them to shops, supermarkets and other such places" (Participant 15 - H)

Participant 15 (H) emphasised how easy it is to access services in an urban area, such as shops and Council support. Similarly, Participant 10 (C), who works for Nottinghamshire Council, highlighted that it is easier to access support when living in the city centre. The council runs drop-in sessions to support guests and hosts, but it is more challenging for people living further away to access. Location plays a key role in access to services, aiding integration and stability. These services include language lessons and support from the job centre, which enables Ukrainians to find employment more quickly and begin to support themselves. Participant 10 (C) noted that Ukrainian refugees have been treated differently from other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. He claimed that they have been "positively discriminated against" and have been able to access things that refugees would not usually have access to, particularly in rural areas. One element of this is being

able to choose where they live, particularly as the War continues and hosting arrangements end, as will be addressed in Chapter 7.

“They rely on the foundations that their hosts have, who tend to be quite settled and stable” (Participant 10 - C)

Furthermore, Participant 10 (C) points out that the demographics of the hosts also influence the location. They are typically retired, have had children who have grown up, and are financially secure with larger properties and spare bedrooms, so they have the space to host and may feel that their guests fill the space left by their children’s departure. As mentioned previously, the Homes for Ukraine scheme relies on this ability and desire to host. He uses the words “settled” and “stable” to describe hosts, juxtaposing the situation the Ukrainians are in. The stability that hosts provide is crucial, even if it is only for the first six months or a year. However, it is essential that guests are not reliant on their hosts and slowly become more independent. Ukrainians may find it challenging to afford the same standard of housing as their hosts. Participant 10 (C) provided the example of one person dismissing an area of Nottingham, despite it being the only area they could afford, because they perceived it as undesirable. Class and perception of status are important to Ukrainian guests, particularly if they would have been considered a higher social class in Ukraine, a view shared by Participant 5 (C) as explained in section 5.2. On the other hand, Participant 15 (H) explained that her Ukrainian guest would struggle to rent a house independently. This is a problem likely to be heightened by the cost-of-living crisis and uncertainties over their visas, which could increase homelessness. Some refugees are still reliant on their hosts, as they cannot afford to move out, so in many ways, they are still homeless.

6.3.3 Importance of community

The significance of people wanting to host through the Homes for Ukraine scheme cannot be overstated. The scheme would not function without people volunteering to host and local organisations supporting both the hosts and guests within the community. Local and national organisations have supported the hosting process, from language classes to employment support and informal coffee mornings. Although hosts have played a vital role in supporting Ukrainian refugees, it was essential that they did not feel isolated or abandoned when helping their guests. Despite the Government establishing the scheme, it has little involvement in the scheme's running, aside from funding the payments to hosts, leaving councils to support the day-to-day operation of the scheme. This included

running background checks on potential hosts, checking in with them regularly, and, more recently, assisting Ukrainians in finding independent housing. This shows the devolution of power from the Government to Councils, which has grown since 2014 (see Sandford, 2024). Furthermore, this has led to the Government playing a less active role in the community, which stems from the 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrat "big society" agenda, as explained by Burrell (2024). Local organisations and hosts have stepped up to support councils and try to fill this gap.

"This is a very good example of communities pulling together" (Participant 23 - C)

Participant 23 (C) works for West Sussex County Council, supporting the Homes for Ukraine scheme. He reiterated that the "people-led initiative" was the foundation of the scheme. Communities were united with a desire to help the Ukrainians. Due to the Ukrainians' identities and perceptions of deservingness, people wanted to help and felt they could. As mentioned, the Homes for Ukraine scheme departs from the typical asylum process. Still, it emphasises that many people would want to help if such schemes are implemented. Multiple participants had wanted to help refugees and asylum seekers in the past, but did not know how to do so, as there was no clear path to follow. Moreover, the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been clear and direct in its approach to supporting Ukrainians, so members of the public understood what was being asked of them. The term "pulling together" highlights the sense of togetherness that hosting Ukrainians brought. Although Participant 23 (C) represents the support that councils provided, there has been collaboration between councils and local charities to support multiple aspects, including specialist mental health support. Councils and local charities have collaborated to support both Ukrainians and their hosts.

"The community was very supportive. I was surrounded by a lot of kindness" (Participant 17 - G)

Ukrainian refugees received unprecedented support compared to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Participant 17, who is Ukrainian, repeatedly mentioned how supported she felt by her host and the wider community. She explained that she felt settled quickly and that knowing someone was there to support her was comforting. Although not all Ukrainian refugees had a positive experience with their host, the arrangement was highly beneficial when it worked well. Support from the wider community was invaluable as Ukrainians felt welcome and a part of the community. In contrast, other groups of refugees and asylum seekers are segregated in hotels and separate from the

community. When volunteering at a conversation class, one refugee from Iraq spoke to me about feeling depressed in her hotel room because she had nothing to do and was separated from her friends and family. She is isolated in a room, causing instability as she faces “violent uncertainty” (Grace et al., 2018:904). People displaced by war are more likely to face mental health challenges (Oviedo et al., 2022), so mental health support for refugees must be prioritised, especially as it impacts future integration (see Ager and Strang, 2008). While refugees are segregated from local people, they cannot integrate into the community, leading to greater alienation. This further emphasises that their identities, outlined in Chapter 5, are fundamental to how refugees are treated from the moment they arrive.

Community groups and charities play a central role in helping refugees integrate and access services. When speaking with the refugee from Iraq, we discussed attending other sessions with Refugee Roots as a good way to meet new people in a similar situation. These sessions provided more than just a chance to practice English conversation; they provided a sense of community and belonging that can be difficult to establish in a new place. Likewise, the Nottingham Ukrainian Centre (part of the national organisation AUGB) has played a key role in supporting Ukrainians and has become a point of contact for guests and hosts. When I spoke to the Branch Chairman (Participant 24 - C), he described being “overwhelmed” by generosity at the beginning of the War, as so many people wanted to donate clothes and toiletries or were willing to host.

“They were wonderful. It’s a place they can go and meet people, but also access multiple services” (Participant 11 - H)

“They’re doing a very, very good job” (Participant 4 - H)

Participants 4 (H) and 11 (H) spoke highly of the Nottingham Ukrainian Centre and attributed its success to the hosting arrangement. He explained that the Centre provided access to key services and a sense of community and belonging for his guests. This help was easier to access than the Council support, with sessions throughout the week. Participant 19 (H) explained that they ran English lessons for the guests and Ukrainian lessons for the hosts, which improved communication and allowed both parties to learn. As mentioned in section 5.2.3, language skills enhance communication and relationship building with the broader society in the long term (Tip et al., 2019). For the Ukrainians, it provided an opportunity to meet other Ukrainians in the local area and speak with them, and for the hosts, it was a chance to learn from one another. In contrast, violence broke

out across the country in August 2024 after the Southport attack, with Muslim cultural centres and mosques targeted (Stavrou, 2025). These riots were stoked by misinformation and far-right groups to create hostility towards asylum seekers, which is vastly different to the treatment of Ukrainians and appreciation of Ukrainian cultural centres presented above. Cultural centres play a central role in the integration and support of refugees.

“As it’s a lot of females, they have got together and created their own women’s circle. They are all helping each other” (Participant 24 - C)

Participant 24 (C) explained that the arrival of Ukrainian refugees has significantly expanded the organisation. He noted how important it is that new arrivals feel welcome and part of the existing community. They have established a women’s group, as approximately 90% of Ukrainian refugees are women and children (IMF, 2022), providing a space for these women to come together and support one another. A sense of solidarity is created amid an uncertain future, as they are all experiencing the same emotions and challenges of living in a new country. Groups like this give refugees a sense of agency, rather than being seen as vulnerable and helpless.

6.3.4 Summary

This section has focused on the location of Ukrainian refugees in the UK. Unlike other groups of refugees and asylum seekers, they are dispersed across the country, depending on where their host lives, rather than being assigned to a hotel by local authorities. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that experiences have differed depending on whether the guests lived in rural or urban areas. In rural areas, more community support has been provided; however, accessing other services, particularly in remote locations, remains more challenging. In urban areas, it is easier to access services and support from organisations; however, this may be challenging in the long term due to a lack of opportunities. In rural areas, there is a depth of support, whereas in urban areas, there is a wider breadth. However, in both areas, Ukrainian refugees have received considerable support from individuals and charities, making it easier for them to integrate into the local community than other groups.

6.4 Movement of people

6.4.1 To and from Ukraine

At the onset of the Russian Invasion in February 2022, over 8 million people became refugees, and an estimated 3.7 million people are internally displaced (UNHRC, 2023). Many sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Poland, Germany and Russia (Local Government Association, 2023), with others travelling further afield to the UK or the US. Furthermore, the EU enacted the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for the first time, providing immediate protection for Ukrainians and ensuring their right to live, work, and access services (EU, 2022), which has been extended until March 2026. Men between 18 and 60 are not allowed to leave Ukraine (Bird and Amaglobeli, 2022), due to conscription laws, so predominantly women and children have left Ukraine.

“They go back to see their husbands as they can’t leave. Some will go back to see Doctors and Dentists as well”. (Participant 6 - H)

Unlike other groups of refugees, many Ukrainians return to see their family and friends when possible. Participant 6 (H) explains that because their husbands cannot leave Ukraine, many women and their children return to see them, a point also mentioned by multiple participants. The UN Refugee Agency (2024) explained that at least 39% of Ukrainian refugees have travelled back at least once for business, to sort out documents, visit family or see a doctor. Surprisingly, Ukrainians travel back to access health services such as doctors and dentists, despite their host countries offering them. Participant 6 highlights the assumptions that Ukrainians have about coming to the UK and the difficulty they may face accessing systems like the NHS. As outlined in section 5.2, many Ukrainians are from a middle-class background, so they may have higher expectations of the NHS and be more critical of the service provided. The survey suggested that many Ukrainian refugees were disappointed with the healthcare systems in Europe, due to long waits, language barriers, and inadequate treatment (UN Refugee Agency, 2024), so they may find it easier to access this help in Ukraine. Furthermore, these short trips suggest that Ukrainians are attempting to adapt to the war and strike a balance between living in the UK and returning home.

While it is understandable that Ukrainians want to return to see family and friends, it further emphasises that Ukrainian refugees are an exception. They have been granted a different immigration status than other refugees, allowing them to move freely around Europe. This means that they can return to Ukraine when they want to, which is a

departure from the situation of other refugees and asylum seekers, who are restricted in where they can travel and are unable to return to their home country due to war and violence. Additionally, if refugees were to return to their home country, they would risk having their refugee status revoked (UK Visas and Immigration, 2025), but they are still not perceived as 'proper' refugees or deserving of help. Therefore, it is surprising that Ukrainian refugees continue to evoke this narrative of deservedness, whilst being in an entirely different situation to other refugees. However, the public is likely unaware of this. There has been a lack of criticism for Ukrainians; however, if other refugees or asylum seekers were in a similar situation, they would be critiqued. This reinforces Papadopoulos and Tsianos' (2013) argument that the role of borders is not to stop people but to allow certain people in, not others. Ukrainians have been treated very differently due to their European identity, as discussed in Chapter 5, portraying them as deserving of help, which other refugees are not.

"She didn't want to leave, but after about nine months, she went back because she was feeling guilty. She is now working in a hospital near the front line" (Participant 19 - H)

Participant 19 (H) highlights that Ukrainians have returned to Ukraine for a variety of reasons, and her guest returned because she felt guilty about being in another country, while friends and family members were fighting. Participant 19's guest is now actively helping in the war effort, highlighting the shift in gender roles since the Second World War (as mentioned in section 3.6.1). Refugees often experience guilt for leaving home at a crucial moment, disrupting relationships with those who have stayed (Andrews et al., 2023; Shyroka et al., 2023). Participant 18 (H) explained that her guest returned "because her husband was still there, and it put a strain on their relationship". Forced migration disrupts social networks as families are separated (Bunn et al., 2023), which has been shown to undermine integration (Phillimore et al., 2023). Guests still feel a strong connection to their homeland because family and friends have been left behind, and they will be concerned about their welfare. So, they may feel unsettled in a new place. Unsurprisingly, as the War draws on, people have a stronger desire to return home because many Ukrainians left as a temporary solution. However, as explained in Chapter 7, it is becoming a longer-term situation.

6.4.2 Across Europe

Whilst many Ukrainian refugees have returned to Ukraine, others have moved to another European country offering refugee status. Due to their Europeanness and their racialisation as white, Ukrainians can move freely across Europe and settle where they like. Parallel hosting schemes across Europe provide support, including private housing, financial assistance, and integration services. For example, the Red Cross facilitates the 'Safe Homes' programme, which has provided guidance and support for hosts and guests in private hosting arrangements across Belgium, France, Ireland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and Slovakia (Red Cross, 2023).

"There are obviously schemes running of different varieties across Europe. We have had guests move to most countries now" (Participant 10 - C)

Here, Participant 10 (C) notes that some guests have chosen to leave the UK and relocate to other European countries. This may be due to the opportunities available in another country, particularly if they have struggled to find a job. Additionally, many Ukrainians have moved closer to friends and family, who may have settled in a different country. For instance, Participant 9 (H) explained that the last time they heard, their guests had moved to Germany to be closer to family members. Due to the ongoing nature of the war, Ukrainians may want to settle, whereas initially, they wanted a temporary place to stay. Still, this is different to the treatment of asylum seekers who tend to claim asylum in the first safe country they reach. Ukrainian refugees can choose where they live, which is a privilege many other refugees do not have, due to their Europeanness.

6.4.3 Summary

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine led to a large influx of people leaving the country as refugees. Many moved to neighbouring countries in search of safety. However, as the war continued, some people chose to return permanently to reunite with family and friends or moved to a different European country that offered a parallel hosting scheme. This is different to the situation of other refugees and asylum seekers who are unable to return to their home country due to the danger.

6.5 Chapter summary

The themes in this chapter have been chosen because they reflect the experiences of Ukrainian refugees being hosted in the UK. Section 6.2 has considered the meaning of home for refugees and homemaking practices. These broad themes were chosen because they capture how geopolitical events such as the War in Ukraine impact the day-to-day lives of refugees. Section 6.3 has examined how the experiences of Ukrainians have differed across the country. These themes emerged from the interviews, as it became apparent that Ukrainians had different experiences depending on whether they were being hosted in rural or urban areas. This section also builds on my undergraduate dissertation, which explored the importance of local communities. Lastly, section 6.4 focuses on the moment of Ukrainian refugees. This theme was chosen because the movement of Ukrainians is a major contemporary migration event that has significantly shaped relations in Europe; therefore, considering its evolution over time is important. Overall, the themes in this chapter were selected to explore how Ukrainians' spatiality has shaped their experiences and sense of home.

This chapter has explored how the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been implemented nationwide to provide Ukrainians with a safe place to stay. The word ‘home’ is associated with feelings of safety and comfort, but can also be a place of precarity and exploitation (Clare et al., 2023). Ukrainian refugees have been given a sense of home, allowing them to feel settled and stable. They have been distributed across the country in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, there is a depth of support, whereas in urban areas, there is a wider breadth. However, Ukrainian refugees have received considerable support from individuals and charities, making it easier for them to integrate into the local community. As the War continued, some people returned to Ukraine permanently to be reunited with family and friends, while others returned on short trips. The treatment of Ukrainian refugees is starkly different from the treatment of other groups of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. This chapter has considered how this differential treatment has benefited Ukrainian guests, who have been allowed a sense of home. By focusing on the Homes for Ukraine scheme, it reveals much about other schemes and the treatment of other groups of refugees and asylum seekers, as they are denied a home.

Chapter 7 – Multiple temporalities, uncertainty and waiting

7.1 Introduction

The War in Ukraine has persisted for longer than expected. Its ongoing nature and lack of clear resolution have left Ukrainian refugees in a state of uncertainty as they decide whether to return to Ukraine or remain in their host country. Chapter 6 explored the movement of Ukrainians back to Ukraine and other European countries, whereas this chapter will expand on what has happened in the UK and Ukraine over the last three years. While the Homes for Ukraine scheme was established quickly, unlike asylum decisions for other groups, it focused primarily on providing a short-term solution. The differential treatment of Ukrainians has been evident from the beginning, with the implementation of the Homes for Ukraine scheme due to support from the government and members of the public. As the War draws on and hosting agreements end or break down, Ukrainians face new challenges, such as an uncertain visa situation and a shift towards private renting. Longer-term solutions are needed to support Ukrainians in the UK due to the ongoing Russian Invasion.

The multiple temporalities of the scheme will be explored, from its rushed creation to its deeper historical ties to periods of uncertainty, which occurred simultaneously. Analysing the Homes for Ukraine scheme requires conjunctural analysis: a method of social and political analysis that examines the specific circumstances of a moment in time to understand how various forces converge and interact to shape a situation (Vijay, 2024). Peck (2024) emphasises that conjunctural analysis requires thinking across cases and contexts to consider multiple causes. Hall et al. (2013) used conjunctural analysis to understand the rise of Thatcherism and how historical moments produced this political outcome. Likewise, the Homes for Ukraine scheme is a snapshot in time, but it is influenced by a deeper past between Russia and the UK, as explained in Chapter 2. Moreover, conjunctural analysis not only allows us to understand the past, but also enables us to anticipate what will happen in the future and what lessons need to be learnt.

This chapter will be divided into three sections, exploring how the Homes for Ukraine scheme has evolved over time and how it needs to adapt for the future. Firstly, the scheme was quickly established by the Government due to the outpouring of public

support. Next, it will expand on the ongoing nature of the War and its impact on Ukrainian refugees, as they are stuck in limbo. It will also discuss a shift away from hosting arrangements to private renting. Lastly, this chapter will outline what is likely to happen in the future and the impact it will have on refugees. As media coverage wanes and crisis fatigue sets in, Ukrainians still require support.

7.2 Establishment of the scheme

7.2.1 Initial response

When Russian forces invaded Eastern Ukraine on 24th February 2022, there was an instant wave of support for Ukrainians. In a speech, the then Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced, “We will work with them, for however long it takes, to ensure that the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine is restored” (Johnson, 2022b), cementing British assistance for Ukraine. This mirrors the language used by former Prime Minister David Cameron in 2014, during the Annexation of Crimea, when he condemned it as a “flagrant breach of international law” (Cameron, 2014) and imposed economic sanctions. The British Government has supported Ukraine against Russia since 2014, with military, financial and humanitarian aid, and since 2022, the acceptance of refugees. Machin (2023) explains that the Government was eager to take in Ukrainian refugees. The Homes for Ukraine scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme were set up to support new arrivals, and according to Samuel et al. (2025), around 254,000 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in the UK.

“About two weeks later, we launched the Homes for Ukraine scheme, where anyone who wants to get out of Ukraine can come here, provided they can be hosted by a suitable family” (Participant 1 - H)

Participant 1 (H) was a Member of Parliament in 2022, when the War in Ukraine began. He was the first MP to host a Ukrainian family and has spoken openly about the need for continued support. This quote explains the blueprint of the Homes for Ukraine scheme: families can leave Ukraine and move to the UK if a British host accommodates them. According to Michael Gove (2022), who was the Secretary of State for Housing, “our new Homes for Ukraine scheme offers a lifeline for those who have been forced to flee”. The term “lifeline” portrays Britain as a saviour for helping Ukrainians in their times of need; however, as addressed in the following section, it also benefits Britain. Participant 1 (H) highlights that the scheme was established within two weeks, which is remarkably fast for a scheme of this scale. In comparison, the Syrian refugee scheme took six months to start

and started small, and then expanded over multiple years, which is significantly longer than for Ukrainians. The NAO (2023) argues that the scheme was implemented quickly because it directly responded to a crisis with a clear objective of bringing Ukrainians to safety. Nonetheless, there is clearly a political element to this, as other crises, such as those in Gaza, Syria, or Iran, do not receive the same response, which will be explored below.

Participant 1 (H) uses the word “anyone” to include all Ukrainians and highlight that the scheme was open and easily accessible. Ukrainians needed identity documents and a permission to travel letter from the Homes for Ukraine scheme to enter the UK (UK Visas and Immigration, 2022), a straightforward process if they had already been matched with a host. Conversely, Shepherd and Wilkinson (2021) state that the UK asylum process has become “one of the harshest to navigate in Europe”. Other groups of refugees and asylum seekers face extended periods of waiting to decide whether they are allowed to remain in the UK (Brekke, 2004), with many claims being unsuccessful. There is no set timeframe for processing asylum claims (Phillimore and Cheung, 2021), so this often takes months or years, while they are stuck in a hotel room. While this intentional waiting process can create ‘violent uncertainty’ (Grace et al., 2018), Rotter (2015) argues that it can be productive and full of agency. But for many, this period of waiting is a form of slow violence (see Nixon, 2011). Participant 5 (C) explained that other refugees have also left their homes for safety. However, they must wait years for a decision, whereas with the hosting scheme, Ukrainians are instantly offered a “home” within weeks. Therefore, Ukrainian refugees have been treated differently because the British Government established the hosting scheme to ensure that Ukrainians had a safe place to stay. Ukrainians do not have to wait for asylum, which shows this is an exceptional case.

“There was a swell of public opinion, so the government couldn’t really do anything else. You probably wouldn’t get that in other situations” (Participant 8 - H)

Participant 8 (H) claims that the Government was compelled to assist Ukrainians due to the overwhelming public support, rather than solely based on political considerations. However, many crises receive public support, and the same support is not provided. For example, there has recently been a swell of public support for Palestinians, but the Government has done little to prevent the situation and help the victims, likely due to their nationality and identity as flagged in Chapter 5. However, it highlights that support from the public and politicians is required to generate a response like this. In August 2025, Baroness Chapman announced funding for the UN humanitarian response in Gaza

(Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2025); however, this is in the form of funding rather than specific support for the people. The Government decides when to intervene and when not based on its own political agenda. Furthermore, the Homes for Ukraine scheme relies on people wanting to host, so public support is crucial. The British Government has provided financial support to private individuals housing Ukrainian refugees (OECD, 2022), making it feasible for someone with a spare room to host a Ukrainian refugee or family. The outpouring of support for Ukrainians has been central to the success of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, but it highlights that this is an exceptional case, as this has never been implemented in the UK before.

"You couldn't hide away from what was happening in Ukraine" (Participant 22 - C)

Participant 22 (C) suggests that people were aware of the situation in Ukraine due to the extensive media coverage. This supports Martikainen and Sakki's (2024) argument that media discourses heavily influence the perceptions of refugees. The destruction of Ukraine was documented in images and videos in newspapers and on social media, creating empathy as the refugees were viewed as victims. As mentioned in Chapter 5, their identities as women, European, and white evoked more sympathy because the hosts recognised themselves in the Ukrainians, so they were more inclined to help.

7.2.2 Russian threat

Geopolitical tensions with Russia play a significant role in the perception of Ukrainian refugees. Due to Russia's ongoing threat in Western Europe, the British Government were keen to accept Ukrainian refugees. As alluded to in section 5.3.3, the acceptance of Ukrainians benefits Britain because it not only portrays Britain as a global leader but also undermines Russia, mirroring the welcome of refugees during the Cold War to discredit the Soviet bloc (Braithewaite et al., 2019). Participant 14 (H) explained that there was more support for Ukrainians because "the history is more well-known, especially with Russia", suggesting that there has been more sympathy because people are more aware of existing geopolitical tensions. Furthermore, it highlights multiple temporalities at play, as the acceptance of Ukrainians builds upon a much longer distrust of Russia.

"I think a lot of people see Russia being the aggressor here and a big bully. Ukraine is seen as the underdog, and that plays into people's consciences, and they want to help out" (Participant 12 - H)

Participant 12 (H) emphasises that perceptions of Russia, due to the history between Russia and the West, have played a role in how the War in Ukraine has been viewed. The words “aggressor” and “bully” have been used, depicting Russia as an enemy, whereas Ukraine is seen as vulnerable and needing help. Dennison and Geddes (2021) explain that Ukrainians are seen as more deserving of help because Russia represents an ongoing common threat. Likewise, De Connick (2022) asserts that European identification with Ukrainian refugees is a projection of fears of further Russian aggression. Russia is seen as a threat to the West, so people were keen to support the Ukrainians to weaken Russia. Furthermore, Ukraine is seen as a wall between Russia and the rest of Europe (De Coninck, 2022); Ukrainians are depicted as heroes defending the West and more broadly democracy. Ukrainians have been applauded for defending their country, particularly as many Western countries do not want Russia to gain more influence. Many of the participants interviewed would have grown up during the Cold War and will be aware of past tensions with Russia. The Cold War considerably impacted geopolitical relations, security concerns and cultural differences, which are still evident today. Multiple participants expressed a dislike for Russia and cited that as a motivation to host; for example, Participant 6 (H) explained that people’s dislike for Putin meant they were willing to look after any victims he created. In a speech in 2022, the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated that “President Putin of Russia has unleashed war in our European continent. He has attacked a friendly country without any provocation and without any credible excuse” (Johnson, 2022b). The Government and members of the public were united in a desire to support Ukrainians as the Invasion is seen as unjust. Knowledge about Russia, a dislike for Putin and their Europeanness have increased support for Ukrainians, singling them out. Although the War in Ukraine is a current event, it reveals much about the past and previous relations between Russia and the West.

7.2.3 Summary

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was established quickly, unlike systems for other groups of refugees and asylum seekers who wait months or years for their claim to be processed. The swell of public support for Ukrainians meant that people were keen to help them. Although this support has been vital for Ukrainians, it further highlights that they are in an exceptional situation, and this would not be afforded to other groups, who face a harsh asylum system. One of the key motivations for hosting was dislike for Russia and wanting to help the victims that Putin has created, which draws a comparison with the Cold War.

7.3 Ongoing temporality

7.3.1 Impact on Ukrainians

The ongoing nature of the War has impacted Ukrainian refugees being hosted in the UK, and particularly their mental health, as they are separated from their families and homes for an extended period. They have been left in a state of uncertainty for over three years, and the future remains unclear. Moreover, the quick establishment of the scheme meant that no exit strategy was considered.

“If you don’t feel like you’re at home, it can be difficult to live somewhere for a long amount of time because you feel like you’re in limbo” (Participant 3 - H)

Participant 3 (H) outlines that feeling settled in a place can be challenging due to uncertainty, using the phrase “in limbo”. Participant 6 (H) also highlighted uncertainty as a key barrier for refugees, as their visas are being extended in increments, making it unclear how long they can stay. This lack of decisiveness from the Government underlines the Ukrainians’ temporality and precarity; despite being treated differently, they are still unstable. Furthermore, in 2025, Seema Malhotra, Secretary of State for Migration, stated, “the Ukraine schemes provide temporary sanctuary in the UK only while the War in Ukraine remains ongoing […] they are not a route to settlement”. This confirms that the Homes for Ukraine scheme does not provide a route for permanent citizenship, so Ukrainians are stuck “in limbo”. This makes it difficult for Ukrainians to feel settled and plan for the future.

“There’s a lot of cultural stigma around mental health … especially for men. They will not have anything wrong with their mental health” (Participant 5 - C)

The direct (and fast) violence of the Russian Invasion has also created more gradual ‘slow violence’ (Nixon, 2011) of being trapped “in limbo”. Which, in turn, manifests itself in the poor health outcomes of some guests (Participant 5). Having worked with refugees and asylum seekers from a range of backgrounds, Participant 5 emphasised the need for mental health support. People displaced by war are more likely to face challenges to their mental health and well-being, with Ukrainian women being susceptible to PTSD because of targeted Russian warfare on cities (Oraimi and Antwi-Boaten, 2023). Due to the nature of the War in Ukraine, citizens have been caught in the crossfire due to Russian drone and missile attacks on cities, having a lasting impact on them. Furthermore, Ukrainians may struggle to feel at home in the UK because they know that they might have to leave

suddenly, having already had to leave Ukraine. They have been offered a safe place to stay, but only temporarily, and after a while, they may feel that they are intruding on their hosts. The temporality of the scheme and the uncertainty of the War will impact their mental health due to the lack of stability. This supports Lazarenko's (2024) assertion that Ukrainians experience a sense of "permanent temporariness" because they have been impacted by the war since March 2022, and it remains ongoing. Thus, mental health support for refugees is essential. While hosting arrangements are temporary and uncertain, Ukrainian cities and infrastructure are permanently damaged, emphasising the multiple temporalities at play.

"She goes to bed every night knowing that her husband is going to bed in the bath and there will be missile strikes" (Participant 2 - H)

Not only does the slowness and drawn-out nature of the waiting feel harmful, but so do the daily rhythms of the day. Participant 2 (H) notes that her guest is understandably concerned about her husband, who remains in Kyiv. Despite living in the UK, she remains tied to Ukraine. This supports Boccagni's (2012) point that refugees remain tied to their country of origin. She highlights that he is "going to bed in the bath" due to the ongoing threat of missile strikes, which emphasises that those left behind are constantly in danger. This could be considered a form of "domicide" (see Porteous and Smith, 2001) because their safety is destroyed in their own home. Their lives have become dictated by missile and drone strikes and uncertain warning systems, occurring at random times. Participant 2 discusses that nighttime is the worst, suggesting that safety fluctuates throughout the day. Throughout the night, civilians face blackouts, increased attacks and are forced to shelter in their homes or underground (see Sands, 2022). While Ukrainians in the UK face prolonged periods of waiting, their families left in Ukraine are experiencing harm and insecurity daily.

7.3.2 Shift away from hosting

The Homes for Ukraine scheme does not offer a long-term solution, as hosts often do not wish to host indefinitely, and guests prefer to be independent. Initially, hosts were asked to offer space in their homes for six months, which could be extended to a year or more, with the intention of supporting them for a set period before they moved into their own property or back to Ukraine. Komter and Leer (2012) stress the importance of having a clear timeline and endpoint of the scheme to mitigate risks (cited by Burrell, 2024), which was not the case.

“The thing that the council set up, you host for a year, that’s what I decided and that’s what I stuck to” (Participant 14 - H)

Participant 14 (H) chose to host for a year, and she explained that the mother and son she hosted were independent people who learnt English and found jobs quickly, meaning they could afford to rent a flat within a year. Throughout the interview, she emphasised the importance of them working, as they were financially independent and supported themselves; however, she noted that other groups may not be able to work for an extended period (see Johnston, 2020). Having worked in a charity supporting asylum seekers, she emphasised that “a lot of them are graduates, and it would help them assimilate so much easier if they were allowed to work straight away”. Integrating into a host country is challenging, but being isolated in hotels and unable to work makes it significantly more difficult. Zetter (2021) explained that refugees are staying longer in host countries than previously due to ongoing conflicts and instability, so it is vital that they are supported in the long term and allowed to integrate. Ukrainians have been allowed to work and welcomed into communities from the outset, facilitating their easier integration. Whereas isolating other groups of refugees and asylum seekers not only makes them vulnerable in the short term, but also damages their chances in the long term, as they are unable to be independent.

“We got to the stage where we realised that if we didn’t promote them to move, I don’t think they would” (Participant 16 - H)

Participant 16 (H) had a more challenging relationship with his guests and explained that it was not viable for them to continue hosting. He expressed that their guests would not have moved out if they had not encouraged them to leave and sought support from the council. They would “go on holiday to Spain throughout the year, rather than saving money”, meaning they could not afford a deposit for their own property, which the host found frustrating. This signals to the class of the guests (5.2.1) and their Europeanness (5.2.2). Participant 16 (H) explained that “things were starting to bubble over” and it was becoming increasingly challenging to share their home, particularly as their guests were causing damage to the property, and at one point, a fire. When this happened, the hosts decided they could not continue hosting and asked the Council to find them a new place to live. This supports Rozakou’s (2012) argument that the host has more power in the relationship, so the arrangement will end when the host decides, as they control the time. However, this raises the question of whether guests can ever feel at home when they are

being hosted and can be asked to leave at any point. The IMF (2022) states that hosts and guests need to be supported in the longer term, as the arrangement is conditional and has an endpoint (Monforte et al., 2021). It is unrealistic to expect hosts to want to continue hosting indefinitely.

“It would be useful if there was a set pathway, after six months, twelve months or whenever” (Participant 11 - H)

Participant 11 (H) explains that the scheme lacks clear long-term support for both guests and hosts, suggesting that it could be beneficial to have a set pathway after six months or a year, as it is currently open-ended. A shorter but fixed time might be preferable to a longer but open-ended and vague arrangement, as it lacks stability. Although migration has long been associated with uncertainty (Williams and Balaz, 2012), Ukrainians have been no exception. For guests and hosts who struggle to communicate, it can be challenging to have conversations about the future, which can cause uncertainty, as Participant 11 (H) explains. The Local Government Association (2024) has suggested several key ways to adapt the Homes for Ukraine scheme to make it more sustainable in the long term. For example, they suggest that Councils should use some of the Local Authority Housing Fund to provide lasting, affordable housing that could house new arrivals, thereby reducing pressure on hosts in the long term (Local Government Association, 2024). A set pathway would provide a more structured approach to the scheme, and if implemented again in the future, could be a more effective method.

7.3.3 Establishing themselves in the UK.

Due to the shift away from hosting arrangements, Ukrainian refugees are faced with the challenge of establishing themselves in the UK. The War in Ukraine is ongoing, so many are choosing to stay here and find independent housing.

“We decided after nine months that the war was not going to finish quickly, so it would be better for everyone if we helped them with their own accommodation” (Participant 1 - H)

Participant 1 (H) outlines that they quickly realised that Ukrainians would stay longer than initially envisaged, so they needed their own space. He owned another property in the village, making it straightforward for the Ukrainian guests to move, which highlighted the

importance of the host's class in their ability to support their guests. Although they still maintain a close relationship with their guests, this is a longer-term solution, enabling their guests to become more independent. Participant 26 (C) highlighted that "once the hosting ends, people want their own independence". Having relied on their hosts for a specific period, Ukrainians want to be able to support themselves, as they would have done back in Ukraine. However, long-term housing for refugees presents a challenge due to the existing housing availability and affordability crisis in the UK (Duszczyk and Kaczmarczek, 2022). Additionally, Councils do not have the means to provide housing for Ukrainians on a long-term basis, as explained by Participant 23 (C). Many Ukrainians struggle to find housing once their hosting arrangement ends unless, like Participant 1, their hosts can help them. Therefore, the hosting relationship remains important even after the arrangement ends, with hosts often acting as guarantors, underscoring that their role does not end once their guests move out.

Despite Ukrainians moving into independent housing, there has been little media coverage of this; meanwhile, there have been several far-right protests about housing asylum seekers across the country. Symonds (2025) has reported that these protests have been promoted on social media to 'protect our country', while activist groups see this as far-right organisations 'stirring up racist violence' as seen in Southport last year. Meanwhile, Ukrainian refugees have been accepted into communities and can now afford to rent their own property. This highlights the significant support for Ukrainians and how the perceptions of refugees clearly correlate with the level of independence and stability they are allowed to have.

"They want to return [to Ukraine], so they feel like signing up for a tenancy is a really big step in making roots" (Participant 10 - C)

In contrast to many guests choosing to live independently, not all Ukrainians want to live in the UK permanently, and they may struggle with the transition. Participant 10 (C) emphasises that some Ukrainians do not want to rent their own property because it is a step towards settling in the UK and "making roots". This supports Lazarenko's (2024) point that some Ukrainians see forced integration as a threat to their Ukrainian identity, rather than an opportunity to feel settled. Many Ukrainian refugees are desperate to return; as highlighted in section 6.4, some have already done so. Ukrainian refugees have chosen to leave temporarily to flee the ongoing War, but some will want to remain in their host countries, while others will return when it is safe. Some people feel a stronger

attachment to their homeland than others. Ideas of temporality and permanence are central to the experiences of Ukrainian refugees, as they balance their homeland and host country. Nevertheless, as time passes, Ukrainians will integrate into the community as they become more settled.

“A friend of hers had met someone and they’re going to get married here, so I think gradually people will disperse into the population more” (Participant 20 - H)

Participant 20 (H) highlights that relationships have formed; some people will stay here permanently. However, this could be a generational experience, as younger people may use it to establish themselves outside of Ukraine and secure employment. This mirrors the choices made by other Eastern European migrants who move to the UK to secure employment; however, Ukrainians have been treated differently and are not perceived as a threat. Participant 24 (C) explained that Ukrainians have established themselves more over time. They have learnt English and secured jobs, showing the positive aspects of time. Ukrainian children have been in British schools for much of their education and have integrated into the community. Likewise, their mothers have jobs and have built up social networks. For some people, the War allowed them to move out of Ukraine, and they may want to stay once the War ends, regardless of the result. Therefore, it is crucial that long-term planning supports Ukrainians who wish to remain in the UK, as they are established and have integrated into society.

7.3.4 Summary

As the War continues, Ukrainian refugees have begun to establish themselves in the UK. The Homes for Ukraine scheme was a temporary solution, so as these arrangements ended, many Ukrainians moved into independent accommodation. Unlike other groups of refugees and asylum seekers, Ukrainians have been able to support themselves financially and secure employment. It is essential that the Government considers how it will continue to support Ukrainians as it shifts towards a long-term arrangement, given the unclear visa arrangements.

7.4 Future prospects

As the War draws on, the future remains increasingly uncertain for Ukrainian refugees. This section will explore what is likely to happen in future, from the perspective of hosts and Ukrainian guests.

7.4.1 Crisis fatigue

Over time, media coverage of the War in Ukraine has diminished due to the prominence of other global events. With tension and conflict across the Middle East growing, the War in Ukraine has been receiving little coverage in the news. Therefore, members of the public seem less aware of the ongoing events as their attention is drawn elsewhere. Ukrainians may feel forgotten as their homeland remains under threat, while public support for their cause has waned. This highlights that support changes over time, and the massive initial outpouring of sympathy is unsustainable.

“I think the support is still there, but people need reminding” (Participant 24 - C)

As the Chairman of a Ukrainian cultural centre, the War in Ukraine remains at the forefront of his mind; however, Participant 24 (C) expressed disappointment that members of the public seem to forget that the War is ongoing. He explained that people are still supportive but need reminding, and that “we need to let people know that there is still a war going on and people are putting their lives on the line every day”. Participant 17 (G) also expressed that people still want to help, but it is not as noticeable. Many media outlets have used the term “stalemate” to describe the situation, as neither side has made any significant gains for months (Sestanovich, 2024). According to Taylor (2025a), peace remains unlikely in the foreseeable future; therefore, it is crucial that support for Ukrainian refugees continues and the public remains informed about the situation. However, as alluded to below, this becomes more difficult as other countries face their own challenges. While other Wars, such as in Afghanistan, were prominent in the media due to Western security concerns, this did not translate into policy, as it has with the Ukrainians. Wars may attract attention due to their military campaigns, rather than due to the victims they create.

“No one expected things to go on for as long as they have” (Participant 10 - C)

Participant 10 (C) emphasises that many people thought the War would be over quickly. Thus, the Homes for Ukraine scheme was a temporary solution. The assistance provided has always been focused on the short term, rather than the long term, precisely due to the rushed establishment of the scheme. The Homes for Ukraine scheme was successful for a specific period, but it is unrealistic to expect this level of support to continue, especially with reduced payments to hosts. For a scheme that initially made an overt showing of solidarity and was prominently featured in the media, its quiet end has likely left members of the public unaware that it is coming to a close. Whilst supporting Ukrainians remains

important, the hosting scheme was a springboard for them to forge their own independence, which is more than is provided to other groups of refugees. Local councils and charities are still in place to help Ukrainian refugees, but they must access this themselves when needed. Support for Ukrainians has shifted to be less direct, allowing them to become more independent; however, it remains accessible.

“The general consensus has always been support, but recently there has been an undercurrent of Why are we doing this? Shouldn’t we be supporting people who are homeless here before helping others?” (Participant 26 - C)

Participant 26 (C) suggests that, as time passes, people see helping Ukrainians as less of a priority. Media coverage has decreased, so members of the public are less likely to be aware of what is happening in Ukraine and may be less inclined to help refugees. Astolfo et al. (2022) suggest a rise in ‘compassion fatigue’ among supporters. The longer the War goes on, the more normalised it becomes. Furthermore, host countries also have limited resources, such as housing, healthcare and education, which must be prioritised for those most in need. The ongoing cost-of-living crisis means that people across the country are struggling financially and may require increased government support. Participant 26 (C) suggests that the priority should be helping the people most in need in the UK. The Homes for Ukraine scheme has cost over £2.1 billion (NAO, 2023), a significant cost, particularly when other services across the country are being cut. Therefore, with people across the country struggling, it is understandable that the scheme's cost has been scrutinised, and support has dwindled.

Although there is still support for Ukrainians, the War in Ukraine may not be at the forefront of people’s minds as it was in February 2022. Participant 16 (H) explained, "We are quite far down the line from the invasion, and it was like the NHS with pots and pans during COVID, to people becoming sceptical and a bit fed up”. By comparing support for Ukrainians to support for the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic, Participant 16 (H) highlights that support often diminishes over time for most causes. However, Ukrainian refugees have still been treated better than other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Debates about the deservingness of asylum seekers and immigration policy have become prominent in the news, with some groups being alienated due to their identities. Despite the sympathy for Ukrainians being less overt, their deservingness has never been questioned, highlighting that they have been treated differently from other groups of refugees and asylum seekers.

7.4.2 Returning to Ukraine?

While it is unclear exactly what will happen to Ukrainian refugees in the future, the Homes for Ukraine scheme was intended as a temporary measure. During the interviews, Ukrainian guests expressed their intention to return to Ukraine once it is safe, and multiple hosts agreed with this sentiment.

"We just had to live somewhere temporarily so we can return at some point" (Participant 17 - G)

Participant 17 (G) highlights that Ukrainian refugees only intended to stay in the UK until it was safe to return to their homeland. She explained, "We love our home and want to go back. All of these programs are temporary because Ukraine wants its people back." This expressed her desire to return to Ukraine and be reunited with friends and family. In the long term, Ukrainians want to return, although it remains unclear when this will happen. Moreover, it is unknown what Ukraine will look like if they do return, as over 167,000 houses have been destroyed, with damage to the infrastructure of over $151 billion (Kyiv School of Economics, 2023). Participant 6 (H) highlighted that due to the number of buildings that have been destroyed, "who knows what they are going back to?". Cities have been targeted by Russian forces in a form of 'urbicide' (Kononov, 2023), leaving uncertainty around the future. Once the war ends, restoring and rebuilding will require significant investment, especially regarding key infrastructure and people's homes. There will be different speeds of recovery, which is a form of temporality, as the destruction is currently prominent in the landscape, but over time, this will change. However, the visible rebuilding is likely to be much quicker than the social repair needed, as families have been separated across Europe and will have lost friends and family in the conflict.

"They're going to have to go home eventually. They must rebuild their country" (Participant 1 - H)

"When the war's done, they can go back and continue with their lives and rebuild their country" (Participant 11 - H)

Likewise, hosts expressed that their Ukrainian guests would eventually need to return to Ukraine to begin rebuilding. Participant 1 (H) explained that they must return because people have fought and died for their independence, which supports Cohn's (2013) point that men have gone to war to protect the nation, as well as women and children.

Meanwhile, as highlighted in 7.3, women and children have been provided with "temporary sanctuary in the UK" (Malhotra, 2025). The Homes for Ukraine scheme was a temporary solution to help Ukrainian refugees until they can return, rather than a path to permanent citizenship. Although it is unclear what will happen in the future, refugees, and to some extent, their hosts, are left "in limbo". On the other hand, some Ukrainian refugees may not want to return to Ukraine once the War ends, if they have settled here. Participant 23 (C) explained, "There will be a percentage of people who will not want to go back, so we need to plan for it", and there has been a lack of forethought concerning this. Even if the War were to end today, many refugees would not be able to return immediately (Bird and Amaglobeli, 2022) due to the scale of destruction. Therefore, a longer-term plan must be in place to continuously support Ukrainian refugees until they return to Ukraine or decide to stay in the UK permanently. Typically, refugees and asylum seekers are unable to return to their home country due to instability or a threat to life, so this is unusual. Many refugees do not have the option to return to their homeland. Although it is currently not safe for Ukrainians to do so, it may be in the future, highlighting that Ukrainians are the exception that proves the rule.

"We hope that after the war, we could go and visit our first lady" (Participant 19 - H)

Despite the ongoing hosting arrangement in some households, many have ended with guests finding independent housing or moving back to Ukraine. Participant 19 (H) expressed that she would like to visit her guest in Ukraine, if possible, in the future. This highlights that friendships have been formed between hosts and guests that will endure beyond the War and continue into the future. These relationships between host and guest will become the legacy of the scheme. In a time of need, people chose to offer space in their homes for Ukrainian refugees and support them, so multiple guests expressed a desire to repay the favour and welcome their hosts to their homeland once the War ends. While this is unlikely given the ongoing war, it emphasises the longstanding temporal bonds of friendships formed between guests and hosts, as well as the sense of durability of the scheme.

7.4.3 Summary

It is unclear exactly what will happen to Ukrainian refugees in the future, but the Homes for Ukraine scheme was only temporary, so long-term support is needed. Returning to Ukraine is unsafe, so they will likely stay in the UK for a while longer. Although support for

Ukrainians is less obvious, due to the reduced media coverage, people still want to help them.

7.5 Chapter summary

The Homes for Ukraine scheme has changed since 2022, from its rapid establishment to a shift from hosting to private renting. It was implemented as a short-term solution, so a shift to supporting Ukrainians in the longer term is necessary. Ukrainians face new challenges as they decide whether to integrate permanently into British society or return to Ukraine. Meanwhile, public support has diminished due to reduced media coverage and a sense of ‘crisis fatigue’. However, the differential treatment of Ukrainians has been evident from the beginning, with the speed at which the scheme was implemented, as other groups of refugees and asylum seekers are forced to wait for months or years to find out whether their application has been successful. Although this support is not as prominent as it was, Ukrainian refugees were clearly supported more from the outset, and local councils and organisations have a range of systems in place to help them.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This thesis has explored the differential treatment of Ukrainian refugees in the UK through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The scheme's rapid establishment in March 2022 allowed Ukrainians to enter the UK safely and be hosted by a British family. Focusing on the scheme as a snapshot reveals much about the broader treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by the asylum system, the state and individual people. Ukrainians have been singled out and treated differently due to their identities. From its rapid implementation, spatiality, and temporality, the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been an exception. By conducting interviews with hosts, guests, and organisations supporting the Homes for Ukraine scheme, I have focused on the day-to-day lives of refugees and whether the differential treatment has provided them with the intended safety. This thesis provides insight into the experiences of individuals who have uprooted their lives to find safety amid the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, from their arrival to the present day and into the future.

8.1 Answering the research questions

How do the identities of Ukrainian refugees shape both the support they receive and society's perception of them?

Chapter 5 focused on the identities of Ukrainian refugees, including their gender, race and class, to understand why Ukrainians have been treated differently from other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Ukrainian refugees have been viewed as 'deserving' due to their predominantly white, female and European identities. Hosts perceived their guests as similar to themselves, so they welcomed them into their homes willingly. While chapter 5 considered race, class and gender separately, these factors are intersectional and entangled. Nevertheless, these collective identities play a key role in who is viewed as deserving and who is not, with 5.2.2 emphasising that the treatment of Ukrainians is a departure from the general treatment of Eastern Europeans seen since the Brexit referendum. Their Europeanness and Whiteness have positioned them as victims of Russian aggression and, therefore, deserving of help. Despite being willing to host Ukrainians, multiple participants stated that they would be reluctant to host refugees from other countries, implying that other groups are less deserving of help. Many hosts also highlighted, in 5.4.1, that they were willing to accept women and children but not men, due to negative stereotypes. The War in Ukraine has simultaneously reinforced gender stereotypes, with women partaking in homemaking practices while their husbands fight,

thereby subverting the traditional view that women are responsible for looking after their families. Overall, the identities of Ukrainian refugees have played a central role in how they have been treated by the British government and their hosts, resulting in significantly more support than other groups of refugees and asylum seekers.

How has the Homes for Ukraine scheme shaped the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in terms of home and belonging, and facilitated their integration into existing communities?

Firstly, the word ‘home’ is in the scheme's name, highlighting that home is at the forefront of the arrangement. British citizens were asked to give up space in their homes to give Ukrainians fleeing war a safe place to stay. Ukrainian refugees have been treated differently from the outset, being allowed a sense of home, at least rhetorically, which diverges drastically from other asylum schemes, where refugees are forced to live in hotels for an indefinite period. For Ukrainians, their experiences of home over the last three years have simultaneously centred on homemaking practices of establishing themselves in a new country, and the destruction of their home and homeland. Refugees will always be tied to their homeland and will be concerned about their friends and family left behind, particularly as images of Ukraine’s destruction continuously circulate the media. Unlike other groups of refugees, Ukrainians have been dispersed across the country depending on where their host lives, so their experiences have differed. In rural areas, there is a depth of support, whereas in urban areas, there is a wider breadth. Ukrainian refugees have received considerable support from individuals and charities, facilitating integration into local communities and providing them with safety and stability. Overall, Ukrainians have been allowed a sense of home and belonging, whereas other groups of refugees are continuously denied a home to deter them, highlighting the differential treatment.

How have the multiple temporalities embedded within the Homes for Ukraine scheme shaped the experiences of Ukrainians in the UK, and how might these shift over time?

The scheme's multiple temporalities, from its rushed creation to its deeper historical ties to periods of uncertainty, have influenced the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in the UK. The scheme was established quickly as a direct response to the crisis, highlighting that the British Government can implement measures in place but chooses not to for other groups. While this scheme successfully provided thousands of Ukrainians with a safe place to stay for at least six months, it failed to consider the long-term or an exit strategy. However, Ukrainians were instantly offered a home and can work, while other groups of

refugees are stuck in a hotel room for an extended period and are unable to work. This demonstrates that the hostile asylum system is purposefully implemented to create “violent uncertainty” (Grace et al., 2018) and to deter people from arriving. Conversely, Ukrainians have been left in a state of uncertainty due to the ongoing nature of the War, with their future remaining unclear. The direct violence of the Russian Invasion has created a more gradual “slow violence” (Nixon, 2011) of being trapped “in limbo”. Hosting arrangements end once the host decides, so many Ukrainians have shifted to private renting. As time passes, some Ukrainians have integrated into the community and forged a sense of belonging, while others have chosen to return to Ukraine. From the beginning, the Homes for Ukraine scheme was forged as a temporary measure, so as the War continues, their future remains uncertain. However, unlike any other asylum scheme, the scheme has successfully provided Ukrainians with a safe place to stay and a home from the outset.

8.2 Contribution to existing literature.

This thesis contributes to a growing body of migration literature, encompassing a breadth of geographical research on various aspects of human migration and mobility (Ehrkamp, 2017), as well as literature on whiteness and racial hierarchies that impact the perception and treatment of refugees (see Mayblin, 2017). This project expands on existing research on the lived experiences of Ukrainian refugees (see Burrell, 2022, 2024; Crossley, 2023), highlighting that this scheme is an exceptional case. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is unique in many ways, so exploring the scheme as a snapshot and its intricacies brings attention to the differential treatment of Ukrainians compared to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. It falls at a time of increasingly restrictive asylum policies and growing far-right movements, attempting to highlight the positive impacts that supporting refugees can have not only on their hosts but on the community. Qualitative methods, including interviews and observations through volunteering, enabled the scheme to be explored from the perspectives of both guests and hosts, allowing them to share their experiences. The key successes and challenges they identified could be used to improve this scheme or a similar one in the future, with suggestions outlined below.

8.3 Policy suggestions

Having spoken to guests, hosts and organisations about their experiences of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, these are some of the main ways this scheme could be improved to support Ukrainians in the long-term:

1. Retaining government payments to people who are still willing to host ensures that they provide their guests with financial stability, thereby providing a safe place to live and preventing homelessness.
2. Providing a clear transitional pathway for Ukrainian refugees shifting from hosting arrangements to private renting.
3. Clarifying long-term visa options for Ukrainian families from the Government to reduce uncertainty and precarity.
4. Continuing funding for language classes, mental health services, and job support will allow Ukrainians to integrate into communities if they choose.

These are some policy suggestions for other groups of refugees and asylum seekers, given what I have learnt about the experiences of Ukrainian refugees:

1. Allowing people claiming asylum to work to become financially independent and reduce dependence on public funds.
2. Additional funding should be provided to language classes, job support, and skills courses to allow them to develop their existing skills.
3. Providing funding to community hubs and groups to facilitate social cohesion and integration into existing communities.
4. Introducing a clear path to affordable housing will reduce dependence on hotels and allow them to settle in the UK safely.

8.4 Areas for further research

While this thesis has explored the Homes for Ukraine scheme and its impact on Ukrainian refugees in the UK, most participants were hosts and charity workers. Therefore, a future project could interview more Ukrainians to explore their perspectives in detail. Another potential area for research is a direct comparison between the treatment of Ukrainian refugees and Afghan refugees, given the recent injunction imposed by the British Government, as this would further expand on the differential treatment between groups.

Additionally, further research on what is likely to happen to Ukrainian refugees could explore themes of domicide and rebuilding in more detail.

8.5 Final reflections

Overall, this project has aimed to showcase that the treatment of Ukrainian refugees in the UK is the exception that proves the rule. Ukrainian refugees have been treated differently due to their whiteness, Europeanness and demographics, at a government level through the establishment of the scheme and individually with hosting arrangements. They experienced an outpouring of support from the British public at the onset of the Invasion, which is rarely seen, and has shaped their experiences over the last three years. The Homes for Ukraine scheme provided refugees with a ‘home’ in a time of crisis, which is starkly different from the protests outside asylum hotels seen today. Furthermore, this project has been bookended by racist riots and the new flag-raising movement, showing that questions of home, race and migration remain as significant as ever.

Appendices

Appendix A - Consent form provided for participants

Participant consent form

Project title: Exploring the differential treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK

In signing this consent form, I confirm that:

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw from the research project (up to the beginning of September 2025), without having to give any reason and withdrawing will not penalise or disadvantage me in any way.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, any information I provide is confidential and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that the researcher may be required to report to the authorities any significant harm to a child/young person (up to the age of 18 years) that he/she becomes aware of during the research. I agree that such harm may violate the principle of confidentiality.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I agree that extracts from the interview may be anonymously quoted in any report or publication arising from the research	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that the interview will be recorded using an electronic voice recorder on a mobile phone.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that data will be securely stored.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, or if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I agree to take part in the above research project.	Yes ☐	No ☐

Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITAL)	Participant's signature	Date
HOLLY JUDSON	hajudson	Jan 2025
Researcher's name (BLOCK CAPITAL)	**Researcher's signature**	**Date**

Please return this consent form to the researcher prior to the interview at lgyhj1@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix B – Participant information sheet

RE: Interviews for Postgraduate Thesis.

Dear Participant,

This document will provide more information about the project and what would be expected of you if you agree to be interviewed.

Project Title: Exploring the differential treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK

This study is about how different groups of refugees have been treated since arriving in the UK. It will focus on how organisations and hosting arrangements have helped Ukrainian refugees since the Russian Invasion in February 2022. The Homes for Ukraine scheme will be analysed to determine the main successes and failures, focusing on the key themes of 'care' and 'home'. Then, this study will consider whether the Homes for Ukraine scheme has the potential to be replicated for other groups of refugees in the future. It will also consider the role of the media and government policy and how this has influenced people's opinions of Ukrainian refugees as opposed to other groups of refugees.

I am carrying out this study as part of my data collection for my postgraduate thesis and aim to interview people who work for different organisations that help refugees locally and nationally to gain a broader understanding of what has been done to support Ukrainian Refugees. I would also like to speak to people who have hosted refugees to understand the main successes and challenges of the scheme. The aim is to find out how the scheme affected the experiences of refugees, as well as what this was like for hosts who opened up their homes.

Participants will agree to give up 30 minutes to an hour (either in person or online via Teams, depending on the location) to answer a range of questions on this topic.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in the study. It is an opportunity to contribute to a growing body of work about the experiences of refugees in the UK. It is also an opportunity to discuss what your family or organisation has done to help, as well as to raise awareness of the treatment of refugees, whether that be highlighting positive or negative experiences.

The final thesis will be submitted in September 2025, and if requested, the final report will be available for all participants to read.

Transcription and recording details:
In agreeing to participate, you acknowledge that you are happy that the interview will be audio recorded so that I can transcribe the interview afterwards verbatim.

The file will be saved on my phone and deleted once the interview has been transcribed. The transcription will be kept on a password-protected computer that only I can access and will be deleted in September 2025 as soon as my thesis has been submitted. No one else will be able to access the information. All participants will be given pseudonyms to protect their identity, as it is a sensitive topic.

Participation in this research is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any point by contacting me at lgyhj1@nottingham.ac.uk (although this may be more challenging as the deadline approaches, so please let me know as soon as possible).

Contact details:
Researcher: Holly Judson, 07985 754029, lgyhj1@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Nick Clare, Associate Professor in the School of Geography, nick.clare@nottingham.ac.uk, Sir Clive Granger Building, University Park campus, Nottingham, NG7 2RD
Dr Thom Davies, Associate Professor in the School of Geography, thom.davies1@nottingham.ac.uk, Sir Clive Granger Building, University Park campus, Nottingham, NG7 2RD

Complaint procedure

If you wish to complain about how the research is being conducted or have any concerns about the research, then in the first instance, please contact the principal investigator at lgyhj1@nottingham.ac.uk.

If this does not resolve the matter to your satisfaction, then please contact the supervisors, who in this case are Dr Nick Clare or Dr Thom Davies (emails above).

Kind regards,
Holly Judson

Appendix C – Ethics form

This is an extract from my ethics form, which was approved by the University of Nottingham Ethics Panel in January 2025. It included extra consideration for interviewing vulnerable participants, the cooperation of gatekeepers, and the discussion of sensitive topics.

School of Geography
Research ethics checklist for staff & research students
[strongly informed by ESRC (2010) *Framework for Research Ethics*]

This form must be completed for **all** research projects, research assignments or dissertations which are conducted within the School. You must not begin data collection or approach potential research participants until you have completed this form, received ethical clearance, & submitted this form for retention with the appropriate administrative staff.

It will be assumed that ethical approval extends from the date of approval for 4 years unless specific start & end dates (no longer than 4 years from approval) are clearly specified in the form.

Completing the form includes providing brief details about yourself & the research in Sections 1 & 2 & ticking some boxes in Sections 2 and/or 3, 4, 5, 6. Ticking a shaded box in Sections 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 requires further action by the researcher. Two things need to be stressed:

- Ticking one or more shaded boxes does **not** mean that you cannot conduct your research as currently anticipated; however, it does mean that further questions will need to be asked & addressed, further discussions will need to take place, & alternatives may need to be considered or additional actions undertaken.
- Avoiding the shaded boxes does **not** mean that ethical considerations can subsequently be 'forgotten'; on the contrary, research ethics - for everyone & in every project – should involve an ongoing process of reflection & debate.

The following checklist is a starting point for an ongoing process of reflection about the ethical issues concerning your study.

Research Context

Through the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into force in May 2018 the University is required to inform every individual whose personal data we process exactly what we are doing with their data, the legal basis for it, who we share it with, how long it is kept for & what that individual's rights are with respect to the personal data that we hold. This information needs to be contained in a Privacy Notice that must be provided to every individual whose personal data we use in research studies. Further details on the GDPR are available here: GDPR or ask your supervisor

SECTION 1: THE RESEARCHER(S)

1.1: Name of principal researcher (in CAPITALS): HOLLY JUDSON

1.2: Status: ☐ Staff
✓ Postgraduate research student

1.3: Email address: lgyhj1@nottingham.ac.uk

1.4: Names of other project members (if applicable):

1.5: Name of supervisors (if applicable): Nick Clare and Thom Davies

	Yes	No
1.6: I have read the University of Nottingham's *Code of Research Conduct & Research Ethics* & agree to abide by it & any relevant update Code of Research Conduct & Research Ethics	✓	

In relation to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

		Yes	No
1	I confirm that I am aware of the GDPR & the proposed work will be compatible with it	✓	
2	The research to be undertaken is in the public interest	✓	
3	If the project involves participants they will be directed to an appropriate privacy notice	✓	

If the answer to any of the above is 'no' further details should be provided in section 7.

SECTION 2: THE RESEARCH

2.1: Title of project: Homes for Ukrainians, hotels for everyone else? Exploring the differential treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK.

Please provide brief details (50-150 words) about your proposed research, as indicated in each section

2.2: Research question(s) or aim(s) & methodology

Please target this to the non-specialist to expedite review

Research questions

1. To what extent do government policies play a role in shaping the differential treatment of refugees, and how can these disparities be addressed to ensure more equitable outcomes?

2. To what extent do geopolitical considerations impact the status of refugees, and how do these factors shape their experience?

3. How do aspects of living conditions influenced by 'domopolitics', such as accommodation quality, access to essential services, and community support, influence the sense of security among refugees?

Aims

To understand why Ukrainian refugees have been treated differently compared to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers and how that affects their experiences.

To understand whether it would be possible to implement the policies put in place for Ukrainian refugees for other groups of refugees and asylum seekers in the future.

2.3: Summary of Method(s) of data collection

Having conducted interviews for my undergraduate dissertation, I would like to develop this method further. I would like to continue interviewing people working for organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, with a focus on organisations in the East Midlands. This will range from small local groups to national organisation or councils. Furthermore, I would like to speak to people who have hosted Ukrainian refugees in order to understand the Homes for Ukraine scheme in more depth and to discuss their experiences of hosting. The aim is to conduct interviews with 20 participants that are each between 30 minutes and 1 hour long. These interviews will be transcribed and analysed using a coding method to identify key themes. Additionally, I am going to look at the policies in place to compare how they apply to different groups and how systems within the UK facilitate the differential treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. One key area of this will be looking at the Homes for Ukraine scheme, compared to other policies concerning the housing of refugees and asylum seekers.

2.4: Proposed site(s) of data collection

There is not one particular site where the data will be collected; however, some are likely to take place in Nottingham or surrounding areas as I am focusing on the East Midlands. I will arrange to meet the participants in places that are convenient for us both and are public spaces. This may be a coffee shop, community centre or local library. It is likely that some of the interviews will take place online as it may be more convenient and time efficient due to the lack of travel.

March 2024

March 2024

Appendix D – Example of a coded interview

This is a short extract from the interview with Participant 1, in which the host explains some of the challenges of hosting Ukrainian refugees and the impact it had on his family.

Interviewer - Would you host refugees again, given that you have had such a positive experience this time?	
Participant 1 – No, I wouldn't do it again. We did it once, and I am very proud of it. But hosting is extremely difficult. Just giving up your home to let somebody else come into it is challenging. It's expensive because you are largely helping support another family. It's a huge amount of pressure, in particular for the women in the house, because of meals, children, bedtime, discipline, arguing, and space. It's difficult to change every single thing about your life. It's very invasive. I'm proud of what I did, but to put the family through it all over again would be very tough. I probably wouldn't push my luck because we had such a positive experience. I don't think anything could ever match up to it. It's also just time with the family. When you've got another family living with you who are in need, you spend a lot of time trying to help them. My daughter suffered quite significantly because she had a real lack of attention for nine months, while they lived with us, because the little boy needed a lot more help. In some ways, he was spoiled because he had all of the attention, and wherever we went, people gave him many toys and wanted to talk to him and help him. This is natural. I really appreciate people wanting to help. But, psychologically, my little daughter was left out, and I think she suffered from that, and she found that quite difficult. It was difficult balancing the two things, so I would be reluctant to do it again for that reason.	Practical and financial challenges Gender roles in the home. Unlikely to host again. Emotional impact on his children. Community support. Big commitment.

Some of the key themes that were used to code the interviews.

KEY
Successes
Challenges
Points emphasised
Support from charities or lthe ocal community.
Identities
Social –spatial
Time

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