

The Lived Experiences of British Citizens Hosting Ukrainian Refugees in the East of England

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Abstract

Context: The Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme, launched in March 2022 in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, represented an exceptional mobilisation of British citizens as direct providers of humanitarian shelter. Despite the scale of this response, the psychological experience of hosting remained underexplored.

Aim: This study explored the lived experience of British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees under the HfU scheme, with particular attention to the psychological processes and meaning-making dimensions of the experience as it unfolded within the intimate space of home.

Method: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was conducted with 15 British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees through the HfU scheme in the East of England, using semi-structured interviews conducted, where possible, within participant's own homes.

Results: Three group experiential themes were identified: Seeing Self in the Space of Conflict, capturing the psychological processes through which witnessing the crisis moved participants to act, and the ways in which the encounter with guests both exposed and transformed their sense of self; The Shared Soundscape of Home, exploring the lived texture of home as a shared sensory space and the quiet negotiation of domestic life; and Being Held in Suspense, examining the liminality of hosting and the significance of community scaffolding.

Discussion: The findings are interpreted as a nested ontological condition operating at two levels. At the domestic level, the host's home became a scaffold for reconstructing the guest's destroyed ontological security. At the community level, peer networks provided collective containment, performing for hosts what hosts performed for guests. Reconstruction was required at both levels.

Implications: To the researcher's knowledge, this study offers the first IPA of the lived psychological experience of HfU hosts, with implications for clinical practice with host populations, the design of future sponsorship schemes, and clinical psychology's role in relation to the governance of forced migration.

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is an original piece of work carried out by the author. It was completed and submitted as a requirement for the author's Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Essex. This thesis has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Olivia Rose

26/04/2026



For the people of Ukraine.

&

For V.

“By sharing her story, I can share her memory.”

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"Not all those who wander are lost" – J. R. R. Tolkien

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Introduction Chapter Overview

This chapter situates the present study within the interdisciplinary landscape of forced migration. It draws together literature from migration governance, sociological theories of hospitality, phenomenological philosophy, and clinical psychology, in order to construct a theoretical framework indicative of the complexity of private refugee hosting as a lived experience. The chapter concludes by establishing the rationale for the present study, and introducing the rationale and aims of the systematic review presented in chapter two, arguing that while existing research has made significant contributions to the understanding of hosting at a structural level, the experiential dimensions of this phenomenon remain underexplored and that Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) offers a fitting methodological lens for addressing this gap.

Introduction

Homes for Ukraine

On the 14th March 2022, just weeks after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the 24th February 2022, the UK government announced the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme. Widely known as Homes for Ukraine (HfU), the scheme invited ordinary citizens to provide accommodation in their own homes to people fleeing the war in Ukraine. The response from citizens was immediate and within a matter of weeks, hundreds of thousands of households had signed up as sponsors, representing one of the largest mobilisations of private citizens in recent British humanitarian history (National Audit Office, 2023; Tryl & Surmon, 2023).

Implemented through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the HfU scheme invited UK citizens to sponsor displaced Ukrainians and enable them to enter the UK on a temporary visa, granting them the right to live and work in the UK for up to three years alongside access to healthcare, benefits, education, and employment support (National Audit Office, 2023). Sponsors were required to be British or Irish citizens or have the right to live in the UK permanently and provide accommodation for a minimum of six months (Home Office, 2022a). Sponsors were offered a monthly 'thank you' payment of £350 per month for the first 12 months, and then £500 for the next 12 months in recognition of their contribution. As of December 2024, approximately 243,800 visa applications had been made to the scheme across the UK, with 194,800 being issued (Home Office, 2024). The majority of applications were made for Ukrainian women and children, reflecting the mobilisation of Ukrainian men into military service following the invasion (Home Office, 2022b).

The scheme marked a significant departure from state-led frameworks that had previously characterised the UK's approach to refugee reception and the move brought global

crisis into intimate, everyday spaces, expanding the boundaries of humanitarian action well beyond professional structures (Burrell, 2024; Daoust & Dyvik, 2025). Rather than placing responsibility for resettlement with local authorities and formal organisations, HfU located the responsibility within private households, embedding humanitarian care within the domestic sphere and asking ordinary citizens to become primary providers of support, protection, and integration (Burrell, 2024). This was a novel arrangement that arrived with limited guidance and without much of the institutional scaffolding that might be expected to accompany a commitment of this kind.

Despite the scale and significance of the Ukrainian hosting response, there remains a pressing need for sustained attention on its psychological implications particularly regarding reception practices and the psychosocial consequences of hosting displaced populations within private and community settings (Javanbakht & Grasser, 2022; Su et al., 2022). Existing research has tended to prioritise policy design, refugee outcomes, or public opinion, often leaving the moral, emotional, and relational dimensions of everyday hosting under-examined (Tomlinson et al., 2023a). The present study addresses this gap by exploring the lived experiences of British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees through the HfU scheme, paying particular attention to the psychological processes through which global crisis is encountered and embodied within the domestic space of home.

The terms ‘refugee’ and ‘guest’ appear throughout this thesis, and it is worth acknowledging that none of these terms are neutral. ‘Refugee’ carries legal, political, and social implications, and is used in its broadest sense to refer to people displaced by conflict. ‘Guest’ is used to reflect the language of participants or the framing of the hosting arrangement and not intended to imply that displacement was voluntary. Across European contexts, Ukrainians were commonly described as guests rather than refugees, a choice that conveys familiarity and relational closeness while simultaneously distancing them from the

stigmatised refugee category (Ruszczyk et al., 2022). These terms are used with those tensions in mind, chosen for their accessibility while recognising that language itself is one of the sites at which boundaries of belonging are drawn.

Migration Governance, International Frameworks, and UK Policy

Understanding what the HfU scheme asked of those who participated requires situating it within the broader landscape of refugee governance from which it emerged. Human mobility in the context of crisis is one of the defining political, social, and moral challenges of the twenty-first century. Forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels, with an estimated 117.3 million people forcibly displaced worldwide by mid-2025 as a result of conflict, violence, persecution, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order (UNHCR, 2025). This figure represents a profound transformation of global welfare systems, social relations, and moral responsibilities, extending well beyond borders and into the everyday lives of citizens in receiving societies.

Contemporary refugee protection is grounded in a complex body of international law developed in response to mass displacements of the First and Second World Wars of the twentieth-century. The 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 New York Protocol remain the foundation of this framework, providing comprehensive guidance for the protection and treatment of refugees at the international level (UNHCR, 2026). The Convention defines a refugee as someone who:

"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being

outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR, 2026).

Its core principle, non-refoulement, asserts that refugees should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom and is considered customary international law (UNHCR, 2026). Some legal scholars go further, arguing that non-refoulement may have achieved the status of *jus cogens*, a peremptory norm of international law from which no derogation is permitted under any circumstances (Costello & Foster, 2016). If accepted, this would render any state measure seeking to limit or circumvent the prohibition legally impermissible, a claim that sits in direct tension with recent UK legislative reform.

Refugee status is not automatically granted upon displacement, it must be legally recognised through an asylum process. Asylum seekers are defined as those who are seeking international protection from dangers in their home country, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been legally determined (International Rescue Committee (IRC) UK, 2024). They must apply for protection either upon arrival in, or when crossing the border into the country of destination (IRC, 2024). The right to seek asylum is recognised as a universal human right, as outlined in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states, "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" (United Nations, 1948). In contrast, individuals who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, violence or persecution but remain within their own country are named internally displaced persons (IDPs) (IRC, 2024). Refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs are distinct from immigrants and migrants although these categories are often conflated in public discourse. Immigrants and migrants are considered voluntary migrants as their movement is typically motivated by personal, economic, or educational reasons, whereas the

migration of refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs is considered involuntary and forced (IRC, 2024).

The UK asylum system is currently undergoing a period of significant transition within a political climate characterised by anti-immigration sentiment and an increasingly deterrence-oriented policy approach. A recent policy statement, *Restoring Order and Control* (Home Office, 2025), includes the introduction of refugee status reviews every 30 months from March 2026, replacing the previous five-year initial leave to remain. This represents a reorientation of the UK's relationship to refugee protection, moving from settlement as the expected outcome of a successful asylum claim toward an ongoing conditional status subject to periodic review. The UK is party to international frameworks of refugee protection, however, access to asylum in the UK is significantly constrained by border controls and limited availability of legal routes for most asylum seekers. The UK asylum system requires that a person be physically present in the UK to make a claim, however there is no asylum visa enabling individuals to travel to the UK solely to seek protection, meaning that those without a visa must often enter the country irregularly, for example by small boat, lorry, or on documentation intended for another purpose (House of Commons Library, 2025). While international refugee law does not require individuals to seek asylum in the first safe country they reach, UK policy actively encourages this, rendering claims inadmissible where individuals could reasonably have sought protection elsewhere (House of Commons Library, 2025).

Since 2022, the UK has undergone significant legislative reform to its immigration and asylum framework. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 introduced a two-tier asylum system distinguishing between those arriving via regular and irregular routes, strengthening enforcement powers, and criminalising irregular entry with a maximum penalty up to four years imprisonment. Under section 12 of the Act, refugees deemed not to have come directly

to the UK were designated ‘Group 2’ and granted 30 months temporary permission on a ten-year route to settlement, rather than the five-year permission granted to ‘Group 1’ refugees. The Home Office suspended this differentiation policy in July 2023 and those who had received ‘Group 2’ decisions had their conditions aligned to those of ‘Group 1’ (Home Office, 2023). The Illegal Migration Act 2023 expanded removal powers and rendered many asylum claims inadmissible for those arriving irregularly. Its substantive provisions, along with the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act 2024, were largely repealed by the Border Security, Asylum, and Immigration Act 2025. This repeal has been characterised as a *prima facie* break from previous policy, with the legislation continuing and expanding emphasis on immigration enforcement and criminalisation (Arnell, 2025). The 2025 Act further reinforced deterrence-oriented measures with a statutory Border Security Command, streamlining removal procedures and consolidating the UK’s shift away from frameworks prioritising humanitarian considerations. Alongside these reforms, the UK has maintained formal resettlement pathways, most notably the UK Resettlement Scheme and its predecessor schemes for Syrian and Afghan nationals, through which individuals identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are transferred directly to the UK and granted refugee status on arrival (Bettley, 2021). While significant in scale and humanitarian intent, these programmes have been limited in public reach and engagement compared to the Ukrainian response (Karyotis et al., 2021).

These legislative developments emerged from a particular policy landscape shaped significantly by what became known as the ‘hostile environment’. Formally introduced under the Conservative government with Theresa May’s declaration of her intention to create, “a really hostile environment for illegal migration”, this approach was formalised through the Immigration Act of 2014 and 2016, and sought to deter irregular migration by embedding immigration control within everyday life (Tyler, 2018). The effect was a process of

responsibilisation through which routine social interactions such as renting a house or accessing healthcare became sites of border control, transforming private citizens and institutions into agents of migration governance (Rose, 1996; Tyler, 2018). The hostile environment operates by deputising immigration control to statutory service providers transforming institutions associated with care into instruments of enforcement (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021), and has furthered the racialisation and criminalisation of asylum seekers, creating a culture of disbelief embedded within institutional practice (Käkelä, 2022). Scholars have characterised this as humanitarian securitisation, a process through which the language and institutions of humanitarian protection are progressively reframed through the logic of security and border control (Shepherd, 2025). Shepherd (2025) argues that this dynamic extends a colonial logic in which the categorisation of whose suffering warrants protection reproduces historical hierarchies of race and geopolitical proximity, a critique with direct relevance to the selective welcome extended to Ukrainians within a political landscape that has simultaneously sought to deter and criminalise other displaced populations.

The HfU scheme did not depart from this logic but significantly extended it. The exceptional welcome extended to White, Christian, Ukrainian women and children was widely contrasted with the UK's response to those fleeing conflict elsewhere, raising questions about whose suffering is recognised as warranting response and on what terms (Anderson, 2013; Burrell, 2024; Fassin, 2011; Szkolut 2022). This differential welcome operated not only at the level of policy but through the visual and discursive framing of displaced people in public culture. Research into UK medias' visual representations of immigrant and refugee women finds that Ukrainian women are consistently portrayed through normalising frames that suggest cultural belonging, whereas Afghan, Palestinian, and Rohingya women are frequently depicted as anonymised or victimised figures (Çetin, 2025). A recent critical systematic review further demonstrates that the exceptional welcome

extended to Ukrainians across Europe was shaped by cultural proximity, racialised familiarity, and geopolitical solidarity. It situates these dynamics within broader patterns of hierarchical inclusion that determine whose displacement receives durable protection and whose remains precarious (Mickelsson, 2025). This differential treatment is thrown into sharp contrast by the absence of any comparable sponsorship scheme for populations facing displacement in other conflict contexts, reinforcing the selective welcome of Ukrainians not simply as a humanitarian response but of the racialised and geopolitical hierarchies that determine which displaced populations are constituted as deserving of exceptional response. The UK's deterrence-oriented immigration policies had moved from the margins to mainstream British political life with Reform UK, whose leader Nigel Farage holds the parliamentary seat for Clacton, Essex. It is within this political context that the civic mobilisation of the HfU scheme holds particular interest and significance.

The participation of private citizens in refugee reception is not without international precedent. Canada hosts the world's longest running private refugee sponsorship programme where citizens volunteer to provide financial, emotional, and practical support to receive and integrate refugees (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019; Hyndman et al., 2017). Following the 2015 refugee crisis, Germany similarly mobilised private citizens and civil society organisations alongside formal state reception, grounded in the principle that refugees should not only be admitted but actively welcomed and supported to become citizens (Oltermann, 2020). The UK's response to the Ukrainian crisis drew on these traditions while departing from them in important respects. Framed as an emergency response, the HfU scheme reflected a broader international trend toward community and private sponsorship models, which have become increasingly attractive to policymakers as cost-effective and socially integrative alternatives to state reception systems (Fratzke & Dorst, 2019). However, such schemes have presented the risk of transferring responsibility from the state to individual citizens, potentially

exacerbating inequalities and generating unsustainable demands on hosts (Labman & Cameron, 2020; Lenard, 2016).

While private hosting, or ‘homestay’ has not been widely used in the UK (Gunaratnam, 2021), it has a longer history across mainland Europe (Monforte et al., 2021). A recent systematic review of the European literature on homestay accommodation for refugees demonstrates that while such arrangements can facilitate rapid access to housing, social integration, and language acquisition while fostering interpersonal solidarity, they consistently produce structural and relational tensions including unclear expectations, power asymmetries, and the temporary nature of arrangements (Bassoli & Luccioni, 2024). Komter and van Leer (2012), writing about hosting schemes in the Netherlands, stress the importance of robust vetting procedures, reliable ongoing support, and clear timelines as essential conditions in order to mitigate these risks. Research on private hosting more broadly suggests that while arrangements can enhance refugee wellbeing, stability, and sense of belonging, they also raise important questions about refugee autonomy (Bassoli & Campomori, 2024). Where hosts assume responsibility for decision-making on behalf of guests, opportunities for refugees to develop agency and self-reliance can be inadvertently constrained (Ran & Join-Lambert, 2020). Motivations for hosting vary across contexts but are consistently rooted in altruism, empathy, and moral commitments to those in need (Doidge & Sandri, 2019). A concept analysis of successful refugee cohabitation further identifies interdisciplinary support, culturally competent care, and clear relational frameworks as necessary conditions for arrangements that promote psychological wellbeing and integration for both hosts and refugees (Al-Hamad et al., 2024).

Across European contexts, the initial reception of Ukrainian refugees was frequently characterised in idealised terms. The widespread mobilisation of Polish citizens in response to the influx of Ukrainian refugees was dubbed a “refugee miracle” by sections of the British

press (Rice-Oxley, 2022). This romanticised discourse, while celebrating generosity, obscures the complex realities of hosting, including the emotional labour, logistical challenges, and cultural negotiations that both hosts and refugees must navigate (Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025). By underplaying the structural constraints and relational tensions, these narratives risk producing an idealised account of hosting that is ultimately misleading and potentially harmful, raising expectations neither hosts nor schemes can reliably meet.

Refugee hosting can be usefully examined through critical, intersectional, and enacted citizenship frameworks, each highlighting different dimensions of belonging and responsibility. Critical race theory, offers a useful lens for understanding how structural inequalities are embedded in societal structures and how social constructions of race influence power, access, and care (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). The principle of intersectionality additionally attends to how race, gender, migration status, and class intersect to produce unique forms of vulnerability and marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1989). The acts of citizenship framework highlights how both hosts and refugees actively perform citizenship through everyday practices of care, hospitality, and advocacy. Through these practices, they enact forms of social membership and rights, even when formal recognition is limited (Isin & Nielsen, 2008). Together, these perspectives illuminate refugee hosting as a complex interplay of ethical responsibility, power relations, and participatory action where social inclusion is both practised and negotiated rather than simply granted by law or policy. Understanding this policy context establishes the structural conditions within which hosts' lived experiences unfold and within which the dimensions of hosting are interpreted.

Hospitality, Home, and the Host-Guest Relationship

The structural and political conditions outlined find their most intimate expression in the domestic space of the home. Understanding what it means to open that space to a stranger requires engaging with the long and contested history of hospitality as both a social practice

and a theoretical concept, and with the question of how those theoretical accounts illuminate the specific dynamics of the HfU arrangement. From the sacred duties of *xenia* in ancient Greece, to the Roman legal protections of *hospitium*, and the Enlightenment ideals of ethical cosmopolitanism, these traditions positioned the protection of outsiders as both a social and moral responsibility, rooted in the recognition of shared humanity (Still, 2012; O’Gorman, 2007). Anthropological perspectives further highlight hospitality as a culturally embedded process where the boundaries between insider and outsider are drawn and redrawn (Selwyn, 2000). Within the social sciences, hospitality has increasingly been used as a theoretical lens for interrogating migration governance, citizenship, and belonging, revealing how the use of language and the practice of welcome operate simultaneously as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion (Derrida, 2000).

Jacques Derrida’s (2000) philosophical account of hospitality offers a framework for understanding the tensions inherent in refugee hosting. He makes the distinction between unconditional hospitality as the absolute and unlimited welcome of the stranger without expectation, and conditional hospitality as governed by rules, limits, and the hosts’ authority over the space of welcome (Derrida, 2000). He argues that as soon as there is a door or a window, someone holds the key, and thereby controls the conditions of hospitality, rendering the unconditional ideal structurally impossible within real social arrangements. This tension is captured in the seemingly generous invitation to “make yourself at home”, which simultaneously conveys welcome and imposes limits. The guest may make themselves feel at home, but the home remains the possession of the host (Bida, 2018). Hospitality is therefore inherently self-contradictory, reflecting hosts’ goodwill toward the guest while simultaneously subjecting the guest to the host’s authority over the space (Bida, 2018). Applied to the HfU context, this framework shows how the tension between unconditional welcome and conditional control plays out in practice, with acts of generosity towards

refugees' simultaneously reproducing asymmetries of belonging that structure the host-guest relationship (Darling, 2011).

These asymmetries are further embedded within hospitality's function as a social necessity through which societies manage encounters with "others", operating at both the level of the private home and the nation state (Candea & da Col, 2012; Shryock, 2012). Rather than a purely altruistic act, hospitality structures relationships of difference, reciprocity, and power. It presupposes otherness, positioning the guest as simultaneously welcomed and marked as not fully belonging (Candea & da Col, 2012; Rottmann & Nimer, 2021). Legal and policy frameworks have increasingly formalised these dynamics, embedding hospitality within inclusive and exclusive logics of citizenship so that practices of welcome are shaped not only by personal generosity but also by legal status, rights, and boundaries of belonging defined by the state (Monforte et al., 2021). What ultimately emerges is the image of a threshold, as a spatial and cognitive boundary delineating "us" from "them", through which host and guest dynamics in domestic settings both reflect and reproduce symbolic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Molz & McIntosh, 2013). Merikoski's (2021) concept of contentious hospitality, developed through a study of home accommodation of asylum seekers in Finland, captures this dynamic in which the home becomes a site of the ideals of unconditional welcome and the realities of conditional cohabitation, producing arrangements that are simultaneously generous and contested. In this way, the intimate domestic space of home becomes a microcosm of broader political negotiations over belonging (Moret et al., 2021). Refugee hospitality as a social phenomenon functions as a multidimensional concept that incorporates the reception, treatment, and integration of refugees in host societies, structured throughout by imbalances of power in which refugees are positioned as worthy or unworthy guests based on their adherence to host-imposed rules and expectations (Farahani, 2021; Kyriakidou, 2021).

Understanding private hosting as more than a practical arrangement therefore draws attention to what the home means as a phenomenological and psychological space before attending to what it means as a social and political space. Gaston Bachelard's 'The Poetics of Space' offers a foundational account of the home as a site of existential significance, arguing that domestic spaces are not merely physical containers but are imbued with memory, imagination, and emotional meaning (Bachelard, 1994). For Bachelard, the home is a primary space within which the self is sheltered and constituted, offering a protective intimacy that he describes as the nest and the lair. These spaces are characterised by familiarity, warmth, and the particular comfort of being enclosed within something one has made one's own. The lair, in particular, carries connotations of a protected retreat from the world, a space of instinctive withdrawal and controlled boundaries. Inviting a stranger into this space therefore involves far more than a practical reallocation of rooms, it represents a fundamental renegotiation of the self's most intimate territory. Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling extends this analysis by framing the home not simply as a place where one lives but as a fundamental mode of being in the world (Heidegger, 1962). To dwell, is to be at peace in a protected space, to preserve and care for the world one inhabits. The disruption of dwelling, whether through displacement or through the radical alteration of domestic space that hosting entails, therefore carries existential as well as practical significance. These accounts establish the home as an intimate space of self-constitution, however they lack the psychological mechanisms through which the self's relationship to home sustains its sense of coherent existence in the world.

Ontological Security and the Psychology of Home

Anthony Giddens provides an account of ontological security as the stable sense of continuity and order that individuals maintain in relation to their identities and their social and material environments (Giddens, 1991). The concept was first developed by the

psychiatrist R. D. Laing (1960) to describe the existential confidence that allows a person to experience themselves as real, alive, whole, and continuous in time. An ontologically secure person can engage with the world and others without being overwhelmed by existential anxiety. In contrast, ontological insecurity describes the terrifying sense that one might not exist at all or might lose the boundary between the self and the world. Laing's (1960) focus was within clinical settings and was associated with the schizophrenic experience, however Giddens brought the concept into the sociological domain.

Giddens (1991) argues that ontological security describes a condition not of clinical extremity but of everyday psychological life. It is largely unconscious, and allows people to move through their days without being paralysed by the fundamental contingency of existence. In late modernity, maintaining this sense of security was no longer automatic but required ongoing social and material conditions to sustain it. Giddens identified that it is sustained through the three mechanisms of routine, basic trust, and narrative continuity. Routine refers to the predictable rhythms and habits of daily life through which the world feels manageable. It creates the background of taken-for-granted order against which the self's sense of coherent existence in the world is sustained. When routine is disrupted, it is felt as a disturbance of something more fundamental. Basic trust defines the foundational confidence in the reliability of others and of the social world. It is not held as a conscious belief but operates with pre-reflective confidence and is sustained through the reliable presence of significant others, predictability in the social world, and trust in expert systems. When basic trust is undermined, the psychological consequences extend beyond the specific relationship to the general sense of the world as an untrustworthy place. Narrative continuity describes the capacity to construct and maintain a coherent story of self that extends across time. The self is not a fixed entity but a story one tells about oneself, connecting the past, present, and anticipated future into a coherent whole. Ontological security depends on the

capacity to sustain this narrative across the disruptions of daily life, and when disrupted the self's sense of coherent existence is threatened at the most fundamental level.

The home functions as the primary anchor of all three mechanisms of ontological security. It is the specific site in which particular routines are enacted, in which basic trust of the most significant relationships are concentrated, and in which the sensory and spatial environment of daily life most immediately sustains the self's sense of continuity across time. The home does not merely shelter the self, but provides the conditions through which the self's sense of coherent existence in the world is maintained. Giddens (1991) also introduces the concept of fateful moments as threshold experiences that breach the taken-for-granted background of ontological security and force a renegotiation of the assumptions through which daily life is organised. Bachelard (1994) and Heidegger (1962) establish that home is existentially significant and Giddens specifies the psychological mechanisms through which that significance operates.

Giddens' (1991) concept of ontological security has been challenged for implicitly privileging stability and routine as the basis of psychological wellbeing, a framing that risks pathologising disruption without attending to its potentially generative dimensions (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998). More significantly, the concept has been criticised for assuming a relatively privileged subject, one who has access to stable housing, predictable routines, and the material conditions necessary for a coherent self-narrative which thereby universalises an experience of security that is itself distributed along lines of race, class, and citizenship (Hage, 2003). These critiques are directly relevant to the hosting context, in which the minor renegotiation of domestic security experienced by hosts sits alongside the catastrophic disruption of that security experienced by guests, and in which the conditions enabling ontological security were from the outset, structurally asymmetric. The concept is used here with consideration of these limitations. While hosting arrangements are intended to provide

safety and shelter, they also reveal how forced displacement unsettles the taken for granted notions of home as a stable, secure space (Vetere & Shimwell, 2024). For both hosts, whose domestic routines and spatial boundaries are significantly altered by hosting, and for refugees, whose relationships to home has been violently disrupted by displacement, the shared domestic space becomes a site in which ontological security must be actively negotiated and rebuilt rather than simply assumed.

Within shared domestic space, everyday practices hold particular significance, as sites of meaning-making, negotiation, and intercultural exchange. Food, for instance, can function as a means through which refugees maintain cultural identity and sustain connections to their homeland (Bailey, 2017), with the preparation of traditional dishes representing autonomy, continuity, and links to experiences of one's home country (Vandevoordt, 2017). Shared food spaces can serve as important sites of intercultural exchange, belonging, and the enactment of everyday citizenship (Duruz et al., 2011). More broadly, hosts play an active role in shaping local processes and cultures through everyday spaces they create, transforming domestic and community spaces into sites of hospitality and solidarity, that soften the boundaries between "citizen" and "non-citizen" (Blank, 2021). In this sense, the private home becomes both a political and an intimate space, at once a refuge from the world and a site in which the world's most pressing questions about belonging, difference, and responsibility are lived out in the texture of daily life. It is within this emotionally and relationally charged domestic space that the psychological demands of hosting must be understood.

The Emotional and Psychological Experience of Hosting

While hospitality has often been understood in primarily practical terms, with the provision of food, water, and shelter, more recent literature focuses on the emotionally and morally charged relational dimensions (Stock, 2019). There is substantial evidence that refugees carry significant and often enduring psychological need. A meta-analysis found that

refugees resettled in Western countries experienced higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Steel et al., 2009). Further research demonstrates that the mental health consequences of war-related displacement can persist for decades, shaped by both pre-migration trauma and post-migration stressors including housing instability, legal uncertainty, and social isolation (Bogic et al., 2015). Research on private hosting of refugees consistently highlights the affective complexity of the host role, demonstrating that hosting is an intimate relational commitment that creates significant psychological demands on those who undertake it (Monforte et al., 2021; Phillimore et al., 2022). The sponsor and refugee relationship demands considerable effort, requiring hosts to invest emotionally, navigate challenges that stem from past trauma, and attend to the psychological wellbeing of those they support (Behnia, 2007; Lenard, 2016; Phillimore et al., 2022). Understanding these demands requires drawing on a range of theoretical frameworks from clinical and social psychology which illuminate distinct dimensions of the relational and emotional landscape of hosting.

Ontological security provides the overarching framework for understanding the home as the primary site within which the dynamics of hosting converge. The frameworks introduced below serve to illuminate distinct and complementary dimensions of the hosting relationship. The ‘ethics of care’ and ‘emotional labour’ attend to the moral texture and psychological work of hosting. The concept of ‘containment’ draws attention to the most intimate and psychologically costly dimension of that work. Attachment theory helps to understand how and why deep bonds form under the conditions of hosting, and ‘compassion fatigue’ names the consequences when such demands are sustained without adequate support.

The ethics of care, offers a foundational framework for understanding the moral texture of hosting (Gilligan, 2014; Tronto, 1998). Rather than framing care as a virtue or purely instinctive response, the ethics of care positions caring as a relational and context-

dependent moral practice that attends to the particular vulnerabilities and needs of others. Applied to refugee hosting, this framework situates hospitality as a practice of interpersonal moral engagement that requires ongoing attentiveness, responsiveness, and responsibility toward the guest's wellbeing (Monforte et al., 2021; Tronto, 1998). Critically, Tronto (1998; 2020) argues that care is always embedded within relations of power, and that those who provide care frequently occupy structurally dominant positions relative to those they care for, a dynamic that resonates directly with the asymmetrical host-guest relationship. This understanding extends into the refugee context where acts of care are found to be of intrinsic value to refugees beyond the practical integration outcomes, and they simultaneously function as forms of practice-based resistance to the hostile policy environment (Käkelä et al., 2023). While this study examines professional third sector care rather than voluntary domestic hosting, its finding that care relationships are central to refugees' sense of belonging and integration speaks directly to the relational significance of the hosting arrangement.

Refugee hosting can also be understood through the lens of emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003). Where ethics of care emphasise the relational and context dependent responsibilities hosts hold toward guests, emotional labour complements this by highlighting the effort involved in managing emotion in order to sustain a particular relational presentation. The concept of containment, offers a complementary perspective for understanding hosting at the most intimate level (Bion, 1962). Containment describes the process by which a person receives and holds another's unprocessed emotional experience, allowing distress to be experienced and metabolised rather than simply expelled. Bion (1962) developed this concept in the context of the therapeutic relationship and the mother-infant dyad. Its application to domestic hosting requires care, as hosts are not therapists or mothers, and the hosting relationship does not carry the same professional boundaries or institutional

supports as a clinical encounter. With this clarification in mind, the concept offers the most precise clinical language available to describe what hosts were being asked to do.

Attachment theory offers a further relational lens. The attachment system is activated under conditions of threat, prompting individuals to seek proximity to protective others who provide safety and regulation (Bowlby, 1982). Large-scale adversities such as the war in Ukraine, displacement, uncertainty, and loss can heighten attachment needs among those affected, while simultaneously activating caregiving responses in others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This dual process helps explain both intensified dependency and protective, even parental, reactions in the context of refugee hosting. Attachment theory therefore offers a relational lens for understanding emotional bonds, heightened vigilance around safety, and the strain that can emerge when caregiving demands exceed capacity (Bowlby, 1982). When care is sustained over time in conditions of limited support and uncertain duration, the psychological costs can become significant. Compassion fatigue describes the cost of caring for those who are suffering, with secondary traumatic stress arising from indirect exposure to traumatic material through close relational contact (Figley, 1995). As a framework, compassion fatigue has been criticised for locating psychological vulnerability within the individual carer rather than in the structural conditions that generate care demands without adequate support (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The framework is therefore used here with this structural qualification in mind, rather than as an account of individual psychological failure.

These psychological concepts do not exist in isolation from the broader social and structural conditions of hosting. A community psychology framework emphasises that wellbeing is shaped not only by individual psychological factors but by power relations, community dynamics, and structural conditions within which people live (Prilleltensky, 2008). Intergroup contact theory has been widely applied across disciplines, particularly in refugee contexts where it shows that proximity and meaningful everyday interactions

between refugees and host populations can foster more favourable public attitudes while reducing prejudice, stereotyping, and perceived threat, thereby increasing support for displaced groups including Ukrainians (De Coninck et al., 2021; Górska & Tausch, 2023; Pettigrew et al., 2011). A more nuanced understanding of these relationships can foster mutual support, strengthen resilience, and enhance inclusivity within host communities (Al-Hamad et al., 2024). Recent research also highlights the constructive role of hospitality more broadly in fostering social inclusion and alleviating loneliness among refugees, with shared living arrangements identified as a potential mechanism for reducing psychological stress when adequately supported (Altinay et al., 2023). These frameworks reveal hosting as a psychologically complex practice whose demands have been substantially underestimated and whose consequences extend well beyond the individual into the social and political fabric of receiving communities.

Host Experiences of Homes for Ukraine

The most comprehensive quantitative study of HfU sponsors to date was conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2022, November 2022, and August 2023 with 41,323 participants in total (ONS, 2023). The survey captured the sponsors' demographic profiles, motivations, types of support provided, challenges encountered, and additional assistance desired. The findings indicate that most sponsors were over 30 years of age and in employment, with 94% reporting a desire to help those fleeing the war as a primary motivation and 79% identifying available space as a key enabling factor (ONS, 2023). Sponsors reported providing extensive practical and emotional support including assistance with accessing services (91%), community integration (78%), transport (73%), emotional support (70%), language support (70%), and employment (66%). The most commonly reported challenges included uncertainty about guests' futures (66%), visa related issues (50%), navigating public services (29%), and ambiguity about the sponsor role itself

(25%), with many respondents expressing a desire for greater administrative support, clearer guidance, and improved signposting to available resources (ONS, 2023). While the ONS data offers a valuable large-scale overview of sponsors' profiles and experiences, its survey format limits deeper exploration of personal, relational, and psychological dimensions of hosting, limiting its capacity to illuminate the meaning-making processes through which hosts understood and navigated their role.

In March 2023, More in Common, an organisation that carries out regular public opinion research on contemporary UK issues, published a report named “Welcoming Ukrainians: The hosts’ perspective”, drawing on a survey of 1,200 hosts. It was conducted in January 2023 alongside qualitative focus groups, representing the largest independent survey of the HfU scheme outside the ONS research (Tryl & Surmon, 2023). The findings indicated sustained public support for the scheme, with 71% of respondents considering the UK’s reception of over 150,000 Ukrainians to be a positive development and 88% reporting that they were glad to have taken part. Motivations were primarily moral in nature, with 79% reporting a sense of responsibility to help those fleeing the Russian invasion, while practical motivations including available space and the manageable six-month commitment were also evident. Despite the overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the experience, the report documented significant emotional demands, with hosts describing supporting guests through the deaths of family members, sitting with accounts of trauma, and offering comfort to those not yet able to process their experiences. Practical difficulties were also prominent, with 69% of hosts identifying support in accessing public services as the most significant challenge and 66% reporting reliance on third-party organisations including peer support networks on WhatsApp or Facebook, and local faith groups for practical assistance (Tryl & Surmon, 2023).

Qualitative research of the HfU scheme has further enriched the landscape. A recent study explored the experiences of 46 HfU hosts, documenting motivations, hosting experiences, attitudes toward institutional support, and future intentions, concluding that while the scheme demonstrated significant public willingness to engage in humanitarian action, its success was fundamentally dependent on the emotional labour and practical efforts of individual hosts, with significant shortcomings in scheme design and delivery (Tomlinson et al., 2023a). A subsequent study by the same team examined direct and vicarious administrative burdens experienced by hosts when encountering public services, identifying substantial psychological costs generated by navigating complex systems on behalf of guests (Tomlinson et al., 2024). Research also documents how the scheme was structured around devolution of responsibility from government to private individuals, producing conditions of dependency and precarity for guests while placing unsustainable demands on hosts operating without adequate institutional scaffolding (Burrell, 2024). The most recent study of host experiences situates these findings within the broader logic of the HfU scheme, showing how hosts effectively became border agents whose discretionary choices reproduced at the domestic level the exclusionary hierarchies operating at the national policy level (Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026).

The current evidence base establishes that hosting through the HfU scheme was experienced as simultaneously meaningful and demanding, morally significant and practically burdensome, relationally enriching and psychologically costly. The evidence also suggests that the quality of hosting arrangements shape refugees' integration outcomes in measurable ways. The integration framework identifies social connections, access to services, language acquisition, and civic participation as core integration enablers (Ager & Strang, 2008). The hosting relationship directly influences these dimensions, with outcomes shaped substantially by the structural conditions of the arrangement. The survey and interview data

available captures these dynamics primarily at the level of reported experiences rather than at the deeper phenomenological level of lived experience. The psychological processes through which hosts made sense of their role, navigated the emotional complexities of shared life, and integrated this experience into their understandings of themselves and their social worlds remains underexplored. It is this experiential and meaning-making dimension that the present study seeks to address.

Aims and Objectives

The current literature emphasises the structural, relational, and policy dimensions of private hosting of Ukrainian refugees and confirms that the psychological processes through which hosts experienced and made meaning of hosting has yet to be examined in depth. The timeliness of this research is significant. Conducted during an active and still-evolving humanitarian crisis, the study captured the lived experience of hosts at a moment when the longer-term consequences of the scheme are still unfolding. As the first cohort of three-year HfU visas expire and guests face the uncertainties of the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme, the psychological consequences of the hosting arrangement are becoming increasingly visible. Understanding what hosting meant to those who undertook it, while those experiences remain available for reflection, is both an academic and a policy imperative.

Against a backdrop of rising global forced displacement and an increasingly restrictive UK immigration landscape, one shaped in part by the deliberately hostile environment policy that has defined British immigration governance since 2012 (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018), the domestic spaces of ordinary citizens have become significant sites of humanitarian response. That private homes have been called upon to fill this role is itself politically significant in that where the state retreats from welcome, the home becomes the final threshold of welcome. However, the home is not a neutral space. As an anchor of

ontological security (Giddens, 1991), it is the intimate ground within which the self is constituted and a stable sense of belonging in the world is maintained. What it means to open that space to another and what it costs deserves careful attention. Attending closely to what that experience means to those who live it is therefore a matter of academic importance and pressing concern.

The emotional and psychological experience of hosts holds direct relevance for clinical psychology practice through the priorities set out in the NHS 10 Year Health Plan (Department of Health and Social Care, 2025). One of the central commitments of the plan is a shift from hospital care toward prevention, early identification of psychological need, and community-based support. Private refugee hosting as a site of community-based care deserves specific attention, particularly in understanding the psychological costs of the hosting role in order to offer insights that have the potential to inform more psychologically-minded community programming and support as needed. By centring the experiences of hosts as an underexplored phenomenon, this study seeks to illuminate the psychological dimensions of everyday humanitarianism and to contribute evidence that can inform the policy and practice of psychological support for future community and private sponsorship schemes, and to make a distinctly psychological contribution to a literature that has been dominated by sociological and policy-oriented perspectives.

The present study addresses this gap through an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the accounts of 15 British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees through the HfU scheme, which attends to the lived, meaning-making dimensions of the hosting experience in psychological depth. In keeping with the idiography and exploratory orientation of IPA (Smith et al., 2021), the study is guided by a single, open research question:

What is the lived experience of British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees through the HfU scheme, and what sense do hosts make of the psychological, relational, and moral dimensions of opening their homes to someone displaced by war?

Systematic Literature Review Overview

Since February 2022, the quantity of studies of Ukrainian refugee hosting has increased rapidly. The systematic meta-ethnography presented in the following chapter synthesises the existing qualitative literature to explore the lived experience of hosting Ukrainian refugees across European contexts in order to map the structural, relational, and experiential conditions of hosting. The review produces an interpretive account of hosting Ukrainian refugees that both situates the present study and confirms that the lived, meaning-making of the hosting experience remains underexplored.

Systematic Literature Review

While the preceding chapter drew on theoretical frameworks of migration governance, sociological theories of hospitality, phenomenological philosophy, and clinical psychology to construct an analytical scaffold for understanding the hosting experience, it also identified a significant limitation in the existing empirical literature. Since February 2022, the quantity of studies of refugee hosting has increased rapidly but, as yet, the findings have not been systematically synthesised. The present chapter addresses this gap directly with a meta-ethnographic synthesis of qualitative and mixed-methods research on the lived experiences of individuals hosting Ukrainian refugees in private domestic settings across European contexts.

Aims and Rationale of the Synthesis

The aim of the synthesis is to conduct a meta-ethnography of the literature exploring the experiences of hosting Ukrainian refugees, with host experiences as the primary focus. The intention is to raise the analysis to a more nuanced and meaningful conceptual level and to consider the findings in relation to the current study's subsequent data and themes, implications and directions for future research.

Meta-ethnography, developed by Noblit and Hare (1988), was selected as the method of synthesis as its aims align directly with the epistemological commitments of the present study. It treats qualitative studies as interpretative accounts whose concepts, metaphors, and themes can be translated across one another to generate new third-order interpretations which exceed what an individual study can produce alone (Noblit & Hare, 1988). This approach is particularly well suited to a phenomenon as experientially complex and contextually situated as refugee hosting, where the goal is not to establish what hosts universally experience but to develop a conceptually rich and theoretically integrated account of how hosting is lived,

understood, and navigated across diverse settings and circumstances. By raising the analysis to a higher interpretative level, the meta-ethnography presented here provides both a conceptual bridge between the existing literature and the present study, and a theoretical foundation against which the findings of the empirical study that follows can be meaningfully situated and extended.

Method

Design

Noblit and Hare (1988) developed meta-ethnography as a method for synthesising qualitative research to explore and understand experiences and interpretations of experience. Data from individual studies are interpreted into key concepts or themes, which are translated across studies to generate synthesis. Within this process, studies can either align as reciprocal translations or present contradictions as refutational translations, ultimately forming a line-of-argument synthesis. The synthesis was conducted in accordance with the seven phases of meta-ethnography: getting started; deciding what's relevant; reading the studies and assessing quality; determining how studies are related; translating the studies; synthesising translations; and expressing the synthesis. These phases are not strictly sequential but iterative, requiring repeated movement between individual studies and emerging interpretive constructs as the synthesis develops (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidance was followed throughout the identification, selection, and appraisal process (Page et al., 2021).

Search Strategy

A comprehensive database search was conducted on 17th February 2026 across nine electronic databases: MEDLINE Ultimate, APA PsycInfo, APA PsycArticles, CINAHL Ultimate, Scopus, Web of Science, Sage Journals, Wiley, and Taylor & Francis. Searches

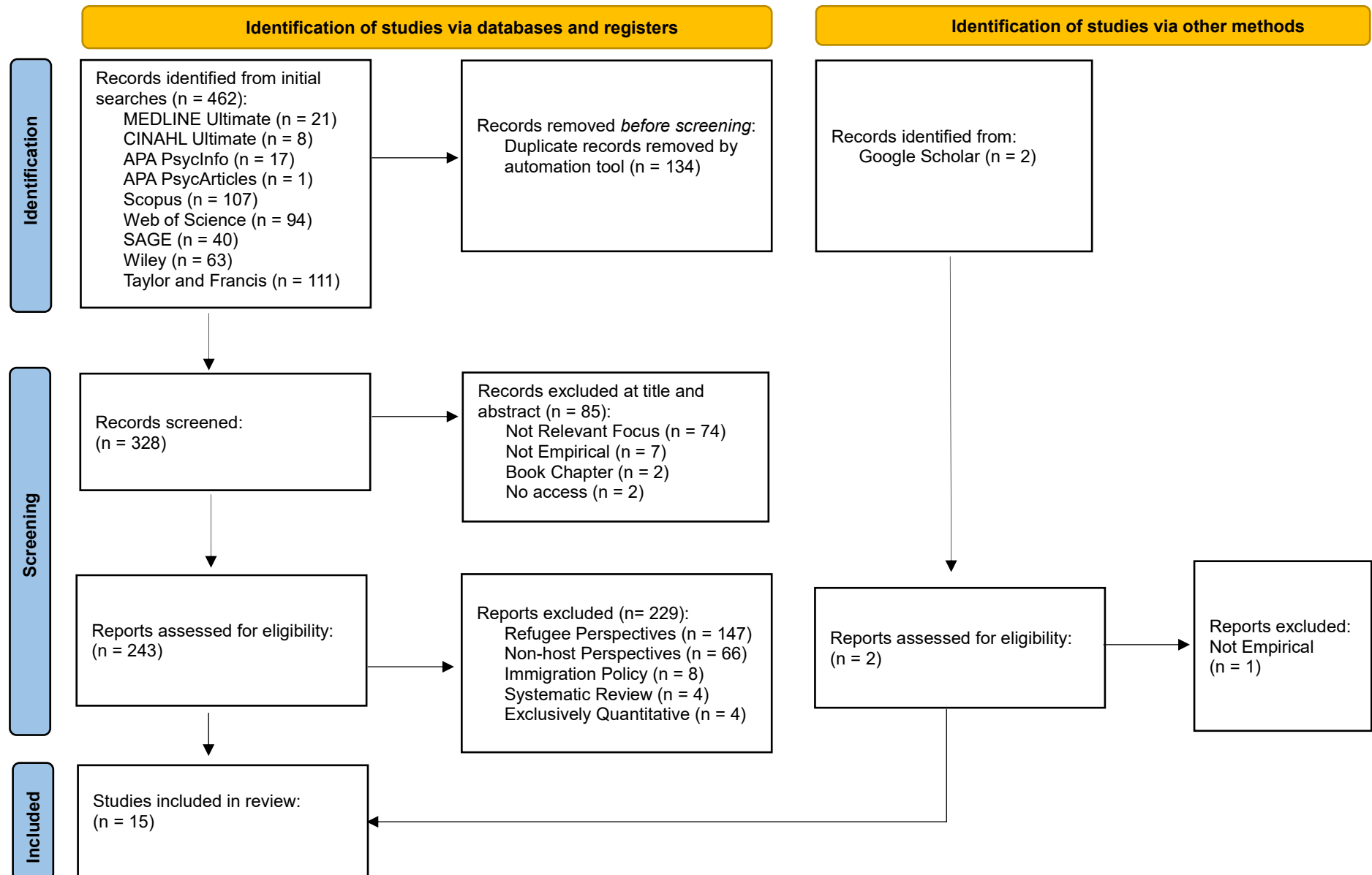
were limited to articles published in English between February 2022 and February 2026.

Three searches term clusters were combined using the following search terms related to the population of interest, the hosting arrangement, and methodology and experience:

1. (“Ukrainian refugee*” OR “Ukrainian asylum seeker*” OR “Ukrainian displace* person*” OR “Ukrainian displace* people” OR “Ukrainian migrant*” OR “Homes for Ukraine”) AND
2. (“host*” OR “family host*” OR “host* famil*” OR “private host*” OR “homestay host*” OR “homestay” OR “homestay accommodat*”) AND
3. (“lived experience” OR “phenomenology” OR “life experience*” OR “experience*” OR “qualitative” OR “interview*” OR “perspective*”).

The initial search identified a total of 462 articles across all databases, with the largest contribution from multi-disciplinary databases of Taylor & Francis (n = 111), Scopus (n = 107), and Web of Science (n = 94). Additional sources were identified from social science databases of Wiley (n = 63) and SAGE (n = 40). Smaller numbers of records were identified from health and psychology focused databases of MEDLINE Ultimate (n = 21), APA PsycInfo (n = 17), CINAHL Ultimate (n = 8), and APA PsycArticles (n = 1). Following the removal of 134 duplicates via Mendeley Reference Manager, 328 articles were screened at title and abstract. Of these, 85 were excluded, yielding 243 articles for full-text eligibility assessment. A further 229 were excluded at this stage, and two additional records were identified through Google Scholar, one of which met eligibility criteria. The final sample comprised 15 papers drawn from 12 studies. Full details of the search and selection process are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram for systematic reviews



Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles were included if they were full-text, peer-reviewed publications in English, published between February 2022 and February 2026, and employed qualitative or mixed-methods designs consisting of substantial qualitative components with sufficient detail to enable meaningful translation (France et al., 2014). Studies that included perspectives of refugees, practitioner, social workers, or community organisations were included provided that host experiences were outlined in sufficient detail to contribute meaningfully to the synthesis. Articles were excluded if they were inaccessible in full text, non-empirical, or published prior to February 2022. Studies focused exclusively on immigration policy, refugee experiences, or the perspectives of activists and institutional actors without substantive attention to hosts were also omitted. Personal accounts, exclusively quantitative studies, and published systematic reviews were similarly excluded. These inclusion and exclusion criteria enabled a targeted and methodologically coherent selection of available literature, focusing on the lived experience of hosts of Ukrainian refugees in private accommodation settings while filtering out peripheral or non-empirical research.

Critical Appraisal

The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative studies was used to assess methodological quality across included studies (CASP, 2024). Whilst there is no definitive rating system for the CASP checklist, a numerical scoring system was applied to enable structured comparison across the evidence base (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007), with 1 point allocated for each criterion met, 0 for each criterion not met, and 0.5 for criteria where insufficient information was available to make a clear judgement, yielding a maximum score of 9 for each study as question 10 of the checklist was not formally rated. Question 10 was deemed to be focused more on the impact and value of the study rather than methodological

quality. In line with established practice in meta-ethnographic synthesis, no studies were excluded solely on the basis of quality appraisal ratings, recognising that excluding studies on methodological grounds risks unnecessarily restricting the synthesis and may disproportionately penalise the quality of reporting rather than the quality of the research itself (Atkins et al., 2008). This decision was also pragmatically justified by the relatively limited evidence base where the exclusion of lower-rated studies would have significantly reduced the conceptual range available for translation. The intention throughout was to prioritise each study's conceptual contribution to the synthesis rather than its methodological presentation.

CASP quality ratings across the included studies ranged from 5.5 to 9 out of a maximum of 9, indicating moderate to high methodological quality overall. Strengths were consistent across studies in the areas of research design, recruitment strategy, and data collection, with all included studies demonstrating clear research aims and appropriate qualitative methodologies. However, several recurring limitations were identified that carry implications for the interpretive weight placed on different studies within the synthesis. Full CASP ratings for each included study are presented in Appendix A.

The most significant and consistent limitation was insufficient attention to researcher reflexivity. The majority of studies scored 0 on this criterion, meaning that the relationship between researcher positionality and the knowledge produced was rarely examined. This is notable for a meta-ethnography, as the second-order constructs on which the synthesis depends are shaped by the interpretative frameworks of the researchers. Where reflexivity was absent, it was not possible to assess the extent to which the researchers' own assumptions may have structured how participants' accounts were interpreted and presented. This limitation has been managed within the synthesis by attending carefully to the language and framing used by the researchers and by highlighting interpretive moves that appeared across

multiple studies rather than relying heavily on constructs from single sources. Constructs that emerged consistently across studies have been weighted more heavily than those appearing in only one or two studies with limited methodological transparency.

Analytical transparency varied considerably across studies. Several received partial scores due to limited description of their analytical procedures, making it difficult to trace the journey from raw data to the themes and concepts presented as findings. This affects the reliability of the second-order constructs available for translation. Where analytical processes were well detailed, such as studies using thematic analysis and grounded theory, greater confidence could be placed in the constructs as reflections of participant experience. Where analysis was described only as “qualitative” or “inductive” without further specification, the third-order constructs developed from those studies should be understood as more tentative contributions to the synthesis. This variation has shaped the synthesis in practice where constructs from methodologically stronger studies provided the interpretive anchors around which less fully described findings were organised. The line-of-argument synthesis presented in the following section should be understood as a theoretically coherent and empirically grounded interpretive account of hosting Ukrainian refugees, one that has drawn on the full range of available evidence while remaining alert to the differential reliability of its sources.

Study Characteristics

The fifteen papers included in this synthesis were drawn from twelve empirical studies conducted across six European countries between 2023 and 2026, reflecting the rapid emergence of scholarship on Ukrainian refugee hosting in the years following the Russian invasion in February 2022. The majority of studies were conducted in the UK and Poland, with additional research from Belgium, Switzerland, Slovakia, and Italy. This geographical concentration carries interpretive implications. The UK and Polish studies are the most

extensive and analytically richest in the dataset, and they share the important structural feature of both countries operating national hosting schemes, which means that hosting in these contexts was embedded in a specific governance architecture that shaped hosting experiences. The Swiss, Belgian, Italian, and Slovak studies, in contrast, document hosting that occurred largely outside of formal national schemes. This distinction is important as the synthesis makes claims across all six national settings, but the interpretive weight of the governance focused construct rests disproportionately on a subset of the evidence base.

Most studies employed qualitative methods ($n = 11$), using semi-structured or narrative interviews, with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) or grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as the primary analytic approach. The remaining studies employed mixed-method designs ($n = 4$), combining surveys with in-depth interviews. Sample sizes ranged from small qualitative samples of 15 to 46 hosts to large-scale online surveys of up to 986 participants. Recruitment was primarily conducted through purposive or snowball sampling via social media platforms, refugee support groups, voluntary associations, and third-sector networks, which may introduce a degree of self-selection bias toward hosts with particularly strong or reflective engagement with the hosting experience. The synthesis is therefore an account of hosting as experienced and narrated by hosts with sufficient investment in the experience to discuss it. Across studies, participants were predominantly women, reflecting broader patterns in the demographic composition of hosting scheme participants documented in national data surveys. This demographic consistency across most contexts suggests a structural feature of the hosting phenomenon and shapes the synthesis.

Three studies from Tomlinson et al. drew on the same dataset of UK-based hosts. Each examines a distinct analytical dimension of the hosting experience: host motivations and experiences (Tomlinson et al., 2023a), the direct and vicarious administrative burden of hosting (Tomlinson et al., 2024), and perceptions of administrative fairness of public

processes (Tomlinson et al., 2023b). These are treated as separate papers within the synthesis while acknowledging their shared sample. Two papers from Berg and Zschomler similarly drew on the same dataset of UK-based hosts, examining arrival infrastructures and brokering practices (Zschomler & Berg, 2024) and racialised hierarchies of belonging (Berg & Zschomler, 2025). These are likewise treated as separate papers, as they make distinct contributions to the synthesis. Key characteristics of all included studies are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: *Study characteristics*

Study No.	Authors and country of research	Title	Aims of study / Research questions	Sample	Data collection method	Method of data analysis	Key concepts and conclusions	CASP rating
1	Tomlinson, J., Kasoulide, E., Meers, J., & Halliday, S. (2023a) UK	Hosts' Experiences of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme: A Qualitative Study	What motivates them to volunteer? What are their experiences of hosting? What do they think of the support they receive from government and public services? Is volunteering changing their outlook? Are they willing to volunteer again?	n= 46 hosts (34 women and 12 men) Purposive and snowball sampling Via social media	Semi-structured interviews (45 minutes) Via Zoom	Qualitative Not specified.	Motivations; Hosting; Services & Support; Attitudes; Future Intentions. Conclusions: HfU scheme considered a success, demonstrating public willingness to engage in humanitarian action however success was dependent on emotional labour and practical efforts with significant shortcomings of design and delivery.	6.5

2	Tomlinson, J., Kasoulide, E., Meers, J., & Halliday, S. (2024)	Direct and vicarious administrative burden: Experiences of UK public services as Homes for Ukraine host	The experiences of sponsors and especially the costs they incur when they encounter administrative burdens.	n= 46 hosts (34 women and 12 men) Purposive and snowball sampling Via social media	Semi-structured interviews (45 minutes) Via Zoom	Qualitative Inductive Analysis	Direct and Vicarious Learning Costs; Direct and Vicarious Compliance Costs; Direct and Vicarious Psychological Costs. Conclusions: Significant and sustained direct and vicarious burdens for hosts.	6.5
3	Tomlinson, J., Kasoulide, E., Meers, J., & Halliday, S. (2023b)	Whose procedural fairness?	To demonstrate the phenomenon of vicarious administrative fairness through an empirical study of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.	n= 46 hosts (34 women and 12 men) Purposive and snowball sampling Via social media	Semi-structured interviews (45 minutes) Via Zoom	Qualitative Not specified.	The subject matter of vicarious experiences; Modes of vicarious experiences; Consequences of vicarious experiences. Conclusions: Simultaneous administrative processes through	5.5

							different roles (advocate/supporter/ bystander), shaping host attitudes towards state.	
4	Luczaj, K. (2023) Poland	Multifaceted Hospitality. The Micro- Dynamics of Host–Guest Relations in Polish Homes after 24 February 2022	What kinds of problems occurred and how were they sorted out from the point of view of the host?	n= 15 hosts (14 women and 1 man, aged 20s – 70s) Via social media	Semi- structured interviews	Qualitative Thematic analysis	Everyday Routines and Negotiations; Difficult Life Situations and Stress; Quarrels Among Migrants; Neglecting One’s Own Family; Too Strong an Emotional Involvement; Incompatible Expectations. Conclusions: Hosting as emotionally and socially complex with most experiencing difficulties that affect	7

							everyday life, wellbeing and household dynamics, even when hosts have the best intentions.	
5	Arcadu, M., Olcese, M., Rovetta, G., & Migliorini, L. (2024) Italy	“Bridging cultures through food”: A qualitative analysis of food dynamic between Italian host families and Ukrainian refugees	To explore the dynamics arising from the cohabitation of Italian hosts and Ukrainian refugees, focusing on the interactive exchanges related to food.	n= 24 hosts (mostly women, aged 31 – 77 years) Purposive and snowball sampling Via voluntary associations	Semi-structured interviews (40 minutes) Face-to-face	Qualitative Grounded Theory	Differences in Eating Habits - (Time, Kind of Food, Children’s Dietary Education, Routine); Issues Regarding the Eating Habits of Refugee Children; Food as an Intercultural Exchange; Commensality - (As an Opportunity, As a Challenge). Conclusions: Food practices as central site of tension and connection.	8

6	Skowrońska, M. (2025)	Guest, Family, or Roommate? How Framing Guides Private Hospitality of Ukrainian Refugees in Poland	How do the six dimensions of hospitality—domain, duration of stay, selectivity, social distance, obligations, and agency—shape the framing strategies that hosts employ? How do Polish hosts interpret and reframe the hosting relationship as those dimensions evolve over time, and how do these interpretations affect day- to-day cohabitation?	n= 15 hosts (10 women and 5 men) Via refugee support groups on social media	Semi- structured interviews (90 minutes) 13 Face-to face and 2 video call (some at interviewee's home)	Qualitative Thematic Analysis	Elements of the Hospitality Framework and Their Challenges - Hosting Domain: Private Homes, Public Meanings; Duration and the Weight of Time; Selectivity and Moral Filtering; Social Distance and Emotional Closeness; Reciprocity and Obligations: Transaction or Moral Economy?; Agency/Control: Who Hosts Whom? Reframing and Its Challenges - From Initial Hospitality to	8
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							Shifting Roles; Reframing as Kinship; Reframing as Cohabitation; Disrupted Reframing: Generation, Gender, and (Dis)ability in Unstable Frames. Conclusions: Hospitality frame was unstable, hosting as dynamic relational process of reframing.	
7	Rancew- Sikora, D., Czapka, E., Mika, B., & Kossakowski, R. (2025) Poland	A study of disillusionment in Polish families hosting refugees from Ukraine in 2022	To explore the experiences of families hosting Ukrainian refugees following the Russian invasion.	n= 15 hosts (14 women and 3 men, including 2 couples) Via social networks	Narrative interviews	Qualitative Thematic Analysis	A Common Beginning: Welcoming the Refugees with the Support of Collective Mobilisation; Types and Dimensions of Hosts' Experiences: Daily Annoyances	8.5

(Home Space and
Material Objects,
Children); Emotional
Mismatch Between
Hosts and Refugees;
Dimensions of
Disillusionment:
(Relational
Dissatisfaction,
Questioning the
Moral Identity of the
Newcomer as a War
Victim, Questioning
the Moral Identity of
the Host as an
Altruistic and
Generous Person).
Conclusions: Hosting
follows a similar
emotional trajectory
where hosts
internalise blame or

							externalise frustration.	
8	Burrell, K. (2024) UK	Domesticating Responsibility: Refugee Hosting and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme	What actually happens when responsibility is diffused in this way? And what impact does this shifting of focus have on those offering support, and for those receiving it?	n= 58 (30 hosts, mostly women, aged 30s – 70s) 15 Ukrainian guests and 13 central and local government representativ es and charities	Interviews Online	Qualitative Not specified	Finding Hosts and Homes: Matching and Vetting; Responsible Hosts, Dependent Guests; Uncertain Temporalities: Moving On in a Housing Crisis. Conclusions: HfU structured around devolution of responsibility from government to private individuals.	8
9	Politi, E., Van Acker, K., Dangubić, M., Van Keer, R., Pignolo, L., Claeys, J.,	Sharing is caring: a micro- level analysis of domestic hospitality for displaced	To identify factors that make hosting experiences meaningful and rewarding for hosts, while minimising the risk of reproducing power	n = 742 (online survey) n= 58 (interviews:	Interviews (90 minutes) Belgium	Mixed- methods Thematic Analysis	Harmonious Cohabitation Convergence; Gradual Fatigue and Exhaustion Emergence;	9

	Favre, Y., Green, E., Roblain, A., & Schrooten, M. (2025)	Ukrainians in Belgium and Switzerland	imbalances, exclusionary logics, or compassion fatigue.	28 in Belgium, 30 in Switzerland, 41 women and 22 men)	Switzerland (at participant's home)		Dysfunctional Cohabitation Divergence. Conclusions: Hosting as a dynamic and negotiated process with three trajectories, revealing how everyday practices are closely intertwined with wider social and political hierarchies.	
		Belgium Switzerland		Convenience and snowball sampling Via social media, outreach to known hosts and professional networks				
10	Dula, E., & Fuchs, G. (2025)	Homestay accommodation as care work: a case study of private	How refugees and hosts experienced private accommodation, and whether and in what way private accommodation	n= 986 (online survey) n= 24	Narrative Interviews	Mixed- methods Grounded Theory	Caring About – Realising the Need of Care (Realising the Needs of Refugees); State	8

accommodation	facilitates the arrival of	(12 hosts and
for refugees	refugees and promotes	12 refugees)
from Ukraine in	social integration.	
Switzerland		

Authorities and the
 Host's Need for
 Care; Caregiving –
 Practical Dimension
 of Care; Care-
 receiving:
 Negotiating
 Relations Through
 Care (Mutual Care
 Relations, Denying
 and Rejecting Care –
 Perspective of
 Refugees, Denying
 and Rejecting Care –
 Perspectives of the
 Hosts); Caring With
 – Beyond the
 Temporary.
 Conclusions: Hosting
 as intensive care
 work that is
 negotiated.

11	Lumley-Sapanski, A., & Garbers, K. (2026) UK	Hosting as a border making process: Understanding the role of proximity in explaining the motivations of British hosts in the Homes for Ukraine scheme	To understand hosting experiences and to gain an understanding of people's motivations for volunteering to be a part of the HfU scheme.	n = 35 (aged 33 – 77) Via third sector hosting organisation	Semi-structured interviews and surveys	Qualitative mixed-methods Deductive approach	Cultural and spatial proximity of the Ukrainian conflict and Ukrainian displaced; Intent and need: seeing the similarity of Ukrainians to those fleeing violence in WWII; The role of gender and family status: creating a sense of worth and vulnerability; Implications of special proximity and relational responsibility. Conclusions: Hosting as bordering process operating through state and home.	7.5
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12	Alrawadieh, Z., Altinay, L., Urbanciková, N., & Hudec, O. (2024)	Refugees at home: the role of hospitableness in fostering pro-social attitudes and behaviours towards refugees	To examine the role of hospitableness towards refugees, as embraced by local hosts, in engendering positive social outcomes, including fostering favourable attitudes and empathy towards refugees, satisfaction from hosting refugees in private dwellings and advocacy for hosting them.	n = 160 (surveys) n= 25 (12 women, 13 men)	Interviews	Mixed-methods Thematic Analysis	Moral Obligation; Practical and Emotional Support; Satisfaction; Challenges; Perspective-Taking and Empathy; Selective Hosting; Advocacy. Conclusions: Hosting as a social and humanitarian practice that promotes empathy and satisfaction.	7
13	Zschomler, S. & Berg, M. L. (2024)	Homes for Ukraine: Arrival Infrastructures and the UK's "New Bespokism"	Examine arrival infrastructures and arrival brokering practices emerging from the UK government's response to people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine.	n = 23 (guests, hosts, practitioners, social workers; host number not specified)	Narrative interviews In-person and online	Qualitative Not specified	Hosts as Arrival Brokers; Providing Material and Practical Support and Mobilising (New) Networks; Between Facilitating and Constraining Agency.	8

				Via Anglican Church networks and local authorities			Conclusions: HfU combined formal and informal infrastructure shaped by power and exclusion.	
14	Berg, M. L., & Zschomler, S. (2025)	Superdiversity, the “new bespokeism”, and hierarchies of belonging: the Homes for Ukraine scheme in the UK	The proliferation of migration channels and immigration statuses as a constitutive characteristic of superdiversity.	n = 23 (guests, hosts, practitioners, social workers; host number not specified)	Narrative interviews In-person and online	Qualitative Not specified	“I saw this girl walk out of Ukraine”: reckoning with racialised hierarchies of deservingness; “A cosy house with an amazing garden”: the Homes for Ukraine scheme and class.	7.5
				Via Anglican Church networks and local authorities			Conclusions: Hosting as reinforced exclusion and privatised form of refuge.	
15	Wilczyńska, E. (2025)	Refugees or Guests: Polish Rural and	To recapture the Polish countryside inhabitants’ attitudes towards refugees	Not specified	15 diary entries from a memoir	Qualitative	Guests and Refugees; Integration into a Social Network; In	6.5

Poland	Small-Town Residents' Response to the Influx of War Refugees from Ukraine	from Ukraine from the perspective of hospitality theory, as sharing their homes was one of the most significant experiences for Polish rural residents involved in providing support.	competition called "My Local Community Towards Refugees"	Critical reading and textual analysis	Defence of the Guests. Conclusions: Initial generosity and integration and persistent socio-economic and cultural tensions.
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Determining how the Studies are Related

The synthesis began with immersive reading of each included paper, with attention to how the researchers framed their findings and implications, and identifying points of reciprocal and reputational relationships between studies.

Translating the Studies into one Another

The themes and concepts identified in the original studies were reviewed to ensure they were encompassed in the relevant key concept in the translation. The researcher constructed detailed summary tables for each paper documenting first-order constructs drawn directly from participant accounts and interpretations, and second-order constructs representing the researcher's interpretation of those accounts to ensure that all identified concepts were incorporated into the synthesis (Appendix B). Key concepts for all studies are illustrated in a comparison table presented in Table 2 in the results. The table maps the constructs to convey how they are grounded in specific studies where 'ticks' indicate that a given study engages with the corresponding construct.

Synthesising the Translations

Shared themes were identified across the interpretations and concepts generated within the studies. The relationships were largely reciprocal as detailed in the line-of-argument synthesis. The key concepts were integrated into four overarching third-order constructs: Moral Initiation; The Hidden Labour of Hosting; Home as a Site of Governance; The Shifting Ground of Hosting. Within these constructs, 14 second-order constructs were identified: moral motivation and ethical action; historical and cultural proximity; selective deservingness; care labour; emotional labour; bureaucratic labour; domestic governance and everyday negotiation; gendered labour and responsibility; state abdication and responsibilisation; power asymmetry; racialisation and inequality; harmonious and

transformative trajectories; fatigue, disillusionment and withdrawal; temporal uncertainty and post-hosting precarity.

Results

The following synthesis presents the findings of a meta-ethnography as a line-of-argument. The translated concepts from individual studies are integrated into a coherent interpretative account that reconceptualises the phenomenon as a whole rather than cataloguing its component parts (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Across the 15 included papers, private hosting of Ukrainian refugees emerged as a morally activated, relationally complex, and structurally embedded practice whose conditions and consequences were shaped more by structural forces than by moral qualities of the individuals involved. The synthesis organises this account around four interrelated third-order constructs. The constructs are not sequential stages but interlocking dimensions of a single process, each shaping and being shaped by the others.

Table 2: *Cross-comparison of studies by concept*

Third-order constructs	Second-order constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total ticks
Moral Initiation	Moral Motivation and Ethical Action	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	10
	Historical and Cultural Proximity	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	8
	Selective Deservingness	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	11
The Hidden Labour of Hosting	Care Labour	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	10
	Emotional Labour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	12
	Bureaucratic Labour	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓			7
	Domestic Governance and Everyday Negotiation	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			10
	Gendered Labour and Responsibility				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	9

Home as a Site of Governance	State Abdication and Responsibilisation	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	9	
	Power Asymmetry	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	13	
	Racialisation and Inequality	✓		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	8	
The Shifting Ground of Hosting	Harmonious and Transformative Trajectories	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	10
	Fatigue, Disillusionment and Withdrawal	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	10
	Temporal Uncertainty and Post-Hosting Precarity	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	12

*Study 1: Tomlinson et al. (2023a) Study 2: Tomlinson et al. (2024) Study 3: Tomlinson et al. (2023b) Study 4: Luczaj. (2023) Study 5: Arcadu et al. (2024) Study 6: Skowrońska. (2025) Study 7: Rancew-Sikora et al. (2025) Study 8: Burrell. (2024) Study 9: Politi et al. (2025) Study 10: Dula & Fuchs. (2025) Study 11: Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers. (2026) Study 12: Alrawadieh et al. (2024) Study 13: Zschomler & Berg. (2024) Study 14: Berg & Zschomler. (2025) Study 15: Wilczyńska. (2025)

Moral Initiation

Private hosting is activated by a convergence of emotional, historical, cultural, and structural conditions that make hosting feel not only possible but morally necessary. The third-order construct of moral initiation captures the socially structured conditions under which hosting was activated and the filters that simultaneously determined who was eligible to receive that welcome. Three second-order constructs sit within this construct: moral motivation and ethical action; historical and cultural proximity; and selective deservingness.

Moral Motivation and Ethical Action. Across the studies, the decision to host was consistently framed as a moral response to perceived injustice, with most studies describing the moral obligation to host as an empathetic or altruistic duty (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a; Wilczyńska, 2025). Several studies also revealed that the personal moral response was simultaneously structurally produced (Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026). These studies describe the mechanisms through which the state secured moral obligation as a historical or geographical responsibility with media narratives framing hosting as patriotic rather than merely compassionate (Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026), and a civic solidarity or ethical citizenship through which the state secured voluntary labour it was unwilling to fund (Burrell, 2024). The underlying interpretive construct translated reciprocally where hosts positioned themselves as responding to an imperative grounded in shared humanity, proximity, or responsibility. For some hosts the structural production of their moral motivation became visible through the act of hosting, and produced an awareness that their capacity to feel obligation toward Ukrainians was inseparable from racialised perceptions of cultural familiarity, which was experienced as uncomfortable rather

than affirming for participants (Berg & Zschomler, 2025). Moral motivation was called forth from structural conditions rather than purely from within hosts themselves.

Historical and Cultural Proximity. In many accounts, the moral impulse was shaped by historical memory or perceived cultural proximity to Ukrainian suffering (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a; Wilczyńska, 2025). References to the Second World War, European identity, Slavic kinship, and media narratives of Ukrainian displacement were recurrent across studies, suggesting that moral motivation was not generated solely through personal disposition but amplified by collective cultural memory and public discourse (Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Wilczyńska, 2025). Lumley-Sapanski and Garbers (2026) identify three distinct forms of proximity driving host motivation: geopolitical proximity to a conflict on European soil, sociocultural proximity constructed through perceived shared values and lifestyles, and historical narrative proximity actively manufactured through governmental invocations of wartime hospitality. Even when framed differently as duty, solidarity, caring about social injustice, or geopolitical identification, reciprocal translation of these accounts across studies gave a consistent interpretive construct that hosting was experienced as ethically necessary rather than optional. Proximity generated moral resonance, intensifying the sense of obligation while simultaneously determining who was eligible to receive exceptional welcome and implicitly excluding those perceived as less proximate.

Selective Deservingness. Moral motivation was neither neutral nor unconditional. Across the synthesis, processes of selective deservingness were embedded within hosts' ethical reasoning from the very beginning of the hosting decision (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al.,

2023a, 2023b; Wilczyńska, 2025). Informal cultural filtering (Skowrońska, 2025), gendered vulnerability assumptions (Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026), explicit racial preferences (Alrawadieh et al., 2024), and racialised hierarchies of deserving (Berg & Zschomler, 2025) indicated that moral inclusion operated through boundaries. Hosts navigated internal divisions, distinguishing between Ukrainians from the east and the west of the country on cultural and political grounds (Luczaj, 2023), imposed conditional expectations of language learning, work-seeking, and gratitude that transformed unconditional welcome into a provisional arrangement (Dula & Fuchs, 2025), and questioned why Ukrainians received exceptional access to services routinely denied to refugees from other backgrounds (Tomlinson et al., 2023b). Racialised hierarchies and assumptions shaped who was welcomed and on what terms, with White, Christian Ukrainian women and children positioned as deserving refugees in ways that implicitly excluded other displaced populations from consideration.

Selective deservingness did not operate only at the moment of initiation. A second level of the construct emerged through sustained relational contact as several studies reported the gradual erosion of hosts' initial unconditional welcome into a judgement of whether guests deserved continued care. Rancew-Sikora et al. (2025) document this most clearly, showing hosts questioning guests' moral right to be considered war victims on the basis of behaviour, lifestyle choices, and the perceived absence of visible suffering. This relational erosion of welcome drives the trajectory of disillusionment in the fourth third-order construct.

At a third level, selective deservingness operated as a feature of governance rather than merely individual attitude. Differential state provisions with Ukrainians receiving the right to work from day one while asylum seekers from other backgrounds receive minimal stipends demonstrate the conditions of welcome at the level of institutional design (Burrell, 2024; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026). Hospitality operated through moral evaluation

rather than unconditional openness, and the criteria of that evaluation were racial, cultural, and gendered in ways that most hosts would not have recognised as criteria at all. Across all three levels, selective deservingness operated not as an individual failing but as a consistently reproduced feature of the hosting arrangement, present before, during, and beyond the relationship itself.

The Hidden Labour of Hosting

The second third-order construct is built around the gap between what the state framed hosting as and what hosting required in practice. The provision of accommodation, while symbolically significant, constituted only the most visible dimension of the hosting experience. It required multidimensional labour that was simultaneously situated within a domestic space, systematically transferred from the state, and sustained by a moral demand. Hosting quickly revealed itself to be far more demanding, intimate, and structurally complex than initial framings suggested. Five second-order constructs sit within this third-order construct: care labour; emotional labour; bureaucratic labour; domestic governance and everyday negotiation; and gendered labour and responsibility. Each is feminised in ways that run through the entire construct rather than residing solely in the final sub-construct.

Care Labour. The practical, material, and physical labour of hosting emerged consistently across studies as the foundational substance of everyday hosting (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Arcadu et al., 2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2024a; Wilczyńska, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Hosts described sharing meals, providing transport, and facilitating access to healthcare and education (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Care was embodied, time-intensive, and relational, reshaping the texture of daily life in ways that extended well beyond the provision of accommodation. Arcadu et al.'s (2024) detailed account of food dynamics between Italian hosts and Ukrainian

refugees illustrates the particular significance of everyday domestic practices as sites of relational care. The extent and intimacy of care required became visible to hosts only in retrospect, once the relationship was underway and the demands had accumulated beyond what was initially anticipated (Tomlinson et al., 2023a; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Wilczyńska, 2025). Care labour therefore transformed the home into an infrastructure of support that operated continuously and often invisibly, making demands difficult to name, quantify, or anticipate, and ultimately difficult to refuse once a guest was living within the home.

Emotional Labour. Distinct from care labour in that it involved managing feeling rather than doing tasks, emotional labour was continuous, unevenly distributed, and morally charged across the studies (Alrawadie et al., 2024; Arcadu et al., 2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Wilczyńska, 2025). Hosts described absorbing war-related grief, navigating psychological distress in guests, providing what several described as informal therapeutic support, and sustaining the appearance of patience and welcome in the face of accumulated frustration. Tomlinson et al. (2023b) document the emotional burden of hosts absorbing the weight of their guests' encounters with public systems as their own and experiencing anxiety and distress in response to bureaucratic delays. A further hidden form of emotional labour of tolerance was documented where politeness norms suppressed open negotiation and hosts absorbed resentment silently rather than risk the hosting relationship (Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025). These accounts demonstrate strong reciprocal translation around the concept of hosting as sustained affective labour rather than a single act of generosity. Emotional fatigue emerged as a product of proximity to suffering and sustained uncompensated care rather than any failure of moral commitment. Moral action became emotionally costly over time.

Bureaucratic Labour. A frequently underestimated dimension of the hosting role was bureaucratic labour. Hosts across multiple national contexts described navigating immigration systems, welfare processes, healthcare registration, educational enrolment, and benefit applications on behalf of guests who were unfamiliar with the institutional landscape of their receiving society (Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Tomlinson et al. (2024) provide the most systematic account of this burden, identifying learning costs, compliance costs, and psychological costs as distinct dimensions. Lumley-Sapanski and Garbers (2026) document how hosts effectively became border agents through vetting, matching, and administratively supporting guests in ways that transferred the gate keeping functions of the state to private individuals. Private households absorbed state administrative functions transforming homes into bureaucratic infrastructures. Hosts did not simply offer shelter, they filled institutional gaps, absorbing resettlement responsibilities that the state had delegated.

Domestic Governance and Everyday Negotiation. The relational micro-politics of shared domestic life through negotiation of food, space, daily routines, parenting norms, and household rules were a persistent dimension of labour (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Arcadu et al., 2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Studies consistently described boundary strain (Tomlinson et al., 2023a), expectation mismatch (Luczaj, 2023), struggles over agency and control (Skowrońska, 2025), and the asymmetric power embedded in whose domestic norms prevailed (Burrell, 2024; Politi et al., 2025). Zschomler and Berg (2024) show how the quality of these negotiations varied substantially depending on the material conditions of the hosting arrangement, with hosts in adequately spaced and well-matched arrangements describing domestic cohabitation as manageable and

enriching, while those in overcrowded or poorly matched settings describing the home as a site of friction and strain. The domestic space was not only a site of governance and control but held the conditions for intercultural exchange. Reports of hosts and guests cooking together, exchanging recipes, growing vegetables in gardens were described as some of the most meaningful moments of the hosting experience (Arcadu et al., 2024). These micro-negotiations reflect a shared dynamic in which hospitality generated relational closeness while simultaneously exposing power asymmetries inherent in the structure of hosting itself.

Gendered Labour and Responsibility. The distribution of labour across all dimensions within hosting households was profoundly gendered. Hosting disproportionately fell to women (Arcadu et al., 2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Wilczyńska, 2025). Dula and Fuchs (2025) report that two-thirds of their Swiss survey respondents were female, providing substantial evidence for the feminisation of the hosting role. Practical and psychological support fell predominantly to women (Burrell, 2024), female hosts absorbed the emotional costs of managing domestic tensions silently (Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025), female hosts were rendered invisible in their own homes by patriarchal guest norms (Politi et al., 2025), and it was predominantly women's networks who organised the infrastructures of care for Ukrainian arrivals in Polish rural communities (Wilczyńska, 2025). Hosting did not create the gendered distribution of labour, it reproduced and intensified an existing structural inequality, making it visible in a new context.

Home as a Site of Governance

This construct moves from the interior of the hosting relationship to its structural and political conditions. Private hosting enacted and reproduced the structural conditions of refugee governance, including the deliberate transfer of state responsibility to domestic space, the power asymmetries that the transfer produced, and the racialised hierarchies that

determined whose suffering warranted exceptional welcome. The private home was not simply a space of compassion, it was simultaneously a site where the state operated. The excess labour documented in the previous construct is explained by the governance transfer captured here. Three second-order constructs sit within this: state abdication and responsabilisation; power asymmetry; and racialisation and inequality.

State Abdication and Responsibilisation. Rather than disappearing at the threshold of the home, state governance was reconfigured and redistributed from formal institutions into private households through a process of responsabilisation that transformed individual citizens into informal agents of refugee governance (Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2023b, 2024; Wilczyńska, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Burrell (2024) makes this argument most directly, with the HfU scheme relocating refugee resettlement away from the state and into intimate domestic spaces, and revealing through her interviews with institutional actors that this was not a planning failure but a deliberate governance decision. The state did not retreat from the home, it governed at a distance while dependent entirely on what happened inside. Hosts in Switzerland explicitly describe taking over the work of social workers in the absence of adequate provision (Dula & Fuchs, 2025). In the UK, the absence of state infrastructure produced a new form of privatised bespoke support in which the quality of arrival support depended entirely on the resources, networks, and initiatives of individual host households (Berg & Zschomler, 2025). In Polish rural contexts, community networks filled the institutional gaps entirely, with no formal state infrastructure coordinating or supporting the reception of Ukrainian arrivals (Wilczyńska, 2025). Tomlinson et al. (2023a, 2023b, 2024) document the administrative vacuum this produced across the UK context, where hosts navigated welfare, education, health, and immigration systems. Hosting therefore operated inside state structures rather than outside them. The responsibility for resettlement was not

shared between state and citizen but transferred from one to the other, with private homes becoming informal sites of governance and hosts becoming the human infrastructure.

Power Asymmetry. The structural power relations between host and guest were actively produced and entrenched by governance design not just relationally enacted (Arcadu et al., 2024; Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2023b; Wilczyńska, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Guests relied on hosts for bureaucratic navigation, social network access, housing security, and emotional stability (Burrell, 2024). Hosts who acted as advocates and mediators in public processes wielded a structurally produced power over guests' access to services (Tomlinson et al., 2023b). Power asymmetry was explicitly situated in the UK as hosts were not simply helpers but informal border agents whose discretionary choices about who to sponsor, and on what terms, reproduced at the domestic level the exclusionary hierarchies operating at the national level (Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026). Additionally, class-based matching processes whereby hosts specified requirements for English proficiency, educational background, independence, and family size, further compounded this asymmetry, with Ukrainian refugees having far less agency in the selection process (Berg & Zschomler, 2025). Dependency was generated by the conditions that provided no independent infrastructure for guests, no regulatory oversight of hosts, and no exit pathway that did not require guests to render themselves homeless.

Racialisation and Inequality. Racialised and classed hierarchies gave the dynamic of domestic governance its particular structural character across the dataset. The synthesis reveals that hospitality was not distributed evenly but shaped by existing inequalities of race, class, and cultural proximity that were simultaneously individual attitudes and structural governance effects (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024;

Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2023b; Wilczyńska, 2025). In the UK, the warm welcome extended to a white, European, Christian population of predominantly women and children contrasted starkly with continuing hostile environment policies directed at other displaced populations (Burrell, 2024). Studies in the UK further identified racialised and classed hierarchies shaping who was welcomed with exceptionalism narratives (Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026), and preferential schemes (Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2023b). Alrawadieh et al. (2024) provided explicit evidence with Slovak hosts stating they would be afraid to host someone from Africa, making visible the racial prejudice operating beneath the threshold of conscious articulation. Private hosting did not occur outside systems of inequality, it reflected and reproduced them.

The Shifting Ground of Hosting

The final third-order construct captures the consequences of the preceding three constructs. It outlines the divergence of relational, material, and temporal outcomes produced by hosting from kinship to disillusionment, burnout, and structural abandonment. The outcome that prevailed was determined more by structural conditions than by individual moral qualities. Positive trajectories clustered where structural resources were present, negative trajectories clustered where they were absent. Disillusionment and fatigue were not moral failures, they were consequences of unsupported care provision in conditions of institutional inadequacy. Three second-order constructs sit within this: harmonious and transformative trajectories; fatigue, disillusionment and withdrawal; and temporal uncertainty and post-hosting precarity.

Harmonious and Transformative Trajectories. Positive hosting outcomes characterised by kinship, cultural exchange, mutual learning, and guests developing independence were documented across the studies and represented a distinct trajectory (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Arcadu et al., 2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj,

2023; Politi et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a; Wilczyńska, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). For some hosts, familial bonds developed through sustained interaction (Politi et al., 2025, Skowrońska, 2025), with connections formed with guests described as the most rewarding aspect of the entire experience (Tomlinson et al., 2023a). Studies documented that intercultural exchange of food, language, and domestic practice produced lasting social connections and transformed understanding in both parties (Arcadu et al., 2024; Luczaj, 2023). The most clearly evidenced structural enabler of harmonious trajectories was host social capital where well-networked hosts could broker access to employment, housing, and social participation (Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Social capital is understood as a structurally distributed resource, unevenly available across class and geography, making it a structural condition rather than based solely on individual effort. Harmonious trajectories were also enabled by the structural conditions of the material and spatial arrangements of hosting where having more physical space within the home allowed for separation, privacy, and autonomy (Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Politi et al., 2025). Alrawadieh et al. (2024) documented positive outcomes in Slovakia in the absence of any formal private sponsorship scheme. This finding suggests that the structural conditions shaping trajectories also include the social and normative context of hosting, emphasising the cultural, community, and relational context as dimensions of structural resource as well as material and institutional dimensions. The harmonious trajectory was not produced by individual moral virtue, it was produced by the presence of structural conditions that enabled it.

Fatigue, Disillusionment and Withdrawal. The trajectory documented most extensively by Rancew-Sikora et al. (2025) and present across multiple studies, moved from initial enthusiasm through gradual exhaustion to moral disillusionment and, in many cases, the erosion of the hosts' unconditional welcome into an increasingly scrutinising judgement of whether their guest truly deserved continued care (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Arcadu et al.,

2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a; Wilczyńska, 2025). The disillusionment trajectory was seen through the lens of food, with initial enthusiasm giving way to frustrations regarding different eating practices (Arcadu et al., 2024). A similar pattern was present in Switzerland, where hosts' initial care gave way to compassion fatigue as caregiving demands exceeded sustainable capacity without adequate institutional support (Dula & Fuchs, 2025). Even where overall satisfaction was higher, gradual disillusionment emerged as hosts described reduced freedom, language barriers, and cultural incompatibility accumulating over time (Alrawadieh et al., 2024). This is where selective deservingness reappears in its most intimate form, with hosts gradually eroding their unconditional welcome as guests failed to perform the expected image of the grateful war victim (Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025). Wilczyńska (2025) documents the decline in solidarity over time at the individual level however she also insists that the experience of hosting produced new social bonds, community infrastructure, and lasting connections. This reveals that divergent outcomes operated simultaneously at the individual level with hosting relationships following trajectories of harmony or disillusionment depending on their structural conditions, while at the community level hosting could produce durable social capital regardless of how individual arrangements ended.

Temporal Uncertainty and Post-hosting Precarity. Temporal uncertainty pervaded the hosting experience across nearly all included studies, with hosts operating without a clear understanding of how long the arrangement would last, what would trigger its end, or what institutional infrastructure would support the transition to come (Alrawadieh et al., 2024; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Luczaj, 2023; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Politi et al., 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025; Skowrońska, 2025; Tomlinson et al., 2023a, 2024; Wilczyńska, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Hosting was initiated under culturally and

politically produced assumptions of short-term emergency support yet frequently extended far beyond that framing without support being made available as the demands of the arrangement accumulated. In Poland, hosts found the indefinite nature of hosting arrangements particularly difficult, with the inability to anticipate an end generating an emotional burden (Luczaj, 2023), and hosts extending arrangements beyond their own tolerance out of guilt, trapped by the moral commitment they had made in the absence of any institutional alternative for their guests (Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025). In Switzerland, the absence of clear temporal boundaries prevented hosts making plans for their own lives and generated resentment that complicated the ongoing care relationship (Dula & Fuchs, 2025). In Slovakia, hosts whose initial positive orientation was progressively eroded by uncertainty about resettlement and return found that temporal ambiguity prevented both parties from investing in a shared future (Alrawadieh et al., 2024).

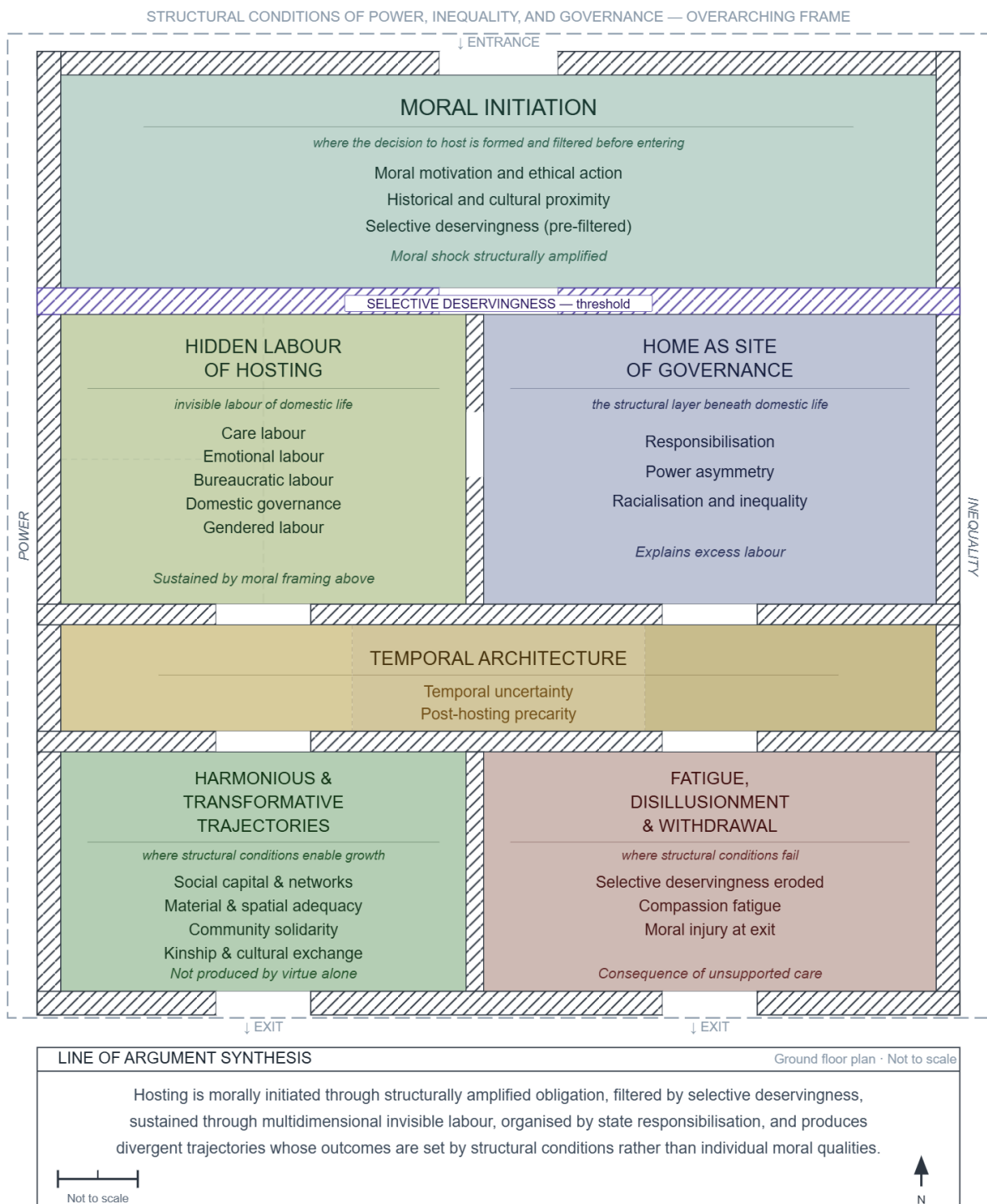
The post-hosting dimension of this precarity was documented most starkly in UK based studies. The ethical impossibility created by the HfU scheme required hosts to make their guests homeless as a condition of accessing social housing (Burrell, 2024). The compliance costs and psychological burden of navigating the transition process was also documented, with hosts describing the end-of-hosting stage as the most stressful and least supported phase of the entire experience (Tomlinson et al., 2024). The quality of post-hosting outcomes depended entirely on the social capital and institutional connections that individual hosts could mobilise, with guests whose hosts had strong networks transitioning to independent accommodation while those without such connections faced renewed displacement (Zschomler & Berg, 2024). Hosting ended in many cases not with resolution but with a second structural failure, the precarity that followed mirroring the inadequacy that had characterised the arrangement throughout.

Line of Argument Synthesis

Following Noblit and Hare's (1988) final phase, the translations were synthesised into a line-of-argument synthesis that reconceptualises private hosting of Ukrainian refugees as a morally activated yet structurally burdened and relationally negotiated practice of domestic governance whose outcomes are determined less by individual moral qualities than by structural conditions within which hosting unfolds.

Hosting is morally initiated through an ethically charged response to perceived injustice that is filtered from the outset by racialised hierarchies of cultural proximity and selective deservingness that are simultaneously individual attitudes and governance effects that determine who is eligible to receive welcome. The enactment of this moral commitment requires multidimensional invisible labour that vastly exceeds what was anticipated, or supported, with disproportionate labour falling on women. Simultaneously, the domestic dimension of this labour also contained conditions for intercultural exchange as well as governance. This excess labour is the product of state responsibilisation, in which the private home is reconfigured as a site of governance where fundamental power asymmetries are reproduced and the racial hierarchies that constitute Ukrainians as uniquely deserving simultaneously justify the exclusion of others. The synthesis does not diminish the moral commitment that hosts brought to this experience but situates that commitment within the structural conditions that initiated it and ultimately shaped the outcomes at an individual and community level. The line-of-argument synthesis is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: *Visual representation of line-of-argument synthesis*



Discussion

The meta-ethnographic synthesis presented in this chapter produces an account of private hosting as a morally activated yet structurally burdened practice of domestic

governance whose conditions and consequences were shaped more consistently by structural forces than by moral qualities of the individuals involved. The synthesis demonstrates that each third-order construct is connected with the other, creating the conditions of the next.

Hosting begins with moral initiation. The decision to host was not just a spontaneous personal response but was called forth and shaped by the specific structural conditions of governmental invocations of wartime solidarity, media narratives of Ukrainian cultural familiarity, and framings of hosting as patriotic (Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Burrell, 2024). This finding does not diminish the ethical commitment that hosts brought to their experience but situates that commitment within institutional and political conditions that activated it. The moral activation documented across studies resonates with the concept of moral shock as the disruption to ordinary moral experience produced by images, moments, and realisations that compel action (Jasper, 1997; Jasper, 2014). Yet the synthesis reveals that moral initiation was filtered along racialised, gendered, and cultural lines that determined whose displacement warranted response. This is among the most consistently evidenced findings across the included studies, with multiple studies from different national contexts documenting the exceptional and racialised framing of the Ukrainian response (Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025). Differential inclusion and the racialised hierarchy of refugee deservingness (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018) illuminate this filtering, making visible the structural conditions beneath what appeared to individual hosts as personal moral reasoning.

This activated moral commitment is what makes the second construct possible. With hosting being framed as an ethical obligation rather than a service, the labour it required could not easily be refused or recognised as work. The hidden labour of hosting, including care, emotional, bureaucratic, and domestic, was sustainable only as long as it could be understood as moral action rather than unpaid work. The ethics of care framework clarifies

the structural dynamic of the four phases of caring about, taking care of, caregiving, and care receiving (Tronto, 1998), which were all enacted in hosting, producing an intensity of labour that was made invisible because of its moral framing. The disproportionate burden of this labour on women reproduced a structural inequality that hosting intensified rather than created, which is consistent with Tronto's (1998) analysis of care as systematically devalued because it is performed predominantly by women.

The third construct explains why the labour was structurally necessary. The home as a site of governance was a designed function documented across included studies as the transfer of responsibilities from state institutions to private homes (Burrell, 2024; Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers, 2026; Tomlinson et al., 2024). This can be understood through the concept of responsibilisation as the neoliberal logic through which the state transfers responsibility to individuals while framing the transfer as civic virtue rather than structural offloading (Rose, 1996). Hosts absorbed responsibilities generated by policy delay, limited welfare access, and bureaucratic complexity that should have been managed by public institutions. The state did not disappear from the hosting arrangement, it was reconfigured by delegated governance into private homes. Derrida's (2000) concept of hospitality states that it is the host who defines the conditions of hospitality and welcome, and the governance architecture deepened this imbalance by placing institutional authority into the hands of hosts, creating an asymmetry of power and obligation that the scheme's framing concealed rather than acknowledged. This aligns with everyday practices of asylum support being deeply entangled with broader migration regimes (Darling, 2011, 2022). Additionally, racialised and classed hierarchies shape domestic hospitality. Hospitality does not transcend inequality, it reflects and reproduces it.

The fourth construct establishes that structural conditions determined whether moral commitment could be sustained. Through the translation of the included studies, outcome

trajectories are not fixed categories but positions that can shift as structural conditions change over time. The harmonious trajectory clustered where the conditions identified as integration enablers were present, such as employment access, social connections, community scaffolding, and a degree of institutional support (Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Politi et al., 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024). The disillusionment trajectory clustered where they were absent (Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Rancew-Sikora et al., 2025). The cumulative depletion produced by moral initiation without adequate support, hidden labour without recognition, and governance without resources is what shifts arrangements from harmonious toward disillusionment over time. Post-hosting precarity was not a relational failure, it was a consequence of a governance architecture that prioritised rapid placement over sustainable support and delegated the management of open-ended uncertainty to the private individuals who had volunteered to help. The concept of ambiguous loss illuminates the particular burden of temporal uncertainty as the difficulty of grieving an ending that cannot be completed because the crisis that generated the relationship has not itself ended (Boss, 1999; 2016). This produced a sustained state of relational and emotional uncertainty that was structurally produced rather than a product of individual psychology.

The most significant contribution of the synthesis is the identification of selective deservingness as a construct operating across all four third-order constructs. No single included study identifies selective deservingness as operating throughout the hosting experience, its presence at each stage becomes visible through translation of multiple studies. Selective deservingness functioned as a continuous filter throughout the hosting experience, shaping who was welcomed, operating through conditional welcome, appearing as a logic of differential state provision in the governance architecture, and re-emerging as the gradual withdrawal of moral commitment as guests failed to perform visible suffering documented in the disillusionment trajectory. Hosting operates within a moral economy (Fassin, 2011),

where compassion is not distributed equally in response to need but unevenly in ways organised by power, cultural proximity, and racialised hierarchies (Anderson, 2013; Tyler, 2018).

Limitations

While this meta-ethnography offers an integrative account of hosting Ukrainian refugees, several methodological and conceptual limitations must be acknowledged. Methodological quality varied across the included studies in ways that carry interpretive implications. The most significant and consistent limitation across the dataset was insufficient attention to researcher reflexivity, with the majority of studies scoring zero on this criterion in quality appraisal. Meta-ethnography synthesises authors' interpretations rather than primary participant data, and therefore relying on second-order constructs generated within the epistemological and methodological frames of the researchers. Nuances may have been filtered through researchers' theoretical commitments, analytical lenses, and disciplinary positions. Where reflexivity was absent it was not possible to assess the extent to which researchers' interpretive frameworks shaped how participants' accounts were rendered. This limitation has been managed within the synthesis by according greater interpretive weight to constructs evidenced across multiple studies, although it is possible that subtle contextual meanings are re-framed during synthesis. Additionally, the majority of studies relied on purposive or snowball sampling, which may have introduced a degree of self-selection bias towards hosts with engaged relationships with the hosting experience.

The geographical distribution of included studies, while spanning six European countries is heavily concentrated in the UK and Poland, with the remaining four countries each represented by a single study. This means that the contributions of UK-specific constructs, particularly the governance dimensions, are richly evidenced and more developed for the UK HfU scheme than private hosting as a transnational phenomenon. Structural

responsibilisation may operate differently depending on national governance models. Although the line-of-argument synthesis conceptualises across these differences, it may obscure context-specific dynamics.

A further limitation concerns the cross-sectional design of most studies, which limits the temporal claims made. The trajectory constructs are developed from studies that captured hosting at particular points in time rather than following hosts longitudinally through the full arc of the experience. Wilczyńska's (2025) study provides the closest approximation to longitudinal evidence. Therefore, the synthesis represents a moment in an ever-evolving humanitarian context. Future research may shift or complicate the identified constructs.

The synthesis focuses on studies exploring hosts' perspectives while refugee perspectives were sometimes referenced in included papers (Berg & Zschomler, 2025; Burrell, 2024; Dula & Fuchs, 2025; Zschomler & Berg, 2024), they were not systematically synthesised. Given that the power asymmetry construct is central to the synthesis, this creates significant asymmetry within the synthesis itself. Consequently, constructs are interpreted solely from the host perspective.

Inclusion criteria prioritised peer-reviewed publications written in the English language, with studies conducted in other languages or published in grey literature being excluded. Given the rapid emergence of community-based hosting initiatives across Europe, significant insights may exist in policy reports, NGO evaluations, or local-language studies not captured in this synthesis. This limitation may skew the synthesis toward academic narratives rather than grassroots or informal accounts of refugee hosting.

These limitations do not invalidate the synthesis but limit its potential scope. The findings should therefore be understood as a conceptual contribution to theorising private refugee hosting of Ukrainians rather than a definitive account of all hosting experiences.

Conclusion

This meta-ethnography has synthesised 15 papers drawn from 12 studies of private refugee hosting across six European countries to produce four third-order constructs: Moral Initiation, The Hidden Labour of Hosting, Home as a Site of Governance, and The Shifting Ground of Hosting, generating a line-of-argument synthesis that reconceptualises private hosting of Ukrainian refugees as a morally activated yet structurally burdened practice of domestic governance whose outcomes are determined less by individual moral qualities than by structural conditions within which hosting unfolds.

The synthesis establishes that the moral impulse to host was experienced but never unconditional, being filtered from the outset by racialised, gendered, and cultural hierarchies of deservingness operating largely beneath the threshold of conscious reflection. It establishes that hosting required multidimensional invisible labour that was systematically underestimated and gendered. It establishes that the private home was simultaneously a site of care and a site of governance, with state responsibilisation deliberately transferring resettlement responsibility to the domestic space while declining to support it. It also establishes that the outcomes of hosting were structurally produced rather than morally explained. The line-of-argument synthesis reveals the experience of hosting Ukrainian refugees across six European contexts as a commitment situated within institutional, political, and cultural conditions that activated it, organised it, and ultimately determined its outcomes. Moving from macro-interpretative explanation toward micro-level meaning-making requires a psychological study that can attend to the phenomenological accounts of hosts directly.

Methodology Chapter Overview

The following chapter outlines the methodology including the epistemological and ontological stance, design, recruitment, data collection, analysis, reflexivity, and ethical considerations of the present study.

Methodology

The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees in their own homes through the HfU scheme. The synthesis of the previous chapter reveals that sociological and policy-oriented analyses dominate the existing literature, and while these have produced a rich structural account of what hosting involved and how its outcomes were determined, the psychological processes underpinning the constructs identified remain underexplored. Moving from macro-interpretative explanation toward micro-level meaning-making requires a psychological study that can attend to the phenomenological accounts of hosts directly. The present study employing IPA therefore extends the meta-ethnographic synthesis by integrating psychological theory, providing an in-depth account of British citizens' lived experiences of hosting Ukrainian refugees.

Epistemology and Ontology

This study is situated within an interpretivist epistemological paradigm (Willig, 2013). Interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge is generated through interaction rather than discovered as objective fact. Experiences of hosting are understood as meaning-laden, contextually embedded, and shaped by social, political, and relational processes. Consistent with this position, the researcher is not viewed as a neutral observer but as an active participant in knowledge production. The results presented in this thesis therefore represent a co-constructed account shaped by both participant narratives and researcher interpretations. This epistemological stance aligns with contemporary clinical psychology's emphasis on context, relational processes, and the situated nature of psychological experience (Levitt et al., 2017).

Phenomenology, as developed across the work of Husserl (1931), Heidegger (1962), and Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), examines how individuals experience the world within

specific contexts, rather than seeing it as separate from them (Willig, 2013). Husserl proposed that phenomena should be examined as they appear in consciousness encouraging a disciplined attentiveness to experience prior to theoretical abstraction. The concept of ‘intentionality’ highlights that the meaning of an experience depends on the perceiver’s perspective, including their emotions, motivations, context, and personal viewpoint (Willig, 2013). This is particularly relevant for exploring British citizens’ experiences of hosting Ukrainian refugees where broader socio-political factors may shape how phenomena such as refugee reception are perceived. Understanding these experiences requires acknowledging differences at both systemic and individual levels.

Phenomenological research prioritises participants’ lived experiences with researchers engaging to interpret their meaning (Smith et al., 2021). There are two main approaches in phenomenology, descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive phenomenology emphasises pure description, requiring researchers to ‘bracket’ pre-existing assumptions including those related to culture, nationality, or political perspectives to minimise bias (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2004). Interpretive phenomenology or Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) integrates description and interpretation, assuming all experiences are meaningfully constructed and that researchers’ perspectives shape the analysis (van Manen, 2016). IPA recognises that people can experience the same event differently, depending on their beliefs, judgments, and interpretations (Smith et al., 2021; Willig, 2013).

IPA aligns with a relativist ontology, viewing reality as subjective and constructed through individual experience rather than objectively measurable challenging positivist notions (Willig, 2013). It also considers the influence of social interactions, consistent with symbolic interactionism, where meaning is created and reshaped through shared processes (Blumer, 1969). This study adopted IPA to explore both the content and interpretive processes

of interviews with hosts of Ukrainian refugees, allowing for an understanding of the dynamic ways in which meaning emerged through interactions between researcher and participants.

Design

Private refugee hosting is a phenomenon of considerable complexity, shaped simultaneously by structural inequalities, relational dynamics, and psychological demands. Phenomenology, as a philosophical method and orientation, is concerned with the structure of lived experience (Husserl, 1931). Consciousness is always intentional, always directed toward something, and understanding human experience therefore requires a careful, systematic description of the ways in which objects, relationships, and situations appear to the experiencing subject. Martin Heidegger (1962) extended this framework by situating consciousness within the world rather than standing apart from it, arguing that human beings are always already embedded in a web of practical, relational, and temporal involvements that shape how experience is made possible at all. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012) further enriched the tradition by foregrounding the role of the body in perception and meaning-making, arguing that experience is not a cognitive or abstract process but is lived and felt through bodies in place, through sensation, movement, emotion, and relational interaction (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). Together, these thinkers establish a philosophical tradition that is uniquely suited to the study of phenomena as intimate, embodied, and relationally complex as refugee hosting, where the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of experience are inextricably intertwined. IPA inherits from this tradition a commitment to attending carefully to experience as it is lived, felt, and made meaningful by the person living it.

This study employed IPA as developed by Jonathan A. Smith (2011) and elaborated by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2021). IPA is grounded in three core philosophical commitments: phenomenology as a commitment to exploring lived experience; hermeneutics

as the theory of interpretation including the double hermeneutic whereby participants make sense of their experiences and the researcher interprets that sense-making (Smith, 2011); and idiography as a detailed, case by case analysis prioritising depth over breadth (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

IPA was selected for several reasons. Firstly, the experience of hosting refugees is complex, relational, and emotionally nuanced. IPA enables close examination of how individuals construct meaning around morally and socially significant experiences. Secondly, IPA's idiographic focus aligns with clinical psychology's emphasis on understanding individual lived worlds rather than reducing experience to categories or symptom clusters. Thirdly, IPA allows for both experiential descriptions and interpretative depth which is particularly relevant when exploring experiences embedded within broader political and cultural discourse. Fourthly, IPA is committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences (Smith et al., 2021) which is directly appropriate for a phenomenon as personally significant and contextually embedded as hosting a refugee in one's home.

Alternative qualitative approaches were considered but deemed less suitable. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) offers a flexible method for identifying patterns across qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The key distinction between RTA and IPA lies in their analytic orientation. IPA requires sustained idiographic engagement with each individual case before cross-case analysis begins, whereas RTA moves quickly toward cross-participant patterns and shared themes. For a study concerned with how particular individuals made sense of a personally significant experience, this idiographic commitment was essential. RTA's greater flexibility would have meant that the depth of case-by-case phenomenological engagement central to this study could not have been maintained. The double hermeneutic is

also a defining feature of IPA that has no direct equivalent in RTA, and it was this interpretive depth that the research question required.

Grounded Theory (GT) aims to generate explanatory theory grounded in data, emphasising conceptual abstraction and theoretical saturation, and typically involves larger more heterogeneous samples (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The present study sought depth of understanding rather than theory generation and IPA's focus on interpretative understanding of lived experience was therefore more aligned with the research aim. Narrative Analysis focuses on the structure and function of stories, examining how identities and social realities are constructed through narrative (Riessman, 1993). While narrative approaches offer rich insight into how experiences are told, they often prioritise story form and discursive construction over phenomenological content of experience, and tend to analyse broader narrative arcs rather than detailed experiential statements central to IPA. The study's interest lay more in the psychological meanings embedded within participants' accounts rather than in narrative structure. Overall, IPA was selected as the most appropriate methodology as it balances the depth of idiographic analysis with interpretative engagement, enabling a rigorous exploration of the lived psychological experiences of hosting Ukrainian refugees while remaining aligned with the epistemological and clinical aims of this research.

The decision to focus exclusively on the perspectives of hosts rather than guests was methodologically deliberate. The focus on hosts was justified by the identified gap in literature with psychological experiences of displaced populations having received considerable scholarly attention, and the lived experience of hosts of the HfU scheme having not been examined in depth. In a national and regional context characterised by increasingly restrictive immigration policy, the decision of ordinary citizens to invite strangers into their homes represented a distinctive and underexplored psychological phenomenon warranting in depth attention.

Recruitment

Participants were required to be over 18 years of age, British citizens, and to be currently hosting or to have previously hosted a Ukrainian refugee through the HfU scheme, for a minimum of two months. This threshold was established to ensure participants had sustained engagement with the hosting experience sufficient for the kind of rich, reflective accounts that IPA requires. While no published IPA guidance specifies a minimum duration of experience, a period of two months was considered the minimum necessary for participants to have encountered the complexities of cohabitation that the study sought to explore. Hosting arrangements shorter than this risk capturing only the initial period of adjustment rather than the sustained experience of domestic hosting.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants with direct experience of hosting, supplemented by an element of convenience sampling reflecting the geographical focus of the study in the East of England. Snowball sampling was also used to extend the reach of recruitment. This approach carries implications for the research, as participants who were unwilling to discuss their experiences may be underrepresented. It also introduces a self-selection bias that likely omits insights from particular types of hosts or specific hosting experiences, particularly those that are more sensitive or less readily shared. As a result, the study may disproportionately reflect the perspectives of individuals more willing or able to articulate their experiences. While these limitations are acknowledged, the study makes no claim to representativeness but instead prioritises experiential and interpretative depth.

Fifteen participants were recruited for the study. While smaller samples of three to eight participants are often typical in IPA research (Smith et al., 2021), a sample of fifteen was considered appropriate here for two reasons. Firstly, hosting contexts varied considerably across the sample in terms of duration, living arrangements, the number of guests hosted, and

whether arrangements were on-going or concluded. A slightly larger sample enabled a degree of contextual diversity while maintaining idiographic depth (Smith et al., 2021). Secondly, the phenomenon is embedded within a specific and time-limited scheme whose experiential range warranted broader representation than the minimum sample might have captured. IPA studies with comparable sample sizes have been published in contexts where the phenomenon under investigation warranted it (Flowers et al., 2001). The subsequent analytic process extended across six months, reflecting the depth of individual case analysis and iterative cross-case interpretation that this sample size demanded.

The decision to recruit exclusively from the East of England was both pragmatic and analytically motivated. Pragmatically, the region provided an accessible and relatively coherent recruitment context for a single researcher. Analytically, the East of England received a substantial number of Ukrainian arrivals under the HfU scheme and its diverse geography of large urban areas alongside rural communities means that hosting unfolded across a range of economic and social contexts. A further layer of significance is the political landscape of the region which has undergone notable shifts following the 2024 UK general election, with reduced Conservative representation and increased Labour and Liberal Democrat presence. Polling and local analyses also point to rising support for Reform UK across parts of the region, particularly around immigration and economic concerns (Heath et al., 2025). Reform UK advocates one of the most restrictive immigration positions in contemporary British politics, framing irregular migration as a national security issue and seeking withdrawal from key international frameworks including the 1951 Refugee Convention (Reform UK, 2026). Choosing to open one's home to Ukrainian refugees in a region with growing hostility toward migration was likely to carry particular meanings and being sensitive to this context is part of better understanding the whole experience. The

limitations of restricting the sample to a single region are acknowledged in the discussion, where questions of transferability are addressed.

Participants were recruited through various community networks, social media platforms, local refugee charities, university networks, and through local authorities. Online advertisements were posted, and email invitations were distributed through relevant networks (Appendix D). Interested individuals contacted the researcher directly and were provided with a Participant Information Sheet outlining the study's aims, procedures, and confidentiality safeguards (Appendix E). Written informed consent was obtained prior to participation (Appendix F). Participants received a £20 voucher in recognition of their time, as approved by the University of Essex Ethics Committee.

Interview Schedule and Structure

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design using semi-structured in-depth interviews to facilitate rich exploration of participants' lived experiences while allowing flexibility in pursuing emergent themes. Qualitative interviews provide access to participants' lived worlds through dialogue, allowing exploration of meaning, feeling, and interpretation prior to theoretical abstraction (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). It is through conversation that we come to know other people and learn about their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they inhabit. This method attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view and to unfold the meaning of their experience prior to theoretical explanation.

The interview guide was developed in accordance with IPA principles and relevant literature, aiming to capture rich, contextually embedded accounts of participants' experiences (Appendix G). Questions were open-ended and exploratory, organised around four broad domains:

1. Understanding of the HfU scheme.
2. The lived experience of hosting.
3. The lived experience of supporting others and being supported by institutional systems.
4. The emotional and psychological impact of hosting.

Within each domain, questions were designed to invite participants to speak from their own perspective and in their own terms, with prompts available to encourage elaboration where needed. For example, within the lived experience of hosting domain, participants were asked, ‘Would you tell me about your experience of hosting?’ with follow-up prompts such as, ‘What was it like to meet your guest(s)?’ and ‘Could you tell me about your positive/negative experiences of hosting?’ These questions were designed to access the texture of the experience consistent with IPA’s phenomenological orientation.

Procedure

Demographic information such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, employment status, education, and relationship status was collected prior to the start of each interview to provide contextual information about the sample and to allow the researcher to attend to any demographic factors that might be relevant to interpreting participants’ accounts (Appendix H). Interviews were conducted one-to-one at a mutually agreed date and time, either in the participant’s home or online via Microsoft Teams with the participant present in their home.

Conducting interviews within participant’s own homes, where feasible, was a methodological choice that carried theoretical and practical significance. The home was the site in which the lived experience under investigation unfolded. Conducting interviews within that space offered the possibility of situational attunement, allowing participants to speak from within the physical and sensory environment of their experience rather than recalling it

from a distance (Smith et al., 2021). The presence of the home as an active backdrop to the interview had the potential to facilitate a more immediate and embodied form of reflection, consistent with IPA's commitment to accessing lived experience as closely as possible to the way in which it is felt and known. This approach also carried relational significance as entering a participant's home as a researcher required a similar act of trust and welcome that had been extended to guests, positioning the interview itself as a modest enactment of the hospitality that was the subject of inquiry. A lone-working risk assessment protocol was followed for in-person interviews (Appendix I). Prior to each home visit, a check-in system was maintained with the researcher confirming safe departure from each home visit. This protocol was developed in consultation with the University of Essex Research Ethics guidelines.

Prior to beginning the formal interview, a brief pre-interview conversation was conducted to build rapport and provide a gentle entry point. Opening prompts such as, 'Why don't we start with you telling me something about your home?', invited participants to begin with familiar, grounded material before moving toward the more emotionally complex dimensions of the hosting experience. This approach is consistent with IPA guidance on interview design, which recommends that interviews open with accessible, contextualising questions that allow participants to settle into the conversation before being asked to reflect on more personally significant or difficult material (Smith et al., 2021).

The researcher used clinical judgement throughout interviewing to monitor participant comfort, and respond sensitively to emotional cues. The structure allowed for flexibility, enabling exploration of emergent themes. Interview questions remained open-ended, with capacity for necessary expansion and exploration of the participants' answer if considered relevant and appropriate. Participants were encouraged to elaborate, provide examples, and express their experiences as explicitly as possible, supporting the attainment of rich, nuanced

descriptions of hosting experiences while sensitive management of rapport ensured ethical and respectful engagement throughout. Interviews lasted between 47 minutes and 89 minutes and were audio recorded with participants' consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim (Appendix J). Across the 15 interviews, a total of 17 hours and 5 minutes of audio data were collected, reflecting the depth of engagement that participants brought to the interview process. Once transcription and verification were complete, anonymised transcripts were assigned unique identifiers to protect participant confidentiality, and audio recordings were deleted. Participants were offered a debrief following interviews and provided with information regarding support organisations should any distress have been experienced during the conversation.

Analysis

Data were analysed using IPA following established procedural guidelines (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith et al., 2021). The analysis proceeded idiographically with each case examined in detail before cautious cross-case comparison began, in keeping with IPA's commitment to preserving the particularity of individual experience.

The analysis followed the whole-part-whole approach that is central to IPA's hermeneutic foundations. Analysis began in September 2025 with repeated, immersive reading of each transcript to develop a holistic sense of the participant's experiential world, attending to content, tone, emotional shifts, and narrative structure. Detailed exploratory comments were then developed, including descriptive comments attending to what participants described, linguistic comments attending to how they expressed themselves, and conceptual comments engaging with the psychological and theoretical significance of what was said (Appendix K). This approach allowed close attention to participants' meaning-making processes while also enabling a more interpretive dialogue with the text.

Experiential themes were then developed from the exploratory comments, capturing psychologically salient aspects of participants' meaning making. Themes were repeatedly checked against full transcripts to preserve contextual integrity, guarding against fragmenting meaning through premature abstraction. Returning to the whole account allowed consideration of how individual excerpts reshaped understanding of the participant's overall experience. Themes within each case were examined for connections using analytic techniques such as abstraction, subsumption, and polarisation (Smith et al., 2021), and a structured table of superordinate and subordinate themes was created for each participant. Cross-case analysis followed, identifying patterns of convergence and divergence across accounts while preserving idiographic nuance. This iterative movement between part and whole reflects the hermeneutic circle and acknowledges that understanding is provisional, situated, and shaped by the researcher's standpoint. Themes are therefore understood not as features that emerge from data but as co-constructions produced through an interpretative interaction between participant narrative and researcher interpretation.

Reflexive notes were maintained throughout analysis, and supervisory discussions were used to enhance rigour and challenge interpretative assumptions. Analytic decisions were grounded in manual, iterative engagement with transcripts rather than software-assisted coding. Findings are presented as interpretative constructions grounded in participants' accounts rather than objective truths (Smith, 2011).

Reflexivity

IPA is grounded in the assumption that a person's account produces knowledge about their thoughts and feelings regarding lived experience, while also recognising how the researcher brings their own experience and interpretations to the research process. The knowledge produced by IPA is therefore reflexive as it acknowledges the researcher's perspective throughout the interpretative process. Consistent with the interpretivist

epistemological framework which assumes that meaning is socially constructed and co-produced through interaction, the analytic account produced here was shaped by the relational dynamics between myself and participants as well as by my own personal, professional, social, and cultural positioning.

As a White Scottish woman with an academic background in sociology and current doctoral training in clinical psychology, I occupy a position of relative social privilege within the UK context. I do not share participants' lived experience of hosting Ukrainian refugees, nor the experience of forced migration. My position as an outsider to my participants may have shaped both the questions I asked and the narratives participants felt able to share. While outsider status may have reduced assumptions of shared understanding, potentially encouraging participants to articulate their experiences in greater detail, it may also have limited my access to unspoken meanings embedded in local hosting communities. Within IPA's hermeneutic framework, my interpretations are inevitably shaped by my own experiential and theoretical lenses.

Prior training in sociology has sensitised me to structural inequality, discourse, and the operation of power. This orientation shaped my interest in how hosts construct meaning around responsibility, citizenship and moral obligation. Simultaneously, my clinical psychology training inclined me toward attending to psychological processes such as empathy, boundary negotiation, distress, resilience, and relational dynamics. As a trainee clinical psychologist aspiring to work therapeutically with refugee communities, a professional investment in narratives of care, growth, and wellbeing was maintained. This may have predisposed me toward foregrounding psychological interpretations of coping and relational meaning over political and economic perspectives. Ongoing reflexive practice was therefore necessary to interrogate how my developing professional identity influenced what was attended to during interviews and analysis.

Engaging with this topic also requires explicit consideration of race and geopolitics. Public responses to Ukrainian displacement in the UK have occurred within a broader racialised migration landscape in which refugees from different regions are not treated equally. As a White British researcher examining predominantly White European displacement, I am positioned within systems that normalise certain forms of belonging while marginalising others. My own racial and national identity may have unconsciously aligned interpretive framing with dominant narratives of European solidarity. A critical reflexive stance required me to question how whiteness, national identity, and cultural proximity functioned implicitly within both participants' narratives and the analytic process.

It is also important to acknowledge that I received a formal diagnosis of dyslexia and ADHD during the course of this research. A naturally associative and divergent thinking style may have facilitated the generation of connections across participants' accounts and across theoretical frameworks. Simultaneously, the executive functioning demands of managing a large qualitative dataset across an extended analytic period required the development of explicit organisational systems, including excel spreadsheets, structured analytic tables, and a detailed audit trail, which also served the quality criterion of transparency. Having the personal experience of feeling outside normative social expectations has additionally sensitised me to social dynamics and to the experience of being positioned as 'other', a sensitivity that I brought consciously to my interpretive engagement with participants' accounts of hosting people displaced from their homes and communities.

Reflexive engagement with the experience of conducting the research was also important. Recruitment proceeded with ease and participants responded promptly and with enthusiasm. Many described the interview as an opportunity to speak about an experience they felt was not well understood by those outside the hosting community. This ease of access was analytically significant, the openness with which participants welcomed a researcher into

their experiential worlds seemed to mirror the same impulse that had moved them to open their homes to a stranger. Entering participants' homes for interview purposes produced a particular reflexive experience. I had an awareness of occupying the guest position accompanied by the experience of mild anxiety at arriving at an unfamiliar threshold, and entering a space whose meanings had been made by others. This offered a small but embodied resonance with what participants had described their guests navigating, and sharpened my sensitivity to the phenomenological weight of home. Participants were, without exception, generous, warm, and accommodating, often making tea, showing photographs, and in several cases continuing to talk well beyond the formal interview. The ease and warmth of access required sustained effort to maintain analytic distance alongside relational warmth.

This research also reflects an understanding of clinical psychology as a discipline that extends beyond individual psychopathology to engage with systemic, cultural, and societal processes that shape mental health and relational experience. Contemporary clinical psychology increasingly acknowledges the impact of migration policy, social exclusion, racism, and community responses to psychological wellbeing. In situating this study within hosting contexts, I am consciously positioning clinical psychology within broader social and political conversations about displacement, responsibility, and belonging. This stance aligns with a commitment to social justice and accessible public mental health while also requiring reflexive awareness of the limits of psychological frameworks when engaging with complex geopolitical realities.

Throughout interviews, I was attentive to the inherent power imbalance between researcher and participant, including my institutional affiliation, and perceived psychological expertise. I was particularly mindful of the sensitivities involved in discussing topics relating to forced migration, trauma, and displacement, recognising that even when participants were hosts rather than refugees, conversations could evoke emotionally charged discussions. This

dynamic was navigated through careful pacing, transparent communication regarding consent processes, ongoing monitoring of participants' emotional responses, and sensitivity to emotional boundaries. I engaged in sustained reflexive journaling to document emotional responses, value judgements, and moments of resonance or discomfort throughout data collection and analysis. This process was particularly important when participants' perspectives aligned closely with or diverged sharply from my own social and political values. Supervision and peer debriefing provided additional reflexive spaces supporting critical interrogation of emerging themes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Essex Ethics Committee (Appendix L). All participants gave their free and informed consent by signing the participant consent form to participate in the study at the outset of their involvement and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time before, during, or after the interviews with no implications and no need to offer a reason or explanation. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymisation of all data, which was stored securely in accordance with GDPR regulations. All documents were stored on the researcher's personal University of Essex Box account. The research team who had access to the data, included the researcher and two University of Essex supervisors. Audio recordings were deleted following transcription to further protect participant privacy.

Research involving the topic of refugees can involve ethically, emotionally, or politically sensitive material including race relations, gender issues, asylum seeking processes, and discussion of trauma. To ensure the research was conducted ethically and to minimise the potential for distress or harm, several measures were implemented. Participants were fully informed for the outset about the purpose of the study and the topics that would be discussed. They were reminded that they were not obliged to answer any questions they did

not wish to. Interviews were conducted in a safe and comfortable setting, with breaks offered as needed, and the researcher remained sensitive to any individual need that arose during the conversation.

A lone-working risk assessment and safety protocol was followed for in-person home visits. A risk of harm protocol was developed in advance of data collection, providing guidance on how to respond to adverse events during interviews, including participant distress, disclosure of illegal activity, or indication of risk to self. This protocol was drawn on following one interview in which a participant had experienced bereavement of their guest during the hosting arrangement, and the debrief and signposting procedures were followed. A list of emotional support services was provided to both researcher and participants in the event of distress arising from engagement with the material.

There is a growing body of literature around refugee studies that is concerned about a dual imperative which describes the tensions between satisfying the demands of academic inquiry and ensuring that the knowledge generated is used to protect refugees and influence policy (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). Consideration was given to the fact that the participants of this study were hosts rather than refugees. Any policy recommendations aimed at helping a particular group can have different consequences for those excluded from the study, potentially furthering xenophobia or anti-refugee sentiment. Rigorous conceptualisation, research design, analysis, and ethical deliberation were therefore applied throughout.

Quality Criteria and Considerations

Given the interpretative and idiographic nature of IPA, quality in this study is evaluated using principles outlined by Yardley (2000), applied alongside the IPA specific quality markers identified by Smith et al. (2021). Yardley proposes four broad criteria for assessing qualitative research including sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour,

transparency and coherence, and impact and importance which aligns closely with the standards Smith et al. (2021) set out for IPA in particular. These complementary frameworks were applied throughout the research process, reflecting the study's commitment to quality that is both epistemologically coherent and methodologically specific.

Sensitivity to context was demonstrated by grounding the study in relevant psychological, socio-political, and migration literature, which situates participants' accounts within the broader context of the war in Ukraine and the UK's sponsorship response. This ensured that findings were interpreted with awareness of the cultural and political discourses shaping participants' experiences. Sensitivity was also reflected in the conduct of the interviews. Participant wellbeing was attended to throughout the study and prioritised over the needs of the research and the researcher. Interviews were structured with broader contextual questions before moving to potentially emotionally complex material, supporting rapport and psychological safety. In keeping with IPA's idiographic commitment, sensitivity to context additionally involved attending carefully to the particular circumstances, meanings, and lived worlds of each participant before moving to cross-case analysis, with conscious effort made to preserve nuance and avoid imposing interpretations.

Commitment and rigour were demonstrated through the depth of engagement with both participants and the analytic process. Interviews were conducted in a manner that encouraged detailed exploration of lived experience including the use of prompts and requests for elaboration. Rigour was pursued through the systematic application of the IPA analytic process across all 15 transcripts, consistent with IPA guidelines (Smith et al., 2021). An analytic journal was maintained throughout data collection and analysis, documenting interpretive decisions and preserving moments of analytic uncertainty. Regular supervision meetings provided space to review developing themes, challenge assumptions, and enhance

analytic depth, and an audit trail documenting analytic decisions, theme development, and reflexive accounts was maintained throughout.

Transparency was ensured through detailed documentation of methodological decisions, recruitment procedures, interview design, and analytic steps within this chapter. The rationale for selecting IPA over alternative qualitative approaches was explicitly articulated to demonstrate epistemological coherence. Additionally, coherence was maintained by ensuring alignment between the research question, methodological approach, data collection method, and analytic process. The interpretative stance adopted in the analysis was made explicit including acknowledgement of the double hermeneutic inherent in IPA. In the results chapter, themes are illustrated with verbatim extracts to demonstrate grounding in participants' accounts allowing readers to evaluate the plausibility of the interpretations and trace the analytic journey from the data.

The final criterion concerns the contribution and usefulness of the research. This study addresses the contemporary and underexplored area of the lived psychological experience of British citizens hosting Ukrainian refugees. The research offers insights relevant to clinical psychologists working with communities responding to displacement and humanitarian crises, and its implications for practice and policy are elaborated in the discussion chapter. Impact is also considered in terms of reflexive development. Engagement with participants' accounts prompted ongoing reflection on assumptions regarding privilege, identity, responsibility, and morality, contributing to professional growth and critical awareness. By adhering to established qualitative quality criteria and to the IPA-specific standards set out by Smith et al. (2021), the study aimed to produce results that are credible, coherent, and meaningful within both academic and clinical psychology contexts.

Results Chapter Overview

The following results chapter presents the participant demographic profiles, experiential information, and experiential themes with participant quotes illustrated in detail. The first group experiential theme identified was Seeing Self in The Space of Conflict, including the experiential themes: “If it was me...”: From Witnessing to Acting; “Because I can”: Capacity as the Condition; Meeting the Stranger, Exposing the Self: Confronting Encounters; Welcoming the Stranger, Transforming the Self: Expanding Horizons. The second group experiential theme identified was The Shared Soundscape of Home, including experiential themes: Letting Others into the “Lair”: Softening the Sound of Home; From Welcoming to Living Together: The Quiet Negotiation of Difference; Strangers Becoming Kin: The Quiet Expansion of Family; Living With the Echoes: A Space Shaped by War. The third group experiential theme was Being Held in Suspense, including the experiential themes: A Leap of Faith: Navigating Risk and Responsibility; Suspended in Time: The Tension of Uncertainty; Labour Beyond Home: Navigating the Unknown; Hosting Together: Community as Scaffolding.

Results

Participant Profiles

The research included 15 participants, eight women and seven men, ranging in age from 52 – 77 years. All participants identified as White British and heterosexual, reflecting the demographic profile of HfU sponsors more broadly as documented in the ONS survey data (ONS, 2023). The majority of participants were retired at the time of interview, with five in current employment. Educational attainment was high across the sample with eight participants holding post graduate qualifications. In terms of relationship status, nine participants were married. Ten interviews were conducted in participants' homes and five were conducted online, with the participant in their own home at the time of interview. This decision reflected participant preference and practical accessibility. The sample's relative homogeneity in terms of ethnicity and sexuality is consistent with the broader HfU sponsor population. The older age profile of the sample suggests that the decision to host may have been particularly associated with participants at a life stage affording both available domestic space and a degree of flexibility in their daily routines. Five participants were still hosting guests in their homes at the time of interview. The full demographic profile of the sample is recorded in Table 3. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality.

Table 3: *Participant Profiles*

Participants (n=15)	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Sexuality	Employment	Education	Relationship Status	Interviewed
1 - Emily	Woman	White British	59	Heterosexual	Employed	Postgraduate	Married	At home (online)
2 - Nicole	Woman	White British	64	Heterosexual	Employed	College	Partner	At home (online)
3 - Stephen	Man	White British	75	Heterosexual	Retired	Secondary	Married	At home
4 - Brian	Man	White British	70	Heterosexual	Retired	Undergraduate	Married	At home
5 - Joseph	Man	White British	57	Heterosexual	Employed	Postgraduate	Married	At home
6 - Lucy	Woman	White British	68	Heterosexual	Employed	Postgraduate	Divorced	At home
7 - Mary	Woman	White British	77	Heterosexual	Retired	Undergraduate	Widowed	At home
8 - Laura	Woman	White British	68	Heterosexual	Retired	Postgraduate	Widowed	At home (online)
9 - Michael	Man	White British	71	Heterosexual	Retired	Postgraduate	Married	At home (online)
10 - Jane	Woman	White British	52	Heterosexual	Employed	Postgraduate	Married	At home (online)
11 - Thomas	Man	White British	55	Heterosexual	Retired	Postgraduate	Single	At home
12 - Luke	Man	White British	69	Heterosexual	Retired	Postgraduate	Married	At home
13 - Mark	Man	White British	56	Heterosexual	Retired	Undergraduate	Divorced	At home
14 - Kate	Woman	White British	72	Heterosexual	Retired	Undergraduate	Married	At home
15 - Edith	Woman	White British	58	Heterosexual	Retired	Undergraduate	Married	At home

The contextual and experiential information is provided in Table 4 where ‘ticks’ indicate the corresponding information for each participant. At the time of interview five participants were still hosting guests, seven had guests who had moved on to independent accommodation, and three had guests who had returned to Ukraine. The duration of hosting arrangements ranged from five to 36 months. With regard to the process of hosting, the majority of participants mentioned having contact with the local council and local charities or both, in order to facilitate the process of hosting, with 11 participants making reference to the local council’s involvement, 13 participants making reference to having contact with local charities, and nine participants sharing that they had contact from both the local council and local charities. Notably, a total of nine participants referenced the use of social media, more specifically Facebook, in finding and supporting their guests.

When asked if participants would consider hosting again, five indicated that they would, three participants shared that they were unsure, and seven stated that they would not host again. Participants who shared that they were unsure if they would host again stated that it would be dependent on their current circumstances, for example, the prospect of downsizing their home would mean that they would not have the space to offer to a guest, needing to offer the space they have to other family members in need, or getting older and needing to focus on current health concerns. For participants who indicated that they would not host again, this was due to either the difficulties experienced whilst hosting, or that they had met the expectations of the hosting scheme and did not see any further need to host.

Table 4: *Contextual and experiential information*

	Emily	Nicole	Stephen	Brian	Joseph	Lucy	Mary	Laura	Michael	Jane	Thomas	Luke	Mark	Kate	Edith
Duration of hosting (months)	30	30	29	9	36	27	15	5	6	10	14	13	24	8	16
Number of guest(s)	1	2	1	4	7	1	2	1	4	2	2	2	4	2	2
Still hosting	✓	✓			✓	✓							✓		
Guest(s) moved on to independent accommodation			✓	✓					✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Guest(s) returned to Ukraine							✓	✓			✓				
Use of Facebook/Social Media	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Contact with Local Council	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Contact with Local Refugee Charity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Would host again	Not sure	Not sure	No	Not sure	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No

Summary of Findings

IPA was used to examine the lived experiences of 15 British citizens hosting Ukrainian refugees through the HfU scheme in the East of England. Each interview was read multiple times, with exploratory comments attending to the texture of participants' language, the metaphors they reached for, the hesitations, and the moments of particular intensity or apparent difficulty. Experiential statements were developed from these comments, capturing what each participant appeared to be expressing about their hosting experience. Through an iterative process of comparison and abstraction, these statements were examined for patterns of convergence and divergence across the sample, first at the level of individual cases and then across the dataset as a whole. Decisions about what to include and what to omit were guided by two questions: whether a theme was sufficiently grounded in the data, and whether it contributed something distinct to the interpretive account. This process produced three group experiential themes and 12 experiential themes, presented in Table 5 below, with the full table of experiential statements aligned to each theme available in Appendix M.

The first group experiential theme, *Seeing Self in the Space of Conflict*, captures the psychological processes through which participants moved from witnessing the Ukrainian crisis at a distance to responding to the conflict by opening their homes, to the ways in which the encounter with a guest both exposed and, for some, expanded their sense of self. The second group experiential theme, *The Shared Soundscape of Home*, attends to the lived texture of shared space with the quiet and sometimes difficult negotiation of difference within intimate life, the gradual softening of boundaries, the emergence of something resembling kinship, and the persistent presence of war within the home. The third group experiential theme, *Being Held in Suspense*, captures the temporal, relational, and structural dimensions of hosting as an open-ended commitment with the risk and responsibility of an arrangement entered into without certainty, the burden of uncertainty about the future, the labour extended

well beyond the home, and the significance of community in scaffolding what the state did not.

Table 5: *Group experiential themes and experiential themes*

Group Experiential Theme	Experiential Themes
Seeing Self in the Space of Conflict	“If it was me...”: From Witnessing to Acting “Because I can”: Capacity as the Condition Meeting the Stranger, Exposing the Self: Confronting Encounters Welcoming the Stranger, Transforming the Self: Expanding Horizons
The Shared Soundscape of Home	Letting Others into the “Lair”: Softening the Sound of Home From Welcoming to Living Together: The Quiet Negotiation of Difference Strangers Becoming Kin: The Quiet Expansion of Family Living With the Echoes: A Space Shaped by War
Being Held in Suspense	A Leap of Faith: Navigating Risk and Responsibility Suspended in Time: The Tension of Uncertainty Labour Beyond Home: Navigating the Unknown Hosting Together: Community as Scaffolding

Seeing Self in the Space of Conflict

The first group experiential theme captures how participants’ encounters with war and displacement were experienced as embodied encounters with the self. It attends to the phenomenological act of visualising the self within a scene of violence and displacement. For Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), vision is not a passive reception of information but an active, bodily engagement with the world, we see not with our eyes alone but with our whole body.

The space of conflict was not a location on the map, but a lived space in which the self was reorganised in relation to what was seen and felt.

“If it was me...”: From Witnessing to Acting. The decision to host was most often described as emerging from a profound emotional response to the unfolding events of the war in Ukraine. Witnessing the invasion created an intense affective shift in which distant suffering began to feel immediate and personally meaningful. Participants described witnessing the invasion unfold on the television or radio and experiencing intense emotional reactions such as horror, disbelief, anger, and grief. Rather than being a distant geopolitical event, the war was experienced as an embodied threat. Images of tanks crossing borders and families fleeing their homes disrupted the sense of safety and stability, prompting reflection on what it might mean for “us” in such circumstances. Emily described how this moment of reflection moved her from observing events to identifying herself in them:

“I suppose it’s that thought of somebody just taking over another country and, you know, people being in danger for their lives and that feeling of, if that was me, you know, how would I feel? And, you know, you want to help, we want to help people. And it was a very practical way of helping somebody.” (Emily)

The phrase “if that was me” marks the psychological moment at which identification with the stranger occurred. The movement from the third person to the first traces the collapse of distance that resonates with Jasper’s (1997) moral shock. Similarly, Laura spoke about the cognitive process of placing herself in the position of those forced to flee their homes:

“And we just so much wanted to help and it was just awful what was going on in the war and we could put ourselves in the position of people living there and we just wanted to be of some assistance.” (Laura)

The phrase “put ourselves in the position” is significant. It is a deliberate relocation of the self into the experiential world of another. Both Nicole and Michael extend this perspective-taking through the lens of parenthood. Nicole shared, *“I would like to think if my child was in that situation, my daughter, one of my daughters, that people would be kind to them”*, while Michael explains, *“we would hope that there would be somebody out there to do the same for our children in the same awful situation, war descending upon us.”* The phrase “war descending upon us” carries a particular weight with the imagery of descent suggesting something inescapable, from high above, as a threat that could arrive without warning. By imagining their own children in this position, participants collapsed the distance between “family” and “refugee”, between “here” and “there”, which strengthened their desire to offer support.

For many participants, the moral impulse was not only directed outward toward the suffering of others but inward towards the self. Nicole articulated this dynamic in a particularly reflective way:

“I'm a [recipient of a national honour], so I guess it's in my DNA. And part of me thinks that I've had this honour bestowed upon me and I need to prove that I'm worthy still... And then perhaps once it's done, it'll probably be about three years and perhaps I've done enough. I don't know. There would be that feeling that I've done my bit.”

(Nicole)

The phrase “in my DNA” speaks to identity, while the phrase “worthy still” speaks to an element of accountability, as though hosting were a debt to be repaid or a credential to be maintained. The use of “I’ve done my bit” echoes the language of civic duty and wartime contribution, positioning hosting within a national narrative of moral service.

Many participants described feeling a strong urge “*to do something*”. For some, to witness suffering and remain passive felt uncomfortable and risked a form of moral dissonance. In this sense, the decision to host became one way of restoring congruence by bringing actions into closer alignment with deeply held values. The pull to act therefore seemed to carry personal significance, allowing participants to respond to the needs of others while also maintaining a sense of moral integrity in themselves.

Hosting could be understood not only as a response to the suffering of others but as a meaningful way for participants to act in accordance with their values. Witnessing the war appeared to create a kind of emotional convergence, collapsing the sense of distance from conflict and prompting reflection about how one ought to respond. Hosting provided a tangible pathway for translating this emotional disturbance into action. In doing so, participants were able to express compassion and responsibility in a practical way while restoring a sense of alignment between their values and their sense of themselves as people who respond to others in need.

“Because I Can”: Capacity as the Condition. Participants were often aware that hosting was not simply a moral choice between right and wrong, but one shaped by their personal circumstances and available resources. The capacity to offer refuge was closely connected to having sufficient living space, financial stability, good health, and an enabling life stage. In this sense, participants’ ability to host was intertwined with forms of security and stability already present in their lives. Nicole expressed a sentiment shared by many participants when she reflected on why she chose to host, “*because I can, it's something I can do.*” The simplicity of this formulation positions capacity not as a preference or choice among equals but as the enabling condition of moral action itself.

Physical space was described as a foundational element of making hosting possible. In order to share their home, hosts needed to have space that could realistically be offered to someone else. Resources such as spare bedrooms, converted garages, or annexes created the practical conditions that allowed hosting to take place. Lucy reflected on the considerations involved even when space was limited, *“I can really only accommodate one person because my bedrooms are very small, sort of no more than sort of six by six feet really.”* While Edith, described living, *“in this big house and there's two of us and we had room and people needed help and that's what we did.”* The availability of space appeared to take on a particular significance when set alongside the realities of displacement. Available space was experienced not as a logistical resource but as a condition that carried a form of responsibility. This dynamic resonates with the capability approach (Jamil, 2024), in which conditions necessary for human action are understood as socially produced and unequally distributed. Capacity was not a personal virtue but a structural advantage whose possession appeared to generate obligation.

Life stage also shaped hosting capacity. Many participants described themselves as *“empty-nesters”*, with adult children no longer living in the home. This transition sometimes created both physical space and emotional openness to the idea of welcoming someone else into the household. Jane gave an account of the circumstances that led her family to begin hosting:

“Our son is nearly 28 and he had a few months before, bought his first house and moved out. And we've got a garage conversion which has got an annex...And our daughter had just gone to university, so she wasn't in the annex. So the annex was empty. And we just started to have some conversations about we've got this empty annex and we could really, really do some good.” (Jane)

The repetition of “really, really” suggests an urgency as though the empty space itself exerted a moral pressure. Hosting intersected here with broader family transitions, particularly within trajectories of home ownership and changing family arrangements.

Participants also recognised that their capacity was not fixed. Health concerns, ageing, and changing personal circumstances could alter what felt manageable. Stephen spoke of the painful moment at which he and his wife’s capacity had diminished, “... *we had to ask [guest] if it was possible if she could find somewhere else to live, because, you know, we couldn't. Couldn't cope any longer, to be honest. Yeah, well, we both had health problems...*” The decision to end hosting was framed as an acknowledgement of personal and physical limits not as a withdrawal of care. This connects to the phenomenological insight that care is always enacted through a body with limits (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). Hosting required sustained emotional and physical energy and participants were aware that good intentions alone could not sustain it indefinitely.

Overall, the ability to host appeared unevenly distributed, shaped by access to space, stability, and time. Participants often reflected thoughtfully on the circumstances that enabled them to take part. Their reflections suggest an awareness that opening one’s home was closely connected to already having a secure home and the resources necessary to share it. Personal capacity and moral action were experienced as closely intertwined.

Meeting the Stranger, Exposing the Self: Confronting Encounters. While hosting was initially motivated by feelings of moral shock and identification with ‘the other’, the experience of living alongside guests over time appeared to prompt deeper reflection. What began as an act of support gradually became an opportunity for inward reflection about their own assumptions and self-understanding. Through the experience of sharing space,

participants encounter tensions between their self-understanding as fair, tolerant, and caring individuals and the broader social dynamics shaping responses to displacement.

Hosting exposed participants to uncomfortable reflections about race, privilege, and the uneven ways in which compassion can be extended. Many participants reflected, with varying degrees of directness, on the racialised character of the UK's response to Ukrainian displacement. Nicole asked, *"is it racist? Do the Ukrainians get treated better because by and large they're white? I suspect so."* Brian compared the speed of the HfU scheme with the treatment of Afghan refugees and Laura described feeling troubled by what she perceived as the role of whiteness in shaping public acceptance:

"I think he thought it would be bearable to the British people if it was white people coming over. I think that was a really powerful part of it and that is very much what put us off...I don't think there'll ever be a government scheme like that for a country which isn't white and I find that a bit more than a bit unpleasant." (Laura)

The phrase "a bit more than a bit unpleasant" is a characteristic British understatement that conveys the discomfort of naming something that participants recognised but struggled to fully articulate. Laura's observation that the scheme was "bearable" to the British public reveals an awareness of selective deservingness as a structural filter operating through public attitudes and political narratives rather than simply individual prejudice. The psychological texture of this recognition reveals that participants had acted on their values, and yet the encounter with difference confronted them with the possibility that those values were embedded within a moral landscape that had selectively determined who deserved their compassion.

Brian reflected on the gap between expectation and encounter, *"I don't know what we were expecting people to be like from Ukraine. They're just ordinary people."* Laura similarly

questioned her earlier assumptions stating, *“That’s not what I expected of a refugee in quotes. Well, what do you expect of a refugee?”* Placing the word “refugee” in air quotes, Laura signalled her awareness that the category was itself a construct, one that had shaped her expectations and that the encounter with a specific individual had complicated. The rhetorical question of “what do you expect of a refugee?” was a moment of critical self-examination, inviting recognition that the category carried unexamined assumptions. Luke reflected on the complexity of individual difference among guests he encountered:

“But that’s like putting together an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman together really because they, they were from quite different parts of Ukraine and quite different backgrounds...their attitudes were very different and their outcomes...have been quite different.” (Luke)

Luke reached for a familiar cultural frame with the use of the joke structure of “an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman” to convey diversity within the guests, a frame that places Ukrainians within a recognisably British landscape of regional difference. The analogy functions as a gesture of inclusion and a subtle form of cultural assimilation, rendering Ukrainian difference understandable through a British lens.

Experiences such as these appeared to complicate simplified narratives about displacement. Rather than fitting into a singular identity defined by victimhood, guests were experienced as complex individuals with varied outlooks. This prompted participants to reflect not only on their assumptions about refugees but also how they understood their own role as hosts.

For some, these reflections widened into broader questions about global responsibility and inequality. Michael, for instance, pondered the disparity between the welcome offered to Ukrainians and the treatment of those crossing the Channel:

“What about all of the other refugees crossing the Channel and putting their lives at risk in desperation? Why are we taking such a harsh view of people who are leaving their homeland? For reasons. Some of the reasons reflect back on us in terms of global warming. Where did the industrial revolution start? Whoops. UK. We are the ones who probably triggered all of the carbon emissions that have then led to climate change.” (Michael)

Hosting also created moments of more immediate reflexive disruption. Luke described a particularly destabilising moment while watching a play about refugees:

“And there was one person who was, well, why have I got to learn English? Why can't everyone learn to speak our languages? And I just sat there thinking, yeah, well, maybe. Maybe...why should I have to speak English? It really made me stop and think, yeah.” (Luke)

The repetition of “maybe” captures a thought being formed in real time, with a certainty dissolving as it is articulated. This is the moment of disruption in which assumptions were briefly made visible and aligns with the attitudinal shifts documented in contact theory (Pettigrew et al., 2011). The discomfort these reflections generated was rarely fully resolved. Many participants were left with a moral ambivalence, being proud of what they had done and troubled by the conditions that had made it possible. This unresolved tension suggested that hosting did not produce moral clarity but a more honest and complicated relationship with one’s own values.

Welcoming the Stranger, Transforming the Self: Expanding Horizons.

Participants often described hosting as an experience that influenced their sense of self, their relationships, and their broader social outlooks. These changes were often framed as meaningful, growth-promoting, and at times enriching. At the same time, participants also

acknowledged that the experience could involve moments of strain, disagreement, or emotional rift. Overall, the experience seemed to both expand and gently unsettle existing understandings of self, family, and responsibility.

Brian explicitly positioned hosting as mutually enriching, while Michael described how everyday interactions with guests shaped his perspective:

“They would show us things, speak slowly so we could understand and introduce us to friends and show us interesting things. So in a way, we hope that's a habit we've adopted. Just enjoying the company of others and learning from each other.”

(Michael)

Michael does not describe a grand transformation but a gradual reorientation of a new way of being with others that he hopes has become part of how he will continue to inhabit the world.

For some participants, the pressures associated with hosting placed strain on close relationships. Mary described how the pressures of hosting placing extraordinary strain on her marriage, *“Me and my husband had never sort of argued through our marriage and we had a really happy marriage and this nearly broke us up... Yeah. So there's no. I wouldn't do it again.”* The finality of “I wouldn’t do it again”, spoken at the end of an account of considerable emotional upheaval, carries the weight of a quietly exhausted conclusion. Mary’s account illustrates how the emotional and practical demands of hosting could reverberate within intimate partnerships in way that the hosting’s civic framework entirely obscured. Joseph framed similar accounts he had heard in stark terms, *“it's not nice when people have sort of opened their home to then have their own life sort of smashed apart as a result of it.”* The use of “smashed apart” conveys the magnitude of disruption that could accompany an experience that was publicly understood as an act of generosity.

However, despite these tensions, participants often returned to broader reflections on humanity and connection. Edith framed the experience in more affirmative terms, *“It makes you feel better...you don't want to see others suffer. And so that. Whatever you can do, you do. And actually, that's enriching.”* Even when the experience had been difficult, the sense of having responded to suffering in a way that mattered remained.

Overall, hosting appeared to function as a transformative experience. For some, it deepened cultural awareness and reinforced their moral identity. For others, it exposed existing tensions within families and altered intimate relationships. These experiences often involved both enrichment and difficulty. In this sense, hosting expanded participants' perspectives while also testing the resilience of existing relationships, highlighting the complex and deeply human nature of welcoming others into one's home.

The Shared Soundscape of Home

The second group experiential theme refers to the home as a sensory space, known through sight, sound, smell, texture, and temperature as much as through physical arrangement. The quality of quiet in the early morning, the creak of a particular floorboard, the sound of another's presence are all sensory features through which the home is experienced as “home” rather than a physical structure. Bachelard (1994) described the home as a space of resonance in which sounds are heard and felt, carrying the emotional weight of belonging and the comfort of the familiar. When the home is opened to another, its soundscape changes. A new presence brings new sounds, a different relationship to silence, and new rhythms of daily life. These are not dramatic disruptions but quiet ones. The acoustic texture of home is reshaped as familiar rhythms of noise and silence are subtly reorganised.

Letting Others into the “Lair”: Softening the Sound of Home. Hosting involved a gentle reworking of how participants experienced their homes. Many described the home

shifting from a private sanctuary to a shared and negotiated space. Routines that had previously been guided by ease and autonomy became shaped by greater awareness and self-monitoring. In this way, the meaning of “home” was not lost but it was quietly reshaped.

Emily reflected on the accumulation of small shifts:

“I think it's just you've then got you, your space to yourself, you know, it is different when there's somebody else there... The way you dress, the way you behave, you know, is different, isn't it?...It's just things that don't seem significant, really, but, like, altogether it is significant...What, what you eat, you know, how loud you put the TV on, all of those things, you, you, you change when somebody's in the house, don't you?” (Emily)

The use of “isn't it” and “don't you” function as appeals for shared understanding, and an invitation to the researcher to confirm that this experience is valid and recognisable. Emily is reaching toward something that feels significant but is not easy to articulate, and the questioning nature of her account reflects the tentative quality of her meaning-making. The phrase “things that don't seem significant, really, but, like, altogether it is significant” captures the phenomenological weight of hosting not as a dramatic event but an accumulation of small moments that collectively transform the experience of home.

In these accounts, the freedom of unselfconscious living became something participants became more aware of once it had shifted. Edith described similar adjustments in daily routines:

“You've got to change the way that you, you act around your own empty house. I mean, stupid things like you, you know, you go to the loo, you've got to lock the door...Simple things like that, you know, just got to be aware of.” (Edith)

Edith's dismissal of these adjustments, using the self-deprecating language of "*stupid things*", reveals the normative pressure to present one's own inconveniences as trivial relative to the far greater disruptions experienced by the guests. Ontological security is sustained precisely through such unreflective routine (Giddens, 1991) and its gentle disruption reveals how much of domestic comfort depends on the invisible assumptions that underpin it.

Several participants also acknowledged missing the ease that comes with having a space entirely to oneself. Nicole expressed this gently, "*sometimes I guess it would be nice just to come home and find the bathroom not occupied. It's just the silly things*". The dismissive "just the silly things" mirrors Edith's "stupid things" with both participants minimising their own experience in the act of naming it, suggesting an awareness that acknowledging discomfort risks appearing insufficient in one's commitment to hosting.

Stephen's declaration of, "*this is my castle*", and Laura's description of the home as, "*very much your lair*" evoke the sense of protection, identity, and ownership that many people attach to their homes. The lair, in particular, carries connotations of enclosure and withdrawal, a space that is inaccessible to others. To share it is therefore a renegotiation of something fundamental to how the self is constituted in relation to domestic space (Bachelard, 1994).

Hosting involved learning to live with a certain emotional complexity. Participants described opening the doors of their "castle" while still inhabiting it and sharing their "lair" without relinquishing it. Domestic autonomy was not erased but gently reshaped sometimes requiring patience, flexibility, and at times a quiet sense of loss.

From Welcoming to Living Together: The Quiet Negotiation of Difference. For many participants the initial moral clarity that accompanied the decision to host gave way to

the far more complex realities of sharing a home. Living together required participants and guests to navigate everyday boundaries and expectations in ways that were often unanticipated. Brian reflected on how routines gradually emerge within the shared space:

“So I think we just tried to make it as welcoming as possible and we pretty soon established a routine in the house. So it wasn't difficult. There weren't. Because they were so nice. There was no. No arguments about anything...They learned fairly quickly to ask, although they would perhaps delay a little while and try and sort of hedge around it rather than be too direct.” (Brian)

The phrase “try and sort of hedge around it rather than be too direct” frames this as a cultural characteristic of the guests. Similarly, Michael described how shared meals evolved over time as the arrangement settled:

“We started up to begin with, I cooked meals for us, so we'd have a meal together at least once a day. And then [guest] started sharing the cooking...And then over time that became a bit much, always cooking for each other. So we had a couple of days a week when she would cook one, I would cook the other. And then we went our separate ways in between times. But it all worked well.” (Michael)

The phrase “it all worked well” suggests the meaning made from the experience is one of success but the detail of the account reveals the labour that “working well” involved with repeated recalibration of routines. The emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003) embedded in this account is hidden by the focus on outcomes, which is itself a characteristic feature of how hosts minimised the emotional costs of their labour.

Simultaneously, participants expressed moment of mismatch between their expectations of shared household life and the reality that unfolded, with the closeness or

companionship they had anticipated not always materialising in the ways they had imagined. Stephen gave an account of this subtler form of distance:

“I found it very difficult. Yeah. She was never. In our way. But I can't describe it. No, she, she. I mean, she would. She. She would never. She would. Wouldn't sit with us. Or sometimes she'd sit with us and have a meal, but most of the time she wouldn't. That was her choice.” (Stephen)

The repeated false starts and self-interruptions enact the difficulty of articulating what Stephen is trying to describe. He is reaching for something to fit the quiet sense of a lack of connection that he struggles to name and he is careful not to indicate this as a failing on the part of the guest. The tension between wanting connection and respecting separation runs throughout participants' accounts of cohabitation.

Mary spoke about differing expectations around household routines:

“...the way she treated our home. I have a cleaner and she would. My cleaners would clean their rooms...I told her to do the same, but she would do it when I told her. But throughout the time she was with me, she never once washed the towels or put her towels out to be washed. And I, I found that really difficult.” (Mary)

Mary's use of “the way she treated our home” carries a possessive weight. What is at stake for Mary is not cleanliness but mutual respect and shared responsibility within a space whose meaning was deeply connected to her identity and her sense of order. The home is a site where cultural norms and power relations are negotiated and reproduced (Blunt & Dowling, 2022). Mary's distress at the unwashed towels is understood as the distress of having the norms of her domestic world and work unacknowledged.

Luke reflected on tensions that arose around the use of the kitchen:

“So if I was sat here and I was about to go and cook dinner, if she came down and started cooking their dinner, I'd wait until she moved out the way. If I was cooking dinner and she came down, she'd carry on and get in my way and there was some friction. Yeah. If you wanted the kitchen space, you ask her or imply that you wanted the kitchen space and eventually you tell her to get out of the kitchen for half an hour.” (Luke)

The progression through this account from waiting, to implying, to verbalising, maps the gradual assertion of domestic authority that Luke ultimately exerts. The implicit norm of whose kitchen it was operated asymmetrically. The home's domestic norms tend to function as invisible defaults that structure shared space in ways difficult to see because they feel so natural (DiAngelo, 2018).

Cultural difference was often encountered through the ordinary routines of everyday life. Food practices, health beliefs, parenting approaches, and gendered expectations all became sites of quiet negotiation. These moments did not result in conflict but required reflection and communication, and the conscious process of navigating differing expectations could become tiring over time, even when participants continued to value the relationships that hosting created.

Strangers Becoming Kin: The Quiet Expansion of Family. Hosting frequently involved the gradual reshaping of how participants understood family and belonging. Through everyday care and emotional connection, many described relationships that moved beyond the practicalities of offering accommodation. Guests were not only welcomed into the home but over time became woven into the emotional fabric of the space.

Mary described the bond that developed between her late husband and a child guest:

“And my husband got particularly close to him because he, [child guest], looked on my husband as his granddad...And yeah, they formed a really close bond. So much so that when they left, my husband said to me as we were driving back from the airport, I feel bereft.” (Mary)

The word “bereft” is the language of grief and reveals the depth of a bond that formed. Kate described the connection with a guest even in the absence of shared language:

“Yeah. It's strange because, you know, I couldn't actually properly talk to her, but, yeah, I felt like she was a kindred spirit. I mean, I don't know actually if she would have been if I could have spoken to her, you know, I only had the impression that we thought on the same wavelength, but she liked gardening.” (Kate)

Kate is not claiming certainty about the nature of the relationship but preserving its felt meaning while acknowledging its basis in gesture rather than conversation. Small moments such as tending to the garden together became a way of building bonds of kinship and highlights that families are something that people do rather than something they simply are (Carsten, 2000).

Jane recalled conversations within her household before hosting began:

“We said, if we're going to do this, they become part of the family, you know, but we didn't know how that was going to work. We didn't know whether it would work. You know, we didn't know. There was a lot on both sides, of trust, really.” (Jane)

Jane’s reflection highlights both the intention to create a sense of belonging and the uncertainty that accompanied it. Building relationships within the home required trust from both hosts and guests, particularly as they navigated unfamiliar circumstances together.

Joseph articulated how the parental role developed:

“You become very protective of them. I was very protective of all the girls because it, Mum as well, and I knew that she didn't have a husband. So we effectively my wife and myself, became sort of stand-in parents.” (Joseph)

The expansion of kinship was grounded in asymmetry from the outset. Hosts' awareness of guests' displacement and loss intensified their protective and parental responses, suggesting that it was precisely guests' vulnerability that facilitated the formation of these quasi-parental bonds. These dynamics were shaped by the vulnerability associated with displacement even as relationships developed with warmth and mutual regard.

Across interviews, participants spoke about guests becoming “*part of the family*” or being thought of in ways similar to that of adult children or relatives. This suggests that hosting expanded participants' understanding of who could belong within the circle of family life. However, hosts remained aware that these relationships unfolded within the broader context of displacement and resettlement where guests had experienced significant loss and disruption.

Hosting therefore appeared to create a space where new forms of relational belonging could emerge. While the home remained the hosts' domestic domain, the emotional connections that developed were often sincere and in some cases, lasting. For many participants, welcoming displaced guests into their homes became a process through which the boundaries of family were gently widened.

Living with the Echoes: A Space Shaped by War. Hosting brought participants into close and sustained contact with the emotional consequences of war. For many, the realities of conflict were no longer distant or abstract, but became present within the everyday life of the home. Participants described becoming aware of the lingering effects of trauma through small but powerful moments such as late-night phone calls, startled movements, sudden

distress, or quiet tension that accompanied waiting for news from loved ones. Witnessing these experiences could evoke feelings of shock, concern, and sorrow.

Emily reflected on her anticipation of this emotional weight:

“One of the things that did worry me from. From. From a selfish point of view would be that there would be a lot of heartache and, you know, and trauma and. And, you know, there is. She gets bad news and, you know, obviously she's in contact with her family a lot, and so. And you do take on some of that. So I was a bit concerned about that side. Like, I didn't want a lot of trauma in the house, you know, that on a selfish note, I had to cope with.” (Emily)

Emily frames her concerns about the psychological demands of hosting as selfishness, suggesting that the moral framing of the experience made it difficult to acknowledge her own needs without self-criticism. The repeated false starts suggest the difficulty of articulating a concern that felt impermissible. The anticipatory anxiety about absorbing another's trauma is consistent with literature on secondary traumatic stress (Figley, 1995), however acknowledging this at all seemed to represent a kind of moral failure. The compassion fatigue framework has been criticised for locating vulnerability in the individual carer rather than the structural conditions that generate care demands without adequate support (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) and this is precisely what Emily's self-criticism indicates as she deflects onto her individual character what is in fact a predictable consequence of an institutional design that placed no limits on what hosts were expected to absorb.

Participants described doing their best to provide comfort and containment during moments of distress. Stephen shared:

“Every now and again, like anybody who's not in their own home and whose family's lives are at risk, have a meltdown....I don't think we could give her the emotional

support that she needed. Yeah. But most. I mean, we. We had a hug and we talked to her and that.” (Stephen)

In such moments hosts felt uncertain about how much support they could truly provide. Nevertheless, many described responding with simple acts of care by offering reassurance or physical comfort when it felt appropriate. Jane reflected on how the emotional strain of displacement could be visible once guests had reached a place of relative safety:

“You could tell she needed, like. You could tell she needed to kind of decompress from that kind of trauma. And, you know, even though, you know, compared to a lot of Ukrainians, nothing really bad had happened, it was still a trauma. You know, it had been quite traumatic. She was with a baby on her own in another country for about eight weeks, being really brave to take this, and she kind of emotionally collapsed in a bit of a heap when she got to us.” (Jane)

Jane’s account highlights how the initial period of survival and resilience during displacement could later give way to exhaustion or emotional release. For some guests, arriving in a supportive environment created space for feelings that had previously been held back.

Witnessing the constant anxiety and uncertainty faced by guests waiting for news from loved ones was a strikingly recurrent experience. Thomas described the particular anguish of waiting for digital confirmation that loved ones were alive:

“They pick up their phone to look at messages they sent the night before. They're looking for ticks. If they see two ticks, they know the person's read the message and they know they're alive. If they don't see any ticks, they're worried shitless that they've been bombed and have been killed. And there will be days where there's no ticks, not because they've been bombed, just because the Internet's down.” (Thomas)

Through this account, the home became permeated by the anxiety of wartime uncertainty, mediated through a digital interface that delivered life and death information in the form of small blue marks on a screen.

Hosts sometimes found themselves listening to stories or witnessing distress that they could not fully understand or resolve. Edith described responding to these moments in a way that felt natural to her:

“So she was in a real state in a really bad, bad way that really hurt her...But you just deal with it naturally. And I'm just got to listen. I'm only. I'm an emotional bloody wreck most of the time, but I'm. You know, you cuddle her....Make a cup of tea, you listen to her; you cry with her; you. You see pictures that she wants to show you. You give her the time.” (Edith)

These everyday gestures of listening, sitting together, sharing tears, or offering a cup of tea became a way of responding to distress within the intimate setting of home. Bion (1962) describes containment as the capacity to receive another's unbearable experience, to hold it without being destroyed by it, and to return it in a form that is more bearable. These psychological costs were real and carried without institutional recognition or support.

For some hosts, these relationships also brought experiences of profound personal loss. Kate spoke of the deterioration in her guest's health during their time together, *“Her health just got worse and worse. She had to have lots of blood transfusions every three weeks and it just got worse and worse. And yeah, she died.”* While recounting this experience, Kate wept while discussing her loss and shared photographs of the cake her guest had made for her as part of a birthday celebration. These memories highlighted the closeness that had developed between them and the grief that was still present in the home following her guest's

passing. This raised unanswered questions about how the emotional consequences of hosting, at their most profound, are recognised and supported.

Many participants described absorbing fragments of these experiences through empathy and shared living. The home in this sense became a place where wider consequences of war were felt. Hosting therefore required participants to live alongside emotions that could not easily be resolved. Rather than fixing the pain of displacement and loss, hosts described their role as one of accompaniment by remaining present, offering comfort where possible, and sharing space with experiences shaped by war.

Being Held in Suspense

The third group experiential theme describes the experiential condition of being held in suspense between two states. Liminality refers to a threshold condition in which ordinary structures of certainty, identity, and belonging are suspended (Turner, 1969/2017). Liminality is not a brief passage but an extended mode of living, structured by uncertainty and dependence on external decision-making. When the future cannot be reliably anticipated, when a visa might or might not be extended, when the war might or might not end, when the guest might or might not remain, it is this state of uncertainty that defines the psychological weight of the hosting experience. Under these conditions, hosting suspends a life in a prolonged liminal state where the next chapter cannot be written because the conditions that would determine its course lay entirely beyond the control of those most affected.

A Leap of Faith: Navigating Risk and Responsibility. Participants framed the decision to host as involving careful reflection about uncertainty and responsibility. Entering into a hosting arrangement was at times characterised as a “risk”, reflecting the vulnerability that welcoming a stranger into one’s home entails. Emily captured this:

“It was still a risk, you know, you don't know who you're going to get and you don't know if you're going to get on with them and you don't. You don't know if they're going to treat you or your house as you want it to be treated.” (Emily)

Risk appeared to be a relational and practical concern relating to questions of trust, compatibility, and the navigation of shared space. Participants expressed apprehensive reflections that the experience of home as familiar and secure may feel somewhat more uncertain when opened to someone new. Hosting therefore involved a willingness to tolerate this uncertainty.

Mark reflected on this mutual nature of this uncertainty when he explained, *“Yeah, you know, I mean it's a risk for me, you know, because you don't know who you have in your home really. But it's also a massive risk, you know, a massive step for them to take.”* This aligns with the relational ethics of care, which attends not only to the person being cared for but to the vulnerability inherent in the act of caring itself (Tronto, 1998). Hosting was not a relationship between a confident provider and a passive recipient but a mutual leap into uncertainty shaped by trust on both sides.

Discussions about the possibility of ending hosting arrangements also highlighted how participants thought about responsibility and choice. Michael described how both hosts and guests were able to decline a match if it did not feel suitable, *“The way, they had the option to reject us if they wanted, as we did them.”* For some participants, this sense of mutual choice seemed to help ease the discomfort about the potential imbalance of power within the arrangement. However, their reflections suggest an awareness that the broader circumstances surrounding displacement and refuge inevitably shaped these interactions.

For a few participants, concerns about risk were also connected to safeguarding and the vetting procedures used to match hosts and guests. Edith's concern about vetting revealed

a further dimension. She was worried primarily not for herself but about whether arriving guests would be safe in the homes of strangers, *“I was worried about. They didn't vet anybody really, you know...it's like putting somebody into somebody else's care. You don't know nothing about that person.”* Her focus was on the wellbeing of those the scheme was designed to help rather than her own protection. Hosting was therefore understood as carrying a degree of responsibility for ensuring that those arriving would be safe and supported.

Jane reflected that family discussions had been necessary before hosting could move forward, *“it was more about the idea of having strangers in our house, you know, that would kind of upset the apple cart. And so we had to have kind of lots of conversations as a family.”* Hosting was not only an individual decision, it required families to consider the possibility that the experience would lead to change.

Overall, participants' accounts suggest that considerations of uncertainty and responsibility did not disappear once the decision to host was made. Rather these reflections appeared to continue throughout the hosting experience, often being managed through conversation and consideration. Hosting involved an evolving process of thinking carefully about safety, trust, and care for everyone involved.

Suspended in Time: The Tension of Uncertainty. The experience of waiting featured prominently in participants' accounts and was often described as emotionally charged and marked by uncertainty and limited information. The time between submitting applications and the eventual arrival of guests was frequently experienced as prolonged with little communication from official channels. This produced a sense of being suspended within a bureaucratic process that was difficult to understand or influence.

Lucy reflected on the mounting frustration she experienced while trying to seek clarity:

“...what's happening? You know, why is this going on so long? Why is it? I kept ringing the helpline and then they told me, you're not allowed to phone more than once a week. Then I emailed my MP. He didn't reply back until after she'd arrived. So pretty useless, really.” (Lucy)

The sequence of events Lucy describes maps the experience of systematic institutional obscurity. The final dismissal of “pretty useless really” is delivered with characteristic British understatement that contains considerable frustration. Lucy’s experience illustrates what the meta-ethnographic synthesis described as the vicarious administrative burden imposed by the scheme (Tomlinson et al., 2024).

Jane reflected a similar period of suspension, where she described “*hounding*” her Member of Parliament while monitoring online Facebook forums alongside other waiting hosts:

“...we just had to wait and, you know, weeks went by and I was following it all on Facebook....And it was kind of like, oh, my God. You know, we just didn't know whether it was going through.” (Jane)

Jane’s account suggests that the waiting experienced was felt as something closer to dread than frustration. The uncertainty was not only individually felt but shared and that sharing amplified awareness of the delays and made them more bearable through the reassurance of common experience.

Several participants emphasised the length of this waiting period. Michael described the process as, “*quite a long protracted period*”, suggesting that the delay was felt not in practical terms but also emotionally as anticipation stretched over time without clear resolution. Similarly, Mark recalled hearing nothing for “*six, seven, eight weeks*”, highlighting the unpredictability of communication and reinforcing the sense that the process

was largely outside the host's control. This mirrors accounts of asylum systems in which prolonged waiting is conceptualised as a form of bureaucratic power that produces uncertainty, where limited communication and delay shape people's experiences and reduce their sense of control (Rotter, 2016).

For many participants, uncertainty persisted well after guests' had arrived. Instead, it evolved into long-term uncertainty regarding guests' immigration status and future possibilities. Questions about visa duration, the progression of the war, and the potential for the return or continued residence in the UK created an ongoing sense of unpredictability. Emily reflected, *"The future bit is the hard thing though, you know...her thoughts are she'll go back when the war finishes. And when will that happen, you know, if that will happen? I don't know."* Her reflection captures the difficulty of planning for a future when the timing and outcome of broader geopolitical events remain uncertain.

Hosts and guests alike were often living with possibilities that could not yet be resolved. Nicole spoke about the emotional implications of what returning to Ukraine might mean for a child who had begun to settle in the UK, *"But it's gonna be. It's going to be difficult. It's going to be. It's going to be difficult. Tearing her away from the. Tearing. That's a really emotive word. But she will not want to leave here."* Nicole's interruption of her own sentence following the word "tearing", where she recognises the weight of the word and names that recognition aloud, and then chooses to retain it rather than replace it with something softer reflects the emotional complexity of imagining a future separation after attachments have been developed. The concept of liminality as described as the state of being betwixt and between, neither fully here nor fully there (Turner, 1969/2017) captures something of what both hosts and guests inhabited across the duration of the arrangement. This sense of in-betweenness also mirrors a common experience of forced displacement, where refugees in a citizenship sense do not belong to one place or another (Malkki, 1995).

Joseph extended this concern in relation to children's wellbeing, reflecting on how the possibility of relocation might be a "*catastrophic trauma*" for those who have begun to experience the UK as home.

For some participants, immigration policy was experienced as a threat emphasising the importance of clear long-term pathways for those who wish to remain. Jane reflected on this possibility while acknowledging that some individuals will wish to return to Ukraine:

"I think they really should have the opportunity to a pathway to citizenship, if that's what they want. But a lot of people will want to go back and they want to rebuild their country. But there will be some people who make a life here. You know, she's had to make a life and it's. That's. That's the risk she's made is that by trying to make herself a life here, she could have that all snatched away from her in 18 months-time if the government said, no, you've got to go back." (Jane)

Her reflection highlights the tension between building a life in the present while remaining aware that future decisions about residency may lie beyond the control of both hosts and guests.

Hosting unfolded with a broader landscape of temporal uncertainty. Waiting was experienced throughout hosting. In this way, emotional life within the home was shaped not only by interpersonal relationships but by the wider structures and policies that influence guests' future security.

Labour Beyond Home: Navigating the Unknown. All participants spoke of the process of becoming a host as involving considerable administrative effort. Rather than following a clear procedure, many described the scheme as complex and at times difficult to navigate. Hosts found themselves assuming the roles of advocate, translator, and navigator through unfamiliar institutional territory. Participants often found themselves working

through unclear guidance, evolving systems, and unexpected challenges. In doing so, hosts frequently took on forms of labour that required persistence, advocacy, and extended beyond what they had initially anticipated for their role as a host.

Emily reflected on the challenges of helping her guest complete the digital visa application:

“That certainly was a challenge...it was uploading her passport or something like that, and we just. We couldn't tell her how to do it...even on, like, teams and sharing your screen and things like that, I'm not sure we were able to do that because I think it was all on her phone and it was all via WhatsApp.” (Emily)

The phrase “we couldn’t tell her how to do it” carries a particular quality of helplessness. The technological complexity of the process meant that the administrative burden was not only effortful but experienced as a failure of care.

For some hosts, the administrative role became particularly significant when their guests’ faced barriers created by the conditions of war. Thomas’ account gave this dynamic its starkest form, *“I basically had to apply as if I was them, even though I wasn't. It was a bit bizarre...But basically, in Ukraine, they didn't have reliable Internet or power because they were getting bombed.”* The administrative design of the scheme met the conditions of war in such a way as to place extraordinary demands on private individuals who had no institutional authority or training to manage them.

Brian highlighted the evolving nature of government systems during the early stages of the schemes, *“There wasn't a defined process...It was hit and miss, really. If you knew people who knew stuff, then you had an advantage...The government played catch up all the way through.”* Success for hosts and guests depended not on formal guidance but on informal networks of prior knowledge. This is the responsibilisation logic (Rose, 1996) where the state

transfers its functions to private citizens while framing that transfer as civic virtue. However, this does not involve a transfer of control, creating a double bind in which responsibility is devolved without authority. This was experienced as navigating an improvised system in which the rules were changing and the responsibility for getting it right rested entirely on the individual who had volunteered to help.

Lucy described the psychological texture of navigating welfare systems as, *“It just, it was just, yeah, chaos. It wasn't chaos, but you felt like you were wading through shark infested waters really.”* Her self-correction reveals the struggle to match the felt experience to vocabulary. She reaches for “chaos”, then withdraws it, and presents the metaphor of “shark-infested waters” which gives the impression of risk while trying to acknowledge that there was some order to the system. The metaphor highlights that navigation was demanding because the stakes were incredibly high and the consequences of making the wrong move would be experienced by someone who depended on her.

Lucy similarly reflected on how her expectations of the process differed from what ultimately occurred:

“But yes, I naively. I don't know if it's naive, but that's. I was given the impression that we would kind of be matched with somebody who had just sort of turned up or...Looking for sponsorship and applied somehow, but that's not how it happened and that's not what I think was ever intended. But that wasn't clear.” (Lucy)

Her reflection highlights the uncertainty participants experienced while trying to understand how matching and sponsorship would work in practice. Rather than following a clearly defined pathway, the process felt ambiguous, leaving hosts to interpret procedures as they went on.

The practical responsibilities often continued following the guests' arrival in the UK. Participants described helping guests navigate systems that could be difficult to access without local knowledge or language support such as healthcare, banking, benefits, and education. Joseph described being among the first hosts to receive a family, finding himself navigating a Universal Credit system not yet configured for Ukrainian refugees:

"We think it was a very good scheme. In fact, I think our family, one of the first to arrive, which meant that we had to sort of deal with the sort of all the issues in relation to universal credit, bank accounts, SIM cards, because our, our systems weren't ready for the scheme." (Joseph)

Accounts such as Joseph's illustrate how hosts became important intermediaries, helping guests access services and understand unfamiliar systems. The citizenship framework (Isin & Nielsen, 2008) illuminates what hosts were doing in completing visa applications, registering guests with GPs, helping open bank accounts, and advocating within bureaucratic processes. They were enacting acts of citizenship, constructing the conditions of belonging for people whose formal citizenship remained precarious.

Hosting Together: Community as Scaffolding. Throughout all the interviews, hosting was experienced as sustained through collective effort rather than undertaken alone. While participants recognised the presence of local authorities and refugee charities, the most immediate and responsive support frequently emerged through peer networks and informal community connection. Community stood at the heart of the experience for many participants, offering a practical and emotional scaffolding that helped ease the demands of hosting and filled the gaps where formal support felt limited.

Nicole described how much of her day-to-day guidance came from peer-led Facebook groups:

“You got a kind of support network via Facebook, if I'm honest with you, by other. From other hosts, asking questions, posting on there. Does anyone know what to do? You know, and there was always somebody that had just done the thing that you had. And they would always post on there. You do this, you do that, you go, you phone...So it was kind of, the support was kind of peer support, if you like.” (Nicole)

Nicole's account highlights the immediacy and practical nature of peer knowledge. Advice was often offered by others who had recently navigated a similar situation, allowing information to circulate through shared lived experience rather than formal guidance alone. The repeated phrasing of “*you do this, you do that, you go, you phone*” suggests how informal, collectively developed ways of navigating complex systems gradually emerged within these spaces.

Laura described a WhatsApp group used to share information and provide reassurance, while Jane mobilised professional networks through Facebook to gather essential items for an arriving family:

“People I work with at the hospital, I mean, I've worked there for a long time, were coming out of the woodwork saying to me, I saw it on Facebook, my friend link shared it...I've got a car seat, I've got this, I've got a steriliser, I've got. So gradually we then, you know, it was kind of like a list.” (Jane)

Jane's evocative image of colleagues “*coming out the woodwork*” conveys both surprise and gratitude at the response she received. What began as an individual hosting arrangement became a wider network of colleagues and acquaintances. Through these existing relationships, resources and assistance were shared, transforming everyday social spaces such as workplaces and online platforms into sites of practical support.

Edith described how a group of local hosts began meeting regularly to coordinate support:

“So she set up a group because there was actually something like 20 families on [location] that signed up to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. So we had meetings on a regular basis and everybody took a job...So I took the job of collecting clothes, toys, anything that people were willing to donate. The garage was like a charity shop.”

(Edith)

Edith’s account illustrates how collective organisation gradually emerged in response to shared needs, with responsibilities distributed and domestic spaces repurposed to store donated items, reflecting how ordinary environments became part of a broader community response.

Some participants situated their actions within broader cultural narratives of solidarity and collective responsibility. Edith invoked the “Blitz Spirit” as a way of making sense of people coming together in times of crisis. Edith reflected on this when she said, *“it's the old Blitz spirit, that's when humans are amazing in certain areas, that when there's a need, people rally.”* Through this framing, acts of hosting and community mobilisation were understood as part of a familiar national narrative about resilience and mutual support during times of hardship.

In reaching for this cultural narrative, participants were situating their actions within a broader moral landscape in which responding to suffering elsewhere became part of what it meant to act responsibly. This framing functioned as an enactment of citizenship where helping displaced families was framed as a socially valued and morally appropriate response to crisis, connecting immediate domestic practice to a broader cultural understanding of citizenship as something enacted in moments of collective need (Isin & Nielsen, 2008).

Private sponsorship research in Canada has shown how hosting schemes can generate civic identities through which individuals remake their understanding of social membership (Hyndman et al., 2017), and the present findings suggest a comparable dynamic in the HfU context.

This moral positioning was often relational. Participants' enactment of moral citizenship appeared most meaningful when their guests could be recognised as deserving help. This mirrors the selective deservingness identified in the meta-ethnographic synthesis. In this way, concepts such as the "good refugee" deserving protection and the "good citizen" offering hospitality appeared to be mutually reinforcing constructs. Such concepts highlight how humanitarian action was not only practical but also symbolic, allowing participants to position themselves within broader moral and national narratives of solidarity.

Discussion Chapter Overview

The following chapter summarises and interprets the findings of the study through the lens of ontological security. It critically relates these findings to existing literature, considers study limitations, and outlines implications for clinical practice and policy. It also reflects on how clinical psychology understands its responsibilities to serve communities in a context where the governance of forced migration is placed within their homes.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer a psychologically grounded account of what it meant to open one's home to a Ukrainian refugee in the East of England through the HfU scheme following the 2022 invasion. This study proposes that the lived experience of hosting created a distinctive ontological condition operating simultaneously at the domestic level and community level. At the domestic level, the private home was transformed from an anchor of the hosts' ontological security into a scaffold for the reconstruction of the guests' ontological security, at a gradual and largely unacknowledged cost to the host's own. At the community level, when the scheme's institutional withdrawal rendered the domestic scaffold too heavy to sustain, informal peer networks between hosts performed the same function for hosts that they were performing for guests. They held the weight, shared the knowledge, and provided the trust and solidarity that made carrying on possible. Reconstruction was required at both levels simultaneously.

The claims of this research are grounded in the methodology that produced it. IPA is uniquely equipped to access lived psychological accounts and the following discussion rests not only on documenting what hosts and the community provided, but on establishing that both provisions were experienced as ontologically significant. They were matters of identity, coherence, and the capacity to inhabit the world with a stable sense of who one is and what comes next. This dimension of experience is accessible only through the sustained idiographic, double hermeneutic engagement with individual accounts that IPA provides.

The systematic meta-ethnography that precedes this study established the structural architecture within which this psychological account is situated. The four connecting constructs of Moral Initiation, Hidden Labour, Home as a Site of Governance, and The Shifting Ground of Hosting describe at the structural level the same condition that the present study describes at the psychological level. What the meta-ethnography could not access was

what moral activation felt like within the self, what the renegotiation of domestic routines cost at the level of identity, what the destruction of security meant for the narrative through which hosts understood their lives, and what it was that community actually provided that made the experience bearable. The present study provides that experiential account, grounding the meta-ethnographic constructs in the psychological mechanisms that produced them.

The lived experience of hosting a Ukrainian refugee through the HfU scheme was one of moral commitment and unexpected relational depth, enacted within conditions of structural inadequacy that left hosts carrying the weight of a national humanitarian response in the intimate space of their own homes. Hosts made sense of the psychological dimension through the language of identity. The decision to host was experienced as narrative repair, the demands of hosting as ontological renegotiation, and the endings of arrangements as a form of loss for which the surrounding social world provided no adequate recognition. They made sense of the relational dimension through the language of family. Strangers became kin through shared domestic life, and those bonds carried the weight of grief when they ended. They made sense of the moral dimension with growing complexity. What began as civic virtue became, through the encounter with selective deservingness, a more troubled and more honest reckoning with the conditions of their own compassion. They made sense of the structural dimension with a clarity that accumulated over time. The costs they had carried were not the natural consequences of caring for another person in difficulty. They were the consequences of a governance arrangement that had placed institutional responsibility in private hands without acknowledgment, support, or resolution. The discussion that follows explains how that condition was created, how it operated at both levels, and what it reveals about the governance logic of humanitarian response.

The decision to host was experienced as a moral necessity. This moral impulse appeared to be bound up with participant's sense of identity, as though the self was called to account by events it could not observe without some form of response. The existing literature has documented this moral dimension of hosting motivation. Across European contexts altruism, empathy, and ethical commitment were reported as consistent drivers (Doidge & Sandri, 2019). In the UK, the ONS survey data found that 94% of HfU sponsors reported a desire to help as a primary motivator (ONS, 2023), and the *More in Common* report confirmed that 79% of hosts reported a sense of responsibility to help those fleeing the invasion as their primary motivation (Tryl & Surmon, 2023). The meta-ethnographic Moral Initiation construct also identified across European hosting contexts that moral motivation was called forth by a combination of personal moral commitment and the institutional and media framing as a civic and patriotic response to a proximate humanitarian crisis.

The present findings reveal the psychological mechanism through which that moral activation operated. The decision to host was not just a response to the suffering of others, it was a response to the threat that witnessing that suffering posed to the narrative continuity of the self. In Giddens's (1991) terms, the fateful moment of the invasion of Ukraine arriving in participants' homes through screens and radios, was a threshold experience that breached the protective fiction of daily continuity and demanded renegotiation of the assumptions through which ordinary life was organised. Hosting was the act through which that renegotiation was made possible, providing a means of restoring the coherence of a moral self-narrative. This extends the existing literature's account of hosting motivation from the observation that hosts were morally committed to the understanding of why that commitment felt closer to a need than a choice. Hosting was not simply what they wanted to do but what they needed to do in order to remain the person they understood themselves to be.

The filter through which that moral necessity operated is equally important. At a structural level the welcome extended to Ukrainians was organised by cultural proximity, racial familiarity, and a moral economy in which compassion was distributed unevenly along racialised and geopolitical lines (Çetin, 2025; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Fassin, 2011; Mickelsson, 2025). The UK's hostile environment policy with immigration governance has organised the perception of displaced people as threatening, illegal, and culturally alien (Griffiths & Yeo, 2021; Tyler, 2018) and has structured perceptions of which suffering warrants the kind of empathetic identification. The meta-ethnographic synthesis confirmed this selective deservingness as consistent across European contexts, and the present study adds the subjective experience of this structural account. The present findings suggest that selective deservingness was not only a policy logic or media framing but a filter on whose suffering could produce the fateful moment of narrative disruption that made hosting feel necessary. This is a dynamic identified as a feature of refugee hospitality more broadly (Farahani, 2021; Kyriakidou, 2021). Through the experience of hosting, participants became increasingly aware that the 'deserving' framing of Ukrainian refugees was structured by a hierarchy that excluded others whose suffering was no less real. This recognition introduced a form of moral ambivalence as hosts were confronted with the conditional nature of the compassion they were enacting. What had initially been experienced as a clear moral response became more complex, raising questions about why certain forms of suffering elicited action while others did not. The intersections of race, nationality, and cultural proximity that organised the differential welcome (Crenshaw, 1989; Fassin, 2011) were experienced as an encounter with the limits and conditions of one's own compassion. This encounter was among the most morally significant dimensions of the experience and required participants to reconcile their actions with broader awareness of inequality in how care is distributed.

Through the act of hosting, the private home was transformed from an anchor of the hosts' ontological security into a scaffold for the reconstruction of the guests'. This extends Giddens's (1991) framework in a specific direction. Giddens identified the home as the primary anchor of the three mechanisms to which ontological security is sustained and identified fateful moments as the threshold experiences through which that security is disrupted. What the present study suggests is that the home can function not only as the anchor of one person's security, but as the provisional scaffold for another's reconstruction, and that when it does, the host is simultaneously renegotiating the conditions of their own. The home's relationship to ontological security is not only personal but relational, and opening it to someone whose security has been catastrophically and involuntarily destroyed creates a distinctive condition in which both persons' relationships to that space are simultaneously and asymmetrically at stake.

Each small domestic adjustment was a moment at which a taken for granted routine was made deliberate rather than unconscious, and the home briefly required more effort to inhabit than it had before. The significance was cumulative rather than individual, because each adjustment constituted a renegotiation of the conditions through which the host's own sense of coherent daily existence in the world was sustained. Mary's distress at the unwashed towels was not primarily about cleanliness, it was about the breach of this specific domestic order through which her ontological security was organised. Luke's account of the kitchen illustrated how power and the shared home operated not through explicit authority, but through naturalised routines, often ones that felt natural to the person whose security they anchored and were invisible to the person for whom they did not. Conditional hospitality is enacted (Derrida, 2000), as the home remains the host's possession even when shared. The existing literature has identified power asymmetry as a consistent structural feature of homestay arrangements (Bassoli & Luccioni, 2024), however the present

study demonstrates the specific domestic mechanism through which that asymmetry was enacted in the most intimate and apparently trivial dimensions of shared daily life.

The sponsor-refugee relationship demands sustained emotional investment (Phillimore et al., 2022) and the present findings reveal the specific psychological mechanism through which that demand operated. The relational dimension of the scaffold was enacted through kinship. The bonds that formed through shared meals, celebrated birthdays, and witnessed grief were not incidentally meaningful, they were ontologically necessary. They were relationships through which basic trust could be provisionally established and through which a disrupted narrative of the self could begin to be reconstituted. This extends Carsten's (2000) account of the relational constitution of kinship into the specific context of ontological reconstruction. Large-scale adversity can simultaneously heighten attachment needs among those affected and activate caregiving responses in others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). In the hosting context, the constitution of kinship was also the providing of security. When arrangements ended, the grief that followed was the grief of losing relationships that had become anchors of ontological security. The existing literature has treated hosting endings as practical matters requiring clear timelines and managed transitions (Komter & van Leer, 2012). The present study extends this recommendation into its psychological dimension suggesting that clear endings are necessary not just for logistical management but because they allow the grief of ending to be anticipated, named, and socially recognised rather than absorbed in silence as a legitimate loss that the surrounding culture did not seem to acknowledge.

The domestic scaffold was costly and was operating without recognition, support, or any provision for those who were sustaining it. The scheme placed the responsibility for ontological reconstruction within private homes, without providing the structural conditions that would have made it sustainable. As the cumulative weight of that responsibility began to

erode the very routines, relationships, and narrative through which hosts own sense of security was organised, what held them? The answer does not appear to lie in the institutional architecture of the scheme, but in what hosts built and maintained with one another.

Against this backdrop of institutional withdrawal, the most unexpected finding of this study becomes visible. Existing literature has documented the presence of peer support among hosts. The *More in Common* report (Tryl & Surmon, 2023) found that 66% of HfU sponsors relied on peer networks as their primary source of practical assistance, and the meta-ethnographic synthesis documented community solidarity as a consistent feature of European hosting contexts. The present study reveals, however, that this account is incomplete. While existing literature identifies what community provided in practical terms, it has not accounted for what it provided psychologically, and to the ways in which it shaped hosts' ability to sustain the role over time. The community psychology tradition has long established that wellbeing is shaped not only by individual psychological factors but by the community dynamics and structural conditions within which people live (Prilleltensky, 2008). For many participants, the presence or absence of such community networks was not only a source of support, but the difference between sustainable hosting and collapse.

The present study proposes that what community provided was collective containment. Bion's (1962) concept of containment describes the capacity to receive and hold another person's unprocessed emotional experience, allowing it to be experienced and processed rather than expelled. The domestic level of the scaffold established that hosts were performing a containing role for guests within the home. They were receiving traumatic material, providing relational stability, and holding the weight of displacement within the intimacy of daily life. The collective level demonstrates that community was performing the same function for hosts. The Facebook groups, WhatsApp exchanges, and the local host meetings were spaces in which the emotional weight of hosting could be expressed,

witnessed, and held by people who understood it from the inside because they were living through it themselves. Descriptions of peer knowledge that circulated were not only practical guidance, but the transmission of basic trust and assurance that this was bearable and that one was not alone in carrying it.

The concept of community as collective containment names an experience that has not previously been articulated. It extends Bion's (1962) framework beyond the therapist and patient, the mother and infant, into the community level, demonstrating that the function of containment can be distributed across a network of people who hold each other's distress collectively because they share the specific experience that is generating it. Community was providing not only shared knowledge and practical guidance, but psychological holding. It was performing the specific function that makes distress bearable not through resolution, but through witnessed sharing. Survey data documented that hosts relied on peer networks (Tryl & Surmon, 2023), and the meta-ethnography identified community solidarity as a feature of the hosting landscape. However, this study reveals what community was actually providing at the psychological level and why its absence would have been experienced not as inconvenience, but as the removal of the primary means through which the experience was made bearable.

At the domestic level, hosts provided routine, basic trust, and narrative continuity for guests whose security had been destroyed. At the community level, informal peer networks provided the same three conditions for hosts whose capacity to sustain the domestic scaffold was being eroded by the scheme's institutional failures. The scheme required ontological reconstruction at the domestic level and made it necessary at the community level, without resourcing either. This was not just a matter of administrative inadequacy. The reliance on a private hosting model over institutional reception, the absence of clear timelines, and the transfer of institutional responsibility without training, point to a broader governance

architecture. Within this, hosting was framed as voluntary generosity, while leaving those who enacted it to absorb its psychological and practical costs without sufficient recognition, resource, or resolution.

Clinical and Applied Implications

The lived experience of hosting a Ukrainian refugee through the HfU scheme creates a nested ontological condition requiring a simultaneous reconstruction at the domestic and community level. What hosts needed and what the scheme failed to provide were the conditions of reliable institutional structures, relational continuity, and the capacity to construct a coherent narrative future through which ontological security is sustained. The following implications are organised around clinical practice, service and scheme design, and the broader professional and societal responsibilities of clinical psychology.

Clinical Implications for Practice

Perhaps the most pressing clinical implication of this study concerns the psychological wellbeing of hosts themselves, as a population whose needs have not previously been recognised to date within formal mental health frameworks. Across participants, the emotional labour of hosting was sustained, cumulative, and largely unacknowledged, carried within the private space of the home without adequate recognition from the institutions whose responsibility it was to fulfil. What hosts experienced was a sustained renegotiation of the domestic routines, basic trust, and relational continuity through which their own sense of self in the world was organised, performed in the service of partially rebuilding those same conditions for guests whose ontological security had been catastrophically disrupted. The structurally generated psychological demands and their clinical consequences are well documented. Compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress (Figley, 1995), and the particular psychological weight of functioning as a container for

another's distress (Bion, 1962) all emerged as meaningful aspects of participants experiences, however, it appeared that very few perceived the support available to be orientated towards their own psychological needs, indicating a potential area for further clinical attention.

Clinicians and practitioners working with host populations should be alert to these risks. Hosts may present not with dramatic symptoms but with the quieter signs of sustained emotional depletion, such as fatigue, a gradual narrowing of emotional availability, difficulty maintaining the warmth and patience that initially felt natural. They may also experience a growing sense of isolation within a role that others may perceive as straightforwardly rewarding, alongside a persistent sense of moral ambivalence that they may struggle to name or feel they are not entitled to express. The coexistence of pride in what was done and discomfort about the racialised conditions that had made it possible are a clinical presentation that practitioners may encounter and that existing frameworks do not adequately help them to understand or hold. Moral injury theory (Litz et al., 2009) which describes the psychological damage that arises when a person acts rightly within a system that is itself morally compromised, offers a framework for understanding this presentation. Practitioners should be equipped to recognise this dynamic and offer reflective spaces in which it can be named rather than suppressed.

The cultural framing of hosting as a straightforwardly positive and morally admirable act may paradoxically make it harder for hosts to acknowledge when they are struggling, because doing so appears to contradict the civic identity that hosting was expected to express. The findings also highlight the importance of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) as a condition of sustainable hosting. Participants who felt able to acknowledge difficulty, to express the limits of their capacity, and to seek support without fear of judgement appeared better placed to sustain their commitments over time. Creating spaces, whether in peer networks, support groups or clinical settings, where hosts can speak honestly about

ambivalence, frustration, and exhaustion without feeling that their doing so reflects poorly on their motivations or their care, is therefore not a luxury but a necessity. Practitioners and support organisations may wish to reflect on how their communication either enables or constrains this kind of honest expression, and should remain mindful of cultural narratives that emphasise the positive aspects of hosting in ways that may inadvertently render its psychological costs invisible.

The findings also carry implications for how hosting relationships are understood and supported through the lens of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982). The bonds that formed between hosts and guests were in many cases significant attachments, not merely warm acquaintanceships, but relationships of emotional depth whose endings carried the psychological weight of loss. This has particular implications for how the transitions at the end of hosting arrangements are managed. The departure of the guest, whether through relocation, return to Ukraine, or death, as in Kate's devastating account, should not be treated as a logistical matter, but as a relational event with psychological significance for both parties and should be treated as such. Practitioners working with hosts in the aftermath of arrangements should be alert to these transitions, creating opportunities for them to be acknowledged, witnessed, and held in ways that validates rather than minimises their significance. The end of a hosting arrangement can be understood as a severing of an ontological scaffold through which a provisional sense of security was sustained. Organisations supporting hosts should consider how they prepare people for these transitions, how they offer support around their aftermath, and how they create opportunities for endings to be acknowledged and held.

Service and Scheme Design Implications

The most important service design implication follows directly from the study's most unexpected finding. Community as collective containment was the primary means through which the psychological demands of hosting were made bearable, providing at the collective level the routine, basic trust, and shared narrative that the scheme had placed in private homes without resourcing. Many participants described absorbing the traumatic experiences of their guests, while sitting with grief, witnessing distress, and holding the emotional consequences of war within the intimacy of their homes. Yet there was no corresponding support for the psychological impact of that exposure on themselves. Clinical supervision models and professional caring roles offer a useful framework. Regular, structured opportunities for hosts to process their experiences with a trained practitioner, not as therapy but as supported reflection, could provide the kind of containing function at a community level that many participants were providing for their guests at a domestic level. Peer support networks, as the findings demonstrate, already fulfil something of this function informally, however their value should be formally recognised, adequately resourced, and built into the design of future sponsorship schemes, rather than left to emerge organically in the gaps of institutional provision. A scheme that depends on community solidarity without providing for it is not a minor oversight, it is extracting psychological capacity from communities without accountability.

Integrative community therapy (ICT), rooted in systemic family therapy, the pedagogy of the oppressed, and resilience theory, offers a framework for formalising and resourcing host communities in this context (de Paula Barreto & Camarotti, 2021). ICT is a group based psychosocial intervention designed to strengthen community bonds, promote emotional wellbeing, and build collective resilience through structured spaces of shared storytelling and mutual recognition. Rather than positioning individuals as patients in need of treatment, it positions communities as repositories of wisdom and strength, thereby creating

conditions in which people can speak honestly about difficulty, be witnessed by those who understand their experience, and draw on the collective resources of the group to sustain their engagement within challenging circumstances. The peer networks that participants described such as Facebook groups, WhatsApp messages, and regular meetings, were already functioning in a way that resembles the underlying principles of ICT. Delivering ICT through trained facilitators embedded within local refugee support organisations, and building it into the formal infrastructure of future sponsorship schemes, would provide hosts with a structured and psychologically informed version of what many were already creating for themselves. Given that the findings document how hosting placed participants in sustained contact with traumatic material, that many carried the emotional weight of the exposure largely alone, and that the community solidarity was the primary means through which the demands of hosting were made bearable, ICT's emphasis on collective resilience and shared emotional processing represents a particularly fitting and practically accessible model of support. Its community orientation also aligns with the broader community psychology framework that informs this study, offering an intervention that addresses the social and structural dimensions of host experiences, rather than individualising what are, in important respects, collective psychological challenges.

Beyond community support structures, future schemes require specific attention to the structural conditions that produce ontological harm. Clear timelines and explicit guidance on the transition out of hosting would allow both hosts and guests to construct a coherent narrative of the future rather than inhabiting the open-ended temporal suspension the HfU scheme produced. The transfer of significant bureaucratic and administrative responsibilities onto private individuals was experienced by participants as exhausting, isolating, and at times distressing and the present findings establish that this was not a failure of individual resilience but a consequence of a governance arrangement that had transferred public

functions into private homes without adequate support. Future sponsorship schemes would benefit from being designed with explicit recognition of the emotional and practical labour they ask of private citizen. This might usefully begin at the point of induction and pre-hosting preparation, with structured briefings that set out the relational and psychological demands as well as the logistical expectations of the role. In addition, clear and accessible guidance, responsive helplines, and thoughtfully managed matching processes appear important in supporting hosts. Framing expectations realistically around what hosts can reasonably be asked to provide without professional training or institutional backing may help to mitigate strain and reduce the risk of hosts feeling overwhelmed or unsupported over time. The findings suggest that the sustainability of hosting depends not on the moral qualities of individual hosts, but on the structural conditions within which they are asked to act. This finding places clear responsibility on policymakers to ensure that those conditions are adequate to the demands they create.

The temporal architecture of the hosting arrangement carries particularly urgent implications for future scheme design. The ontological precarity documented must be addressed by future schemes, providing pathways to either longer-term settlement or supported return so that both hosts and guests are not left indefinitely suspended in a condition whose psychological costs are documented in this study. The UK government's recent move toward 30-month reviews of refugee protection status (Home Office, 2025) makes these recommendations increasingly urgent. If ontological security cannot be established because the future remains perpetually unresolved then wellbeing, integration, and civic participation that schemes declare as their goals become impossible to achieve. Policy design should recognise that the psychological conditions for sustainable hosting are not peripheral concerns to be addressed after logistical arrangements are secured. They are conditions on which the scheme's own stated objectives depend.

Professional and Societal Implications

The racialised dimensions of the findings carry implications that extend beyond individual clinical support toward the design of schemes and the training of practitioners. Participants' candid reflections on the differential welcome extended to Ukrainian refugees relative to other displaced populations, and the structured moral ambivalence that the encounter with selective deservingness produced, suggest that critical consciousness as an awareness of how structural power and racial hierarchies shape who receives compassion and on what terms, is not only a theoretical concept but a lived psychological experience for hosts themselves. Selective deservingness operated as a filter on whose suffering could produce the fateful moment of narrative disruption that made hosting feel necessary. Practitioners working with host populations and those designing future sponsorship schemes should engage with these dynamics, rather than treating the HfU scheme as a racially neutral humanitarian intervention. Cultural humility (Foronda, 2020) and critical consciousness (Pitner & Sakamoto, 2005) should be embedded in practitioner training and host support as practical frameworks for navigating the complex moral terrain that the findings reveal hosting to involve. Practitioners require frameworks that validate the moral significance of what hosts did, while creating space for discomfort, ambivalence, and the psychological weight that many carried without support.

The findings also carry implications for how clinical psychology understands its own role in relation to the governance of forced migration. This study has demonstrated that the psychological consequences of humanitarian policy are not located only in displaced people but in the private citizens who are asked to absorb some of the consequences of displacement within their own homes. Clinical psychology has a responsibility to attend to these populations, to develop frameworks adequate to their experience, and to bring its understanding of relational ethics, community resilience, and the structural conditions of

psychological wellbeing into conversation with the policy processes that shape the circumstances within which both hosts and guests must live.

The findings situate the hosting experience within the broader landscape of what it means to organise a humanitarian response through the mobilisation of private generosity. They highlight the lived experience of specific citizens carrying the weight of a national policy within the intimate space of their daily lives. Clinical psychology has historically understood its remit as the wellbeing of individuals as well as communities, and its current professional direction of travel supports the argument that this remit must extend further still. The Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) positions psychological distress as arising from experiences of power, threat, and meaning within social and structural conditions rather than from individual pathology alone, and identifies social policy and equality as domains in which clinical psychology has both an academic and professional responsibility to engage. The present findings are consistent with and extend this framework, suggesting a need for clinical psychology to name the governance arrangements that may produce psychological harm as consequences of their design, and to contribute to public and policy discussions shaping responses to future humanitarian crises.

Dissemination

Given the contemporary relevance and implications of this study, dissemination is planned across academic, clinical, and community contexts. Academically, findings will be prepared for submission to a peer-reviewed journal with relevance to clinical psychology and migration. Potential outlets include journals such as *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, and *Emotion, Space and Society*, all of which publish qualitative psychological research with a focus on community, identity, and social context. The study contributes to emerging literature on the psychological impact of community-based humanitarian responses and may be positioned as

extending the understanding of identity, relational, and moral processes within informal hosting arrangements. The application of ontological security as a framework for understanding the psychology of hosting may allow for submission to journals that bridge sociological theory with psychological practice such as *Sociology of Health and Illness* or *Health and Place*. Findings may also be presented at the Division of Clinical Psychology Annual Conference to facilitate engagement with clinicians. For those who participated in the study, an accessible summary of findings will be developed for dissemination to host and community networks, and relevant charities involved in the HfU scheme. This will aim to validate host experiences while also acknowledging the emotional and relational difficulties encountered and contribute to a more nuanced public understanding of the realities of participation in the scheme.

Strengths

Perhaps the most significant strength of the present study lies in its methodological choice. IPA was selected because it is uniquely suited to the exploration of complex, emotionally laden, and personally significant experiences. The double hermeneutic at the heart of IPA, where myself as the researcher makes sense of the participants making sense of their experience, has produced an account of hosting that illuminates not only what participants did, but how they felt about and understood what they did. By committing to depth over breadth and to the idiographic analytic process of individual accounts, the study generated psychological insights that survey based and sociologically orientated research has not yet been able to access.

The sample of 15 participants is a further strength. While at the upper end of what is recommended for IPA research, it was appropriate given the diversity of hosting arrangements across the sample in terms of duration, living arrangements, number of guests hosted, and whether arrangements were on-going or concluded. It also enabled a thorough

and rigorous engagement with each individual account (Smith et al., 2021). The depth of idiographic engagement with individual accounts produced interpretive claims that are grounded in the particularity of experience. All participants identified as White British and heterosexual, and the majority were older and retired. The homogeneity of the sample reflects the demographic profile of the broader HfU sponsor population (ONS, 2023). The homogeneity allowed for closer attention to the particular dynamics of privilege, capacity, and selective deservingness that characterised the hosting experience within that population.

The study's interdisciplinary theoretical framework is also a significant strength. By drawing together phenomenological philosophy, ontological security theory, attachment theory, containment, emotional labour theory, critical perspectives on race and citizenship, community psychology, and theories of hospitality and governance, it offers an integrated account of hosting that bridges migration governance and psychological theory in ways the existing literature has not previously achieved. Each framework was selected for its capacity to illuminate a meaningful aspect of the data, and with ontological security as the scaffolding, their integration reflects the complexity of the experience it seeks to understand. The inclusion of a meta-ethnography alongside the primary IPA study is a further strength. By situating the qualitative findings within a theoretically coherent synthesis of the existing European literature, the study offers a contribution that is both empirically grounded and conceptually insightful, thereby extending the meta-ethnographic framework through psychological depth, rather than adding another qualitative study to an already developing evidence base.

The timing of the study contributes further to its significance. Conducted during an active and rapidly evolving humanitarian crisis, it captures the lived experiences of hosts at a moment when the longer-term consequences of the scheme are still unfolding, which provides a psychologically grounded account of the phenomenon of considerable

contemporary relevance. The East of England setting, while geographically specific, is itself meaningful as a politically contested region whose shifting attitudes towards immigration and humanitarian response provided important contextual background for interpreting participants accounts.

Limitations

Alongside these strengths, several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample was drawn from a specific geographical region and recruited through networks that may have favoured hosts with particularly reflective or articulate relationships to their experience. The use of snowball sampling means that participants were more likely to be connected to host communities and peer networks, potentially underrepresenting those whose arrangements were without community connection.

The sample's demographic homogeneity reflects the broader HfU sponsor population but also raises questions about the transferability of the findings to hosts from different social and cultural backgrounds. The experiences of hosts from minority ethnic communities or from working class households may differ in important ways that the present study is not positioned to capture. The ontological security framework has been critiqued for assuming a relatively privileged social subject (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998; Hage, 2003), and the homogeneity of the sample with stable housing and the material conditions of a secure daily life means that the findings are most directly applicable to hosts for whom those conditions were in place. Whether the ontological account developed here applies equally to hosts from different social positions is a question that future research with more diverse samples could address.

The study focused exclusively on the perspectives of hosts. While this was a deliberate and methodologically justified choice grounded in the identified gap in the

literature, this produces an inherent relational asymmetry that requires acknowledgement. The experiences and inner lives of the Ukrainian guests who were hosted are present in this study only as they were refracted through hosts' descriptions and interpretations. Guests appear in the data as objects of care, as part of the family, and as carrying the weight of war into the domestic space, but they do not appear as subjects in their own right, and the home as an ontological scaffold is accessed only from the host's perspective. Whether guests experience the routines and relationships that hosts described as anchoring or as something more complex remains inaccessible to this study. A fully relational account of the hosting encounter that holds both perspectives and examines the gaps between them remains needed. The present study's findings should be understood as one side of a conversation whose other side remains absent and essential to the theoretical account.

As with all qualitative research, different researchers bringing different positionalities to the same data might have generated different interpretive accounts. Reflexivity has been maintained throughout and the double hermeneutic of IPA is designed to acknowledge that analyst's role rather than conceal it. The interpretive nature of IPA means that the findings should be understood as an in-depth exploration of how 15 individuals made sense of their experience, rather than a generalisable account of hosting across wider populations.

Future Directions

The findings of this study open several directions for future research. Studies employing dyadic or parallel qualitative designs to capture both host and refugee perspectives would offer a more fully relational account of the hosting encounter, attending to the ways in which the same experience is lived and understood differently by each party. Future research might also attend specifically to the guest's experience of ontological security and its reconstruction within hosting arrangements, thereby testing and developing the theoretical account proposed from the perspective of those the scaffolding is intended to serve. It could

also examine whether what hosts experienced as providing scaffolding was experienced by guests as anchoring or the navigation of more complex forms of security.

Longitudinal designs following hosts across the full arc of the hosting experience and its aftermath would provide a more temporally sensitive account of its psychological significance of hosting, capturing the ways in which meaning shifts over time and tracking the longer-term consequences of the attachments formed and lost. How hosts process the endings of arrangements, and the extent to which that process is supported or constrained by social and institutional contexts could be explored in future research.

Research drawing on more diverse sampling strategies, for example, deliberately recruiting hosts from minority ethnic communities, from working class households, or from different regions and political contexts, would help build a fuller and more representative picture of the hosting experience across the demographic spectrum. This would address the specific limitations of the present sample and establish whether the ontological security framework is applicable across different social positions, and whether the collective containment finding holds across hosting contexts with different community architectures. Studies exploring the experiences of hosts whose arrangements ended in particularly difficult circumstances, perhaps through relationship breakdown, emotional crisis, or bereavement could also address a dimension of the hosting experience that the present study can only gesture towards.

Research drawing more explicitly on clinical frameworks would also make a further valuable contribution. For instance, exploring the prevalence and predictors of secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue among hosts, or evaluating the effectiveness of specific support interventions such as ICT in reducing psychological strain and sustaining hosting commitment over time. Research that specifically looks at the clinical applicability of

the moral injury framework (Litz et al., 2009) to host populations would be particularly valuable given the ambivalence evidenced in the present findings.

Comparative research across different national contexts and sponsorship models would also help establish which structural conditions are most strongly associated with positive outcomes for both hosts and guests. It could provide the evidence base that policymakers urgently need if future schemes are to be designed with greater attention to the human realities they asked private citizens to navigate. Such research might also allow the ontological security framework to be tested as a cross-national analytical lens, examining whether the ontological precarity documented in the HfU scheme as a feature of this specific scheme's design or a structural characteristic of private hosting arrangements more broadly.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the lived experience of British citizens who hosted Ukrainian refugees through the HfU scheme and how they made sense of the psychological, relational, and moral dimensions of opening their homes to someone displaced by war. Across 15 accounts, the findings present a more complex, costly, and politically revealing experience than the scheme's civic framing anticipated or acknowledged.

The systematic meta-ethnography identified four constructs of Moral Initiation, Hidden Labour, Home as a Site of Governance, and The Shifting Ground of Hosting and proposed a line-of-argument synthesis that hosting operated as morally activated yet structurally burdened domestic governance, with outcomes shaped more by structural conditions than by moral qualities of individuals. Selective deservingness operated as the threshold through which the entire arrangement was organised, determining who was welcomed and on what terms before any individual decision was consciously made. This

structural account, synthesised across European contexts, provided the architecture within which to situate the primary IPA study.

The IPA study confirmed the architecture of the meta-ethnography and established the psychological cost of the structural conditions and what they meant in the lives of 15 people in the East of England. The lived experience of hosting was a nested ontological condition operating simultaneously at the domestic and community level. At the domestic level, the host's home became the scaffold for rebuilding the guest's destroyed sense of security at gradual cost to the host's own security. At the community level, peer networks performed the same function for hosts that hosts were performing for guests, providing the collective containment that make the experience bearable. Reconstruction was required at both levels and neither was resourced by the state. The most unexpected finding of collective containment names what held hosts and what the scheme did not provide.

Clinicians working with host populations need frameworks adequate to the sustained ontological renegotiation, moral ambivalence, bereavement, and the depletion of caring capacity that participants provided for others without provision for themselves. Service design and policy makers need to consider that the sustainability of hosting relies more on the structural conditions within which they are asked to act and that schemes that transfer public humanitarian responsibility into private homes without adequate support produces psychological harm. The UK's recent policy shift toward conditional and reviewable refugee protection (Home Office, 2025) make the urgency of this recommendation far greater. Future sponsorship schemes should be designed with explicit attention to the temporal, relational, and ontological conditions that determine whether hosting is sustainable and considerate of the human lives impacted.

This thesis reveals the lived experience of 15 British citizens from the East of England who opened their homes to strangers displaced by war. They asked more of themselves than was anticipated, carried more than they were formally supported to hold, and experienced more in terms of growth, kinship, and connection that exceeded the scheme's bureaucratic framing. They were sustained not by the institutions that had invited them to take part but by each other, with peer networks functioning as a form of collective containment.

Understanding what hosting costs, what it requires, and what enables it is an urgent concern for the discipline in a world of increasing displacement and retreating institutional provision. The home is not a neutral space and opening it is not a simple act. It reshapes the self, the other, and the communities that hold them, and it is this complexity that warrants the sustained attention this study has sought to provide.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CASP Rating of Included Studies

CASP appraisal question	1*	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	1
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the research aims?	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5. Was the data collected in a way that addresses the research issue?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participant been adequately considered?	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	1
TOTAL CASP RATING	6.5	6.5	5.5	7	8	8	8.5	8	9	8	7.5	7	8	7.5	6.5

*Study 1: Tomlinson et al. (2023a) Study 2: Tomlinson et al. (2024) Study 3: Tomlinson et al. (2023b) Study 4: Luczaj. (2023) Study 5: Arcadu et al. (2024) Study 6: Skowrońska. (2025) Study 7: Rancew-Sikora et al. (2025) Study 8: Burrell. (2024) Study 9: Politi et al. (2025) Study 10: Dula & Fuchs. (2025) Study 11: Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers. (2026) Study 12: Alrawadieh et al. (2024) Study 13: Zschomler & Berg. (2025) Study 14: Berg & Zschomler. (2025) Study 15: Wilczyńska. (2025)

Appendix B: Sample of Study Concepts

Study	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs
Burrell (2024) UK	Jess: “I would really like to stop...going to Job Centres every week, you know, dragging my little one along, making appointments at the doctors, doing this, doing that, taking them in the car...it's a cumulative effect”	Responsible Hosts, Dependent Guests. - Bureaucratic labour as cumulative burden; practical navigation of welfare and immigration systems compounding physical and emotional demands; gap between formal responsibility (“just accommodation”) and experienced reality obscured by official framing.
	Emma: “the day-to-day, it would be me doing most of the work and kind of psychological support as well...it probably does fall more to the woman”	Responsible Hosts, Dependent Guests. Gendered emotional labour; hosting responsibility falling disproportionately on women within hosting households; gap between governmental framing of limited formal responsibility and lived experience of intensive emotional support;
	Lauren: “I've been the main source of support for our guests...it's so much more responsibility than I thought it would be...what they say we're responsible for on paper but the reality is so much more”	responsibilisation compounding existing gendered care inequalities.
	Lisa: “we've not talked greatly about timescales, it's an awkward conversation to have...I don't want her to feel unwelcome...but for my own sanity, I need an endpoint to know I'm working to”	Uncertain Temporalities: Moving On in a Housing Crisis. - Open-ended hosting without exit planning producing shared anxiety for hosts and guests; system requirement to produce homelessness as condition of social housing access.
	Judy: “I was told you'll have to make her homeless. Well there is no way I am going to make somebody who has been very dependent on me for security, homeless after six months”	

Appendix C: Overview of Constructs

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
1. Tomlinson et al. (2023a) Hosts' Experiences of the HfU Scheme	UK	Wanting to help those fleeing war	Moral motivation as primary driver	Moral Initiation
		Having available space	Capacity enabling action	The Hidden Work of Hosting
		Feeling moral obligation	Emotional and care labour	Home as a Site of Governance
		Navigating public services on behalf of guests	Administrative and bureaucratic burden	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Providing emotional and practical support	Institutional inadequacy and support gaps	
		Uncertainty about the future	Temporal uncertainty about guests' futures	
2. Tomlinson et al. (2024) Direct and Vicarious	UK	Willingness to continue hosting	Positive evaluation despite demands	
		Learning unfamiliar systems on behalf of guests	Direct learning and compliance costs	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Compliance demands and procedural complexity	Vicarious psychological burden	Home as a Site of Governance

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
Administrative Burden		Psychological costs of bureaucratic navigation	Responsibilisation through institutional delegation	
		Vicarious frustration witnessing guests' difficulties	Emotional cost of advocacy role	
		Sense of responsibility for navigating institutions	Gap between state provision and host labour	
3. Tomlinson et al. (2023b)	UK	Simultaneous roles as advocate, supporter, bystander	Vicarious experiences of administrative injustice	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
Whose Procedural Fairness?		Witnessing procedural unfairness affecting guests	Role multiplicity and role strain	Home as a Site of Governance
		Frustration with bureaucratic processes	Attitudinal consequences of institutional exposure	
		Shifting attitudes toward state institutions	Moral engagement with state systems	
		Sense of moral responsibility beyond accommodation	Boundary blurring between host and advocate	

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
4. Luczaj (2023) Multifaceted Hospitality	Poland	Difficulties with everyday routines and negotiations	Domestic negotiation of routines and boundaries	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Stress from difficult life situations	Cohabitation as emotionally and socially complex	Home as a Site of Governance
		Quarrels among migrants within the household	Sustained demands on host's emotional reserves	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Neglecting one's own family	Impact on host's existing family relationships	
		Too strong emotional involvement	Emotional over-involvement and its consequences	
		Incompatible expectations between hosts and guests	Expectation mismatch and relational strain	
5. Arcadu et al. (2024) Food Dynamics Between Italian Hosts and	Italy	Differences in eating habits and meal times	Food practices as sites of cultural difference	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Children's dietary expectations and education	Everyday domestic negotiation through eating	Home as a Site of Governance

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
Ukrainian Refugees		Food as a site of intercultural exchange	Cultural norms made visible through domestic routines	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Commensality as opportunity and challenge	Commensality as both connection and tension	
		Emotional significance of shared and separate mealtimes	Relational care enacted through food preparation	
6. Skowrońska (2025)	Poland	Shifting relational frames across the hosting period	Hospitality framing as dynamic and unstable	Moral Initiation
Guest, Family, or Roommate?		Selectivity and moral filtering in guest choice	Moral filtering shaping who is welcomed	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Social distance and emotional closeness	Relational renegotiation as kinship emerges	Home as a Site of Governance
		Reciprocity and obligations — moral economy	Temporal instability of host-guest categories	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Control and agency within the hosting arrangement	Power and control within domestic arrangements	

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
		Reframing as kinship or cohabitation over time	Cultural and generational disruptions to frames	
7. Rancew-Sikora et al. (2025)	Poland	Collective mobilisation at the outset	Trajectory from enthusiasm to withdrawal	Moral Initiation
Disillusionment in Polish Families		Daily annoyances around home space and objects	Moral disillusionment as a temporal process	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Emotional mismatch between hosts and guests	Emotional mismatch producing relational strain	Home as a Site of Governance
		Questioning the moral identity of the refugee	Selective deservingness reassessed over time	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Questioning one's own identity as altruistic host	Moral identity under threat from sustained demands	
		Internalising blame and externalising frustration	Hosts internalising structural failures	
8. Burrell (2024)	UK	Matching and vetting processes	State abdication through scheme design	Moral Initiation

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
Domesticating Responsibility		Hosts assuming responsibility for dependent guests	Host-guest dependency and power asymmetry	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Uncertain temporalities and housing instability	Temporal uncertainty around housing and futures	Home as a Site of Governance
		Transfer of state responsibility to private individuals	Responsibilisation as structural feature	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Racialised character of the scheme	Racialised deservingness structuring welcome	
		Fragility of everyday humanitarianism	Vulnerability of care reliant on individual capacity	
9. Politi et al. (2025) Sharing is Caring	Belgium / Switzerland	Harmonious cohabitation and mutual adaptation	Three distinct hosting trajectories identified	Moral Initiation
		Gradual fatigue and exhaustion over time	Cohabitation as dynamic and negotiated process	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Dysfunctional cohabitation and conflict	Affective and relational complexity of sharing home	Home as a Site of Governance

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
10. Dula & Fuchs (2025) Homestay Accommodation as Care Work	Switzerland	Everyday practices intertwined with power hierarchies	Power imbalances within everyday practices	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Social and political hierarchies within domestic space	Sustainability contingent on structural conditions	
		Realising the needs of refugees	Hosting as intensive, negotiated care work	Moral Initiation
		State authorities' limited care of hosts	State neglect of hosts' own care needs	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Practical dimensions of caregiving	Practical and emotional dimensions of caregiving	Home as a Site of Governance
		Mutual care relations and their negotiation	Tension between care-giving and care-receiving	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Refugees denying and rejecting care	Care as multidirectional rather than unilateral	
		Caring beyond the temporary arrangement	Relational bonds extending beyond formal hosting	

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
11. Lumley-Sapanski & Garbers (2026) Hosting as a Border Making Process	UK	Cultural and spatial proximity to Ukraine	Proximity as moral trigger for action	Moral Initiation
		Similarity to those fleeing WWII	Historical and cultural resonance shaping motivation	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Gender and family status of refugees shaping response	Gendered vulnerability assumptions influencing hosting	Home as a Site of Governance
		Sense of relational responsibility through proximity	Selective deservingness mediated by proximity	
		Hosting experienced as a bordering process	Hosting as active bordering at home and state level	
12. Alrawadieh et al. (2024) Hospitableness and Pro-social Attitudes	Slovakia	Moral obligation as primary motivation	Moral motivation grounded in hospitableness	Moral Initiation
		Practical and emotional support provided	Care labour as central to the hosting role	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Satisfaction derived from hosting	Hosting as source of satisfaction and meaning	Home as a Site of Governance

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
13. Zschomler & Berg (2024) Arrival Infrastructures and New Bepokism	UK	Challenges encountered during hosting	Empathy and perspective-taking sustaining engagement	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Selective hosting based on perceived fit	Selective deservingness operating informally	
		Advocacy for continued hosting	Hosting fostering advocacy and wider social impact	
		Hosts functioning as arrival brokers	Hosts as informal agents of migration governance	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Providing material and practical support	Arrival brokering as labour beyond accommodation	Home as a Site of Governance
		Mobilising new networks for guests	Formal and informal systems intertwined	
		Facilitating and constraining refugee agency	Power dynamics in facilitating versus constraining agency	
		Navigating gaps in formal arrival systems	Privatised infrastructure filling state gaps	

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
14. Berg & Zschomler (2025) Superdiversity and Hierarchies of Belonging	UK	Racialised hierarchies of deservingness within the scheme	Racialisation structuring access to welcome	Moral Initiation
		Class dynamics shaping who hosts and who is hosted	Classed conditions of hosting capacity	Home as a Site of Governance
		Hosting as reinforcing rather than challenging exclusion	Differential inclusion reproduced within domestic settings	
		Scheme as privatised form of refuge	Privatisation of refuge as governance strategy	
		Differential inclusion along racial and class lines	Exceptionalism narratives obscuring structural inequality	
15. Wilczyńska (2025) Refugees or Guests?	Poland	Categorising arrivals as guests rather than refugees	Guest/refugee framing shaping reception	Moral Initiation
		Integration into local social networks	Social network integration as community process	The Hidden Labour of Hosting
		Community defence of hosted guests	Collective moral defence of welcomed guests	Home as a Site of Governance

Study	Country	First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Third-Order Constructs
		Initial generosity giving way to tensions	Temporal trajectory from solidarity to strain	The Shifting Ground of Hosting
		Persistent socio-economic and cultural friction	Cultural and socio-economic tensions within hospitality	

Appendix D: Recruitment Poster



RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS WANTED

University of Essex

Exploring the experiences of UK residents hosting Ukrainian refugees

What is this research about?

- This research aims to better understand:
 - the experience of UK residents hosting Ukrainian refugees through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme
 - the experiences of offering or receiving practical and emotional support whilst hosting.

Who can take part?

- Anyone over the age of 18 years old.
- UK citizens or have the right to live in the UK permanently.
- Hosted a Ukrainian refugee through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme for a minimum of 2 months.

What will it involve?

- Participation will involve taking part in an interview.
- The interview would last approximately 1 hour and would be held either in your own home or remotely via video call.
- All information you give will remain confidential and anonymous.

How can I participate?

If you would like to take part in the study or would like more information, please contact:

Researcher: Olivia Rose (She/Her)
Email: or23937@essex.ac.uk

Research Ethics Approval Reference Number: ETH2324-1449

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet**Participant Information Sheet****Exploring the experiences of UK citizens hosting Ukrainian refugees****Invitation to Participate**

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you come to a decision on whether to participate it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to carefully read the information below and feel free to contact us if you have any further questions or there is anything you do not understand. Please feel free to discuss this with those around you, friends, relatives, or co-workers. You are not required to say yes to participate and should only agree if you want to.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Why is this research being done?

The lived experience of hosting refugees is a relatively under-examined area of research. This research would like to take the opportunity to explore the lived experience of hosting refugees through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme to provide a richness of qualitative data. This research aims to better understand the lived experience of providing practical support to refugees through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme and in particular the experience of accessing support services (applying for benefits, accessing the GP surgery or

dentist, accessing support from local authorities and accessing schools, accessing mental health support) and understanding the emotional aspects of the experience of hosting refugees fleeing conflict. The outcome of the study may help inform government decisions that influence national policies, as well as facilities and local services.

Why should I take part?

The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of UK citizens hosting Ukrainian refugees through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme. We are interested in the experience of hosting through the scheme and the experiences of offering or receiving practical and emotional support whilst hosting. We hope to recruit 15 – 20 participants who are 18 years of age or over and have hosted through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme for a minimum of 2 months.

What will happen if I take part?

Participation will involve taking part in an interview with myself, a Trainee Clinical Psychologist at the University of Essex. We would agree on a date and time together. The duration of interviews would be approximately 60 minutes, but this can also be flexible to suit you. Interviews will be carried out either in your own home or remotely via video call.

Prior to starting the interview, we ask that you carefully read this information sheet and ask any questions you would like. You will then be asked to sign a written or electronic consent form and complete some demographic information, such as ethnicity, gender, and age, which is just so we can understand more about who you as participants are. All your information, including demographic information, will remain confidential and non-identifiable to you.

If for any reason you no longer wish to take part, please inform the researchers and we will remove any data already collected including your contact information. You have the right to stop the interview at any time.

The interview structure will involve asking about your experience of hosting through the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme and your experiences of offering or receiving practical and emotional support as a host with space for free discussion of the topics. We ask that you be as open and honest as you feel comfortable being.

The interview will be recorded using an audio recording device. This will be transcribed, and the audio recording deleted. The transcript will be comprehensively anonymised, the researchers will remove as much directly identifiable information as possible.

At the end of the interview, you will be given a chance to ask any further questions.

Payment

Everyone that participates will receive a £20 voucher as a reward for their time and efforts. This will be arranged over email by myself, the researcher. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you do not need to give a reason, but if you have already taken part in an interview, this data will be kept, and you will still receive the voucher. If you have not taken part in an interview, unfortunately you will not be eligible for a voucher.

Are there any risks in taking part?

The topics discussed in the interview may have the risk of bringing up strong emotions. The topic is an emotive one for many and might bring up difficult feelings.

If you agree to take part and are finding the interview uncomfortable you should make this known to the researcher immediately. In the event of this happening, we will stop or

pause the interview. You can choose to continue the interview later or stop all together. You have the right to withdraw any data collected up to that point.

If at any point during the interview you disclose something the researcher believes indicates a risk of harm to yourself or others, or indicates a possible crime, they will be required to disclose this to the relevant authorities. The researcher will remind you of this policy before the interview starts and during the interview if necessary.

After the interview we will provide you with resources and information about support organisations such as Samaritans, Mind, Shout etc.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

Whilst there are no direct benefits to participating apart from receiving a voucher, the benefits of your views, experiences, and insights, will be invaluable to this study and potentially future research.

We are hoping that this study will help in providing a voice for the hosts with experience of the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme.

What will happen to the results?

Once all the data is collected and anonymised, it will be analysed to look for common themes and ideas. These results will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis as part of requirements for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Essex. The results will also be submitted for publishing in peer reviewed journals and may be presented at relevant conferences.

At the end of the interview, you will be asked whether you would like to receive updates on the progress of the research. This may include summaries of the findings or news of publications and conferences. If you wish to receive these updates, we will securely store

your contact details separately for this purpose. You will not be identifiable from any of these publications.

How will my data be used?

As this is a research study undertaken by a Trainee Clinical Psychologist, all University guidance has been followed in relation to obtaining consent, in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR states that consent must be freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous. It is also to show that you are willing to participate, understand the purpose and process of the evaluation, and are not committing to providing any data or information you do not consent to. This will occur by your signing of the consent form provided, should you wish to take part.

The Data Controller for this evaluation will be the University of Essex, and should you require further information about any legal information, or have concerns, please contact the University Information Assurance Manager (dpo@essex.ac.uk).

How will my data remain confidential?

All information you give will remain confidential and anonymous. All interviews will be carried out over the online platform of Microsoft Teams or in-person, where they will be audio recorded and stored safely and securely on my personal University of Essex Box account, which is an online platform for storing data securely. It will only be myself facilitating the interviews, which I will carry out in a private confidential space of your choosing. Once transcribed, all audio recordings will be deleted. Transcriptions will also be stored in the same way and given a unique identification number to protect anonymity. Transcriptions will be deleted once the data has been analysed. The research team that will have access to the data, includes me, the researcher, and my two University of Essex supervisors. All data will be analysed by myself, and I will also write up the study. I will also

write up a summary of the study, which will be available to you and all participants, should you wish to request a copy. I am hoping to disseminate the study more widely, such as to an online peer reviewed journal, to help inform the work of others.

Concerns and Complaints

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this research study, or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact Olivia Rose, on or23937@essex.ac.uk. If you are still concerned, you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction or you feel that you cannot approach the facilitator, please contact the University of Essex REO Research Integrity Manager (reo-integrity@essex.ac.uk). Please include the ERAMS reference which can be found at the header of this page.

What happens next?

If you are happy to participate, I will provide you with and ask you to sign the Participant Consent Form. This is just to confirm that you are willing to participate and understand the purpose and process of the study, and what information is being asked of you. This is also to make sure you are not committing to providing any data or information without providing consent. Once you have signed the Participant Consent Form, I will be in touch with you via email to arrange a mutually agreed date and time to carry out the interview. If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with me, Olivia Rose, on or23937@essex.ac.uk.

Appendix F: Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking part in the study:		
I have read and understood the study information, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	☐	☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part in the study involves an audio recorded interview which will be transcribe as text.	☐	☐
Use of the information in the study:		
I understand that information I provide will be anonymised and used for a doctoral thesis and research papers.	☐	☐
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	☐	☐
I agree that my information can be quoted in research outputs.	☐	☐

Name of participant:.....Signature:.....

Name of researcher:Signature:.....

Location:.....Date:.....

.

Study contact details for further information:

Researcher: Olivia Rose

Email: or23937@essex.ac.uk

Appendix G: Interview Topic Guide

A: Introduction & Informed Consent	Notes
<i>Aim: To ensure informed consent and clarity about aims and objectives of the interview.</i> <i>Process: To encourage a collaborative approach and foster rapport.</i>	
Introduce researcher	
Explanation of aims and objectives of the study – provide written information sheet.	
Explain confidentiality and anonymity	
Expectations of the participant – to hear their views in their own words; no right or wrong answers.	
Confers no benefits – “what do you think will happen if you chose not to participate?”	
Practicalities – length of interview; recording; data storage; note taking by Researcher.	
Go through consent – explain can withdraw from the interview at any time & do not have to answer questions.	
Find form of words for not answering – e.g. “I’d rather not go into that”.	
Emotional impact – highlight that talking can be an emotional process, and not always predictable. My first concern is for them.	
Questions for the researcher from participant?	

Record consent in writing – on prepared forms	
Check participant is happy to continue?	
Ask participant to complete the basic demographic information form	
Check equipment and start recording	
B: Demographic Information	

C: (1) Opening questions – Information about participant	
<i>Aim: To put the participant at ease, to start them talking about themselves and get them engaged in the interview process.</i>	
Why don't we start with you telling me something about your home? • What are your living arrangements? (Where; with who; type of housing) • How do you spend your day? (Doing what; education; work; hobbies) • Tell me about your family. (Siblings; parents; family tree?) • Other people in your life? (Social support; friends; helpers etc)	
C: (2) Understanding of the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme	
<i>Aim: To get an idea of the participants understanding of the scheme and how they became a host.</i>	

Process: Try to mirror the language used by the client; clarify concepts; follow-up on unanticipated issues; be aware of body language and emotional state.

Tell me about the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme.

- What did you think of the scheme when it was announced?
- What made you decided to become a host through the scheme?
- What was the process of becoming a host like?
- How long did you host for?

C: (3) Experience of the “Homes for Ukraine” Scheme

Aim: To get the participant to reflect on their experience of being a host through the scheme.

Process: Try to mirror the language used by the client; clarify concepts; follow-up on unanticipated issues; be aware of body language and emotional state.

Tell me about your experience of hosting.

- What was it like to meet your guest(s)?
- Can you tell me about your positive experiences of hosting?
- Can you tell me about any negative experiences of hosting?
- Can you tell me how you feel about having taken part in the scheme?

C: (4) Experience of supporting and being supported

Aim: To get the participant to reflect on their experience of supporting and being supported.

Process: Try to mirror the language used by the client; clarify concepts; follow-up on unanticipated issues; be aware of body language and emotional state.

Tell me about the kind of support you offered your guest(s).

- What practical support did you offer? (applying for benefits, accessing the GP surgery or dentist, accessing support from local authorities and accessing schools, accessing mental health support)
- What emotional support did you offer?

Tell me about the kind of support you were offered as a host.

- What support did you receive as a host?
(accessing support from local authorities, accessing mental health support)
- Did the support meet your expectations?

C: (5) Emotional impact of being a host

Aim: To get the participant to reflect on the emotional impact of being a host.

Process: Try to mirror the language used by the client; clarify concepts; follow-up on unanticipated issues; be aware of body language and emotional state.

Tell me about the emotional impact of being a host.

- How did the experience impact you emotionally?

• Did your guests discuss the emotional impact on them? • Would you consider hosting again?	
C: (6) Closing questions	
<i>Aim: To draw the interview to a close; check that the participant is OK; leave time to address any final issues and feedback.</i>	
Is there anything else you'd like to say or ask me about? • Do you have feedback for me? (things you liked/didn't like about this discussion) • How are you feeling right now?	

Appendix H: Demographic Questions

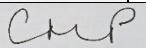
Demographic Information	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Gender	
Sexuality	
Employment Status	
What is the highest level of education you have completed?	
Who do you live with?	
What is your relationship status?	
Do you have any children?	
Optional: Contact Detail's (phone/email)	

Appendix I: Risk Assessment



File name:	Risk Assessment_ETH2324-1449_Sept2024v1.2		
Risk assessment reference:		Version number:	1.2

Risk Assessment

Description of activity / area being assessed	Research Interview		Location	Interviewee's homes and Zoom/MS Teams
Manager responsible	Caitlin Phillips	Signature & date	 18.09.24	
Assessed by (name & role)	Olivia Rose	Signature & assessment date	 12/09/24	

Hazard (H) hazardous event (HE) consequence (C)	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Current risk LxC=R	Additional controls needed to reduce risk	Residual risk LxC=R	Target Date	Date achieved
Researcher lone working in unfamiliar environment/environment of interviewee	Researcher	Introduce self. Build rapport. Make clear expectations of interview and outcomes of research. Reduce travel time where possible.	Low	Inform supervisor of location and date of interview. Let supervisor (or another designated person) know that interview has been completed. Charged phone with connection. Avoid scheduling interviews past 4pm. Plan travel route ahead of time.	Very low	Date of first interview	Date of final interview

Hazard (H) hazardous event (HE) consequence (C)	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Current risk LxC=R	Additional controls needed to reduce risk	Residual risk LxC=R	Target Date	Date achieved
Interview of participant regarding sensitive topic area	Participant	Make participant aware that they do not have to talk about anything that do not wish to and can withdraw at any time with no repercussions. Find a form of words for not answering for example “I’d rather not go into that”. Highlight that talking can be an emotional process, and not always predictable. Use existing interpersonal skills to observe participant’s demeanour and body language, and if discomfort is noted, to	Medium	Be prepared to offer information on emotional support services following interview for participant to reach out to. Make time at the end of the interview to check how the participant is feeling.	Low	Date of first interview	Date of final interview

Appendix J: Example Transcript

TRANSCRIPT: PARTICIPANT 1

DATE: 6th January 2025

TIME: 47 minutes 39 seconds

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, yeah. That's come up as recording. Fantastic. Okey doke. So my sort of opening question just to get us into thinking about things, was to ask you a little bit, actually about your home and what it's like, so that I can sort of maybe visualise it a little bit better or get a sense of what it's like.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Now? As opposed to when my guest first arrived, because it was different.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, well, that sounds really interesting. Tell me about that. Yes, please.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So now there's. It is fairly big. Well, actually, I'll tell you when. When my guests first arrived, because my father was living with us downstairs in, like an annex, and there was just then myself and my husband living at home as well. And we've got four bedrooms upstairs, and then my dad was downstairs in it, you know, with his own bedroom and living room, etc, so it is a fairly big house. But then my dad died 18 months ago, so.

INTERVIEWER:

I'm so sorry.

PARTICIPANT 1:

But then my niece moved into his annex.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, gosh. Okay.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So we've always had like. Well, normally we have quite a few people in the house. You know, it's quite a busy sort of house, really, but.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Is that the sort of thing you want to know, or did you want to know more about the layout?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, no, that's really helpful to kind of picture it. And so there's four bedrooms upstairs and there's an annex downstairs.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Is it like a detached house? Are you in like a. (PARTICIPANT 1 nodded) Oh, right. And so are you on a big street? Is it quiet rural?

PARTICIPANT 1:

We're very close to town, but it almost feels rural as a church. Like, I'm upstairs in one of the bedrooms. I use it as an office, so I can see a church out the window. So if you look from my window, you'd probably think it's fairly rural, but we're actually five minutes walk into town. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, very nice. Lovely location. And so you work from home?

PARTICIPANT 1: Most. Most of the time, yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

And you've got your. Okay, you've got your office room upstairs. And what do you do for work, if you don't mind me asking? I'm being nosy now.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So I'm a physio and I'm working in long Covid.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, fantastic.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Good links with talking therapies.

INTERVIEWER:

Indeed, yes. Essential. Okay, brilliant. And so it's just you, your husband and your niece and.

PARTICIPANT 1:

And my guest still.

INTERVIEWER:

And your guest still. And how long have they been with you?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Two and a half years.

INTERVIEWER:

Two and a half Years. Wonderful. Okey doke. So what's your understanding of the Homes for Ukraine scheme?

PARTICIPANT 1:

So I do know that. So the council did contact her to say, you know, she could access somewhere, you know, another place to live. Obviously she's been living with us for this time now. So at the time I said to her it was up to her what she wanted to do. She could stay with us indefinitely if she wants to, because I was hoping my niece would move out and then she could have the annex downstairs giving her a bit more independence, really. But I don't think she's really got any plans at the moment as to what she wants to do.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, so how did you hear about the scheme, like right at the beginning, what was that experience like?

PARTICIPANT 1:

So that was through just like it was on the news, wasn't it? And then the way we actually. Our guest arrived was that a friend of ours. So we, we talked about it, you know, we talked about having a guest, but not done anything, not registered or anything. And then a friend of ours had somebody staying with them and it was her friend was looking for somewhere in [name of place], so near nearby to her. So my friend put it on Facebook, just like, you know, is

anyone willing to take a guest? So once, once I saw that, I felt it was quite a good way because, you know, it's something we'd talked about. But then obviously it's a risk, isn't it? You don't know who you're getting and it's a risk both ways as well. So the. So my friend, she came around with her guest and we, we FaceTimed the person I've got now and like, showed around the house. Her friend showed around the house, you know, with. On FaceTime, etc. So. So that's how we actually, you know, chose the person who stayed with us, if you like. So it wasn't through the normal, like, you know, just going onto a website or whatever, but then it was all through the homes, Ukraine scheme. So, you know, it's all official. Yeah, it was just rather than having somebody randomly chose then, it was more a connection, really.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. So there was a connection on top of the. Of the just general scheme. It just, it came about so quite naturally, organically, through a friend. And what made you decide when you saw it on the news, you know, to think, oh, should we consider this?

PARTICIPANT 1:

I suppose it's that thought of somebody just taking over another country and, you know, people being in danger for their lives and that feeling of, if that was me, you know, how would I feel? And, you know, you want to help, we want to help people. And it was a very practical way of helping somebody. And I know there's lots of refugees and, you know, lots of people in terrible situations, but I think because that scheme was running, it was. You knew it was like a legitimate way of helping somebody rather than, you know, somebody that you didn't really. I know it's. It was still a risk, you know, you don't know who you're going to get and you don't know if you're going to get on with them and you don't. You don't know if they're going to treat you or your house as you want it to be treated. So. But it just felt a bit more of a safe way of doing it than just, you know, like, if you see somebody homeless, you

know, I think I don't want somebody to be homeless. But, you know, bringing somebody homeless into your house is quite. Is a big risk, isn't it? Whereas this didn't feel so much of a risk. So it felt like something we should do. But I felt that, you know, we could have gone back to the council and said it was not working or, you know, so. And then. And then they would help find that person somewhere to live as well, so then there'd be protection for that person as well. So I'd say that's why it was that thought of, we want to help, but we want some security around it.

INTERVIEWER:

And, like a mutual security as well for the other person. (PARTICIPANT 1: nodded). And the process of, like, becoming a host, was that quite a bureaucratic process? Was there a lot of, you know, in terms of the. The practical bits of. Of it all being legitimised, what was that like?

PARTICIPANT 1:

It was a little bit complicated. I mean, I remember having some discussions with our guest when. When we were trying to sort it out and she was still in. Well, she was actually in Poland at the time and, like, her English was not very good. So we're trying to help her with her forms as well and we're trying to do ours. And that was quite complicated. And at some point I thought, we're just not going to get this sorted because I can't remember, it was like uploading her passport or something that. I think that was the most difficult bit. We. And then we contacted the charity and they actually said, oh, don't worry about this bit. I can't remember what it was now because it's a few years ago. Yeah. And so I can't remember how we actually did it, but it was. It. It was an IT issue, I would say. Yeah, that was more difficult than it should have been. I mean, it should have been easy. You think these people are, you know, potentially got limited Internet connection. They're just often on their phones only and,

you know, so from that point of view, it was a challenge. But the rest of it, like contacting accounts and everything, all of that was quite easy.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. So, yeah, it's the kind of the bit at the beginning, trying to make it happen and suddenly when. When you said, like, filling in forms, I was suddenly like, oh, I wonder, was she filling forms in in English or was she filling forms in in her language? And was that being translated? How did that work? Suddenly pops into my mind.

PARTICIPANT 1:

I know, I can't remember because it.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

I'm not sure. I don't. I'm not sure she was filling them in English. But obviously she had to know details from us, like, you know, our address and things like that. So we had to communicate to. To get all of that filled in. And I knew, I know that was a struggle because, like I say, her English wasn't very good at the time. So, in fact, later on she told us that her niece was in the room with her when she was trying to. When she was talking to us. And she. Her niece was helping her as well with her English. So. But I mean, her niece's English isn't great. She's been over and stayed a couple of times, so we have met her. But, yeah, that. That certainly was a challenge. But it was. It was only the IT bit. It was only. Actually, I think it was uploading her passport or something like that, and we just. We couldn't tell her how to do it. We're trying, you know, we're trying to as much as we could, but like, even on, like, teams

and sharing your screen and things like that, I'm not sure we were able to do that because I think it was all on her phone and it was all via WhatsApp.

INTERVIEWER:

Complicated, isn't it?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

And what was it like to, like, first met her?

PARTICIPANT 1:

That. Yeah, it was, I think. So we picked her up from the airport and because her English wasn't great, it's quite difficult having a conversation.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

And of course, you're not quite sure what you've got in common and things like that. And we asked her what hobbies she had and interests and stuff, but. So she said she enjoyed skiing. Like, you're not going to ski in [location]. I'm afraid. And walking in the mountains, like, well, you can take you to some but you know, little mounds or.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So. Yeah, I remember picking her up and so it was quite a stilted conversation in the car on the way home and then it was late so she went off to bed and then the next day we just took her into [location] and showed around, you know, like, showed. Took her to the shops and showed her where the train station was and, and, and where her friend lived because obviously she'd come over, you know, with that connection there. So that was nice for her. So, yeah, it's. It took a while, I'd say, to. Takes a while to build up a relationship when you haven't got good, you know, use of the language.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, absolutely.

PARTICIPANT 1:

And I know for her it was. It was difficult and we had my sister staying at the same time as well, which wasn't great timing but it just, you know, we didn't have control over the timing. So she was staying with her partner, so we had a house full as well and I was like, I did feel for her, like it, you know, wasn't great time for her. And I know she said the first morning she woke up and she phoned her mum and said, I don't want to go down in the kitchen, they're all in there talking English.

INTERVIEWER:

She felt a little bit left out, I guess.

PARTICIPANT 1:

I think it's that fear, isn't it, of, you know, you're suddenly in another person's family, aren't you, and you don't.

INTERVIEWER:

Know them and like being on another planet, isn't it?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, yeah, I think it was really. And that's. And she's not like. A lot of the people have come over, I think, are quite sort of go getters and, you know, confident and. But I wouldn't say that's. She's not really like that. I think it was more she had that connection with her friend and, and she didn't really have an alternative because where she'd been living there, it was near to a training site for soldiers, so they were being bombed quite a lot. So she had actually left and she was staying in Poland with her mum, but her mum is a live in carer so she was sleeping on the balcony because there wasn't a room for her to sleep in, so she had to sleep on the balcony and so, yeah, so she didn't. I'd say she didn't really have a choice. So it's more circumstances that made her choose to come over.

INTERVIEWER:

So her, I'm guessing her mum was in Poland with her carer.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

So she had, like a small apartment or something that she could live in.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Well, she was a live in carer, so she just had one bedroom, but even the bedroom, there wasn't enough room for our guest. So. Yeah. And then the person she was looking after, she said, when's she gonna go? I've had enough, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So she knew she couldn't stay much longer.

INTERVIEWER:

She couldn't stay, yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, goodness. Sounds really difficult. Yeah. What a story. What an experience for her. And how did. How did that make you feel? You know, knowing this person's like, I don't know, you know, lack of options, I suppose.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Well, because her English wasn't great to start with it, that story unfolded over time. So, you know, we'd get bits and then you piece it together. And then. I mean, her English is great now, so, you know, she can. We can have normal conversations. But, yeah, it was because, to start with, I thought, well, if she's in Poland, she's safe, you know. So then I wasn't quite sure why she still wanted to come.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So it's only after time I got that information that she couldn't stay there because, you know, this is somebody else's house and she was staying there and not wanted to be, you know, by that person. So. So, yeah, I think. I mean, it does. You know, when you hear somebody's story, you do. You do feel for that person. And one of the things that did worry me from. From. From a selfish point of view would be that there would be a lot of heartache and, you know, and trauma and. And, you know, there is. She gets bad news and, you know, obviously she's in contact with her family a lot, and so. And you do take on some of that. So I was a bit concerned about that side. Like, I didn't want a lot of trauma in the house, you know, that on a selfish note, I had to cope with. But, yeah, you know, there have been times where there's been trauma, but generally it's been okay.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And I guess that's one of the things that I'm interested in particularly is, you know, coming from a war zone, there's bound to be trauma that comes with that. But what that's like. Or what that experience is like in somebody else's home and the impact on you, as you say, you know, worrying that you're going to have to hold these really difficult things in your own home.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, certainly that was one of my main concerns before she arrived yeah. And there have been times where, you know, that they've been friends that have died and, you know, so, gosh, you know, it has been part of having her here. Yeah, but I've had a bit of trauma myself or a few incidences, few deaths in the family. And so, yeah, then you try and protect yourself as well, don't you? So I do try and keep a bit. And also, I know that from work as well. You can't, you know, feel everyone's emotions or else you just crumble, don't you? You can't. You can't cope with it. But then you do also find [guest] saying her niece has been over. So her

niece and her sister, they've come over twice now in the summer holidays to stay for a few. And then they'll say little things that you think, oh, yeah, this isn't great, is it? So, like, the first time they came over, the niece didn't turn over, turn off her notification of the sirens.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, gosh, okay.

PARTICIPANT 1:

You'd hear that noise and then you'd realise, you know, and then you'd be like, gosh, you've got to live with that all the time, you know, and then when they were over last time. So her sister doesn't speak much English, Very, very little. So she doesn't, you know, say much to me, but, you know, I just make time of the day conversation. Well, it's not really conversation comments, really, and, you know, about how you're sleeping and because she's a nurse, and I think certainly the first time she came to stay, she just didn't look as though she could settle and relax. And I think her mind's in Ukraine all the time. Yeah. And last time she was over, she slept really well and she said that's the first time she slept well for, I think, since the war started, because, you know, she's just constantly thinking, oh, is there going to be another alarm tonight? And, you know, we're gonna have to go to the shelter. And so all of that's horrible, you know, like, you know, you hear that and you think, yeah, that's your life. You know, that's not. You're having a break at the moment. So. So that. That aspect, you do take on a bit more when that person's with you, obviously, and they're telling their bit of their story. But even that, it's not. It's not like she's opening her heart to me because she can't communicate very well, you know, and then her niece, who's 13, I think part of it is that's her life now, so she doesn't. She might not. Well, she wouldn't speak in the way as her. Same way as her mum would, for instance. So even though her English is better, she can tell me more

stuff and. But yeah, so it's funny, some things get to you and then others you can compartmentalise and, you know, not sort of think about so much.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And I'm wondering about support for you, you know, was what. How did you kind of manage emotionally with these things and was there any kind of support that you had?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Just through the family. I'd say so. You know, my husband, obviously, we're both experiencing the same things, so we'll talk about things and. Because in the family, like I say, two of my siblings have had a guest, so, you know, sometimes we just talk about things around that.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

You know how that feels. And I'd say we've all had slightly different experiences, as you would. Because people are different, aren't they? But, yeah, I mean, I wouldn't say there's external support. I mean, there's. There's groups that are running, you know, like this group in [location], but I think it's more for people from Ukraine than the host. The host, yeah.

Although we have been to a few things, like on Ukrainian Day and things like that, we went to something at the town hall and. And that was quite nice. I mean, you. You feel like you're being thanked, you know, sort of as a group that. That was quite nice to have. But I wouldn't say there's anything else. Not that I'm aware of, anyway.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And who organised things like Ukraine Day, like that sort of type thing.

PARTICIPANT 1:

I think that was the council.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. But generally for you, it was kind of like your social networks, your friends and family that helped support you when it was, you know, quite emotional.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah. I mean, I wouldn't say I talk about everything. I'll talk to my husband, but outside of that, I wouldn't particularly, because it's not. Some things aren't very nice to talk about and, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. Really quite severe, isn't it? Some of the things they've been through and then how it impacts you is then feels like a completely different thing. But it's.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Still as heavy emotionally.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, it is. It is upsetting and. Yeah, it's hard sometimes. Definitely.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And thinking about support, what kind of support did you offer your guest? You know, just in general, when she first arrived.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Well, so she was working for a company in Ukraine. So she was working online. But the amount of money she was getting was, you know, like crazy. Nothing compared to what you get here. So I can't remember what it was now, but it was something like 200 a month. You know, it's just like she couldn't have sort of, you know, done what she wants to do. I mean, I know she's not paying rent or anything, but even so, like just travel and stuff like that. And. And I think also she was thinking it'd be like six months. So she hadn't even brought a winter coat with her or anything. It was during the summer she arrived.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So we gave her not much money, but like £50 or something, I can't remember. And they. And she did get something, a similar amount from [location] Council. So there was just a little bit of financial support, but not much. But we'd do things like we'd take her out, take her to places, take her out for food, for meals and we'd. I'd. Generally, I'd cook, but then she'd have a. She'd buy some food herself as well. I think that's the other thing. Like I'm cooking English food, you know, so it might not be what she likes, family get togethers. So, you know, we'd. I'd take around to my siblings because they were quite welcoming. Oh, and the church as well. So she's, I think, orthodox Catholic, so we're Catholic, so it's not quite the same. But she, she. It was the. Like, if she wants to go to the Ukrainian Church she has to go into [location], so it's quite a long way for her. So coming to our church is as close as she can get without going to [location], if you see what I mean. So she'd come to our church as well. So I

think that gave us a bit of community feel. So, yeah, I'd say they're the sorts of things. I know my sister gave us some clothes as well and. Yeah. Done things on her birthday and took her to the Ukrainian church on her birthday.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, that's so lovely.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, she. She really likes [location], so we've taken her to [location] a few times as well.

INTERVIEWER:

That's so lovely. Yeah, I bet you offered an awful lot of support. That's really wonderful to hear. I was just thinking about, like, accessing, like the GP or like, if she, like, was poorly or anything like that?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah. So, yeah, got her registered there. We. I didn't get registered to start with the dentist. Until she started then having a bit of toothache. So I said, okay, we've got to sort this out. Then managed to get her an NHS dentist. Got an NHS dentist. The receptionist I spoke to, she said to me, oh, no, we're not taking them anymore. I said, well, I've got a guest from Ukraine and, you know, she needs to be seen as she. And so the receptionist said, oh, oh, my daughter goes to school with somebody, a girl with. From Ukraine, and oh, I'll fit her in. She said, so, yeah, so that was really good. Yeah. So. So we did that. We should like, showed her where the public transport is and. And things there was. We did tell her as well about the Ukrainian group that was meeting in [location], but she didn't access that. And then English lessons we told her about. And then from that she's continued with having English lessons and she has to go to [location] for that now.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, brilliant. It's amazing. And obviously with all of these things, it sounds like you have to put in quite a lot of work, you know, with like registering her for things and.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there any support, like from the local authorities or anything that made any of that easier or.

PARTICIPANT 1:

So, to start with [location] Council, so they came around, came around just to do, like, safety check, you know, make sure we're not a fire hazard and stuff like that. And then when she arrived, somebody came round and checked her finances. We all had to have DBS checks as well. Yeah. So the woman that went through her finances, because that's the other thing, it's like you've got this guest and you don't want to pry, you know, you don't want to sort of say, well, let me see your bank account. And, you know, it's up to her how much information she gives us about that. But so I sat in on that just because I said, did she want me to? And she said yes. Actually, we did take her to the job centre a couple of times as well. My husband did that because that was during school holidays because he's a teacher. So, yes, the council woman that came around was helpful because she said she's entitled to. I can't remember what benefit it was now, but because her wage was quite small, obviously it was. It. She told her how to make it up, how to claim benefits, to make it up to more like a living wage. But since then she. She then got a job at Pizza Express and she's been working there. So then, you know, obviously her finances have been a lot better since that, but I wouldn't say. I wouldn't

say [location] Council particularly helpful. I mean, they did email us and say if we needed any help and I'm not. I don't think we asked for anything.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And I was just thinking about, obviously, like, emotional support. Did she have to seek any kind of mental health support or like, anything like that while she's with you?

PARTICIPANT 1:

She hasn't. I'm. More recently, actually, I've. I'd say she's been a bit down and I've said to her, does she feel she needs anything? And I've talked to her about medication. I talked to her about talking therapies as well and gave her the details for talking therapies, but she hasn't accessed, you know, either of those. So she, she hasn't been to a GP about it. I suppose it's, you know, because, like, to start with, she thought it would be months and obviously that hasn't been the case. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

So, you know, and why is it that it's been so long, particularly for her and for you? What's the situation?

PARTICIPANT 1:

I think because she, she says, she says her ultimate plan is to go back when the war's finished.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

PARTICIPANT 1:

But also she's. She's doing this job that she doesn't really like, so she is looking for something else, so I'm gonna try to help her with that as well. So I've googled jobs with her and giving

her links, you know, for. So she can apply for different jobs. I mean, she's got a masters and that's been. [location]'s been helpful with that. [Location] Council, they did look at her qualifications and say, you know, we can say that this is the equivalent of a Master's in UK, for instance. So she's got all that, all written so that she can give that to an employer. So that, that was quite helpful. And then there have been some sessions at the library that she's accessed that and that's more recently, looking at CV writing and interview and stuff. And she went for an interview before Christmas, so I did a, an interview practise with her.

INTERVIEWER:

Oh, gosh, that's so lovely. That's amazing.

PARTICIPANT 1:

But she didn't get the job, so. But yeah, but she was, she was pleased that she'd, you know, was prepared for it and she, she made a good attempt and, and I've said to her, she just needs to apply for lots, you know, just put in applications where you can. So I think if maybe she had a different job, I don't know whether she'd think about looking for somewhere like a. You know, with a flat or something. And like I was saying, I was. I was. My plan was that she could use Dad's annex because, you know, it's got its own front door, it's. Well, I was going to say own bathroom, but she does actually have her own bathroom here because there's. We've got an ensuite upstairs, but it. But in the living room, you know, because that's the other thing. When she first moved in, I said if you want to have friends around and things, you know, you're welcome to do so. But she hasn't. And I think she just feels that it's an imposition, I guess. I'm not really sure. So I think if she had her own area where she could do that, isn't it? Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Gosh, it sounds like you have done so much to support her. Has that, like, taken any kind of a toll on you?

PARTICIPANT 1:

I'd say more recently it has. So we've. We've had a bereavement in the family, you see. So. Yeah, so that's been difficult and I think it's. For that reason I found it more difficult. So I just. I find my tolerance for. Because she's not happy about her job. So when she. Saying about that, I found that. Find that quite difficult when I think, you know, you can look for something else. And so, yeah, I'll tell you more recently that's been. I found that difficult.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, absolutely. It makes an awful lot of sense, I think, particularly when you're going through something, you're spending a lot of energy just trying to get by and look after yourself and then there's. There is very little left at the end of the day and quite naturally our tolerance just goes down with that for anything. So I can completely understand that. How do you feel having, like, taken part in this scheme?

PARTICIPANT 1:

I would say generally it's been really positive. You know, it's nice to feel that you can help someone in a very practical and real way. And I feel we've welcomed her in the. Into the family and, you know, whatever she chooses to do in the future, I. I'm sure we're still being contact and, you know, so, like, my children are. Or the youngest is 30, so they're grown up, but they're all regard her as part of the family, I'd say. So, you know, that's been really nice. I think the. The future bit is the hard thing though, you know, so thinking what is going to happen in the future. And because, you know, her thoughts are she'll go back when the war finishes. And when will that happen, you know, if that will happen? I don't know. I mean,

with Trump in, goodness knows. So I think that bit's the harder bit to get your head around, you know, what will happen long term.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah, I guess. And it's, you know, what will happen with her and her journey next, but then also for you, what's next if she does eventually leave, do you think you would ever host again?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yes, although I don't. I mean, we, we're, we're looking. I'm going to be retiring in January, my husband's retiring in, in the Summer. So we're thinking, well, we'll downsize at some point. So, you know, if we didn't have enough room, we wouldn't. But if we stayed where we are, then. Yes, but I'd have a break. I'd have a time with. With, you know, just the two of us.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. And I think that's just the reality, you know, is one is. Is wanting a break. And what's, what's the motivation behind wanting a break? For you particularly? What would it give you? Having a bit of a break in. In hosting?

PARTICIPANT 1:

I think it's just you've then got you your space to yourself, you know, it is different when there's somebody else there, you know, like.

INTERVIEWER:

Absolutely.

PARTICIPANT 1:

The way you dress, the way you behave, you know, is different, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER:

There's a level of consideration.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

For the other person that.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

You can't shake when you have somebody else in your space.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's even just like talking out loud. So if I'm doing preparation for a talk and I want to practise it by talking out loud, I feel I can't do that. Do you know what I mean? It's just things that don't seem significant, really, but, like, altogether it is significant.

INTERVIEWER:

They add up to being your natural, normal idiosyncrasies that you would do without thinking. But now there is a bit of thinking about it.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

And adjusting.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, yeah. What, what you eat, you know, how loud you put the TV on, all of those things, you, you, you change when somebody's in the house, don't you?

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. So the idea of not having someone there means that there's just that different kind of relaxation, I imagine.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, yeah. I think also we've always had somebody in the house, so, you know, like the children that they, they left, they came back a bit, they left, but then dad moved in with us, so he lived with us for 10 years. And, you know, so. So we haven't actually had nobody in the house.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah. So it's become a bit of a, like, oh, wouldn't that be nice? I can completely see that. So I'm just wary of the time and I wanted to make sure. Was there anything in particular that you wanted to say about your experience that perhaps we haven't touched on?

PARTICIPANT 1:

I don't think so. I mean, it just makes me think, you know, from talking to you about, like, that emotional support, you know, where could that come from, you know, if it doesn't come within the family and that, that, I mean, when. When she first arrived, we did read up a bit, you know, look into how you should have, you know, what you should do for your guests. And so it was things like. And also my sister, she. She had a guest arrive about three months

before us, so I did ask her as well. And she, I mean, she'd written out or, well, typed out a whole list of, like, things for the house. So, like from how the washing machine works to how the TV works to, you know, like, it was all too complicated and I looked in there, so I don't think anyone needs that. But it's. I suppose it's that. Practical things as well, you know, what should you tell your guest? And so that, that probably would have been more helpful to have a bit more information in that respect before she arrived.

INTERVIEWER:

And then.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah. And then the emotional support and. And there are groups for people, Ukrainians, but I'm not aware of there being support groups for people who are hosting. And maybe that would have been nice to have. But. Yeah, can't think of anything else.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay, well, thank you so much. And I just want to check, how are you kind of feeling at the moment, having talked through all of this? Because there was an awful lot there.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah, it does feel quite heavy, really. Yeah, yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

And I just got such a sense of how much support you have given, which just, you know, is very humbling, I must admit. From this side of things, I'm so grateful to hear about all of this. And yes, do take some time for yourself. We have talked about a lot of different things here and if you need anything, just send me an email. If you ever need to have a bit of a. Even like

a debrief chat or there's anything else that you want to just talk through with me, please do. Just let me know because I have asked you a lot of these questions and I take full responsibility for that. So please do, do reach out if you need any kind of support at all and just want to chat it through. That's absolutely fine.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Okay, thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

So what is your plan for the rest of today? Are you busy working?

PARTICIPANT 1:

Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Lovely. Lovely. Well, thank you so much. I'm just going to stop recording now, if I can do that. Stop.

Appendix K: Example Exploratory Comments

PARTICIPANT 1: I suppose it's that thought of somebody just taking over another country and, you know, people being in danger for their lives and that feeling of, if that was me, you know, how would I feel? And, you know, you want to help, we want to help people. And it was a very practical way of helping somebody. And I know there's lots of refugees and, you know, lots of people in terrible situations, but I think because that scheme was running, it was. You knew it was like a legitimate way of helping somebody rather than, you know, somebody that you didn't really. I know it's. It was still a risk, you know, you don't know who you're	Injustice of "somebody taking over another country" - speaks to participant's moral compass for right and wrong? Motivation - people's lives being in danger - a call to action? Personal reflection: "what if it was me" "how would I feel" - fear. "And you know" - connecting with my values of wanting to help. Recognition of the vast number of refugees in the world from other countries, however the scheme presented a way of offering practical support for people in need - values Acknowledgement of other refugees however the scheme provided a "legitimate" opportunity to help Direct route to help somebody, a route to direct support rather than indirect support of someone who may never meet Mention of RISK again, frequency of this word being used so early on in the interview? Seems
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going to get and you don't know if you're going to get on with them and you don't. You don't know if they're going to treat you or your house as you want it to be treated. So. But it just felt a bit more of a safe way of doing it than just, you know, like, if you see somebody homeless, you know, I think I don't want somebody to be homeless. But, you know, bringing somebody homeless into your house is quite. Is a big risk, isn't it? Whereas this didn't feel so much of a risk. So it felt like something we should do. But I felt that, you know, we could have gone back to the council and said it was not working or, you know, so. And then. And then they would help find that person somewhere to live as well, so then there'd be protection for that person as well. So I'd say that's why it was that thought of, we want to

significant for participant to explain/discuss their perspective on risk repeatedly. Shame?

Not know who you will get - the uncertainty - the risk of not knowing the person (moral character) and whether or not you would "get on"

Risk = difference in expectations or what is right and wrong? Moral values. Use of the word "treat"?

More safety = better

Comparison to homelessness being a "big risk"

Scheme made it seem less of a risk because there was a procedure to follow, provided more certainty and a way out if necessary

"isn't it" = repeatedly seeking reassurance or colloquial use of language?

"Felt like something we should do" - felt and should significant - emotional implication and pressure

Provided protection for both host and guest with involvement from organisation (council) -

protection for the guest being highlighted

Desire to help vs Fear of unknown "risks"

help, but we want some security around it.

INTERVIEWER:

And, like a mutual security as well for the other person. (PARTICIPANT 1: nodded). And the process of, like, becoming a host, was that quite a bureaucratic process? Was there a lot of,

you know, in terms of the. The practical bits of. Of it all being legitimised, what was that like?

PARTICIPANT 1:

It was a little bit complicated. I mean, I remember having some discussions with our guest when. When we were trying to sort it out and she was still in. Well, she was actually in Poland at the time and, like, her English was not very good. So we're trying to help her with

her forms as well and we're trying to do ours. And that was quite complicated. And at some point I thought, we're just not going to get this sorted because I can't remember, it was like

uploading her passport or something that. I think that was the most difficult bit. We. And

Scheme provided the security that was needed for participants to act on desire to help

Mutual security necessary

Using the participants words to co-create understanding

Process was complicated

Guest fled to Poland initially

Language barrier - hosts having to support guest with paperwork and forms - organisation difficulties. Host trying to complete paperwork on their end and also supporting guest to complete theirs - first offer of practical support from hosts?

Moves from "a little bit" to "quite" complicated

Almost gave up on the process due to difficulties with IT - couldn't quite remember what the

then we contacted the charity and they actually said, oh, don't worry about this bit. I can't remember what it was now because it's a few years ago. Yeah. And so I can't remember how we actually did it, but it was. It. It was an IT issue, I would say. Yeah, that was more difficult than it should have been. I mean, it should have been easy. You think these people are, you know, potentially got limited Internet connection. They're just often on their phones only and, you know, so from that point of view, it was a challenge. But the rest of it, like contacting accounts and everything, all of that was quite easy.

difficulty was but remembers the thought of this isn't going to work out

Reached out to charity organisation for support
"More difficult than it should have been" - judgement on "should"

Reliance on the internet to complete the process
Lack of thought put into the procedure, no one thought about the fact that the guests may have limited access to the internet after fleeing their homes

Reliance on mobile phones if guests are fleeing their country

Appendix L: Ethics Application

10/10/2024

Mrs Olivia Rose

Health and Social Care

University of Essex

Dear Olivia,

Ethics Committee Decision

Application: ETH2324-1449

I am pleased to inform you that the research proposal entitled "HS763: Exploring the experiences of UK residents hosting Ukrainian refugees." has been reviewed on behalf of the Ethics Sub Committee 1, and, based on the information provided, it has been awarded a favourable opinion.

The application was awarded a favourable opinion subject to the following **conditions**:

Extensions and Amendments:

If you propose to introduce an amendment to the research after approval or extend the duration of the study, an amendment should be submitted in ERAMS for further approval in advance of the expiry date listed in the ethics application form. Please note that it is not possible to make any amendments, including extending the duration of the study, once the expiry date has passed.

Covid-19:

Please note that the current Government guidelines in relation to Covid-19 must be adhered to and are subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep yourself informed and bear in mind the possibility of change when planning your research. You will be kept informed if there are any changes in the University guidelines.

Appendix M: Group Experiential Themes, Experiential Themes, and Experiential Statements

Group Experiential Themes	Experiential Themes	Personal Experiential Themes	Experiential Statements
Seeing Self in the Space of Conflict	“If it was me...”: From Witnessing to Acting	Reciprocal moral reasoning / Reflecting on moral self / Emotional impact of witnessing suffering <i>Identification and moral reciprocity following the witnessing of suffering sparks a moral and emotional drive to help.</i>	Seeing the scenes on TV, Witnessing the distant suffering as a call to action, A moral questioning of self, Identifying with “them”, Alleviating guilt, Aligning with values, Moral identity, Self-reflection, Watching people fleeing, “If it were my child...”, “If it was me or you”, Moral reciprocity, “Same as I would expect from somebody”, Action.
	“Because I Can”: Capacity as the Condition	Capacity and life-stage enabling action / Privilege enabling action / Closeness enabling connection / Reflexive awareness of privilege / Balancing capability and constraint <i>You can only open your home if you already have one to share.</i>	Being empty nesters means having physical and emotional capacity, Having enough material space, Possessing the required resources, Owning a large home with extra bedrooms indicating surplus of resources, Having physical distance vs closeness in proximity, Proximity in space, Being financially stable was an enabler, Life stage of retirement provided capacity, Privilege of owning home, Privilege of possession, Privilege of capacity, “I could”, Conflict

		<i>Awareness of personal privilege and capacity through self-reflection.</i>	between having and not having, Self-reflection, A hidden issue surfacing.
	Meeting the Stranger, Exposing the Self: Confronting Encounters	Confronting and revising assumptions / Self-reflective challenge to stereotypes / Humanising those previously “othered” / Recognising systemic prejudice / Acknowledging racism / Reflecting on moral responsibility <i>Exposing hosts to uncomfortable truths about themselves and the limits of compassion.</i>	Realising the fantasy of who a refugee is, Holding the wrong beliefs and assumptions, Acknowledging internalised beliefs, Confronting prejudice and racism, Challenging stereotypes, Seeing one side of a person, Identifying that refugees are stigmatised, “They are people just like me”, No two stories are the same, Racist attitude in UK, “We are a racist country”, Assumptions shattered through self-reflection, Unlearning, Confronting, Challenging, Humanising encounter.
	Welcoming the Stranger, Transforming the Self: Expanding Horizons	Personal growth through hosting / Enriching and learning from relationships / Negotiating relation strain and connection / Impact of hosting on family relationships	Learning about themselves and others, Learning from others, Learning what works and what doesn’t, An enriching experience, Reshapes, Adds to a more interesting life, Providing faith in humanity, Went into it eyes wide shut, Heard of families breaking up, Reforming family dynamics, Wider family tensions, Strain on marriage, Conflict or connection, The impact of exposure, Transformative encounter.

		<i>Hosting expands the self and others, but at the cost of emotional and relational stability.</i>	
The Shared Soundscape of Home	Letting Others into the “Lair”: Softening the Sound of Home	Experiencing loss of autonomy / Restrictions of everyday freedoms / Negotiating control over personal space / Territory and homeownership as identity / Adapting behaviour in shared spaced <i>The home as a shared space where comfort, freedom, and control are negotiated.</i>	Missing the silly things you can do in your own home when there are no guests, Loss of control over space, Changes behaviour, Changes control over space, Missing the autonomy, “This is my castle”, “Your home is your lair”
	From Welcoming to Living Together: The Quiet Negotiation of Difference	Challenging cultural assumptions / Negotiating cross-cultural difference / Establishing expectations and boundaries / Evaluating relational intentions / Negotiating cultural integration / Respecting autonomy and independence / Reality of hosting versus	Assumed cultural similarity shattered, Food as difference, Attitudes to healthcare and beliefs confronted, Cultural differences larger than anticipated, Opposing values, Gender roles questioned, Personality clashes, Integrating into the culture, Not wanting to integrate, Questioning motives of guests, Fitting in or not engaging, Moved out and self- sufficient, Setting house rules, Addressing issues,

		expectations / Adjusting to unforeseen circumstances <i>The subtle and continuous work of bridging difference and tolerating ambiguity while maintaining relational and domestic harmony.</i>	Building trust, Setting out expectations, Arguments in the beginning, Expecting it to be easier.
	Strangers Becoming Kin: The Quiet Expansion of Family	Transforming strangers into family / Emotional attachment and kinship with guests <i>Relational expansion and emotional integration creates meaningful relationships.</i>	Bringing in guests as part of the family, Feeling protective of guests suggesting immediate Emotional attachment, Integrated guests into the family, Familial attachment “like a grandson”, “bereft when they left”, Investing in guest(s), Pride in guests, Emotional attachments, Kinship, Expanding, From stranger to family member.
	Living with the Echoes: A Space Shaped by War	Vicarious trauma through witnessing suffering / Providing emotional support and containment / Engaging in caregiving as emotional labour <i>Intimate exposure to the ongoing impact of war, making emotional support and</i>	The emotional witness, Shell-shock, Panic attacks, Sorrow, Sobbing, Grief, Loss, Guest passed away, Witnessing trauma in the home, Psychological destruction, A trauma response (flight from Ukraine and fight to stay in UK), Anger, Offering containment with cuddles, cups of tea, listening, crying with, and

		<i>bearing witness a central part of everyday life.</i>	giving time, Emotional labour, Care, Support, Body in UK but mind in Ukraine.
Being Held in Suspense	A Leap of Faith: Navigating Risk and Responsibility	Awareness of mutual vulnerability / Safeguarding as central concern / Deliberate trust-building / Reflective responsibility in relationships / Mutual consent as foundational / Commitment and shared purpose <i>Hosting is a conscious navigation of uncertainty, where ethical responsibility and the vulnerability of all parties are felt and managed in everyday life.</i>	Scheme provides protection for hosts and guests, Family has to feel safe to host, United in pursuit of hosting, A sacrifice, The option to reject each other essential, Both parties are vulnerable, Talking and thinking it all the way through, Taking responsibility, Safeguarding, Suspicion, Doubt, Trust, “A risk for me...massive risk for them”, Balancing safe uncertainty.
	Suspended in Time: The Tension of Uncertainty	Living in suspense / Emotional experience of uncertainty / Living in liminality / Navigating transitional uncertainty <i>Hosts live in a tense liminal space, emotionally stretched between hope,</i>	Waiting to hear back from the scheme, Waiting at the airport for guest, Waiting to be matched, Suspended, Not knowing if it will come through, Waiting for the war to end, Fighting for guests to stay in UK, Needing a pathway for guests to move on, Apprehension, Anxiety, Liminal space, Prolonged uncertainty, Emotional suspension, What next?, Complete uncertainty.

		<i>attachment, and the unpredictability of systems beyond their control.</i>	
	Labour Beyond Home: Navigating the Unknown	Navigating bureaucratic systems for guests / Facilitating access to services / Bridging communication gaps / Supporting orientation and integration / Advocating on behalf of guests / Hosting as professional care <i>Taking on professional-level responsibilities to make the scheme work, often without support or formal guidance.</i>	Attending GP appointments and dental appointments, Providing transport to the job centre, Applying for UC, Liaising with schools, Using Google Translate to communicate, Welcoming and establishing, Orientating, Negotiating, Advocating, Manoeuvring, Travelling, Facilitating independence, Bureaucratic, Bridging gaps, Care labour, Social work profession, Navigating the Unknown, Without.
	Hosting Together: Community as Scaffolding	Relying on peer and social networks / Mutual support among hosts / Community as a source of knowledge / Tapping into collective resources / Community resilience in crisis / Collective action providing stability	Relying on other hosts, Peer support, Support from family and friends, Online support through Facebook and WhatsApp, Reaching out to community, Finding answers in community, Community has the answers, Community support, Community resilience, Community is everything, Collective action, Grounding in times of uncertainty, Collective knowledge, Scaffolding, Survival infrastructure,

		<i>Support and stability are found through community connections and collective knowledge, not just individual effort.</i>	Community rises from the ground up, Rising to meet uncertainty, Turning to others in uncertainty, Anchoring, Being a “good citizen”, The “Blitz Spirit”.
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