

# **Pledging your home: a spotlight on Irish hospitality for those displaced from Ukraine**

**IFRC - Irish Red Cross Safe Homes Programme report**



# Introduction



The escalation of the armed conflict between Russian and Ukraine and the mass displacement that followed spurred some of the highest levels of private hosting Europe has ever seen. Moved by the footage of the attacks on Ukrainian towns and villages, European residents in bordering countries and further beyond were quick to open their homes to displaced people, providing accommodation for weeks and months at a time. For many hosts, this was their first time sharing their home or vacant property with people they didn't know, for others it was not.

State authorities in the EU have obligations related to the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive adopted in March 2022. With respect to housing, they have a duty to provide “suitable housing” for those under the directive. Across the EU, interpretation of this provision has varied both in terms of scale and means. For example, in many countries, the state played a pivotal role supporting residents to provide safe and comfortable accommodation for those in need by sharing their homes. In other countries, the state role in supporting private home sharing was minimal, and residents and their guests were supported by NGOs and local volunteers.

In Ireland, the Irish Red Cross's Register of Pledges (ROP) was the primary vehicle through which Irish residents pledged a room or vacant home to those displaced. Created in 2015 in response to the Syrian refugee crisis and remaining open (and used to temporarily accommodate refugees and their families in the resettlement programme), the Irish Red Cross quickly faced an unprecedented challenge in responding to the 21,428<sup>2</sup> people

who placed a room or home on the Register of Pledge site between February and April 2022.

Inspired by the scale of the public response to the crisis and acknowledging the housing crisis and other challenges related to accommodating other refugee populations, the Irish state, predominantly the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY), quickly came in support of the Irish Red Cross and the thousands of pledgers via direct management support, funding and commissioning of Local Authorities with support from NGOs to assist with placements. An additional impactful policy change was the introduction of a host financial support package, the Accommodation Recognition Payment.

## Safe Homes

This unprecedented solidarity from European residents, and with it, the experiences of those who host and were hosted, was the focus of the IFRC Safe Homes programme. This was a project of the European Union's Directorate



# 21,428

people placed a room or home on the Register of Pledge site between February and April 2022

1 States play a direct or indirect role in organising these solidarity efforts and ensuring that standards are upheld as regards suitable housing (Article 13 TPD), and that protection guarantees are safeguarded and respected.

2 Irish Red Cross [Register of Pledges](#)

General of Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home) led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent society (IFRC) and financed by the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). It was implemented in 9 member states from via their National Red Cross Societies: Belgium, France, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

The objective of the Safe Homes programme was twofold: to offer suitable and safe accommodation to people displaced from Ukraine and to identify and collect good practices in the support provided to hosts and guests. As such it had three key components: a project to implement private hosting schemes, to support those that already existed, and a programme to understand how the different schemes active in the 9 partner countries functioned, including through the experiences of hosts and their guests. Some partner countries participated in all components and others, typically those with an existing private hosting scheme in place like Ireland, participated predominantly in the research component.

The objectives of the Safe Homes programme followed the European Commission's Safe Homes Guidance<sup>3</sup> as well as recommendations set by the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) on private hosting in the context of the Ukraine crisis and so began with a pre-defined list of interests: the collection and management of data, the verification of hosts and assessments of their offers, agreements and contracts, supervision and support, and the exit strategy following the end of the hosting arrangement.<sup>4</sup> The programme produced a series of written products, namely *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine*

*in private homes, A Step-by-Step Guide: For Hosting Assistance to People Affected by Crisis* and a series of case study reports on each of the 9 member states, including one on Ireland titled *Ireland: The evolution of a private hosting model based on partnership and casework*—all published in June 2024.

### **Safe Homes in Ireland and methodological overview**

The Irish Red Cross's Safe Homes programme was mainly research focused.<sup>5</sup> The research began in earnest in August 2023, has been used in a series of IFRC internal reports since then, and culminated with this report in June 2024. It comprised a 3-person team housed within the Migration department of the Irish Red Cross—a Programme Manager, Liam O'Dwyer, a Research Lead, Ciara Aucoin Delloue, and a Research Assistant, Kate O'Dwyer. Researchers designed an original research plan, in-line with the IFRC Safe Homes programme objectives and inspired by research conducted in other Red Cross national societies. They sought out two review rounds into the ethics of the methods proposed before beginning the research.

The methodology used comprised a mixed-methods approach. It combined quantitative data on pledges with survey data and qualitative data obtained through interview, focus groups, and observations. It followed an exploratory case study approach to understand the journey of a displaced person from Ukraine from their arrival to Ireland to their hosted accommodation arrangement. In keeping with the Safe Homes programme themes, it focused primarily on the following areas: matching and placement into pledged accommodation, ongoing supports, integration, and longer-term accommodation trajectory—more details in the Research Methods section can be found in the Annex.

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3 EUAA (2022) [Solidarity and housing: Supporting Safe Homes Considerations, key principles and practices](#).

4 EUAA (2022) [Private accommodation for displaced persons from Ukraine: Practical guide and tool](#).

5 Researchers assisted with two IRC-led public awareness campaigns on pledging in April and May 2024.

The Safe Homes Ireland team participated in IFRC Safe Homes meetings and workshops in Brussels, Budapest, and Warsaw and hosted IFRC and Red Cross EU delegations at meetings in Dublin on two occasions, one being a workshop on the preliminary lessons learned from the research in December 2023 attended by relevant Irish government and NGO partners, pledgers and guests. These different engagements provided the researchers with a greater understanding of the objectives of Safe Homes programme, facilitated the learning from other partner countries and the sharing of the experiences of pledged accommodation in Ireland.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank first and foremost the Irish Red Cross, particularly the Migration department's management and casework team, for their endless support and guidance. Several Ukrainian caseworkers, support workers and volunteers from different organisations across Ireland provided invaluable support in the form of suggestions, contacts, translation and facilitation assistance, with Olena Domina of the Galway Volunteer Centre meriting particular mention. The authors would also like to thank the management team of IFRC Safe Homes programme, colleagues at the Red Cross EU Office, and the Safe Homes teams in the partner Red Cross national societies for their guidance and inspiration. And last but not least, the authors are indebted to the many individuals across Ireland who gave up their time to participate in interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

### Report objectives and scope

This purpose of the report is to share the summary findings of the 10 months of research conducted into private home sharing in Ireland between 2023 and 2024. Based on the evidence, it has two objectives: to serve as a lessons learned guide for the design of future private hosting schemes for displaced people, and to provide policy recommendations based on current policies and practices. As such, the core intended audience is policymakers in Irish government departments at national and local level and the non-governmental and civil society actors leading and/or supporting programme implementation.

In terms of the scope of the research, the population of core interest to the research were displaced people from Ukraine or beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, as per their official legal status in Europe, and the hosts who opened their homes to them. As such the scope of this research is limited to this sub-population and not to the hosting of other migrants and individuals in need of protection. However, in the course of the research, the experience of other migrant groups and their challenges to access accommodation and services were often raised from a comparative perspective. For this reason, the report highlights the key risks and implications of designing hosting schemes for one target population.



## Report structure

The report begins with a background and context section and a summary page of key findings. This is followed by an overview of the methodology and then a description and discussion of each of the key findings under the 5 themes of coordination and communication, matching and ongoing supports, financial support, integration, and longer-term future. Each section concludes with a list of lessons learned: risks and good practices for the purposes of future preparedness, and a list of policy recommendations that reflect the current context. The report concludes with a concise reflection of the Safe Homes findings and their application in policy and practice.

Mary, host, Dublin



## Key terms

- **Beneficiary of Temporary Protection** is the term used to describe those displaced by the conflict in Ukraine who qualify for the temporary legal status as granted by the EU.<sup>6</sup> The use of “beneficiaries” or “BOTPs” risks dehumanising those who have fled conflict, therefore this report refers to this group as “displaced people from Ukraine” (or “displaced people” for short) and it does not distinguish in the nationalities of those displaced.
- **Host** is the term used for the individual(s) in a household that accommodates the guests, it includes those who share the home in which they live (shared home) and those who share an entire, unoccupied property (vacant home). In the Irish context, hosts are often referred to as “pledgers” as they have pledged or offered their home.
- **Guests** are the displaced people temporarily accommodated in a pledged arrangement by a host/pledger.
- **Pledged accommodation** is the IRC-preferred language for what the IFRC calls “private accommodation”. It refers to the home or room offered or “pledged” by someone.
- **Programme refugee** is used to describe a refugee invited to live in Ireland under the refugee protection programme. The pledge programme was initially set up and still is vital to placing refugees from this cohort into accommodation. However, the analysis in this report does not reflect the IRC’s experience with this cohort.
- **Caseworkers** are professional staff assigned to match hosts with guests.
- **Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP)** is a tax-free payment of €800 per month for each property used to provide accommodation to the displaced from Ukraine.

6 Art. 2(a) of Council Directive 2001/55/EC (Temporary Protection Directive).



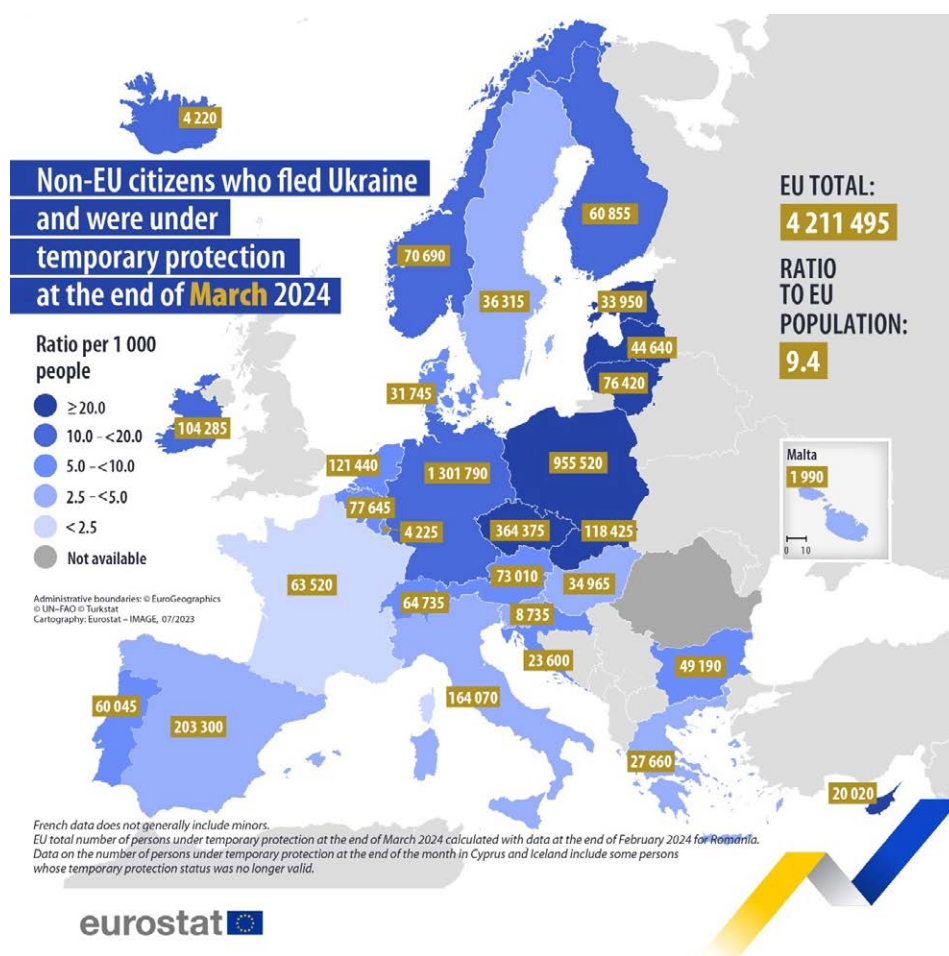
# Background and context

Hosting and hospitality are engrained in Irish culture. Yet hosting refugees and migrants involve particularly unique relations of power, insecurity, and are sites where the meaning of home and belonging are reshaped.<sup>7</sup> Hosting people displaced from Ukraine is therefore best understood in its legal, chronological, and historical context. This section provides a brief overview of the wider context of hosting displaced people in Ireland since 2022.

## Temporary Protection Directive (TPD)

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, causing mass internal and external displacement at levels unseen in Europe since World War Two.<sup>8</sup> On the 4th of March, the Council of Europe adopted Implementing

Decision 2022/382 establishing temporary protection for displaced people from Ukraine. It is an exceptional legal measure created in 2001 that provides for immediate and temporary protection to people displaced from non-EU countries and unable to return to their country of origin. It obliges EU member states to provide a minimal standard of rights, including a resident permit for the duration of the protection; rights to work; suitable accommodation; medical and social welfare; and education for people under 18 years.<sup>9</sup> The time period of the TPD is 1-year fixed period and may be extended by 6-month periods for a maximum of 1 year. It was most recently extended until 4 March 2025.



7 Wilken, L. and Ginnerskov Dahlberg, M. (2017) Between international student mobility and work migration: experiences of students from EU's newer member states in Denmark, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43:8.

8 EUAA (2022) Solidarity and housing: Supporting Safe Homes Considerations, key principles and practices.

9 EU DG Home (2024) Temporary Protection.

## TPD in Ireland in comparative perspective

The TPD has been part of Irish law since 2015 under Section 60 of the International Protection Act. It was first activated for a year in response to the Ukraine crisis in March 2022, renewed for another year in February 2023, and on January 4, 2024, extended until 4 March 2025.<sup>10</sup> This meant that from March 2022, arrivals from Ukraine who met the residence criteria<sup>11</sup> were given a certificate of temporary protection, granting them immediate access to the labour market, public health care, education and social welfare supports. Since May 2022, those aiming to claim TP pass through Citywest Convention Centre, the designated site to register and receive TP certificate and await placement to accommodation.

In Ireland, beneficiaries of Temporary Protection are granted the same level of rights to key public services as Irish citizens—a level of rights only granted to refugees invited to resettle in Ireland.<sup>12</sup> Despite the universalism in the obligation of states across Europe, a recently released Economic and Social Research Council (ESRI) report on the TPD in Ireland shows that implementation of the directive's obligations, and thus the rights granted to beneficiaries, varied across member states between mid-2022 and end of 2023. Some of the areas of discrepancy include provision of housing, healthcare and the levels of social welfare support. While Ireland was one of the more liberal in its interpretation of the rights granted under the TPD (until 2023), displaced people's access to healthcare and housing in the country have been the most challenging and further underscore Ireland's existing twin crises in these sectors.

## Accommodation provision

Under the TPD, EU members are obliged to provide "suitable accommodation" however there is no common definition of what this means in practice.<sup>13</sup> In Ireland, prior to the implementation of the new 90-day policy, most arrivals from Ukraine without pre-arranged accommodation with family or friends were transferred from Citywest to "emergency" accommodation centres and then on to longer-term placements in holiday villages, hotels and rest centres.

Emergency centres are typically state-contracted private hotels providing accommodation and catering to hundreds of displaced people at a time for their first couple of days in Ireland. According to DCEDIY rest centres are "a form of emergency accommodation set up by Local Authorities, with the support of State, community and volunteer agencies, that provided basic care for those displaced by the Ukraine crisis on a temporary basis. Such accommodation was provided in a congregated setting (such as a sports hall/community centre), which was intended to accommodate beneficiaries of Temporary Protection, ideally for a maximum of 2-3 weeks."<sup>14</sup> However, in practice, guests stayed for anywhere from a few weeks to several months.

It is often in emergency accommodation and rest centres where the displaced learn about pledged accommodation. Many displaced people in rest centres actively seek out more comfortable and permanent accommodation options such as private rented accommodation and pledged accommodation and, at least in early 2022, local authorities and other organisations utilised these centres as a method of identifying people looking to enter pledged accommodation.

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<sup>10</sup> Irish Department of Justice (2024) [Extension of Temporary Protection Permissions](#).

<sup>11</sup> All beneficiaries of TP must show evidence of residing in Ukraine prior to 24 February 2022.

<sup>12</sup> The exception to this is when the displaced stay in emergency accommodation, where they have reduced access to welfare supports. ESRI (2024) [The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and Good Practices for Ireland](#).

<sup>13</sup> [European Council on Refugees and Exiles \(2023\) The Right To Suitable Accommodation Under The Temporary Protection Directive](#).

<sup>14</sup> DCEDIY representative, 22.05.24

Rest centres are, since March 2024 and the activation of the 90-day policy, replaced by “designated accommodation centres” which will provide “food, information services and integration supports” for guests for up to 90 days.<sup>15</sup>

Table 1: Key figures on TPD and those in state accommodation, as of 30 April 2024	
Total people granted Temporary Protection status	106,703
Ratio per 1000 people <sup>16</sup>	20.5
Total displaced people living in state-sponsored accommodation (including pledged accommodation)	66,268

Source: DCEDIY and CSO

### Irish government support for pledged accommodation

At the time of the Ukraine crisis, the Irish government, particularly DCEDIY, was committed to ending direct provision, or the contracting of private companies to manage security, administration, and catering for international protection applicants awaiting the processing of their applications. After this approach was criticised in the *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision*<sup>17</sup> in 2020 Minister O’Gorman announced plans to phase this type of provision out.<sup>18</sup> This meant that by early 2022 there was particular concern around the means to provide accommodation for displaced people from Ukraine and the initial groundswell in pledging by Irish residents was exciting and led many policymakers to believe it could solve the accommodation crisis.

Recognising the Irish Red Cross (IRC)’s capacity constraints in the context of such a large influx of pledges, DCEDIY quickly responded by financially supporting the IRC to increase their capacity. During this time, they also coordinated matching via the Local Authorities with support from two NGO organisations before management was handed back to the IRC in October 2022. In July of 2022, DCEDIY, working with the Department of Social Protection, launched the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP), a financial support package of €400 for all households hosting one or more displaced person. The amount was raised to €800 in November of that year.

Further, in November 2022, Local Authorities in partnership with DCEDIY, launched their own pledge scheme “Offer a Home” (OAH) specifically targeting pledgers offering vacant properties. The introduction of the Offer a Home scheme and a new shared customer relations management tool (CRM) facilitated a more direct sharing of responsibility for responding to pledged accommodation with Local Authorities, resulting in a significant increase in the volume of placements.

At the request of government, in April 2023 the IRC, alongside these key actors, established a Consortium of Partners engaged in matching and placing people displaced from Ukraine. An MOA between the DCEDIY and IRC established IRC as the managing partner for the consortium-detailed further below and in IFRC Safe Homes Case Study: *Ireland- The evolution of a private hosting model based on partnership and casework* (published June 2024).

<sup>15</sup> DCEDIY press release: [Designated Accommodation Centres - Current Availability, as of 7 May 2024](#).

<sup>16</sup> Based on Eurostat population of Ireland for 2023: [5194336](#).

<sup>17</sup> Critique was made on the grounds of cost-effectiveness, human rights, equality, and health. See full White Paper [here](#).

<sup>18</sup> Irish government (2021) [Press release: untitled](#). However, the proposed policy changes were based on an estimation of 3,500 applicants per year, and by October 2023, as the numbers surpassed this Minister O’Gorman deemed the changes unattainable. Source: Irish Times (2023) [New plan to end direct provision to be set out in revised White Paper](#), 23 October 2023.



### An effective but short-term response

Irish government strategy was built on the incredible generosity and kindness of Irish residents but in doing so lacked a “pragmatic realism” and so the initial development of the pledge programme was reactive and without a longer-term strategy that had displaced people’s post-pledge accommodation options in mind.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 2: Key figures on pledged accommodation in Ireland, as of 30 April 2024**

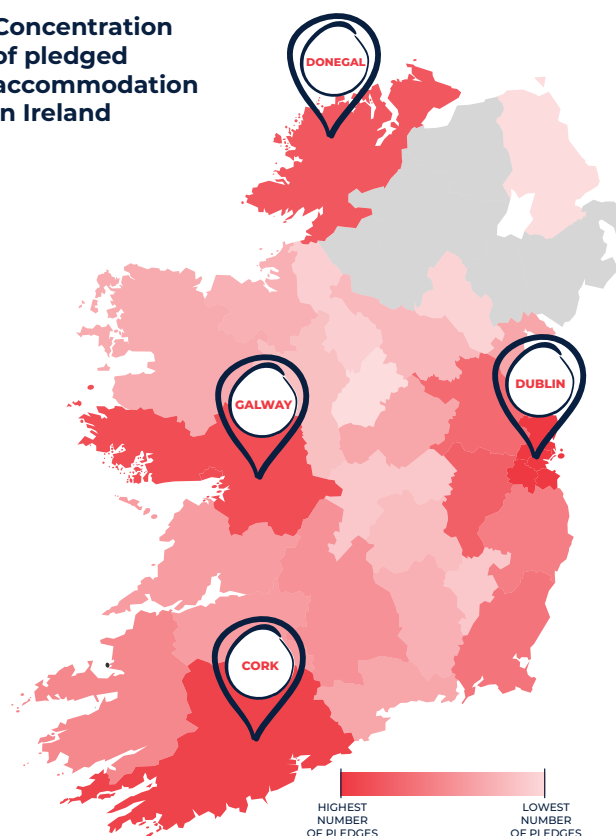
	No. of displaced people	No. of Homes
Pledged accommodation arranged by OAH	7,736	2,486
Pledged accommodation arranged by IRC Consortium	11,117	4,932
<b>Total pledged accommodation figures</b>	<b>18,853</b>	<b>7,418</b>
Overall ARP figures	33,528	16,778
Current ARP figures	24,545	12,443

Source: DCEDIY and CSO

By end of April 2024, 28% of the total amount of displaced people living in state-sponsored accommodation were living in pledged accommodation as provided by Local Authorities and the Irish Red Cross. This figure rises to 32% when those living in private/direct matches are included.<sup>20</sup>

Additional policy changes implemented by the Irish government include the new 90-day accommodation limit and reduced payment policy (similar to that available to asylum seekers in Ireland) initially targeting newly arrived people from Ukraine,<sup>21</sup> leading to concerns about the creation of a “cliff edge” for displaced people, who will have nowhere to go after the 90 day time period has passed and who are at increased risk of homelessness.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, it has recently been announced that the Government is extending the reduced payment to displaced people being accommodated in fully serviced commercial accommodation,<sup>23</sup> a decision which the Ukraine Civil Society Forum has warned could consign 13,000 children to poverty and result in the forced return of many displaced people to Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

### Concentration of pledged accommodation in Ireland



Based on IRC & DCEDIY data end March 2024

<sup>19</sup> Senior government official, 18.04.2024

<sup>20</sup> The percentage for those living in private/direct matches is obtained by subtracting the combined total of IRC and OAH matches from the total ARP allocations—see Table 2 for figures.

<sup>21</sup> DCEDIY (2024) *Changes to Accommodation for People Fleeing War in Ukraine*

<sup>22</sup> Irish Red Cross letter to minister O’Gorman on the Commencement of the new 90 Day Policy, 13.3.24.

<sup>23</sup> The Irish Times (2024) *Ukrainian refugees to have welfare allowances cut from €232 per week to €38.80, under new plan*

<sup>24</sup> Ukraine Civil Society Forum’s statement, 16.5.2024

## Social context: migration and public sentiment

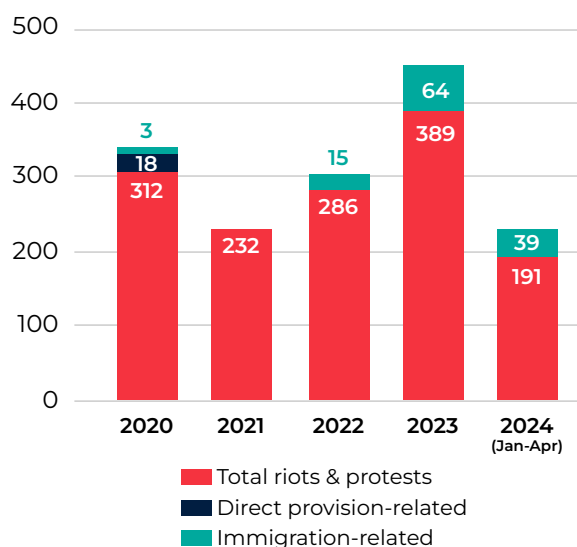
Immigration has emerged as a hot topic in Ireland. The Irish Times/Ipsos B&A Snapshot survey of public sentiment conducted in February 2024 showed that immigration was the highest issue on people's minds, followed by housing.<sup>25</sup> Despite the overwhelming welcome provided by the Irish public to displaced people from Ukraine, in 2023, immigration emerged as a leading issue prompting protests and riots at a significant increase on 2022 levels – a see Graph 1 below. Further, of the total 14 riots in the ACLED database for the year 2023, 12 were led by groups concerned with immigration.<sup>26</sup> Often holding placards reading “Ireland is full” and taking aim at the transfer of migrants to hostels and hotels in local towns, these protests are largely associated with a small group of far-right activists.

While such public outcry has grabbed international headlines, this is not a trend unique to Ireland, and anti-immigrant sentiment is widely understood to be rooted in economic crises and underinvestment in key public services such as health and housing.<sup>27</sup> A Guardian article published in May 2024 highlighted the role that Europe's housing crises plays into far-right anti-immigration sentiment: “It's easy to frame it [housing] as an elites-versus-the-people issue—and to claim migrants are being treated better than nationals.”<sup>28</sup>

Further, riots and protests are often fuelled by online disinformation and propaganda. A recent study by Sky News showed that 80% of online posts relating to a protest that was promoted using the hashtag “IrelandIsFull” in County Wicklow end April 2024 originated from social media users based outside Ireland.<sup>29</sup>

To date, displaced people from Ukraine have been mostly spared from this small group of Irish residents taking aim at “migrants” and “refugees” however, a number of incidents in 2024 should be cause for concern. In January 2024, a former convent designated to accommodate an estimated 80 people displaced from Ukraine in Longford was subject to an arson attack.<sup>30</sup>

**Graph 1:**  
ACLED data on protests and riots in Ireland<sup>31</sup>



Source: ACLED data

25 Irish Times (2024) [Immigration top of the list of issues getting the attention of voters in the past month](#), 6 February.

26 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (2024). Event data on protest and riots in Ireland (1 January 2020-30 April 2024). Data downloaded from [ACLED portal](#) May 2024. Event counts tallied by a search of the notes column for: “asylum”, “direct provision”, “refuge”, “migra”, “ukrain” and “full” and an analysis of the descriptions for the event's core objective/key messages as reported in news reports

27 Vogt Isaksen, J. (2019) [The impact of the financial crisis on European attitudes toward immigration](#). *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7 (24).

28 The Guardian (2024) [Fix Europe's housing crisis or risk fuelling the far-right, UN expert warns](#), 6 May.

29 Irish Independent (2024) [More than half of social media posts about Wicklow anti-asylum protest were from US, analysis finds](#), 3 May.

30 Irish Independent (2024) [Owner of building earmarked to house 80 Ukrainians targeted in arson attack pulls out of deal over fears for family safety](#), 24 January.

31 Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (2024). Event data on protest and riots in Ireland (1 January 2020-30 April 2024). Data downloaded from [ACLED portal](#) May 2024. See footnote 26 for description of how events were tallied.

## Immigration and housing

The roots of the social tensions prompted by increased immigration are long and access to housing is at the heart of it. While there is a housing shortage across Europe, the situation in Ireland is particularly acute. In the spring 2023 Eurobarometer poll, 61% of people in Ireland cited housing as one of the two most important issues facing the country compared to just 10% of people across the EU. Against this backdrop, 13,651 international protection applications were lodged in 2022, representing a 186% increase from 2019 (the last comparable year before Covid-19).<sup>32</sup> Allocating suitable accommodation to applicants while they wait for the processing of their asylum claim in the midst of the housing crisis is proving a core challenge for the state and poor communication and coordination at the local level is contributing to tensions.<sup>33</sup> Interviews with housing experts found that even without factoring in the needs of displaced people and international protection applicants, there is a need to build approximately 50,000 – 55,000 more homes per year for decades to meet demand.<sup>34</sup> The discussion on housing is taken up again in Theme 5: Longer- term Future.

It is against this backdrop of significant social tension over housing and immigration that the Irish experience of private or “pledged” accommodation is situated, and has despite the wider context, proven a generally positive experience for hosts and guests alike. The response of the Irish public to the Ukrainian crisis is story of widespread solidarity and an outpouring of hospitality that often fails to grab headlines to the same degree as those with a narrative of exclusion.

## Hosting as a domestic phenomenon

Hosting occurs largely behind closed doors and involves interpersonal relationships therefore is difficult to research, truly understand, and frame purely in terms of external social factors. Hosting refugees and migrants naturally involves temporal limits and indirectly encompasses elements of exclusion: migrants and refugees are frequently subjected to public opinion about their “worthiness” to receive public goods in the host country (and household), typically based on perceptions of their economic value to society and their suffering/victimhood.<sup>35</sup> Further, hosting inherently involves hierarchy and evokes questions of boundaries and respect for both parties. Yet, with the support of organisations like the Red Cross and partners, hosts and guests do not have to “go it alone” and hosting can be an enriching experience for all involved.

### Typical Host Profile

An individual aged between 56 and 65, employed, living with a spouse and at least one child, and based in an urban area.

(based on HIH/IRC host survey responses)

See summary statistics of host survey results in Annex.

The EU-IFRC Safe Homes programme provided a rare opportunity to shine a light on hosting a cohort of people forcefully displaced and thus enabled better understanding of how and where the private and public factors collided to create the distinct and overwhelmingly Irish positive hosting experience. This report sheds light on the key findings of the Safe Home programme as implemented in Ireland and provides a list of lessons learned for future planning in crisis response, as well as a set of policy recommendations that reflect the current context.

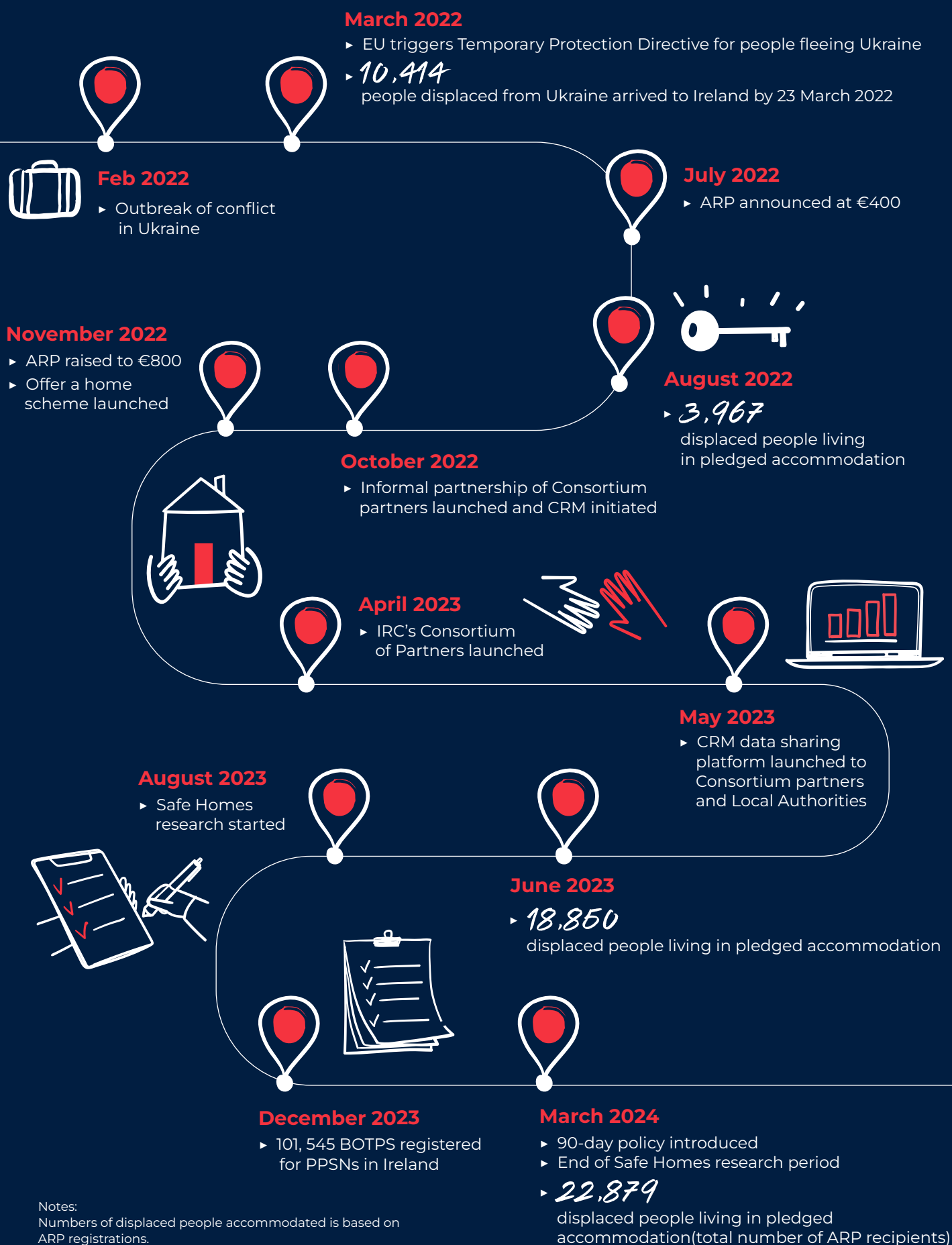
32 EMN (2022) *Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2022*: Ireland.

33 A recent article by Catherine Day, former Secretary General of the EU Commission and author of the *White Paper* highlighted the lack of stock of temporary accommodation for migrants and called attention to how its contributing to “clashes over decisions to house people in emergency accommodation with little advance notice to local communities.” Irish Times (2024) *Ireland is not full and no asylum applicant is ‘unvetted’. But we need a better system*, 22 January.

34 Interview with academic, 3.10.23; interview with private property developer, 13.11.23

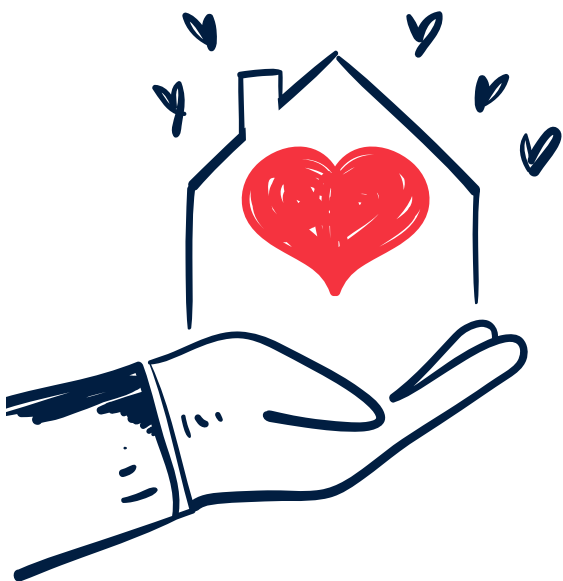
35 Natalie Welfens (2022): ‘Promising victimhood’: contrasting deservingness requirements in refugee resettlement, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

# Chronology of key events



Notes:  
 Numbers of displaced people accommodated is based on ARP registrations.  
 Figures for arrivals from Ukraine in March 2022 sourced from an Oireachtas briefing and for December 2023 from the CSO.

# Key Findings



**1** The displacement of people from Ukraine into Ireland was met by **high levels of solidarity by the public** and with it, unprecedented levels of private home offers.

**2** Hosting, once provided with the necessary wraparound supports for both hosts and guests, is an **excellent “soft landing”** for displaced people as they adjust to their situation.

**92%** of hosts surveyed say their experience was **“good”** or **“better than expected”**

**80%** of guests surveyed claimed to be **“satisfied”** or **“very satisfied”** with their experience in pledged accommodation.

**3** Lack of **institutional preparedness** for the scale of interest in the Irish Red Cross’s Register of Pledges overwhelmed the system, causing much delay and frustration for pledgers.

**4** A **consortium partnership model** is an effective means to improve communication and coordination across multiple actors involved in crisis response, resulting in more efficient matching of hosts and guests and better on-the-ground supports.



**5** Hosts and guests’ experiences are **overwhelmingly positive** but vary according to when they arrived, how they were matched, and how rural their environment is.

**6** **77%** of displaced people in pledged accommodation feel welcome locally, yet integration is shaped by Ireland’s strong urban/rural divide, with **transport** and **childcare** some of the most immediate challenges to entering the workforce for many in rural settings.



**7** Lack of **strategic approach** in a system designed to deliver in response to crisis in the wider context of a severe housing shortage has resulted in inadequate longer-term housing options for displaced people (and Irish society more generally) and requires immediate address.



## Theme 1: Coordination & communication of actors involved

After the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the arrival of displaced people to Ireland from late February 2022, there was a resurgence of interest in the IRC Register of Pledges (ROP), with Irish residents seeking to open their homes in solidarity with those fleeing the conflict. In addition to the pledging via the ROP, independent volunteers and local civil society organisations were actively collecting names and pledges from residents around the country via their own networks and posts on social media. Many met arrivals from Ukraine at airports and transported them directly to their Irish hosts.

In order to capitalise on this outpouring of solidarity from the Irish public, the Irish Red Cross, in partnership with the Department of Children, Equality, Diversity, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), built on the experience of the 2015 hosting model, scaled up data management capacity and the human resources needed to respond to the high volume of pledges on the ROP. This work developed concurrently over a period of 10 months and culminated in the development of the Consortium of Partners in April 2023. From then till the beginning of 2024, the programme continued to evolve and adapt its approach to meet the needs of displaced people under changing government policies. This section describes the major points in the evolution and the Consortium's approach to meet the needs of displaced people under changing government policies.

### The early months: responding to overwhelming generosity

After the escalation of the armed conflict in Ukraine and the arrival of people displaced from the country in Ireland from late February 2022, there was a resurgence of interest in the IRC Register of Pledges, with Irish residents seeking to open their homes to those fleeing the conflict. The Irish Red Cross, in partnership with the DCEDIY, built on the experience of the 2015 model, scaled up data management capacity and the human resources needed to respond to the high volume of pledges—21,428 between February and April 2022, preparing the groundwork for the later placement of people granted temporary protection status in hosted accommodation. A detailed description of these phases is provided in the IFRC Safe Homes Case Study: *Ireland- The evolution of a private hosting model based on partnership and casework* (published June 2024).

This early phase was marked by remarkable effort by many different individuals and organisations involved yet marred by the lack of capacity, coordination challenges and poor communication with pledgers. Pledgers understandably sought swift responses to their generous offers and while four call centres were engaged over a four-month period, there was frustration over the often months-long wait for those pledging accommodation to be matched with guests.<sup>36</sup>

#### Typical Guest Profile

Woman, aged between 36 and 45, arrived with children (no spouse/partner), from Kiev, university educated and identifies as Ukrainian. (based on Safe Homes guest survey)

See full summary statistics of survey responses in the Annex.

<sup>36</sup> Focus group discussions with hosts on 26.9.23; 15.10.23; 17.10.23

## New players

By mid-2022, there were several new actors working with DCEDIY, IRC and Local Authorities and the many volunteers on the ground helping to get through the backlog of pledges and to assist displaced people in finding safe homes. One of these was Salesense (now Uniquely), a call centre brought in by the Irish Red Cross, who led the screening and initial responses to pledges, assisted by three other volunteer run call centres. Another was the voluntary role of Engineering Ireland and the Auctioneering Association of Ireland who assessed, from the perspective of health and safety, vacant houses being offered as pledges. Helping Irish Hosts (HIH), a host-led matching and support agency, emerged the spring of 2022. At this stage, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Peter McVerry Trust (PMVT) had also become engaged to support the Local Authorities in activating pledged accommodation and placing guests with hosts. With the creation of the Offer a Home scheme in November 2022, the Local Authorities role was solidified in matching especially in matching vacant home offers with displaced people seeking hosted accommodation.

The presence of additional actors resulted in a variety of different approaches to matching potential guests with hosts. Organisations and local authority staff all worked to their own policies and procedures resulting in a lack of standardisation. Some organisations, for example, made the facilitation of meetings between hosts and guests prior to moving in an organisational priority, others left this to the discretion of caseworkers. Another key difference in approach was the use of license agreements between guests and hosts and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between organisations facilitating the process and guests.<sup>37</sup>

Operationally, there was wide variation in the capacity of Local Authorities to respond to the scale of pledges, with some councils only having one individual working to support displaced people from Ukraine in their municipalities as well as their already heavy workload. As a result, the effectiveness of local authorities as placing agents was highly variable. This was enhanced by the introduction of IOM and the creation of the Ukraine unit within the Local government management agency (LGMA), which significantly improved coordination and supported capacity needs across councils and central government.

## From ad hoc coordination to formal partnership

From December 2022, the IRC, as directed by government, established a Consortium of Partners to coordinate the range of actors involved. This saw increased communication and information sharing across the different organisations towards the collective goal of more effective and standardised matching and support provision. Thus, the largely informal relationship that existed between the organisations evolved towards a more formalised group of partners, and by April 2023 was made into an official consortium (IOM, Peter McVerry Trust, and Helping Irish Hosts) led by the IRC, recognised and funded by Government to collectively deliver the pledge programme. Although not officially part of the Consortium, Local Authorities' representative and coordinating body the Local government management agency- (LGMA) had regular and structured engagement with the IRC and DCEDIY.

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<sup>37</sup> The IRC have always used formal licence agreements to clarify arrangements between hosts and guests and an MOU to guarantee continued support to hosts from the IRC team, but this was not the case with all organisations.

The creation of the Consortium brought about increased coordination and communication across various actors, translating into more efficient matching and better on-the-ground supports for hosts and guests.<sup>38</sup>

*“The evolution from Phase 1 to Phase 2 came down to sorting out better partnerships, the creation of the Consortium, a couple of key people in the LGMA... key people that that were willing to find solutions.”*

**Senior government official, 6.12.23**

From early 2022 till the end of 2023, the IRC, in close cooperation with DCEDIY, and the Consortium of Partners developed an effective pledge scheme that has housed 11,117 displaced people by end April 2024—see Table 2 above. In its current model, any pledger that lists a room or property on the ROP will receive a call back within 3 days and will be connected with a caseworker or matchmaker of a partner organisation. Word of the programme spread such that most displaced people with experience living in pledged accommodation learned about it from a Consortium organisation<sup>39</sup> or were put in touch with one at the end of their tenure in emergency or rest accommodation.

It also ensured that public campaigns and awareness-raising activities on hosting assistance would be coordinated at both national and local levels. For example, Helping Irish Hosts, in local partnership with Local Authorities, held informational Roadshows around the country showcasing the experiences of hosts to help recruit new hosts. In close partnership with Local Authority partners and affiliates in Galway County, the Irish Red Cross and IOM host informational clinics for people displaced from Ukraine to obtain

information on the steps necessary to find hosted accommodation. The partnership also facilitated Consortium members to engage more formally and effectively with government. Through regular meetings, the Consortium partners worked together to develop messaging and advocacy intended for the government.<sup>40</sup>

## CRM

By October 2022, DCEDIY in partnership with the IRC developed a central reporting database (CRM) to hold the triaged pledges suitable for matching and access was provided to all the organisations working with the government to match. The CRM database was a critical management and reporting tool that enabled the tracking, progressing and utilisation of each pledge. Prior to the implementation of this tool, organisations tasked with matching pledgers and guests faced challenges in verifying activated pledges as they relied on spreadsheets to track each case. The CRM system made this process far more efficient. After the development of the CRM and with it, the establishment of data protection and sharing agreements to comply with GDPR requirements, and after a sufficient degree of human resource capacity was built up at the IRC, the IRC resumed leadership of the pledge programme.

The CRM was rolled out to all Consortium partners, plus the Local Authorities and the LGMA in May 2023. Under the MOA with DCEDIY, this meant all actors could access the pledger and displaced persons data for placements purposes, further streamlining the once disjointed efforts to match hosts and guests. Further, the Consortium's regular meetings allowed partners to discuss challenges and find shared solutions.<sup>41</sup>

38 Interview with Consortium managers 08.08.23; 16.08.23; 22.09.23.

39 Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

40 While IOM participated in all messaging and were part of the team agreeing changes to Consortium policy and operations, as an organisation with special status it was funded by and reported directly to government.

41 Observations of Consortium bi-weekly meetings 28.09.23; 20.10.23



Marie and Luba, host and guest, Sligo

### **A continuously evolving model**

While the partnership model has significantly improved the coordination and effective response to both pledgers and the displaced people who seek out pledge accommodation, challenges still exist. One has to do with the standardisation of practices in matching and ongoing supports across Consortium partners. Each of the partners have different capacities, different organisational priorities, sets of expertise and experiences. Effectively ensuring these varied skills are harnessed and realised while maintaining a standard practice is a core challenge of partnership. However, IRC is spearheading efforts to ensure a more unified practice across partners.

Another is data management, and the need to ensure that the Consortium tools are fit for purpose and effectively aid casework and support teams across organisations to match hosts and guests. Another dimension is to provide hosts and guests with adequate supports, and track their exit plans from pledged accommodation more effectively, as the section on Longer Term Future will discuss in greater detail. An additional challenge is the creation and development of working relationships with each of the Local Authorities by the Consortium, given the volume of work associated with this endeavour and the variance in Local Authorities' operational models. In order to address this, the IRC is creating a specific position designed to work in partnership with the Local Authorities.





### Risks

- Lack of coordination across many actors working towards same goal risks negatively impacting hosts' and guests' protection and overall experience.
- Capacity constraints and poor data management by the implementing organisations risks losing pledgers/home offers and weakening the public's trust in the organisations involved.
- A lack of longer-term strategic approach to accommodation provision during crisis risks creating bottlenecks in temporary measures like hosted/pledged accommodation.



### Good Practices

- Working in a consortium partnership ensures more fluid communications and coordination across multiple actors working to support pledging and translates into more efficient matching and provision of supports to hosts and guests. The IFRC's *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes* report includes a list of "Guiding Principles in Building Lasting Partnerships."
- An accessible, online, centralised pledge and guest registration system that is connected to an adequately resourced casework team ensures the most efficient and supported means to enter a private accommodation arrangement.
- A balanced whole-of-government approach that works to breakdown the siloed nature of the state's response and mitigates the burden falling too heavily on one department.



### Policy recommendations

- Commitment by government to fund a permanent pledge infrastructure (comprising database, staffing, integration, and accommodation supports) with core funding to enable the structure to be a reliable and adaptable tool for crisis response. While this infrastructure is already in place for displaced people from Ukraine and resettled refugees to begin their journey in Ireland, it could be expanded to support the implementation of Community Sponsorship across the country, and for successful International Protection Applicants.
- Designate one department in government to manage refugee reception coordination and support of the provision of pledge accommodation in partnership with NGO's, Red Cross, and Local Authorities. Ensure that the policies of this department are in sync with the wider national strategy on housing to ensure greater harmony between short, medium and longer-term accommodation strategies.



## Theme 2: Matching & ongoing supports

The matching of hosts and guests into a suitable and mutually satisfying accommodation arrangement is one of the most important and challenging aspects of any hosting programme. The research found that a successful and durable match is often dependent upon the role of a third party.<sup>42</sup> In the Irish context, this is typically a caseworker employed by one of the Consortium organisation. Successful matches are often dependent on the caseworker's ability to assess the personalities, preferences and needs of both the host and guest, manage expectations and do their best to ensure the needs of both are met. Following the match and placement, there is a need for ongoing support and follow-up with hosts and guests.

With 92% of hosts reporting in the host survey that they found their experience hosting displaced people to be 'good' or 'better than expected' and 80% of displaced guest survey respondents reporting being 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their experience in pledged accommodation in Ireland, it is clear that hosting, once accompanied by wraparound supports, is a viable medium term solution which provides guest with a "soft landing" as they begin their pathway to integration in a new country. This section discusses what kind of supports hosts and guests need.

### The varying needs of hosts

The host survey data shows that 40% of hosts reported being "anxious" or "very anxious" before hosting.<sup>43</sup> In focus group discussions

with hosts, it was evident that this anxiety was initially about the anticipation of their guests' arrival while overtime as the pledge continued, the worry morphed into anxieties related to communication and how best to support their guest. An anxiety rooted in not knowing how to strike a balance between respecting their guests' privacy and adequately supporting them is commonplace and shows the value in the caseworker role and the reassurance that check-in calls bring.

*"You worry that you're not doing enough to support them, but then you don't really want to do anything because you don't want to overstep barriers."*

**Host focus group participant, 2.11.23**

### Casework

Caseworkers involved in a hosting programme play an essential role in protecting and caring for the needs of both hosts and guests. At the core of the IRC caseworker model are four key steps: matching the displaced people seeking accommodation with hosts, following up with ongoing services, working to support the extension of contracts beyond the initial agreed 6 months / one year term, and a special category of responding to high needs cases.

Caseworkers also coordinate the assessment of properties, prepare both parties for the realities of pledged accommodation and provide both hosts and guests with important briefings on the cultural dynamics involved in an Irish-Ukrainian shared living arrangement.

<sup>42</sup> Focus group discussions with hosts and guests, September 2023– January 2024

<sup>43</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

<sup>44</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

Yet, 29% of host survey respondents report being 'self-sufficient'.<sup>44</sup> These hosts either are experienced with hosting and know where to go for help, find their hosting arrangement to be relatively seamless or are the type of people who don't ask for help even when they may need it. An additional key factor is that guests' situations can change, and as a result, the level of support required by the host and their ability to "go-it-alone" does too. These changing situations and the variation in the reported support required by hosts demonstrates the value in the provision of a wide range of easily accessible supports and in ensuring casework staff adhere to a scheduled set of check-ins over the course of the hosting arrangement.

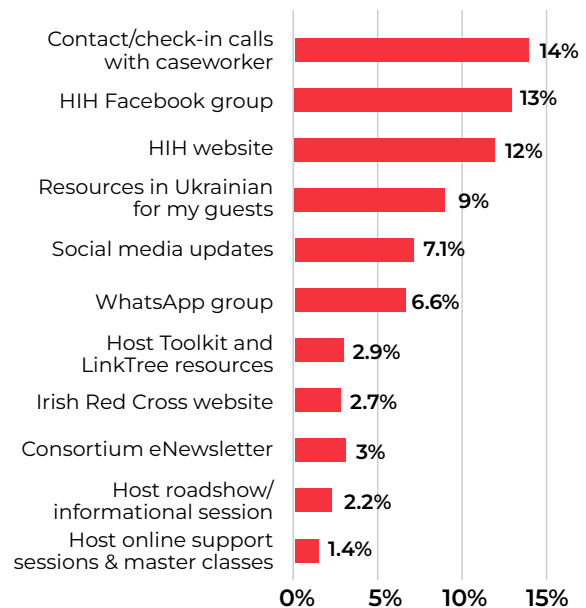
### Accessing available host supports

The Consortium provides a range of supports, mainly in the form of a dedicated caseworker to each set of clients matched. In addition, there are a variety of online supports and activities that hosts and guests can avail of. In host survey results, it emerged that 38% of respondents had availed of at least one Consortium-provided resources, with caseworker check in calls, the Helping Irish Hosts-managed Facebook group and website, and resources in the Ukrainian language being the top three most utilised<sup>45</sup>—see Graph 2 below.

#### Irish Red Cross refurbishment budget

For properties that were initially deemed "unsuitable", the IRC intervened especially in relation to vacant properties and invested in bringing them up to a modern standard and ensuring that the appropriate furniture, bedclothes and basic appliances were on site. This approach contributed to more pledge properties being brought into use. This intervention was co-funded by DCEDIY.

**Graph 2: Most utilised Consortium-provided resources, HIH/IRC host survey**



Source: IRC/HIH survey.

Qs: What of the above is most useful to you as a host? (multiple choice). Total responses: 1,117

Contrasting that, 34% of host survey respondents selected that they were 'unaware or had no experience of any support resources'.<sup>46</sup> Further, host focus group participants who started their hosting journey in Phase 1 were more likely to express either a lack of awareness of available Consortium supports or the fact they never requested them<sup>47</sup>, thus showing that the importance of information regarding supports and available resources is critical for hosts especially during the matching process. Of those focus group participants who report not needing support, when asked how caseworker calls serve hosts, they nevertheless stated that check-in calls serve as a form of reassurance and confidence that someone is supporting them 'just in case'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023: question on utilisation of support resources.

<sup>46</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

<sup>47</sup> Focus group discussions with hosts (current and former), 24.9.23; 13.11.23

<sup>48</sup> Focus group discussions with hosts (6 in total) September- December 2023.

<sup>49</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

Additionally, survey data shows that the Helping Irish Hosts Facebook group is the second most utilised resource.<sup>49</sup> In focus group discussions with hosts, the HIH Facebook group was consistently reported as a place hosts could seek information and share experiences with fellow hosts without judgement and a key site where those who matched directly (outside the Consortium or Local Authorities) were able to find support from a caseworker in a Consortium partner organisation. In this way, moderated social media sites serve as a vital means to identify those matched directly/by private means and provide them the supports they need.

### Guests' needs for ongoing support

Safe Homes survey of displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation found that guests are the most significant source of support to hosts after placement and this is mostly shaped by the often daily or weekly interaction between hosts and guests (especially in shared accommodation).<sup>50</sup> Of those in shared accommodation, 60% of guests interact with their hosts 'daily' or 'more than once daily', with 21% saying they only see their host less than every two weeks.<sup>51</sup> Overtime, this interaction tends to build stronger and more supportive relationships: 74% of surveyed guests describe the relationship with their host as 'friendly and supportive' and 'familial.' When asked how the relationship changed over time, 49% reported that it evolved towards friendly and familial, 40% claimed it stayed the same, and 11% reported that it deteriorated to 'tense and/or distant'.<sup>52</sup>

Hosts are also pivotal actors in helping guests register for public services. Illustrating this point and highlighting the fact that 47% of

hosts serve as the core source of support to their guests<sup>53</sup>, a woman based in Wicklow, hosting since early 2022 stated in a focus group:

*"So I took them to social welfare, got their things transferred from Cork to Dublin to Bray. I did all the basic administrative things, and then I stepped back because they have their own lives to lead."*

**Host focus group participant, 2.11.23**

In addition to regular interaction, host's tendency to take on the burden of supporting their guests also reflects the lack of available supports for displaced people in many parts of the country. Although displaced people often have large Telegram networks of contacts and are highly resourceful, depending on where they are placed, they can be isolated from their support networks and can either be far from local services, or these services can be missing or already under strain to meet other local needs.

### Trauma in the displaced community

The displaced community from Ukraine has significant to severe levels of post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>54</sup> In addition to having to flee their home, many guests and their children have had harrowing first-hand experiences with conflict and violence and following their arrival in Ireland, often have to pass through multiple accommodation options before settling in pledged accommodation. In focus groups with guests, many of them reflected on the trauma and discomfort of their early days in Ireland, specifically in relation to their time spent in Citywest and emergency accommodation centres.

50 When guest survey participants were asked to select their 'biggest sources of support while in hosted accommodation' respondents selected their hosts (47%), followed by their network and friends (24%), a social media site or Telegram group (11%) and a local authority or consortium organisation (9%) and the rest 'other' means, where participants gave varying responses including being fully self-sufficient or feeling totally alone.

51 Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

52 Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

53 Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

54 Interview with psychotherapist, 15.1.2023

*"It was a painful experience. There were 100s of temporary beds in one sports hall. I spent 1 month there. Their two Ukrainian administrators are not very good. I found their attitude to Ukrainians was very painful."*

**Displaced people focus group, 13.10.2023**

Research suggests that often guests who appear 'functional' or articulate do not qualify as high-needs and in many cases their trauma is not evidenced until living in pledged accommodation. As a result, hosts are often inadequately prepared for how to support such individuals. Indeed, hosts often experience anxiety about 'overstepping' boundaries by asking how their guests are coping. It is clear that hosts need to be thoroughly briefed on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), including a clear understanding of their responsibilities and the limitations of their role.<sup>55</sup>

*"There's a very fine line between asking information and being down right nosy or being very personal, so we shied away from asking. So, as a host, I didn't know when it's okay to ask that question, are you okay, or are you lonely, or anything like that. "*

**Host focus group participant, 15.10.23**

### **Svitlo**

The IRC "Svitlo" programme implemented by Ukrainian therapists who work under the supervision of an accredited psychologist, is an available resource for the many displaced people in Ireland. Additionally, Ukrainian-speaking trainers provide psychological first aid (PFA) trainings to suitable persons in the Ukrainian communities. Once the selected Ukrainian community members receive the basic and second level trainings, they can provide PFA service to another person in their group.

The high level of trauma in the community of displaced people from Ukraine in addition to the lack of knowledge possessed by hosts on how to care for them, signals that across the board, there is a need for a greater provision of mental health supports for displaced people from Ukraine and underscores the value of casework.



Youssef, IRC caseworker, with Marie and Luba, Sligo. Photo by ProfileTree.

<sup>55</sup> IFRC (2024) Mental health and psychosocial support



## Safeguarding

Safeguarding, according to the IFRC network, refers to the “responsibility in acting to keep people safe from any form of harm caused by the misuse of power by making sure that our staff, volunteers, programmes, and communications do no harm to children and adults, nor expose them to abuse or exploitation.”<sup>56</sup>

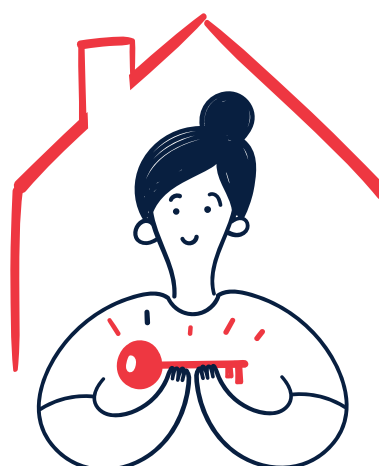
Research found that with respect to the safety and protection of guests, caseworker teams across the Consortium play an essential role as the first line of screening to assess their suitability for pledged accommodation, and their vulnerabilities. Interviews with a safeguarding expert found that a key risk with respect to populations fleeing conflict is trafficking. Given that an estimated 90% of those displaced from Ukraine are women and children, and the sudden and traumatic nature of the conflict the current displaced community in Ireland and across Europe is high needs, vulnerability and at risk of exploitation and abuse.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the role of the caseworker in screening guests and remaining a point of contact after placement, and in supporting hosts to respond to any matters as they arise is pertinent. With respect to the role of hosts, a Consortium representative highlighted that if such concerns are not identified at the matching stage, it becomes more difficult to identify them once the guest has moved into hosted accommodation.<sup>58</sup>

Another key protection measure is police vetting to ensure child protection. In Ireland, the formal Garda (police) vetting of hosts is required when their allocated guests include persons under the age of 18.<sup>59</sup> The majority of Consortium partner’s Garda vetting is carried out by the IRC Safeguarding team. While the process faced significant administrative

delays in 2022, due to the complexity of the process it is reported that the system has much improved and is an important means of ensuring protection for displaced children.<sup>60</sup>

With respect to hosts’ safeguarding, there is no ability to perform an equivalent formal background check on the displaced people moving into pledged accommodation, given that their home country is in an active conflict. As a result, the role of caseworkers in the initial screening of guests, and in the follow up and supports (including referrals to police and other specialist agencies) to hosts throughout their hosting journey is essential.

The last group relevant to safeguarding and a group in need of protection is caseworkers, who are under immense pressure to handle a high and often emotionally burdensome caseload and as a result, are exposed to risk of burnout. It is recognised by Consortium management that the volume of work and responsibilities carried out by the caseworker team is a risk to their wellbeing. Management have implemented a range of policies to address this.



<sup>56</sup> IFRC Protection, Gender & Inclusion (2024) [Safeguarding](#).

<sup>57</sup> Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) [Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland: Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive](#)

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Consortium partner caseworker, 24.10.23

<sup>59</sup> All members of the host household over the age of 16 are required to be police vetted, i.e. have their criminal records checked.

<sup>60</sup> Interviews with Consortium managers and host focus group discussions.



### Partnership with Mediation Ireland

The Irish Red Cross partnered with Mediation Ireland to support caseworkers in conflict resolution and provide tailored trainings for their professional development and support in areas such as stress management and spotting signs of domestic violence.<sup>61</sup> These trainings are held regularly and help to ensure that caseworkers are constantly upskilling in response to the evolving nature of their role. Caseworkers can also contact Mediation Ireland to help resolve serious conflicts that emerge in hosted accommodation that are beyond their remit or capacity to resolve.

### License agreements

License agreements signed between hosts and guests that detail the conditions of the shared living arrangement serve as a means to ensure a fair and transparent living arrangement, and thus support the safety and protection of both parties. Hosts who matched via a Consortium partner were more likely than any informal arrangement to sign a license agreement and report their experience had been “better than expected” in the host survey. On the other hand, hosts who matched via an informal arrangement (outside of the Consortium) and so who did not sign an agreement were more likely to report that their challenges were financial and emotional in nature, including the impact on their families, suggesting that matching via a Consortium partner may help alleviate some of these pressures.<sup>62</sup> As previously reported, focus group participants who had matched by private means often went on to search for support and the resources that were provided by Consortium organisations.

Those hosts surveyed who signed a license agreement (49% of sample) rated its usefulness at an average score of 2 on a scale of 1-5.<sup>63</sup> This suggests that for almost half of the host survey sample, terms about the living arrangement were not agreed formally and thus understandings between host and guest on the expectations occur in a live and informal environment. Focus

group discussions suggested that license agreements are beneficial for providing clarity on the arrangements and increase the sense of security for both parties.<sup>64</sup>

### Rural matches

Another other key finding was the urban/rural divide in hosts and guests experience with ongoing supports. Across the data collected, it is evident that for many guests in highly rural areas, their autonomy is severely restricted by the lack of transport options, and as a result are often dealing with compounding challenges related to securing employment, integration, childcare, and access to healthcare. The lack of employment opportunities is particularly pronounced in the rural areas, and the knock-on effects are reliance on welfare and as a result, increased risk of depression.<sup>65</sup>

*“I sent many CVs to different places, but have had not even one response. So the only solution I see now is to live on welfare.”*

**Displaced focus group participant (rural based), 12/12/23**

In contrast, a focus group discussion with displaced people living in pledge accommodation in Dublin and Kildare had generally more positive experiences in pledged accommodation with respect to supports and integration—a point taken up further in the Integration section.

61 IFRC (2024) Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes

62 IHIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

63 IHIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

64 Safe Homes focus group discussions with hosts, 24.9.2023; 2.11.2023

65 Safe Homes focus group discussions with the displaced 26.9.2023 - 13.12.2023

A widely held view by Consortium member staff is that the benefit of pledged accommodation is that guests have more independence and autonomy than in collective centres or state accommodation. Yet this is proving harder to realise in rural pledges due to isolation.

## Minorities

Displaced people from minorities and those with disabilities may be particularly interested in pledged accommodation. Research found that those with physical disabilities that are not being suitably addressed in state accommodation centres often contact a Consortium partner in the hope that pledged accommodation would be more suited to their needs.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, an interview with a support organisation revealed that significant numbers of the LGBT+ community seek out pledged accommodation, due to the unsuitability of state accommodation for their needs, which is often compounded by some managers of state accommodation centres not being trained in how to care for their specific needs.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, interviews with LGBT+ support groups found that LGBT+ members of the Ukrainian community tended to self-refer to their organisations in search of hosted accommodation due to fear that they would experience discrimination from Ukrainian caseworkers in the Irish Red Cross and Consortium partners. In terms of their suitability for private accommodation, discussions in focus groups found that guests with disabilities benefit from the presence of a third party (caseworker) who can help determine if the conditions of the pledge are suitable for their needs.

However, a key finding is that matching people with disabilities and those from minorities with suitable hosts can be challenging. For example, caseworker teams claim it is often more challenging to match Roma and second-nationals from Ukraine because of hosts' stated preferences.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, over time the discrimination faced by the Roma community displaced from Ukraine the moment they are identified as Roma in the processing or emergency centre through to their stay in collective shelters and occasionally, in hosted accommodation, became a key interest to the Safe Homes researchers. In the words of a Roma health coordinator:

*"They [Roma people] all had traumatic experiences when they were identified, when people realised they were from the Roma community. Extra services, extra interviews.... And what I've seen as their coordinator, they were put out to real rural areas, isolated areas, as far away as you can get."*

**Roma Health Coordinator, 2.11.23**

While Pavee Point have carried out advocacy work and liaised directly with Citywest to ensure that the cultural needs of the Roma community are met in as much as possible,<sup>69</sup> a clear need still exists for translators, caseworkers and managers of centres to receive intercultural training to address issues of discrimination.

*"Usually they [agencies providing supports to displaced people] would look for a Ukrainian who could speak English, and then they would hire that person. That person is not as trained as an interpreter....That can backfire if that person is racist or discriminative."*

**Roma Health Coordinator, 2.11.23**

<sup>66</sup> Displaced focus group discussions, 12.12.23 and 13.12.23

<sup>67</sup> Interview with supporting agency, 9.2.2024

<sup>68</sup> Hosts' clear preferences for Ukrainian people over programme refugees since the start of the conflict in Ukraine is driven by multiple factors including the ARP being tied to the hosting of displaced people and discrimination. This topic is covered in the Safe Homes policy report, to be published end May.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Roma Health Coordinator, 2.11.23

Additionally, it is reported by caseworkers across the Consortium of partners that it is especially challenging to house single men and Crimean Tartars.

### Informal/ direct matches

While the majority of matches are made through the Consortium, by the end of April 2024, an estimated 4,368 were living in pledged accommodation that they had sourced themselves, typically online via Facebook or through other means of direct contact with hosts.<sup>70</sup> Research revealed that these matches have a markedly different experience than those who match via a third party such as the Consortium or LAs, due to the lack of safeguarding checks, property assessments, pre-placement briefings and information sharing, signposting and caseworker follow up. These matches can often occur informally through a displaced people's social contacts and can provide them with a feeling of autonomy in organising their own hosting arrangements. However, research shows that there are a variety of issues that can occur as a result of these arrangements.

Firstly, guests looking to enter an arrangement on their own do not have the benefit of an external third party to support them by engaging with a potential host and advocating for their specific needs and as a result their arrangements are more prone to breaking down.

*"I started to ask questions. I requested the eircode, asked where was the closest shop, how the house was heated and how much could heating cost. The host's reaction was strange, she wrote to us: "You're going through the motions. Take what's on offer. You ask too many questions, probably we can't cope together". So the host left the Facebook group."*

**Displaced focus group participant, 12.12.23**

Additionally, the lack of a Consortium issued license agreement can lead to a lack of clarity between hosts and guests as to how long the hosting arrangement is to last for, leading to anxiety for the guest as to their immediate future. Further, focus group discussions with guests in privately matched hosting arrangements revealed that a number of them have unsuccessfully asked their host to sign a home sharing agreement. Others report approaching a local Ukrainian caseworker for their support in brokering the subject with their host.

*"After 2 months, I found strength to ask host family for how long they were planning to host us,"*

**Displaced focus group participant, 9.11. 2023**

Informal/direct matches are also associated with greater risks of safety and protection issues, particularly for displaced Ukrainian women when looking for a potential host on Facebook or other social media channels.

*"I received a lot of proposals from single men. At the beginning they wrote that it was their good will to support Ukrainians, but when I asked for clarification, I was shocked at what they expected from a woman with a child."*

**Displaced focus group participant, 12.12.23**

In summary, the expectations of hosts and guests vary considerably, with some raising concerns of abuse. The benefit of matching via a third party is that the caseworkers can both screen hosts to ensure they are suitable and can make referrals to the relevant authorities when serious issues arise. More routinely, they serve as vital brokers between hosts and guests, advocating on behalf of guests and vice versa.

<sup>70</sup> Calculated by subtracting the total number in pledge accommodation from the total of ARP recipients. These figures are found in Table 2 on page 9.

### Ad-hoc nature of the guest registration system

One of the key research findings, is the ad-hoc nature of the guest registration system in comparison to the host registration systems (ROP and Offer a Home). The host registration systems follow (at present) a well-managed set of stages starting with the ROP, triaging, then the host's information being uploaded and stored on the CRM. In comparison, there are several pathways through which displaced people can enter pledged accommodation. For example, potential guests can email the IRC via the Migration crisis email, Register of Pledges email and IRC reception email<sup>71</sup> or make their interest known to any of the Consortium Partners who have their own registration forms. There are also a variety of methods in which displaced people contact Local Authorities to enter the Offer a Home scheme. These avenues vary from county to county with several Local Authorities recruiting people from state-run collective or "rest" accommodation centres however more recently, as word of the scheme has spread, there is an increasing practice of waiting for those in need to come to local authorities.<sup>72</sup>

This lack of a standardised process has a number of implications: the occurrence of guests applying to multiple Consortium partners for pledged accommodation and "shopping around" for the best accommodation offer, leading to duplication of work across the Consortium. Additionally, it became evident throughout the research that despite the self-advocacy of guests in reaching out to Consortium partners, the lack of a data system to store their details can lead to them falling through the cracks of the system.<sup>73</sup> A systematic way for guests to log their request for accommodation would

ensure greater transparency in the process, aid follow up with vulnerable people, and provide more equity in the system.

### Data Management

As discussed in the Coordination chapter, the CRM is the primary tool used by caseworker teams to record, track and monitor the utilisation of the pledged/offered accommodation. It is also the central database for reporting data on the number of pledges to the IRC's government department partner, DCEDIY, and other stakeholders. It is viewed by the National government as a key achievement in the Ukraine pledged accommodation response<sup>74</sup> and a number of Consortium partners feel that it has greatly improved the efficiency of the response. However, there are several ongoing issues as flagged by certain stakeholders that need to be addressed in order to improve efficiency of the matching process mainly to do with the shared nature of the database, and the requirement to follow procedure.<sup>75</sup>



<sup>71</sup> An IRC staff worker is responsible for replying to these emails and sending the individual the Accommodation Needs Referral form.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with local authority representative, 27.9.2023

<sup>73</sup> Focus group discussions with displaced (6 in total) September 2023- January 2024

<sup>74</sup> Interview with senior government official, 6.12.23

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Consortium managers 08.08.23; 16.08.23; 22.09.23



### Risks

- Lack of streamlined guest registration system means matching support teams have to manage multiple lists, heightening the risk that data is lost and that the selection process is not transparent or standardised.
- Failing to account for the wide variation in hosts' expectations, needs and therefore not providing adequate and accessible resources can result in hosts feeling ill-prepared for hosting.
- Overlooking the extent of the trauma of the guest community, and of the specific needs of minorities and failing to provide wraparound service that adapts to evolving needs risks the health and wellbeing of hosts and guests.
- Lack of standard practice across actors supporting hosts and guests risks inequality in the matching and overall experience of displaced people in pledged accommodation.



### Good Practices

- Personalised matching done via an experienced and well-resourced casework team.
- Host and guest access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), such as the the IRC's Svitlo programme.
- The provision of intercultural training to caseworkers and translators working as part of a humanitarian response.
- Requiring hosts and guests to sign a license agreement that details the duration and parameters of the living arrangement in practical terms.



### Policy recommendations

- The development of an online guest registration system to ensure a standardised approach to collecting of expressions of interest and matching with hosts. It is worth noting that the IRC are in the process of developing such a system as well as designing a more robust Register of Pledges.
- Investment in new specialised mental health and psychosocial support infrastructure for people in need of protection to be managed by the Department of Health and delivered by the Irish Red Cross or another competent organisation.
- Require pledgers/hosts to sign a license agreement with their guests as a condition to access the ARP.



## Theme 3: Integration

The integration of beneficiaries of temporary protection and international protection applicants has emerged as one of the key challenges facing National government, Local Authorities and supporting NGOs working in the migration sector. As outlined in the recent Immigrant Council of Ireland report, the combined effect of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the increase in the number of International Protection applicants has made the work of national and local integration simultaneously more important and more difficult.<sup>76</sup>

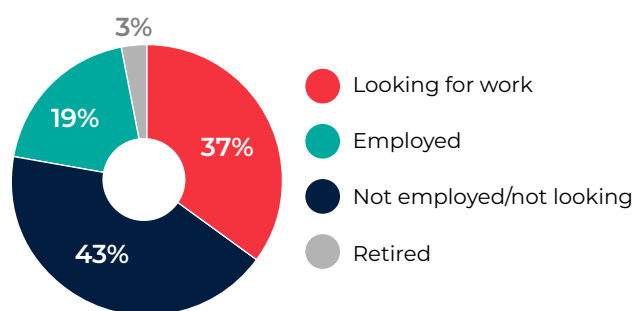
Inspired by the Zaragoza+ indicators for integration, this section considers integration through the themes of employment, English language, childhood education, a welcoming society, and the TPD. It shows that pledged accommodation, once implemented with necessary wraparound supports, provides an excellent “soft landing” for displaced people as they begin their integration journey. However, the dominance of a “bed-led model”<sup>77</sup>, where accommodation was provided according to the availability of supply rather than by matching people with their best-suited location, has impacted integration potential locally. This phenomenon, while understandable in a crisis response, poses a significant barrier to the integration potential of displaced from Ukraine. This is explained below.

### Employment

According to Ukraine Action Ireland (UAI) latest survey round of the displaced community from Ukraine in Ireland (March

2024), 43% of the displaced are employed, 35% are looking for work and the rest are either not looking or retired—see Graph 3 below.<sup>78</sup> Further, the vast majority work in Ireland (as opposed to remotely for company based in Ukraine or elsewhere). CSO data shows that as of January 2024, the sectors showing the most employment of displaced people are wholesale, transport, and accommodation.<sup>79</sup>

**Graph 3: Percentage of displaced survey respondents in employment, UAI survey January 2024**



Source: Ukrainian Action Ireland, Third Survey Round, January 2024

The temporary nature of the TPD has a negative impact on the ability of guests to enter the labour market. Ukraine Action Ireland report that 18% of beneficiaries say that the uncertainty of TPD status and thus their future in Ireland makes finding employment more challenging.<sup>80</sup> Yet, over time displaced people have been found to be increasingly employed. According to UAI, the number who have jobs and are currently working increased between their first survey round (March 2023) from 29.5% to 43% (January 2024).<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Immigrant Council of Ireland (2024) [Submission to the consultation process of the Migrant Integration Strategy 2024](#)

<sup>77</sup> Interview with local civil society organisation representative, 4.11.2023

<sup>78</sup> Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) [2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland](#)

<sup>79</sup> CSO data (2024) [Arrivals from Ukraine, Series 12](#).

<sup>80</sup> Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) [2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland](#)

<sup>81</sup> Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) [2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland](#)

Interviews with local Ukrainian community workers have reported that as their English improves, and as they recover from the trauma of their experiences, there is an increase in the numbers of displaced people entering the workforce.<sup>82</sup>

Safe Homes survey of displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation show that 60% express concern about their employment and financial situation.<sup>83</sup> Focus group discussions with displaced people who struggled to find fulltime employment often seek out volunteering, as they wish to help their own community and give back to Irish society while they search for work.<sup>84</sup>

### Qualifications and accreditation

A 2023 OECD policy response paper highlights the relatively swift entry of displaced people from Ukraine into the European labour market; however, it noted that much of the early employment uptake was primarily in low-skilled jobs, with skills mismatches widespread.<sup>85</sup> In Ireland, despite the upward employment trend, the UAI survey shows that among the employed, most do not work in their field or at the level of their qualifications: 74% have higher education, with 55% holding a master's degree or postgraduate diploma yet only 9% have found jobs matching their professional qualifications.<sup>86</sup>

Relatedly, it shows that people displaced from Ukraine are well educated and before arriving to Ireland were employed in Ukraine. Further, it suggests that many are struggling to navigate the Irish job market and are encountering barriers related to

the recognition and accreditation of their qualifications, and cultural differences during their job search and throughout their employment.<sup>87</sup> A number of European countries have already recognised Ukrainian medical qualifications for the purposes of registration.<sup>88</sup> For example, in France, qualified healthcare professions displaced from Ukraine can receive a temporary practice permit while they wait for the full processing of their qualifications if they prove a certain level of French or English language competency.<sup>89</sup>

### Effect of temporary and rural housing on employment

The EC Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 promotes models of autonomous rather than collective housing, recognising the central role of having a place of residence to secure a job and access education, healthcare and social services.<sup>90</sup> The Safe Homes research supports this position, with findings showing that the integration of displaced people from Ukraine is significantly impacted by their lack of long-term accommodation and having to move from pledge to pledge or centre to centre. The average number of moves that a displaced focus group participant made was 2 with many experiencing 3, most to different counties in Ireland.<sup>91</sup>

*"I occupy myself, but I still want to be realized. I understand that with my level of English I cannot expect to obtain a job on my specialization, but I really want to be realized."*

**Displaced focus group participant (rural based), 13.12.23**

82 Interview with Ukrainian community workers, 25.1.2024

83 Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

84 Focus group discussions with displaced (6 in total) September 2023-January 2024

85 OECD (2023) [Working towards dual intent integration of Ukrainian refugees](#)

86 Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) 2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland. Indeed, survey data shows that 40% have reported needing re-certification and 6% claim their education is not recognised at all, with a significant 31% not knowing if they require certification, illustrating the lack of clear information available to them.

87 Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) [2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland](#)

88 Irish Times (2022) [Why highly skilled Ukrainians are struggling to find work in Ireland](#), 7 May.

89 Government of France (2023) [Accueil en France des déplacés d'Ukraine - Ministère du travail, de la santé et des solidarités \(sante.gouv.fr\)](#)

90 EU Commission (2024) [Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027: Questions and Answers](#).

91 Safe Homes focus group discussions with the displaced, 26.9.2023 - 13.12.2023

Many displaced focus group participants who have lived in multiple state-provided accommodation or multiple pledged properties spoke of losing their job because they were moved to an entirely different county on short notice and highlighted the negative impact that changing accommodation exerts upon their efforts to build a life in Ireland. According to a focus group participant:

*“It is very hard to integrate if we can lose accommodation at any time. When you start to work, to study, or kids start to go to school and then you immediately need to move to another place...I find it very stressful”*

**Displaced focus group participant, 12.12.23**

This suggests that as encouraging as the overall experiences of displaced people in local communities has been to date, there is a need to recognise the effect that relocating people can have on their ability to maintain employment and integrate into local communities more broadly.

Further, in rural Ireland, one of the most significant obstacles to finding and keeping employment is transport: many displaced people do not own a car and live in areas where public transport lines are limited. This finding is echoed by the latest round of UAI survey results which show that lack of public transport is a key obstacle to displaced people securing employment in Ireland.<sup>92</sup> As a result, many rural-based displaced people in focus groups report being less satisfied with their overall experience in pledged accommodation when compared to their urban-based peers. Furthermore, those with children report that due to the rural nature of the accommodation, they can spend the majority of their day transporting their children to and from school. In addition to blocking their access to employment, such barriers to transport (both public and private)

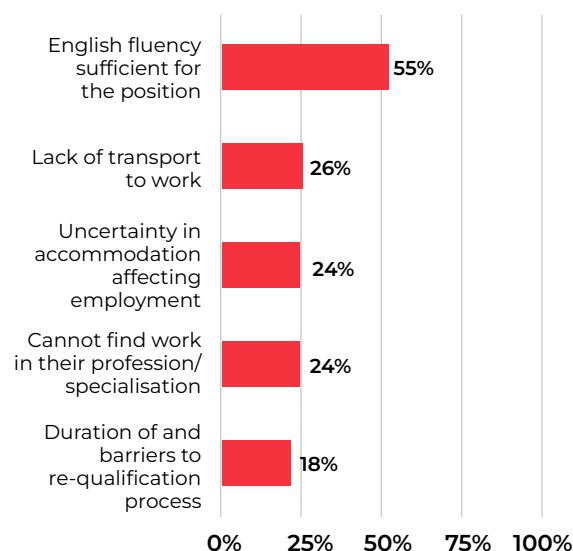
has emerged as a significant challenge for the mental health of already vulnerable displaced people from Ukraine living in rural areas of Ireland.

The extremely rural nature of some pledges, and relatedly their lack of access to community, employment, and public services, acts as a significant barrier to displaced people’s employment, and overall integration potential.

### English language and integration

Language is one of the most significant barriers to migrant integration. The UAI survey found that the largest barriers to finding employment in Ireland was largely English fluency, followed by transport, and inability to find work in their specialisation—see Graph 4 below. Language is also a key barrier to migrant skills accreditation processes, given that a large part of accreditation processes is proving fluency in the host country language.

**Graph 4: Displaced people in pledged accommodation reported barriers to employment<sup>93</sup>**



Source: Ukrainian Action Ireland, Third Survey Round, January 2024. Qs: What are your job search challenges? (multiple choice)

<sup>92</sup> Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) 2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland

<sup>93</sup> Survey question was multiple choice so figures do not add up to 100%.

Language barriers are also a factor for host-guest communications in the pledged arrangement: 34% of hosts reported that the language barrier was one of their most significant challenges in hosting.<sup>94</sup>

*"Everything got better in direct proportion to the increase in my vocabulary."*

**Displaced focus group participant, 10.11.23**

However, focus group discussions and interviews with Local Authority representatives revealed that access to English lessons for displaced people is a challenge, as they are often fully booked. Demand for in-person classes is high: the UAI survey showed that in-person learning was more sought after than online or self-study courses.<sup>95</sup>

In summary, while the employment situation of displaced people from Ukraine is improving the existing barriers related to language, qualification recognition/ accreditation, and the effect of the re-location and rural placements are areas that require policy attention. Research demonstrates that once refugees and international protection applicants enter the economy their tax contributions outweigh the initial expenses of receiving them and they eventually increase GDP and improve productivity.<sup>96</sup> In Poland, a study by Deloitte found that those fleeing Ukraine in the long-term will contribute 0.2%-3.5% of the GDP.<sup>97</sup>

### Children's education

The Central Statistics Office reports that by March 2024, there were over 18,000 children and young people from Ukraine are enrolled in Irish schools for the current academic year, with 62% (11,312) of these in primary schools and 38% (6,873) in secondary schools.<sup>98</sup>

An interview with a senior government official found that the creation of the Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT) teams in the early days of the response has significantly helped Ukrainian children to find school places and integrate into their local communities. The REALT teams' developed strong relationships with local schools and other supporting agencies at a local level.

### Education as an example of a trauma-informed policy response.

The Department of Children worked closely with the National Education Psychology Service to draw up guidance for schools on how to engage with traumatised children.<sup>99</sup> As a result, there was a concerted effort throughout the school response to reduce stress for children, this included modifying the expectations at schools in recognition of the trauma that displaced Ukrainian children have endured. Despite this expertise and the success associated with its implementation, it emerged throughout the research that there is a need for greater support at a local level to care for traumatised children, especially in rural areas.

18,000

children and young people from Ukraine enrolled in Irish schools (March 2024)



94 HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

95 Ukrainian Action Ireland (2024) [2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland](#)

96 International Monetary Fund (IMF) Blog (2016) [Migrants Bring Economic Benefits for Advanced Economies \(imf.org\)](#)

97 Deloitte (2022) [Refugees from Ukraine in Poland Challenges and potential for integration.](#)

98 EMN (2024) [New data on arrivals from Ukraine in CSO's latest release. 05 Mar 2024](#)

99 Interview with Senior government official, 11.1.2023

Further, education for under 18-year-olds, as detailed in the previous chapter, has been one of the more successful areas of integration and benefits from the fact that once a child is enrolled in school, they are added to the numbers for the projection of future schooling needs.<sup>100</sup> Education is thus an example of a sector that is more “proofed” for the unknown future of the TPD.

Yet, in rural areas where transport is a challenge, displaced people report having to make long commutes to local schools, often having to travel some distance to the nearest bus stop.<sup>101</sup> Many reported finding it difficult to engage their children in extracurricular activities and were disappointed by many rural areas’ lack of variety of in sports and leisure.<sup>102</sup>

The Safe Homes research supports the widely held view that education for displaced people under 18 has been so far an integration success story.<sup>103</sup> While there are a number of challenges in certain locations, such as school overcrowding and limited access to public transport, the innovative and responsive approach of the Department of Education demonstrates the effectiveness of a regional structured response and a strong coherence between local and national policy.<sup>104</sup>

### Inclusion of Ukrainian voices in community fora

In March 2022, the Belgian government set up working groups on several topics including employment, education, access to health and social rights, each with a representative from Ukrainian Voices, a Ukrainian advocacy community.<sup>105</sup>



of displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation surveyed feel welcome locally

### A welcoming society

A reported 77% of displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation surveyed feel welcome locally.<sup>106</sup> The research also found that pledged accommodation allows for greater stability and connection with the local community, with survey results showing that 83% of guests in private accommodation were aware of locally available integration-related activities and 52% reporting that their host helps them integrate locally.<sup>107</sup> When asked what integration-related activities they were aware of locally, the vast majority of displaced people in pledged accommodation are aware of English language learning events, activities for children, and social events.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Senior government official, 11.1.2023

<sup>101</sup> Safe Homes guest focus groups, 12.12.2023 - 13.12.2023

<sup>102</sup> Safe Homes guest focus groups, 12.12.2023 - 13.12.2023

<sup>103</sup> ESRI, 2024. *The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and Good Practices for Ireland*

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Senior government official, 11.1.2023

<sup>105</sup> This arrangement enabled government to gather first hand information from the Ukrainian community. Participation in the working group also allowed the community to remain informed of new integration activities. Source: IFRC (2024) Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes (July). See more in this UNICRI article [Refugees in Brussels: when Ukrainians take their life in their own hands](#), 15 March 2024.

<sup>106</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

<sup>107</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

<sup>108</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024





Deirdre and Mariia, host and guest, Dublin. Photo by ProfileTree.

Moreover, the vast majority of displaced people in pledged accommodation find Ireland to be open and welcoming to them. With more than two thirds of guests surveyed reporting feeling welcome locally, it is clear that pledged accommodation is an important first step in many displaced people's integration into Ireland. However, hosts in focus groups outlined that integration into Irish society can be challenging unless a concerted effort is made by the guest themselves, and the research found that the displaced accommodated in Dublin, or larger towns experience more access to and participation in social and cultural life.<sup>109</sup> Urban geographies have long been understood in migration research as sites of possibility, multiculturalism, political expression, and thus where claims to belonging can be more easily redefined.<sup>110</sup> The integration experiences vary considerably by location, and so much of displaced people's integration potential comes down to sheer luck in the match they obtain or the accommodation in which they are placed. It also seems to depend on the activity and engagement of the Local Authority Community Response Forum—detailed on page 35.

Whereas within the Community Sponsorship model, for example, integration is supported more directly.

### Community Sponsorship in Ireland

Community Sponsorship (CS) programmes can be defined as public-private partnerships that are responsible for ensuring refugees' legal entry, and support for their financial and social integration into the host community.<sup>111</sup> With origins in faith communities in Canada, the CS programme in Ireland involves local individuals coming together to form a sponsorship group who provide accommodation and support the integration of the family into Irish society. The group are supported by a caseworker from one of a number of NGO's including the Irish Red Cross.<sup>112</sup> The programme is funded by the European Union Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme within the Department of Justice.

<sup>109</sup> Safe Homes focus groups with hosts, 24.9.2023 - 2.11.2023

<sup>110</sup> Darling, J. and Bauder, H. (2019) *Sanctuary cities and urban struggles: Rescaling migration, citizenship, and rights*. Manchester University Press.

<sup>111</sup> ICMC Europe, IOM, and UNHCR (2017) "*Private Sponsorship in Europe: Expanding Complementary Pathways for Refugee Resettlement*", ERN+ Scoping paper, European Resettlement Network+ (ERN+).

<sup>112</sup> Irish Red Cross (2023) *Community Sponsorship*.

### Local authorities, Community Response Fora and integration at the local level

As discussed previously the implementation of a “bed-led model” was observed throughout the research. While this approach provides immediate shelter and reflects an emergency response, it risks hindering access to socioeconomic rights and integration and does not always provide the accommodation that best meets people’s needs and well-being.

This bed-led model can lead to bottlenecks in access to services, with a number of Local Authorities reporting that there is limited to no capacity to ensure access to medical services or English language classes for displaced people from Ukraine and other refugee groups.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, Local Authorities due to capacity constraints, vary in the scale of integration services provided to displaced people. However, research from the Immigrant Council of Ireland found that nearly all local authorities (30 out of the total 31) have or have had an integration strategy, a significant improvement on the 21 in this position in 2022, which is a strong indicator of improved engagement.<sup>114</sup>

Field research carried out by Safe Homes researchers found that integration potential of displaced communities in local areas depends on the strength of communications and partnership at the local level. A range of local actors are actively involved in supporting integration of those living in private accommodation: Community Response Forums, City-Council partnerships, Volunteer Centres, and several local development companies are engaged in various activities to support the displaced community to secure employment, take part in social events, language learning and other practical issues. The Community Response Fora, which evolved from community response to the COVID-19 era<sup>115</sup>, when activated by county councils, are highly effective and enable the development of multi-agency local relationships. They work on various topics including employment barriers, anti-migrant sentiments, accommodation and safeguarding concerns.

*“The Community Response Forum is really, really important, because everybody that we need and that have been involved in the whole support of the Ukrainian crisis are involved in it, from the army to the Garda to the HSE, the ETB. The various religious communities are also involved, the local link, which is transport service, basically everybody is on it.”*

**Local authority rep, 14.9.2023**

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Local Authority official, 8.11.2023

<sup>114</sup> Immigrant Council of Ireland (2024) [Submission to the consultation process of the Migrant Integration Strategy 2024](#)

<sup>115</sup> LGMA (2023) [Community response fora to support Ukrainian response](#)

## Impact of the TPD on Integration

Another key factor which negatively impacts displaced people's integration – both in terms of public investments in integration and displaced people's own personal motivations to settle and integrate – is the fact that their rights to housing and other social services in Ireland (as per the TPD) exists on a 1-year renewed basis. According to interviews with government officials, and as the guest survey results highlight, the short term nature of the TPD is a barrier to long term integration planning for displaced people from Ukraine.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, 'the TPD is a key driver of displaced people's anxiety about their future rights in Europe.'<sup>117</sup> While many have accepted that the conflict is ongoing and therefore it is likely they will stay in Ireland for longer than initially anticipated, the 1-year nature of the TPD prevents any real certainty and longer-term planning.

Interviews with the different stakeholders surveyed found that it is often difficult to pinpoint the motivation of displaced people from Ukraine to integrate given that is dependent on a wider variety of social factors. However, the longer the conflict goes on, the greater the realisation is amongst guests that they will be in Ireland for a longer period of time than they had initially anticipated—according to Ukrainian Action Ireland survey data, the share of those who plan to stay in Ireland on a permanent basis has increased from 41% to 53% in the two survey rounds (March 2023 and January 2024).<sup>118</sup> In the Safe Homes survey, 71% of displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation reported to wish to stay in Ireland for the long term.<sup>119</sup> This may suggest that living in pledged accommodation may be associated with more positive outlook on a future in Ireland.

Another finding with respect to the TPD is the creation of a parallel system of protection alongside the International Protection framework for those seeking asylum. This distinction manifested in the two cohort's registration and processing requirements, reception conditions, and funding for actors involved in supporting them. Further, the duality between temporary protection and international protection posed ethical dilemmas to the Irish Red Cross caseworkers and other non-state actors who strive to provide humanitarian response to all in need. Moreover, prioritising one group over another due to funding and program constraints, rather than responding to the needs of all affected populations and individuals may conflict with the fundamental principle of impartiality as well as the prohibition of discrimination under international and EU law.

In summary, while the TPD has resulted in the provision of an unprecedented level of supports to displaced people from Ukraine, it is evident that its implementation has resulted in a significant degree of uncertainty for those under its protection, which has a subsequent impact on their ability and motivation to integrate. Several hosts reported in focus groups that their guests are "lost" due to the uncertainty of their situation.<sup>120</sup> Further, a strong narrative exists within policy circles that the presence of displaced people have led to the rejuvenation of rural towns, the Safe Homes research found that those who have been placed in very rural pledges have some of the highest rates of unemployment and are more likely than their peers in urban settings to report negative experiences about their overall experience of life in Ireland.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Senior government official, 7.11.2023

<sup>117</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

<sup>118</sup> Ukrainian Action | [2024 Survey of Ukrainians in Ireland](#)

<sup>119</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

<sup>120</sup> Safe Homes focus group discussions with the displaced 26.9.2023 - 13.12.2023

<sup>121</sup> Focus groups with displaced people in rural settings, 12.12.23 and 13.12.2023



### Risks

- A model focused on finding beds for those in need of temporary accommodation risks thwarting people's wider integration potential. While the government is increasingly interested in integration, allocation of "beds" remains the terminology most cited in the media.
- Pledge programme objectives to utilise as many viable and available rural pledges as possible risks overlooking the additional challenges that rural life may bring for guests.
- Relocating displaced people to many different accommodation sites risks significant impacts on their ability to maintain jobs, and to integrate their children in schools.
- The lack of an effective and well-structured accreditation system for displaced people risks Ireland missing out on essential in-demand skills and economic contributions.



### Good Practices

- The use of the Zaragoza+ indicators<sup>122</sup> of migrant integration in future preparedness, as recommended by the Immigrant Council of Ireland.<sup>123</sup>
- The integration of Ukrainian advocacy groups into local authority planning fora as done in Belgium with Ukrainian Voices.



### Policy recommendations

- The creation of a regionally structured response to provide local integration services that is both led by and in sync with a national strategy on integration and shows strong cross departmental relationships. It is acknowledged that this development has taken root in Ireland with the funding and recruitment of new integration officers in all Local Authorities.<sup>124</sup>
- Facilitate the speedy recognition, certification, and accreditation to enable the use of skills and qualifications of all migrants groups through appropriate mechanisms, and provide access to tailored training and retraining opportunities, including intensive in-person language training.<sup>125</sup>
- Investment in better transport links and services, especially in rural areas.
- Further invest in local entrepreneurial schemes and community development activities focused on new population groups via the Local Development companies. The Immigrant Council of Ireland suggests the introduction of an intercultural small grants scheme and the facilitation of community inclusion open days, to enable the embedding of an intercultural identity within communities and celebrate diversity.<sup>126</sup>
- All transfers from state and pledged or commercial accommodation should be managed by professionals with a casework and/or social work background to ensure that core areas of integration (e.g. education, childcare and employment) are considered vital factors to any move or relocation.

<sup>122</sup> Migration Policy Group (2013) [Using EU Indicators of Immigrant Integration Final Report for Directorate-General for Home Affairs](#).

<sup>123</sup> Immigrant Council of Ireland (2024) [Submission to the consultation process of the Migrant Integration Strategy 2024](#)

<sup>124</sup> Oireachtas (2024) [Local Authorities Dáil Éireann Debate, Tuesday - 30 January 2024](#).

<sup>125</sup> International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2020) [How to Facilitate the Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers Guide for Employment Services Providers Second Edition](#).

<sup>126</sup> Immigrant Council of Ireland (2024) [Submission to the consultation process of the Migrant Integration Strategy 2024](#)

## Theme 4:

# ARP and financial support

Providing financial assistance to hosts is a means to alleviate the financial burden and has been supported in a few European states since 2022. The 50/20 programme in Romania and 40+ in Poland initially granted hosts with 50 RON (€10) and 40 PLN (€8.5) per day, per person hosted. In Ireland, the Accommodation Recognition Payment (ARP) is a tax-free payment of €800 per month for each property used to provide accommodation to displaced people from Ukraine.<sup>127</sup> As outlined in the introduction, it was initially implemented in July 2022 at a rate of €400 per month and was later increased to €800. Hosts sign up via MyWelfare and provide their name, PPS number and address, including their Eircode as well as the name and PPS number of those that they are hosting. When signing up for the payment, the hosts must make a commitment to sign up for at least 6 months. The sum remains the same regardless of location or the number of people being hosted in a single property. The research found that the payment is viewed by government and other key stakeholders as an example of an effective and swift policy intervention, however some challenges remain due to the bluntness of its application.

### Effect on motivation, longevity of hosting

A survey carried out by Helping Irish Hosts in partnership with the Irish Red Cross found that 76% of hosts reported solidarity is the primary motivation to pledge and open their homes.<sup>128</sup> This was followed by financial incentives with 27% of all hosts stating that the ARP was their motivating

factor in deciding to host.<sup>129</sup> These findings were supported in focus groups carried out with hosts and additionally found that while solidarity is the primary motivator for hosting, the ARP has allowed hosts to continue hosting for a longer period of time.

*"If it wasn't available, I probably would have hosted anyway but more short term."*

**Host focus group participant, 26.9.23**

It also emerged throughout the focus groups that despite many hosts feeling guilty about applying for the ARP, it provides an evident benefit in helping them to cover their additional costs. This is supported by survey findings which found that 23.5% of hosts found that hosting was more expensive than they originally expected.<sup>130</sup>

### Impact on guests

Hosts noted the ARP's successful impact on their relationship with their guests, stating that it has helped to relieve any tension that could exist between the two parties due to costs that arise during the hosting agreement.

*"I just think that if you've got somebody for a year, there is obviously some increased energy usage in your house, there's going to be some problems....And it was great to not care really too much, and not feel angry and resentful towards her, because that [financial cost] was taken care of."*

**Host focus group participant, 15.10.23**

The ARP also might alleviate the need for guests to contribute towards bills and other household costs with 81% of guests who

<sup>127</sup> Citizens.ie (2024) [Accommodation Recognition Payment for hosting refugees from Ukraine](#)

<sup>128</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

<sup>129</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023

<sup>130</sup> HIH/ IRC survey of ARP recipients (hosts), August- October 2023



participated in the IRC's survey reporting not being asked to contribute to the household financially by their hosts.<sup>131</sup> Interestingly, of those guests who were asked to contribute financially to their host arrangement, 60% of them were those who matched directly with hosts or through social media etc.<sup>132</sup> This suggested that matching through a partner organisation might provide a source of external accountability between hosts and guests.

Putting the guest experience in private hosting in Ireland into context, almost one in five adult respondents to an EU-wide study conducted by the FRA said they did housework or care tasks in exchange for housing.<sup>133</sup> In Ireland, according to caseworkers, while hosts requests for non-financial contribution by their guests was more common in the early weeks of the response, the introduction of the ARP coincided with a reduction in such requests.

### Concerns about the ARP

Safe Home research found that the ARP is viewed by the government as being an effective tool to promote hosting in Ireland.<sup>134</sup> In terms of financial cost, with state accommodation centres having cost over €2 billion since the outbreak of the conflict in comparison to €118 million spent on the ARP, they also recognise that it offers significant value for money in comparison to state accommodation.<sup>135</sup> However, consideration needs to be given to the role of a financial support package to hosts and the simultaneous lack of contribution of guests towards their pledged arrangement promoting a sense of dependency. Moreover, despite how helpful the ARP has been to hosts, there are a number of concerns of the current model. Firstly, the lack of a locally

designed financial support package meant that in certain areas, the ARP emerged as a more lucrative option than entering the rental market.

*"In certain places, the payment is quite lucrative. It's €800, tax-free... You won't get that in certain places. Now, we became aware in the early stages of this, where people were being evicted out of properties to make way for Ukrainians."*

**Local Authority official, 8.11.23**

Further, interviewees raised concerns about the fact it does not take into account the different costs associated with offering shared arrangements and vacant properties to guests, and that the amount is not scaled according to the number of people being hosted.

Lastly, the current model of the ARP raises ethical concerns. As discussed in the Integration section, the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive introduced a parallel system of protection alongside the International Protection Framework for international protection applicants and the programme refugee cohort. This two-tier system is further emphasised by the fact that ARP is only available to hosts accommodating beneficiaries of temporary protection/displaced people from Ukraine. As a result, since the implementation of the ARP, IRC staff reported that finding housing for programme refugees has become more difficult than previously.<sup>136</sup>

*"The implementation of the ARP for displaced Ukrainians has directly affected other refugees access to the pledge programme and has fundamentally changed the nature of it."*

**IRC caseworker, 9.5.2024**

<sup>131</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

<sup>132</sup> Safe Homes survey of the displaced with experience in pledged accommodation, Nov 2023-Feb 2024

<sup>133</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2023) *Fleeing Ukraine: Displaced people's experiences in the EU*.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with senior government official, 18.4.24

<sup>135</sup> Limerick Leader (2024) *Government spent almost €1.5 billion on accommodation for Ukrainian refugees last year*, 18 April 2024.

<sup>136</sup> Irish Red Cross's Submission to Public Consultation To Inform A National Strategy For Migrant Integration, 30 November 2023

Hosts' clear preferences for Ukrainian displaced people over programme refugees since the start of the conflict in Ukraine is driven by multiple factors including the ARP being tied to the hosting of displaced people and indirect discrimination. Despite this finding, 70% of hosts in focus groups indicated that they would be open to taking in other migrant cohorts in future crises.<sup>137</sup>

Across the Consortium, there is broad support for the extension of the ARP to other cohorts and the IRC has actively advocated for this, however there are concerns that Irish hospitality may not extend so seamlessly to hosting other nationalities.<sup>138</sup>

## ARP: LESSONS LEARNED



### Risks

- A financial host support package that does not take into account location of the property risks making hosting a lucrative arrangement especially in rural areas, potentially distorting the local rental market and attracting hosts interested in purely financial means.
- Limiting ARP to one refugee or displaced cohort and not other cohorts of people in need of protection risks inequality and discrimination in access to pledged accommodation.
- Not scaling the amount paid to hosts to reflect the to the number of people being accommodated in a household risks reducing the accommodation options for families.



### Good Practices

- Implementation of a host financial support has many advantages, including allowing hosts to extend their hosting period.
- The Singa refugee hosting model (named J'accueille in France and CALM in Belgium), which requires non vulnerable refugees to pay a reasonable rent to their host per month with supplementation from local government, is proving successful in helping refugees integrate in France and Belgium.<sup>139</sup>
- An alternative method of covering the cost of hosting as reported in the IFRC Lessons Learned reports is a hybrid payment to both hosts and guests.<sup>140</sup>



### Policy recommendations

- A geographically determined and adjusted ARP payment level that reflects local rental market with a minimum and maximum in place. This also reflects how the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is managed.
- Similar again to the HAP conditions, the ARP should be based on the number of people being accommodated, with an increased amount provided per person hosted in order to support more families being offered accommodation.
- Open the ARP to pledgers who accommodate either Temporary Protection Directive beneficiaries, resettlement refugees and refugees accommodated under the Community Sponsorship scheme to ensure a more ethical approach.

<sup>137</sup> 17 out of 24 total focus group hosts who answered positively about being willing to take in non-Ukrainian guests in the future.

<sup>138</sup> Irish Red Cross's Submission to Public Consultation To Inform A National Strategy For Migrant Integration, 30 November 2023

<sup>139</sup> Singa (2024) J'accueille programme.

<sup>140</sup> IFRC (2024) Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes

## Theme 5: Longer Term Future

Despite the initially perceived temporary nature of displaced people's stay in Ireland, due to the ongoing nature of the conflict and the integration of displaced people from Ukraine into Irish society, an ever-increasing number are planning a longer-term future in Ireland. A Ukrainian Action Ireland survey data from March 2024 found that 53% of participants have decided to stay permanently, a 12% increase from 2023. Yet, despite this, there is an evident lack of accommodation progression pathways to house the 71,000 displaced people living in state-run centres and pledged accommodation by the end of March 2024.

A key finding from the Safe Homes research is that pledged accommodation, once implemented with necessary supports, is a helpful and comforting first step in the integration journey of displaced people and other refugees. However, as argued in the IFRC's *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes*, hosting can only temporarily fill a gap in accommodation needs while authorities work on finding long-lasting solutions.<sup>141</sup> There is an urgent need for the Irish government to prioritise investment in innovative housing policies and solutions to address the housing market crisis towards ending homelessness and housing exclusion.

*"The idea behind pledges is hopefully you have six months or a year free rent so that you're then able to transition into the rental market. But it's so difficult to do that in any capacity in Ireland."*

**Consortium partner manager, 16.8.23**

The Safe Homes research shows that the lack of adequate plans for permanent solutions

poses major consequences to pledged arrangements, increasing dependency on the host household and, thereby, affecting the power asymmetry between hosts and guests.<sup>142</sup> Guests often live with the worry that they may do something to threaten the relationship with their host and risk their accommodation security:

*"I don't want to jinx it. I am very happy with our relations. I understand that it is temporary, we are all humans."*

**Displaced focus group participant, 26.09.2023**

*"After 2 months I found the strength to ask my host family for how long they were planning to host us."*

**Displaced focus group participant, 26.09.2023**

Additionally, most hosts report worrying about the future of their guests and note feeling a sense of guilt at having to end the hosting arrangement. The lack of a viable exit strategy risks betraying their trust in the pledge programme and could prevent them from returning to hosting in future.

Consortium members are acutely aware of the combined worry of their hosts and guests about the lack of progression pathways for their clients. Yet the reality is that they have few options to provide to hosts and guests because of the shortage of pledged accommodation and the high demand for it, and the high competition in the rental market. This section provides an overview of the current accommodation options for the displaced following a pledged arrangement and the key challenges associated with each.

<sup>141</sup> IFRC (2024) *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes*

<sup>142</sup> IFRC (2024) *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes*,

## Longer term accommodation options and key challenges

### 1. Pledge extension and re-match

The host survey results show that 83% of hosts are willing to extend their pledges, and when asked for how long more, 53% said for a year or more. Yet, despite this impressively high level of commitment to engaging in pledging beyond the immediate short term, focus group discussions revealed that many hosts are worried about the future for their guests, and relatedly, their role as their hosts. Many hosts fear having “the conversation” with guests about what happens at the end of the pledged arrangement because they have grown so close to them that it can feel like kicking out a member of family. According to two hosts in a focus group in November:

*“Well, I’m not in any great rush to have that conversation, because we’re getting on very well. There are things I should be talking about, like disappearing for a week, and haven’t. And that emotional thing of becoming part of the family as well, that’s hard. She’s best mates with my granddaughter.”*

**Host focus group participant, 24.09.23**

If a host is uninterested in extending, caseworkers will often look to re-match them with a new host. Yet, there are varying approaches to re-matching. Some Consortium members indicate that it is not an automatic process but rather depends on an assessment of guests’ suitability for hosted accommodation based on a review of the first arrangement. Additionally, given the scale of those looking to enter pledged accommodation, especially since the implementation of the 90-day policy, it is not always possible to rematch families and priority has to be given to those at risk of homelessness.

The twin effects of the lack of suitable progression pathways for their guests, and the close bonds that they develop with them, motivate many hosts to continue hosting beyond what they may have originally set out to do. Further, as discussed in the previous section, the ARP has made extensions increasingly possible. The result is that hosting has become more of a medium-longer term solution for the accommodation needs of displaced people, and there is a dire shortage of solutions to exit from this scenario. The risk is that many hosts may feel obliged to continue hosting in the absence of alternatives for their guests.

### 2. Rented accommodation

The rental market in Ireland is suffering from a serious lack of supply. Ukrainian Action Ireland survey results from March 2024, found that only 11% of guests had secured rented accommodation. Since 2015, rents in Ireland rose by 60%, compared to 13% across Europe.<sup>143</sup> According to ESRI and Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) data, the average rent for a new tenant in Ireland was €1,574, by the end of 2023, with an existing renter paying €1,332 on average. In Dublin, these figures are €2,102 a month and €1,767 a month.<sup>144</sup> An article by Rory Hearne, author of *Gaffs: Why no one can get a house and what we can do about it* connects the rental market to the buying market, which places emphasis on a return of investment rather than the provision of sustainable accommodation.<sup>145</sup> Displaced people are very aware of the housing supply crisis, and many have made attempts to find places locally, either before entering pledged accommodation or during:

*“I looked for rented accommodation for a year on Daft.ie and Facebook and found nothing.”*

**Displaced focus group participant, 10.11.2023**

<sup>143</sup> Eurostat (2024) [Harmonised index of consumer prices \(HICP\) annual data](#).

<sup>144</sup> Breaking News (2023) [Landlords could be flouting rent pressure zone rules](#), 30 November.

<sup>145</sup> The Guardian (2023) [Ireland’s housing crisis is a disaster for its people – and a gift to far-right fearmongers](#), 11 Dec.

In terms of entering the rental market, the Rent Supplement scheme is the only rental support scheme provided to displaced people from Ukraine, representing an additional barrier to securing private rental accommodation. The Rent Supplement is a means-tested payment for certain people living in private rented accommodation who cannot provide for the cost of their accommodation from their own resources.<sup>146</sup> A key issue with it is that a requirement is to be in full-time employment, which is defined as 30 hours or more a week.<sup>147</sup> This acts a direct barrier to the integration of displaced people and hinders their journey to living independent lives. Additionally, the Safe Homes research found that the rent supplement due to administrative challenges, is in reality, is “nearly impossible” to access due to the complex administrative challenges associated with it.<sup>148</sup>

In comparison, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), which displaced people under Temporary Protection are not eligible to apply for, is provided by local authorities to households with a long-term housing need.<sup>149</sup> Unlike the Rent Supplement, HAP allows tenants to work full-time, while still receiving housing support. However, the ineligibility for those displaced from Ukraine to apply for this support, which, when combined with the broader capacity issues within the current system, has resulted in some displaced people fearing they may lose their accommodation if they were to get full-time employment because as their income rises their Rent Supplement decreases.<sup>150</sup> In a normal market, this would not be an issue but in the context of under supply and high and regular increasing rents it is. Therefore, given the severity of the rental crisis and the

difficulty, as identified throughout the Safe Homes and UAI findings, for displaced people from Ukraine to enter the private rental market, it is evident that there is a need for adequate rental supports to be provided to enable them to continue on their journey to integration in Ireland.

### **IRC's pledge programme in 2016**

The IRC's Syrian cohort pledge experience comprised of guests spending 18 months to 2 years in pledged accommodation, accompanied by intensive integration supports to aide their journey to independent living. Prior to the worsening of the housing crisis, Cooperative Housing Ireland worked with the IRC to support the move of the Syrian cohort from pledged accommodation into private rental accommodation which was to be their home in Ireland and enable their integration into Irish society. This cohort had access to the housing assistance payments (HAP) rent supplement.

### **3. Rapid build and modular housing**

Another progression pathway for a sub-category of displaced people is to be placed in rapid build and modular housing. While there are many types of houses that fall under the banner of modular housing,<sup>151</sup> in the Irish context and specifically in the displaced people response, there are two key terms: rapid build and modular housing. While both refer to non-permanent, prefabricated housing, a rapid build home is defined by the government as “a high-quality dwelling that is mostly built off-site from the planned location using modern methods of construction (MMC), then delivered and

<sup>146</sup> Rent Supplement ([citizensinformation.ie](https://citizensinformation.ie))

<sup>147</sup> Citizens.ie (2024) Rent Supplement ([citizensinformation.ie](https://citizensinformation.ie))

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Consortium caseworkers, 12.10.23; 25.10.23

<sup>149</sup> Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme (2024) Home - Housing Assistance Payments ([hap.ie](https://hap.ie))

<sup>150</sup> The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and Good Practices for Ireland | ESRI

<sup>151</sup> For example the terms “container homes” and “tiny homes” are also frequently referred to as modular housing.



finished on site. The units can be put in place quicker than standard accommodation with less construction disruption to the area.”<sup>152</sup> These have a maximum 60-year lifespan, and they receive an exemption from planning permission due to the government's implementation of the TPD. Rapid builds are allocated to families of four: two adults and two children. A condition is that the guests pay 16% of household income plus €40 utility weekly charge.

Modular housing, on the other hand, is a “prefabricated building that consists of repeated sections called modules. On foot of a Government Decision in March 2023, DCEDIY was requested to explore a proof-of-concept modular accommodation project in respect of modular units with a faster delivery window than the OPW Rapid Homes project.”

There is a mixed uptake of rapid build and modular housing by local authorities. Some have not been receptive to the programme, citing difficulty receiving local support and the complicated engagement with the multiple departments and organisations involved.<sup>153</sup> A review of the media coverage of government's programme for displaced people show that local opposition has been rooted in concerns over the use of green sites<sup>154</sup>, inadequate provision of local services and therefore lack of additional resources for newcomers<sup>155</sup>, and the lack of similar fast-track planning exemptions for social housing intended for Irish residents on housing lists.<sup>156</sup> Further, the Department of Public Expenditure raised concerns in March 2024 about their value for money vis-a-vis more

permanent forms of housing, and questioned the feasibility of the proposed timeline.<sup>157</sup> In May 2024, DCEDIY released a statement announcing a scaled back programme as a result of budget restrictions.<sup>158</sup>

As of 31 December 2023, there were seven rapid build home sites completed and 1,240 displaced people had moved into 310 homes.<sup>159</sup> In May 2024, DCEDIY announced plans to house an additional 2,616 displaced people before end 2024.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, the existing modular villages with displaced people from Ukraine residents are not mixed socially, risking the ghettoisation of the programme. In summary, the current programme is inadequate to accommodate the full need to be met and highlights the gaps in the governments longer-term accommodation strategy for displaced people.

#### 4. Refurbishment programme

The Emergency Refurbishment (Ukraine) Programme is a combined effort between Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), DCEDIY and local authorities. It responds to “offers of accommodation requiring significant remedial, refurbishment or conversion works”.<sup>161</sup> The Programme is comprised of two delivery strands, one of which is focused on buildings in public ownership and the other which supports owners of private buildings to refurbish them to the appropriate standard as per guidelines from D/HLGH<sup>162</sup>. The uptake by property owners has been slow and it is unknown how many displaced people from Ukraine have been able to access a refurbished property.

<sup>152</sup> DCEDIY representative, 22.05.24

<sup>153</sup> Interview with local authority representative, 25.9.23

<sup>154</sup> Irish Independent (2023) [Plan to build modular homes in Wicklow for Ukrainians voted down](#)

<sup>155</sup> Roscommon Herald, Council says Ballaghaderreen ‘not a suitable location’ for modular homes plan

<sup>156</sup> Mayo News [Council say they have no control over decision to allow modular homes for refugees](#)

<sup>157</sup> RTE Government plan for modular homes had ‘unrealistic timelines

<sup>158</sup> Irish Times, [Plans to use modular homes as accommodation for Ukrainian refugees scaled back](#)

<sup>159</sup> ESRI (2024) [The Application of the Temporary Protection Directive: Challenges and Good Practices for Ireland](#), p. 27

<sup>160</sup> Irish Times, [Plans to use modular homes as accommodation for Ukrainian refugees scaled back](#). One project site of 50 modular units has been initiated with plans for 62 additional units with accommodation for a maximum of 248 displaced people to be developed “over the coming weeks”.

<sup>161</sup> [Parliamentary Questions 411 of 5 March 2024](#).

<sup>162</sup> [Parliamentary Questions 411 of 5 March 2024](#).

This scheme is separate to the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant, launched by the Department of Housing in July 2022. With grants available of €30,000 for vacant properties and €50,000 for derelict properties, it aims to “help bring vacant and derelict properties back into residential use and ensure the existing housing stock is used to the fullest extent possible.”<sup>163</sup> This policy was added to the Housing for All policy launched in 2021 which aims to build or support the availability of 33,000 new homes per annum until 2030.<sup>164</sup>

## 5. Returning to state-run collective centres

When there are no alternative options available to guests, IRC caseworker policy is to return displaced people to state collective centres. Also, if a guest refuses an offer of a rematch they are sent back to state accommodation. The effect of this policy is that guests who have spent a few weeks or months in a private living arrangement have to go back to communal living, losing the autonomy they were developing in pledged accommodation and upending any gains they may have made embedding in the local community.

## LONGER TERM FUTURE: LESSONS LEARNED



### Risks

- A lack of exit strategies risks undermining the trust of host and stopping them from engaging in hosting in the future.
- The lack of viable exit strategies out of pledged accommodation and state accommodation centres amidst an ongoing housing crisis risks worsening ongoing social tensions and risks fuelling support for the far-right.<sup>165</sup>
- Relatedly, isolating migration accommodation response from broader housing planning risks creating bottlenecks in provisional accommodation and risks ghettoising areas.



### Good Practices

- Hosting schemes must be designed with clear exit strategies, set up from the start, which enable guests to transition from hosting arrangements. The IRC's Syrian cohort pledge programme included resources and supports to aid guests into more independent living—success for this cohort was facilitated by the availability of the HAP rental support.
- In Spain, a key progression pathway from private accommodation is the option to convert the initial hosting arrangements into a “cohabitation agreement”. This reflects the Singa model referenced on page 40. The rental costs in such cases could be supported by social benefits.<sup>166</sup>
- Introduction of large housing associations that issue contracts for the development of not-for-profit housing that is available to all cohorts of tenants to reduce the risk of ghettoisation.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2022) [Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant expanded to cities and remote rural areas](#)

<sup>164</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2021) [Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland](#).

<sup>165</sup> The Guardian (2024) [Fix Europe's housing crisis or risk fuelling the far-right, UN expert warns](#), 6 May.

<sup>166</sup> IFRC (2024) [Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes](#),

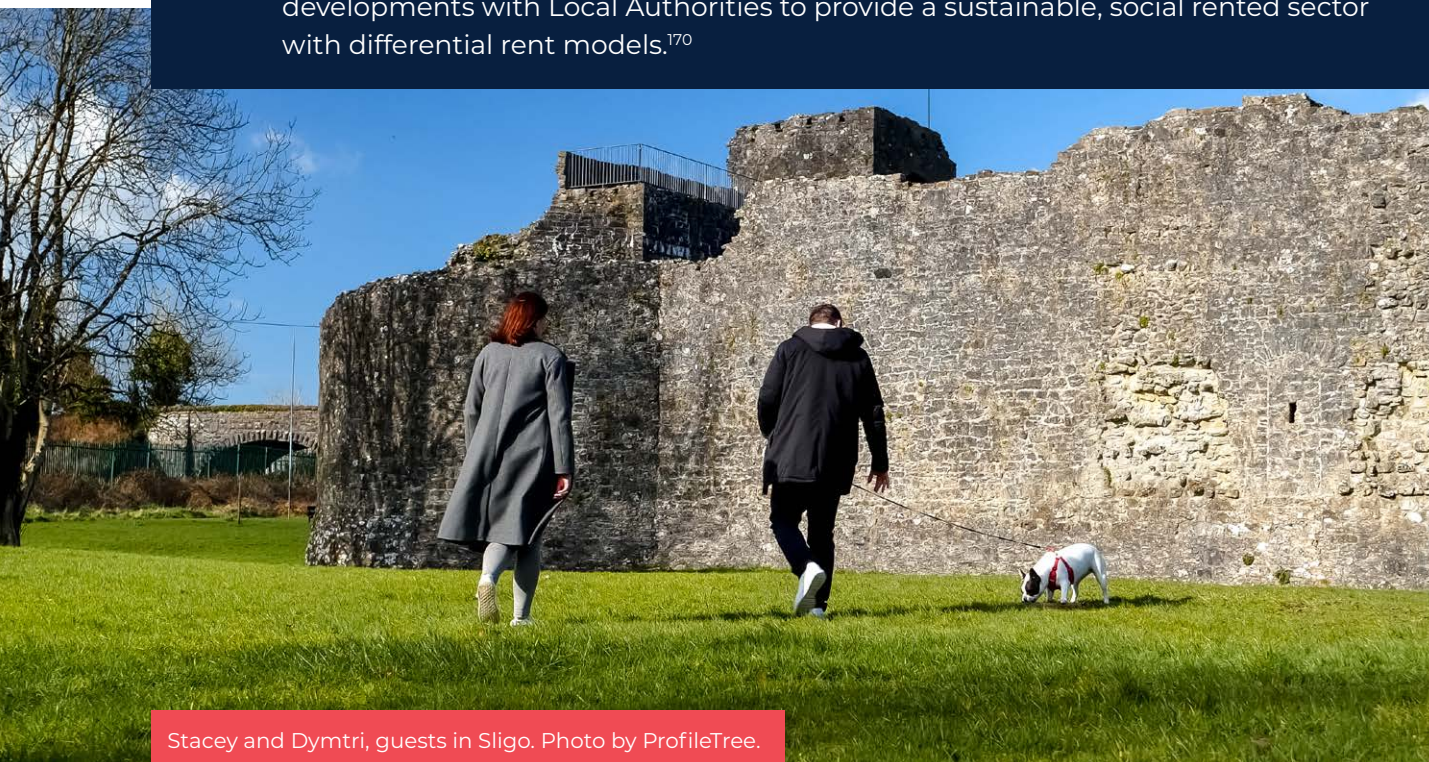
<sup>167</sup> Interview with leading housing policy academic, 3.10.23

- With the aim of “inspiring more courage and creativity in housing policy”, the Housing Solutions Platform published *50 out-of-the-box housing solutions to homelessness and housing exclusion* across the EU and present concrete ideas of how to provide decent and affordable housing to people most in need.<sup>168</sup>



## Policy recommendations

- Provide hosts and guests with viable exit strategies out of pledged accommodation and state accommodation centres.
- Open HAP support to beneficiaries of Temporary Protection given the challenges with the Rent Allowance scheme as identified above, and ensure the availability of private rented sector properties.
- Significantly increase the number of rapid build homes being built around the country and ensure that the population being offered accommodation is from a variety of backgrounds including currently displaced people, all refugees with status to remain, people on the housing register, and people seeking affordable housing.
- Revise the Housing for All targets to adequately reflect current and projected migration flows. This research also supports the recent figures put forward by the Housing Commission which found that Ireland may need up to 62,000 new homes built per year until 2050 to meet housing demand, a figure that reflects natural population growth, migration, and other trends.<sup>169</sup>
- Ensure funding for and close involvement of housing associations in future housing developments with Local Authorities to provide a sustainable, social rented sector with differential rent models.<sup>170</sup>



Stacey and Dymtri, guests in Sligo. Photo by ProfileTree.

<sup>168</sup> Housing Solutions Platform (2019) [50 out-of-the-box housing solutions to homelessness and housing exclusion](#).

<sup>169</sup> The Housing Commission (2024) [The Housing Commission Report pg. 42](#)

<sup>170</sup> The Housing Commission (2024) [The Housing Commission Report pg. 57](#)



## Conclusion

The Safe Homes programme provided a rare opportunity to gather lessons learned from the experiences of private hosting in Ireland and Europe more broadly. Overall, research suggests that private hosted or pledged accommodation in Ireland, once provided with the necessary wraparound supports, is a success as short to medium-term accommodation for the displaced. Therefore, researchers consider the Ukraine crisis response in Ireland, although imperfect, as inspiration for the wider role of private hosting across society, for a diverse range of people in who find themselves in need of temporary accommodation.

The core challenges this report addressed were related to communication and coordination across multiple actors in the early phase. The research shows the value of a consortium partnership arrangement and the creation of secure and shared data tools. The second set of findings related to matching and ongoing supports, where the role of a third-party organisation (like the IRC or a Consortium partner) and a dedicated and well-resourced caseworker team help provide hosts and guests with the information, referral, and protection needs they may have. The financial support package, the ARP, was discussed for its value in attracting hosts and contributing to the elongating of contracts, but also for its shortfalls: a non-varying rate that does not take into account the number of people in the household or the geographical location of the house, and the fact it is tied to the TPD and so complicates the IRC's commitment to support pledging for all migrants.

The final theme was the future accommodation strategies, and it discussed the limited progression pathways that a

displaced person can take after pledge and the challenges with each. While there are currently a limited number of longer-term accommodation options for displaced people, none of them possess the capacity to fully absorb the number currently in pledged accommodation and state accommodation centres. Pledged accommodation provides the authorities with time to either invest in expanding the housing market or develop innovative housing solutions. Yet, it is evident that the Temporary Protection Directive negatively affects the ability of government departments to engage in long term planning.

*'I think the lack of a clear accommodation strategy of where we're going with all of this is probably one of the biggest challenges, because we're in a constant reactive state.'*

**Interview with local government official,  
21.8.2023**

A reported strategic decision-making paralysis has resulted in a reactive response to accommodation needs for displaced people in Ireland and has resulted in a bottleneck in the pledged community, which is entirely dependent on the discretion of private households to pledge their homes. This raises the question of how extensively private households should be involved in taking on the state's role in providing reception accommodation when there is no clear vision and strategy for long-term housing solutions.<sup>171</sup> The IFRC's *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine* report highlights that EU states' reliance on private hosting has exposed the limits of refugee reception infrastructure and, more generally, long-standing structural problems affecting all citizens across the EU.

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<sup>171</sup> IFRC (2024) *Safe Homes: Key lessons from hosting people displaced from Ukraine in private homes*,

The research highlights the need for a well-defined exit strategy for guests in hosted accommodation, one that includes policies, investments and services to facilitate a transition from hosting to more autonomous housing solutions, with a commitment to boosting integration and inclusion. This approach recognises the interconnected nature of a newcomer's life by addressing vital aspects such as securing stable housing, finding employment, fostering participation in community and social life as well as accessing education and healthcare.

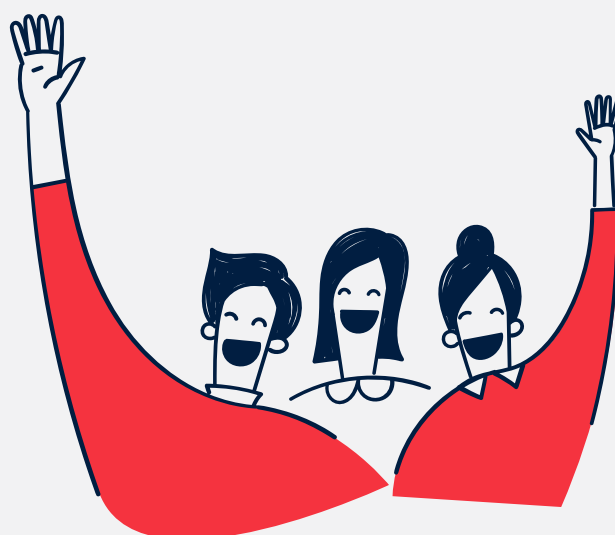
Towards this end, there is an urgent need for the national government to prioritise investment in innovative housing solutions in order to ensure viable exit strategies for guests from their hosted arrangements. The research showed that the arrival of displaced people from Ukraine has exacerbated a complex set of pre-existing challenges in Ireland, largely to do with housing and that many of challenges faced by displaced people from Ukraine (and other newcomers to the Ireland) in accessing affordable and secure housing are shared by Irish residents. In support of the position held by the Immigrant Council of Ireland, researchers agree with the statement: "Policies such as Housing for All should be revised to reflect the housing needs of migrant communities in their entirety, including protection seekers of all kinds."<sup>172</sup>

Thinking beyond accommodation, the research also shows the need for a focus on institutional preparedness for future migration trends and unexpected crises that cross all of the Zaragoza integration areas: employment, education, social inclusion, active citizenship, and welcoming society. Researchers support the view that it is only by tying accommodation provision to a holistic approach to integration will the true potential of migrants in Ireland be fully realised.

*"If there is to be a learning, you'd imagine it'd be a system called the Temporary Protection system."*

**Senior government official, 6.12.23**

Lastly, the Safe Homes research showed that there have been many examples of learning and successful policy adaptation from the state's Covid response to respond to the TPD obligations, Community Response Fora being a key one. Equally, there are many lessons that can be taken from the experience of the displaced from Ukraine in Ireland since 2022 and applied to various sectors of society for other population groups in need of temporary housing. It is hoped the lessons learned from the Ukrainian response, as documented in this report, can be used to inform the response to future crises, and that the particularly positive story behind pledging is one that is maintained, nurtured, and broadened.



<sup>172</sup> Immigrant Council of Ireland (2024) [Submission to the consultation process of the Migrant Integration Strategy 2024](#)



# Annex

## Research methods

The research was conducted between August 2023 and March 2024 by a lead (Ciara Aucoin Delloue) and assistant researcher (Kate O'Dwyer) with dedicated oversight and management (Liam O'Dwyer). It comprised a mixed-method, case study approach to understand pledged accommodation for displaced people in Ireland. The core methods for data collection were interview, focus group, observation, and survey. The methodology and ethical approach was reviewed by the IRC's internal compliance lead, and by independent humanitarian academic based at University College Dublin in September 2023.

The time period of interest was February 2022 to April 2024. The populations of interest were policymakers leading the implementation of the IRC's pledge programme, such as the Consortium of partners (managers and caseworkers), key government departments, specifically Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), local authorities, and other civil society organisations. The other two core groups of interest were Irish resident hosts (of both shared and vacant homes) and displaced people with experience living in private accommodation arrangements. While based in the Irish Red Cross office in Dublin and a number of host focus groups were held online, researchers travelled to Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny and Limerick to conduct interviews, focus groups, and conduct observations of state accommodation centres. These locations were selected for geographical spread, and in the case of Donegal and Kerry specifically, for their high concentration of pledged and emergency accommodation.

At the start of the research, Helping Irish Hosts, with support from IRC, was leading the development of a survey intended for hosts. Safe Homes researchers reviewed and inputted on the questionnaire. The host survey was distributed by DCEDIY and Department of Social Protection (DSP) to the total number of registered ARP recipients on August 18 2023—circa 6,000 households at the time. It remained open till 2nd of October 2023. The results of this survey were a source of data for this report. Researchers then led the design of and distribution of a survey for guests, using the Kobo platform. Questionnaire design was inspired by the Belgian Red Cross's guest survey. Distribution was conducted via displaced caseworkers from Ukraine and other independent community representatives, largely via their own Telegram groups.

Selection and recruitment for interviews was based on desk study and the snowball or referral method. Interviews were requested directly by the researchers using emails and phone contacts. Recruitment for focus groups was led by two strategies: contact made via Consortium caseworkers and via a Google form sign-up sheet. Recruitment for displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation was facilitated by caseworkers using their Telegram groups, and other independent Ukrainian community representatives. Guest focus groups were (except for one in English) conducted in Ukrainian with the assistance of an independent facilitator/translator. All research participants were asked to sign a consent form which guaranteed their anonymity would be protected and detailed the intended use of the research findings.

In total, researchers conducted 49 interviews, 15 observations<sup>173</sup>, and 12 focus group discussions and designed and distributed a survey to displaced people with experience in pledged accommodation. See Annex for more details on data collection methods.

Interview and focus group discussions were recorded and transcripts produced and translated as needed. Analysis of transcripts (interviews and focus groups) followed the reflexive thematic analysis method.<sup>174</sup> This entailed multiple rounds of reading interview and focus group transcripts and

coding them first according to a template co-created at the Safe Homes Qualitative Analysis Workshop held in Warsaw in October 2023 and a second round collating a set of emergent sub-themes. A final round of coding involved synthesising and consolidating similar and related themes. The two researchers checked each other's coding to minimise bias. Final codes were copied and saved into an Excel sheet, which was then used to build a structure for the report and served as the database for the quotes cited. Quantitative analysis of survey data was also conducted using Excel.

**Table 3: Summary of methods and key population group**

Methods overview	Approach	Population sample	No. of participants/sites surveyed
CRM data analysis	Host information analysis	N/A	N/A
Survey	Online survey	HIH/IRC host survey	1,117
		Guests	430
In-depth interviews	Semi-structured key informant/elite interviews	Government reps at various levels	18
		NGOs, private companies and civil society organisations	21
		Community leaders/activists	10
Focus groups	In person & online	Hosts (6 in total)	28
		Guests (6 in total)	35
Observation	Ethnography	Emergency accommodation centres	4
		Consortium meetings	7
		Community Response fora, IRC informational clinics and HIH Roadshows	4

<sup>173</sup> Researchers observed Consortium calls, a government steering committee meeting, and visited state-sponsored rest centres.

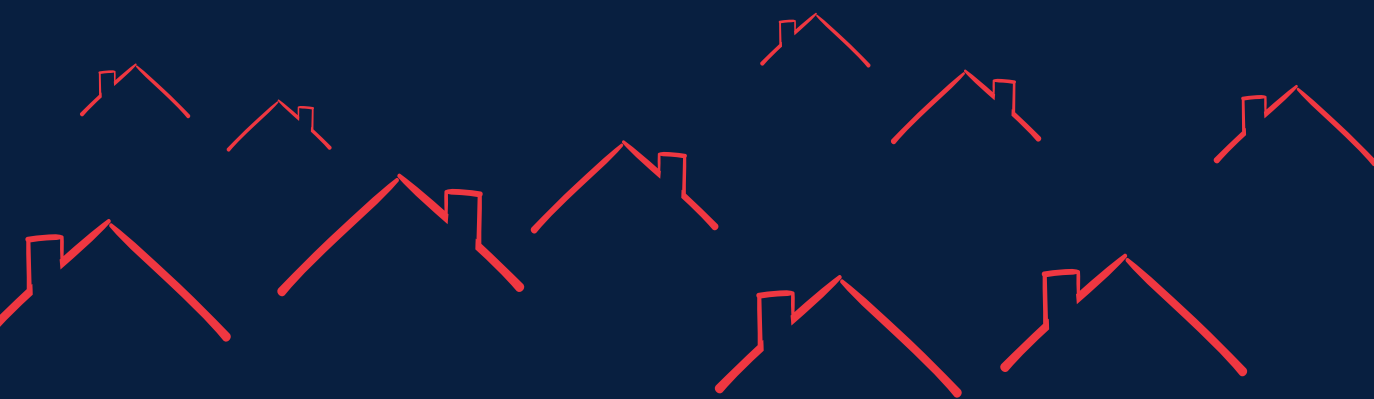
<sup>174</sup> Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2021) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Sage Publishers

**Table 4: Summary statistics of HIH/IRC host survey respondents (n=1,117)**

<b>Age</b>	18-35	7.5%
	36-45	15.5%
	46- 55	24%
	56-65	34.5%
	66+	18.5%
<b>Employment status</b>	employed	50%
	retired	25%
	Self-employed	15%
	Unemployed	3%
	Other	7%
<b>Living arrangement prior to guests arrival</b>	live with a spouse and children	35%
	live with a spouse	29%
	live alone	23%
	Other	11%
	Live with housemates	2%
<b>Rural/urban location</b>	Urban area	58%
	Rural area with limited transport options	13%
	Rural with walking access to core amenities (shops, school, etc.)	13%
	Rural with access to transport	10%
	Other	6%

**Table 5: Summary statistics of Safe Homes guest survey respondents (n=418)**

<b>Age</b>	18-35 years old	28%
	36-45 years old	45%
	46-55 years old	19%
	56-65 years old	5.5%
	65+	2.5%
<b>Gender identity</b>	Woman	79%
	Man	19%
	Other	2%
<b>Arrived alone or with family</b>	With just children	37%
	Alone	26.5
	With my spouse	6%
	With my spouse and children	21.5%
	With other members of my family	9%
<b>Arriving from</b>	Kiev	28%
	Kharkiv	17%
	Odessa	10%
	Donetsk	9.5%
	Other	35.5%
<b>Stated nationality</b>	Ukraine	99%
	Other	1%
<b>Highest level of education achieved</b>	Primary education (5-12 years)	0.3%
	Secondary education (12-18 years)	5.5%
	Trade education (+16 years)	14%
	Higher education/university (+16 years)	80%
	None	0.2%



**+CIFRC**