Supporting Ukraine

Following the ongoing violence and attacks on Ukraine, RCPCH has put together this live member briefing outlining how we are working on your behalf, activity you may wish to consider and the range of support available to you and colleagues, plus further guidance.

The College building was lit in solidarity with the people of Ukraine

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### Supporting Ukraine

We are all deeply disturbed by the ongoing reports from Ukraine of attacks on civilian populations, including children and young people, as well as direct assaults on hospitals and health workers. These are all in contravention of international humanitarian law and must be recorded and responded to as such.

Conduct of conflict and use of weapons which directly kill and injure children are, by definition, indiscriminate and thus constitute grave violations of international convention and law.

Across the world, paediatric organisations are raising their concerns about the attacks on Ukraine, including:

- European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP) (PDF)
- European Paediatric Association (EPA)
- International Pediatric Association (IPA)

As a College, we are closely monitoring the situation and reflecting on what action we can take, such as statements on specific areas like refugee coordination, policy and management over the coming period. We are also considering options for how we can provide practical support, via remote technology, for people on the ground managing care.

Our activity on Ukraine is organised into four broad areas:

- Standing in solidarity
- Advocating for children and young people
- Supporting the paediatric community in Ukraine
- Supporting refugee and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
We know that our members want to show support and help the people of Ukraine, in whatever way they can. We have put together this page of information for RCPCH members, with resources and links that you may wish to read, use and take forward – for your own benefit or for colleagues and the children that you see in your practice.

Some of the links and information here go beyond the current situation in Ukraine and help paediatricians support refugees and migrants wherever they may be from. We will continue to update this page when more information is available or is shared with us.

**Standing in solidarity**

As a College we have established a Ukraine Oversight Group among our Senior Leadership Team to coordinate and steer our activity.

Following reports of the violence, we put together an initial statement on 27 February 2022, condemning the attacks and calling for immediate aid and support to those in need, recognising the specific and life-long impact this violence will have on Ukrainian children and young people. On 9 March 2022 we issued a further statement in response to the reported strike on a children's hospital in Mariupol.

As you can see from the photo above, we lit up our offices in blue and yellow on 3 March 2022 in solidarity with the health care workers still in Ukraine, continuing to provide aid and support to the millions still there.

**Advocating for children and young people**

We join a number of organisations in advocating on behalf of the people of Ukraine. In our own advocacy we are focusing on two broad areas.

**Safeguarding of families coming to the UK**

Following the announcement of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, we have written privately to the Minister for Refugees in the UK regarding appropriate safeguarding checks for people applying to participate in the scheme.

We welcome the steps the Government has taken to date in developing schemes
for Ukrainian residents to come to the UK, including those joining family members and those hosted by families, charities, businesses and community groups. However, we are acutely aware that the women and children arriving in this country will have experienced significant trauma and will in many cases be extremely vulnerable.

With this in mind, we are working closely with other charities including NSPCC, Barnardo’s and Save the Children, to emphasise the areas that Government departments should consider in preparing measures to support families seeking sanctuary in the UK. These are:

**Vetting of sponsors.** DBS checks on their own will not be sufficient to safeguard refugees in all situations, so we think there is need for Government to develop and share a set of expectations for those who host and those who stay with them.

**Provision of information for refugees and host families.** Providing translated welcome packs with key information including emergency numbers and helplines could ensure that refugees have ways of connecting to crisis services, should they need them. We also suggest that those who host should receive information and advice on preparation for receiving a family from Ukraine with tips on understanding trauma and ways of connecting themselves and their host family to the local community and the wider Ukrainian diaspora.

**Guidance for local authorities.** Early intervention is a key safeguarding principle and enabling local authority staff to use their professional judgement in situations will be key. We would also encourage local authorities to keep in touch with families, as the situation warrants, to ensure problems are not left to escalate.

**Unaccompanied children.** We urge the Government to work with Ukrainian authorities and other international government and NGO partners to take steps to ensure that information about children fleeing Ukraine is recorded and shared appropriately, to maximise the chance of reuniting them with family members when possible. In the meantime, government should make plans to assess and support the needs of unaccompanied children coming to the United Kingdom from Ukraine.

**Care and transport of children with critical health conditions**

Following the successful transportation of 21 Ukrainian children for cancer treatment in the UK, we have written privately to the UK Foreign Secretary and
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to advocate for transport for children with chronic illnesses to receive care in the UK.

We are also continuing work with Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the British Association of Perinatal Medicine to call for support for new mothers, babies and children, including access to aid and humanitarian corridors so they can leave safely. We have written jointly to the Foreign Secretary in the UK (PDF) following reports that hospitals and perinatal units are being bombed, with pregnant women forced to give birth in bomb shelters. We have also written jointly to the WHO Director General, Ukrainian Ambassador to the UN, UK Prime Minister and the Irish Taoiseach (PDF) to ask that the UN resolution demanding aid access and civilian protection in Ukraine is placed as the highest priority to ensure that essential humanitarian actions are achieved.

**Supporting the paediatric community in Ukraine**

We are aware of a number of paediatric resources for Ukrainian support, many of which are stored in an open-access repository coordinated by the European Society for Emergency Medicine (EUSEM).

Our Global team have adapted some of their existing resources to be available in Ukrainian for clinical and non-clinical Ukrainians faced with mothers, infants and children with critical needs. These will be available shortly.

**Supporting refugee and unaccompanied asylum seeking children**

We have collated here a variety of resources to help our members with supporting the health of all refugees in the UK.

We are also exploring the translation of information on our Medicines for Children platform into Ukrainian to support families coming to the UK with access to information about medicines. These resources will be available shortly.

**Guidance produced by the College**

Refugee and unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people - guidance for paediatricians: This information aims to support paediatricians in the
assessment and management of children and young people of refugee background, with links to key external information and resources

**Rights of migrant, refugee, stateless and undocumented children - our position (2019):** As outlined in the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to voice, protection, health and education. We urge all states to recognise and realise their obligation to children's access to healthcare.

**Rights to access healthcare for migrant and/or undocumented children:** This guidance highlights the barriers that currently exist for certain migrant and/or undocumented children with regards to access to healthcare and attainment of a healthy life. This is in the context of increases in efforts to charge certain migrant and/or undocumented groups using NHS services and you may find useful.

**Working in fragile and conflict-affected states:** As a College, we have a mandate in our mission statement to support improving child health in the UK and around the world. RCPCH Global's strategic plan includes explicit commitment to work in the poorest countries. Many low-income countries are also classified as ‘fragile and/or conflict-affected’. Our position may be helpful to read. You can read more about our global child health programmes.

**Guidance from other organisations**

**Asylum seeker and refugee mental health:** The Royal College of Psychiatrists have produced new guidance for supporting the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees. This information is endorsed by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and is aimed at health and social care professionals in the UK coming into contact with displaced people.

**Children's health: migrant health guide:** This guidance from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities provides specific considerations for assessing the health of migrant children. It complements a broader **OHID checklist for assessing migrant patients of all ages**.

**Activity you may wish to consider**

**Community sponsorship**

If you want to offer a home to people fleeing Ukraine, you can become a ‘sponsor’ as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This is available across the UK. If you
think you might be able to offer a home to a refugee family, by expressing your interest in the scheme you'll be joining 100,000 people who've already signed up and said they want to stand with refugees. You can sign up on the Homes for Ukraine website, and organisations like Reset and Sanctuary Foundation have lots of resources available if you want to learn more about what might be involved, and are offering matching, training and support services.

**Looking after yourself and donating safely by nation**

The Charity Commission and Fundraising Regulator for England and Wales has urged the public to ‘give safely’ to registered charities as people make generous donations to causes helping to support and protect people affected by the invasion of Ukraine.

The Disasters Emergency Committee, a coalition of 15 leading UK charities, has launched its collective appeal to provide emergency aid and rapid relief to civilians suffering during the conflict. We would also highlight that every pound donated by the UK public will be matched by the UK Government through its UK Aid Match scheme up to the value of £20 million – the largest commitment ever made to a DEC appeal through UK Aid Match.

**England**

**Offers of assistance:** NHS England has said that there is a national effort underway to provide support to Ukraine and to ensure the NHS stands ready to provide further support as needed. They have said in order to coordinate this help, to avoid creating disruption or duplication, please submit offers of assistance to England.incident14@nhs.net.

**Looking after yourself:** NHS England has made available a range of support services available to help you manage your own health and wellbeing while looking after others. This webpage outlines ‘support now’, ‘health and wellbeing programmes’ and ‘how-to guides’.

**Wales**

The Welsh Government has said: The situation in Ukraine may be traumatic for family members, friends and those currently in living in Wales.

The CALL (Community Advice & Listening Line) Mental Health helpline is available
24 hours a day to listen and provide support. Call 0800 132737 or text 'Help' to 81066.

**Scotland**

The [Scottish Government has created a website](https://www.gov.scot) to help people in Scotland make donations in a secure and effective way should they wish to do so. This includes financial donations, essential supplies and volunteering.

**Northern Ireland**

The [Charity Commission in Northern Ireland](https://www.charitycommission.gov.uk) has outlined how to give safely in response to the crisis in Ukraine should you wish to do so.