



To: Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

Date: 3rd November 2022

Subject: Homes for Ukraine

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To update the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on the local implementation of the UK Government 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) is requested to consider and comment on this Briefing Note, making any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities as desired.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and also to their immediate family members (for example spouse/partner and children under 18)* who may be of other nationalities, to be sponsored to come to the UK. Applicants can apply from Ukraine or from any other third country.
- 3.2 Coventry City Council and the voluntary and community sector are working in partnership to ensure the necessary LA functions are in place to provide sanctuary to Ukrainian people and families arriving in the city and the on-going support required.
- 3.3 Currently the [scheme](#) only allows individuals to sponsor Ukrainians. The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward. Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.
- 3.4 Sponsors are asked to provide accommodation for a minimum of six months. Sponsors can also receive an optional 'thank you' payment of £350 per month for up to the first 12 months of sponsorship. Payments will stop when the sponsorship ends. Sponsors should not charge rent. They will not be expected to cover the costs of food and living expenses, although they may wish to offer this, especially in early weeks while guests are finding their feet in the UK.
- 3.5 The government announced on 22 June 2022 that the Homes for Ukraine scheme will allow children and minors under the age of 18 to come to the UK as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme without a parent or guardian. The changes will enable a child to apply for a visa if they have proof of parental consent. This must be certified by an authority approved by the Ukraine government, such as the Ukrainian consul abroad. Extensive sponsor checks will also be carried out by local authorities ahead of any visa being granted, with councils able to veto any sponsor arrangements they deem unsuitable. The sponsor should also be someone who is personally known to the parents. To date we have not received any applications for unaccompanied minors to come to Coventry, but we are working closely with children's service to support any applications *that are* made.

4 Coventry City Council Approach to Homes for Ukraine:

4.1 Coventry City Council has 9 main functions:

4.1.1 Safeguarding

- **Undertake basic DBS checks** for all adults in the sponsor household; In cases where the incoming arrivals include children and/or vulnerable adults
- **Undertake an enhanced DBS checks** with barred lists check.

4.1.2 **Accommodation Checks** - Make at least one in-person visit either before or shortly after a guest has arrived, to confirm that the accommodation is suitable and the guest is well and that there are no serious safeguarding, or welfare concerns.

4.1.3 **Interim payment for guest** - Provide an interim payment of £200 per guest for subsistence costs

4.1.4 **Provision of Education** - Provide school places for children of school age. Councils will be paid additional funding to support with this.

4.1.5 **Service referrals** - Provide advice and referrals to specialist public health services as appropriate

4.1.6 Work and benefits

- **Work** - Support to access local Jobcentre Plus appointments for benefit assessments and job-seeking.
- **Benefits** - Working age guests will be able to apply to receive Universal Credit and will be able to apply for advance payments where eligible. Pension age guests will have access to State Pension Credit and Housing Benefit provided they meet eligibility criteria

4.1.7 **Homelessness assistance** – In cases where the sponsor/guest relationship breaks down and the guest is homeless or at risk of homelessness, in this instance the Councils' statutory homelessness duties will apply.

4.1.8 **Community integration** - play a key role in supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities including organising community events.

4.1.9 **Administering payments to sponsors** - Administer the optional 'thank you payment' of £350 per month payments to sponsors as long as the sponsorship arrangement exists, for up to 12 months in total.

5 Update on progress:

5.1 A central registration portal managed by DLUHC has been set up which provides information about hosts and guests. Information is filtered by the team to start the process of DBS and Accommodation checks as part of the nine functionalities of the Local Authority.

5.2 To date (17th October) 231 Ukrainian guests have arrived in the city under this scheme, accommodated in 116 different properties. Additionally, the portal showed 188 hosts offering accommodation and 82 guests expected to come to Coventry before the end of the year.

5.3 As of 17th October, we have conducted 171 initial accommodation checks in total. Of these we have refused 7 as unsuitable.

Support for Guests

5.4 Our main focus has centred on co-ordinating a range of wraparound support to Ukrainian guests through the provision of ESOL, employment support, benefit advice, finding school places, provision of temporary bus passes and provision of Library cards and GoCV cards. More importantly, safeguarding of guests remains a constant activity. The team are in regular contact with guests as they settle in the city through:

- In-person welfare checks
- Monthly welfare calls
- Meeting guests at one of the activities taking place at the Central Library

Support for Sponsors/Hosts

5.5 A number of host webinars have been delivered to sponsors whose guests have already arrived in the city. This provides the opportunity for the team to update hosts with latest guidance and support available to them and their guests as well as for hosts to ask any questions they may have.

Communication

5.6 There are several ways that both hosts and guests can communicate with the team. This includes:

- The use of our functional email address which is checked daily:
HomesforUkrainecoventry@coventry.gov.uk
- A page on [the Council website](#) has been set up providing up-to-date information on the scheme: Coventry City Council website:
- A weekly newsletter is also distributed to hosts and guests that details the provision and support available in the City.

Matching and Rematching

5.7 Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC) have been commissioned to:

- Facilitate the matching process between potential hosts and guests
- Provide support in finding alternative accommodation for guests where necessary (re-matching).
- Provide benefit advice and application support to new Ukrainian arrivals

Additional support

5.8 Association of Ukrainians Great Britain (AUGB) has a community centre in Coventry and a vibrant community, there is also an active Ukrainian Catholic Church which has been very supportive. Together these organisations have supported the newly arrived guests from

Ukraine by offering pastoral support, weekly coffee mornings with events such as outings and speakers and have supported us as a local authority extremely well.

6 Challenges

- 6.1 **Ukraine Family Scheme:** Announced by the Government on the 5th March 2022 preceding Homes for Ukraine by two weeks, This visa scheme allows applicants to join family members, or extend their stay, in the UK. It runs in parallel with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, however, the support that can be offered by the Council is limited. Local Authorities receive no additional funding for those coming through the Family Scheme; guests are not eligible to receive the initial £200 interim payment on arrival and family members who are providing accommodation receive no recompense or a 'thank you' payment unlike the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
- 6.2 In addition to the above, funding is available for school and early years placements for children on the Homes for Ukraine scheme but not for those on the family visa scheme
- 6.3 One issue in particular is that where arrangements break down between those on the family visa scheme, councils are not allowed to move these families onto the Homes for Ukraine scheme. As such these Ukrainians are advised to present to the Council under homelessness legislation. This means that a small number of families have had to stay in temporary accommodation for periods of time.
- 6.4 We are concerned as a Local Authority, that we do not receive direct information from the Home Office about the number of individuals arriving through the Family Scheme and therefore cannot be certain of overall numbers. Our main source of intelligence comes via other organisations and teams or when individuals present to services. To date, we are aware of 107 individuals that have arrived under the Family Scheme but believe the number to be much higher, perhaps up to as many as 140.
- 6.5 We have express our concerns to DLUHC, about the inequity of the two schemes and continue to lobby so that Local Authorities are resourced sufficiently to support all those who arrive from Ukraine since the start of the war, regardless of the route used to enter the UK.
- 6.6 **Move on accommodation**
- 6.7 The first Ukrainians arrived in the City in early March. Although sponsors are able to host for up to 12 months, the minimum requirement for hosting guests is six months.
- 6.8 With no current guidance from DLUHC about move on accommodation after initial placements end, the Council is currently considering arrangements after the six months planned sponsorship to help people move on to longer term accommodation; stay with existing hosts or to be rematched.
- 6.9 On 6th October the Council held a housing information session for guests with speakers from Enforcement, Tenant Landlord liaison and a Homes for Ukraine host who is also a Private Rental Landlord. The session was well attended and very informative.

6.10 Long-term integration needs

6.11 Funding under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is currently for one year, whereas client's integration needs are likely to be longer term, as recognised in other refugee schemes. Councils need early assurances that they will be resourced to provide this support to all Ukrainian arrivals in the longer term.

6.12 Officers will be supported at the meeting by a representative of the UAGB and one of the Ukrainian guests who have arrived under the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

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