

Communities Scrutiny Panel

DATE	07/07/2022
REPORT OF	Helen Isaacs, Assistant Chief Executive
SUBJECT	Homes for Ukraine
STATUS	Open

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update to the panel on:

- 1) The government Homes for Ukraine scheme, which is supported by the Council, its communities and partners.
- 2) The government announcement that the Homes for Ukraine scheme will allow eligible children and minors under the age of 18 through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme to come to the UK without a parent or guardian; and
- 3) The government announcement that the National Full Asylum Dispersal Scheme will become temporarily mandatory for all councils;

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Scheme

1.1.1 Homes for Ukraine - the scheme opened in March 2022, and in NEL residents have offered to sponsor Ukrainian refugees, known as guests. As of 24th June 2022, 41 guests have arrived and a further 24 are expected.

1.1.2 Ukraine Family Scheme - To note there is a separate 'Ukraine Family Scheme'. Family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others are permitted to come to or stay in the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme. Applicants can extend their stay for up to 3 years and are able to work, study and claim benefits in the UK. Whilst councils have not been instructed to provide support to applicants accessing this scheme, the Council does provide advice to Ukrainian refugees who approach the Council for support through this route, to ensure accommodation is sustained and to prevent homelessness and meet our wider safeguarding responsibilities.

1.1.3 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks - An advanced DBS is conducted on each sponsor and any other adults living in the sponsor's household to ensure that they do not have a criminal record. Where there are minor offences, a risk assessment is undertaken which includes specialist advice from relevant services e.g. Police, adult or children's safeguarding.

1.1.4 Property Inspections – All properties must meet certain criteria to ensure suitable accommodation for the guests. We are partnering with an external property check provider who we notify when the

property is ready to be inspected. The guidance and criterion is set out by the government and available on the government website. Where a hazard or notable issue is identified in the property inspection, recommendations for improvement are made to the sponsor, and offer to re-inspect the property on completion of the works required.

- 1.1.5 Safeguarding** - As part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, authorities are required to carry out an in-person visit to the sponsor's property, to ensure suitability and to check that the accommodation is safe and free from health and safety hazards.
- 1.1.6** This check is separate to the processing of the visa application, and the timing of the check does not affect when the visa is granted by the Home Office or when guests may travel to the UK. We endeavour to complete the check before the guest's arrival.
- 1.1.7** In addition, we liaise with our local policing teams for safeguarding, public protection and community cohesion. The neighbourhood police and police community support officers have established relationships within local communities and neighbourhood groups, which together help support both sponsors and their guests. This also gives reassurance to the respective governance group for Homes for Ukraine e.g. Safeguarding Boards, Strategic and Operational Migration groups.
- 1.1.8** Once the guest arrives, we conduct a meet and greet visit to check in with both the guest and sponsor. Following this and dependent on the level of support needed by the guest and sponsor, a four weekly welfare check is arranged or sooner if required.
- 1.1.9 Payments to guests** – the council is required to make an initial subsistence payment of £200 to each guest on arrival, this does not need to be repaid. In parallel, the council's refugee integration service's support officers help guests to apply for a bank account and Universal Credit.
- 1.1.10 Thank you payments to Sponsors** – Sponsors who have met the '5 checks' set out in the government's guidance to councils, are eligible for an optional £350 monthly 'thank you' payment for up to 12 months. In addition to the '5 checks', the council is required to ensure that the sponsor does not charge their guest rent. The government has placed the onus on the sponsor to notify the council if their guest ceases to reside in the Sponsors property and leaves during the 12 months.

1.2 Unaccompanied Ukrainian children refugees

- 1.2.1** The Homes for Ukraine scheme will allow children and minors under the age of 18 who have already applied through the Homes for Ukraine

Scheme to come to the UK without a parent or guardian, the government announced on 22 June 2022.

- 1.2.2** The UK government has worked with the Ukraine government, to make changes to the scheme which 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.
- 1.2.3** Extensive checks on the sponsor and adults in the sponsor household, will be required to be carried out by councils ahead of any visa being granted by the Home Office. Councils will have the ability to veto a sponsor if they deem them unsuitable and will be asked to undertake regular checks on the child. Councils will be able to use existing statutory powers to protect the child's wellbeing and safety where there are concerns.
- 1.2.4** The sponsor should also, except in exceptional circumstances, be someone who is personally known to the parents. In cases where a sponsor is not related to the child, an enhanced DBS with barred list check will be required in advance of issuing the visa.
- 1.2.5** This policy will initially apply to the 1,000 children who have already applied but are unable to travel as they are not travelling or reuniting with a parent or guardian.
- 1.2.6** In recognition of the need to give children greater security, sponsors will be asked to commit to hosting for up to 3 years, or until they are aged 18 and the sponsorship has lasted 6 months - in line with the existing commitment for sponsors of adults or parents with their children.

1.3 National full asylum dispersal scheme

- 1.3.1** On Wednesday 13 April, the Home Office announced that all councils in England, Scotland and Wales would be considered to be an asylum dispersal area and required to take part in asylum seeker dispersal, that councils will receive new government funding. This will allow destitute asylum seekers to be moved into temporary accommodation while their claim is considered.
- 1.3.2** An informal consultation, commenced on 9th May 2022 and concludes 1st July 2022. The consultation will enable councils and the government to come together and propose how asylum dispersal will work in detail within 12 regions and nations, with each area set to agree a regional plan that works for them.
- 1.3.3** The Home Office has said it is committed to working with councils to move to a fairer distribution of asylum seekers and has produced a summary factsheet of the changes. North East Lincolnshire is already a dispersal area.

1.3.4 The Home Office expect this full dispersal model, backed by new government funding, will allow their contracted accommodation providers (eg SERCO, Mears), working on behalf of the Home Office, to identify more easily private rental sector properties that can be procured for asylum dispersal accommodation.

1.3.5 The objective being to immediately increase affordable accommodation capacity in the asylum system and be fairer to the overburdened councils who have been participating in asylum dispersal for many years.

1.3.6 The consultation discussion is considering how other existing accommodation pressures such as the response to the situation in Ukraine and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme are impacting on councils.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 Exploitation – A larger risk is the potential of exploitation, this could be from the sponsor they are paired with in terms of financial exploitation to external elements such as employment, organised crime, modern slavery, trafficking. Currently we try and minimise as much risk as possible with our pre checks, sponsor visits, housing inspections, welfare checks, police inspections. We are in regular discussions with the police coming about mitigating this risk.

2.2 Homelessness – There is a risk for the Homes for Ukraine population group that the relationship between the guest and the sponsor could breakdown during their stay. In the first instance we would seek advice from the council's Home Options team. The government have released an official rematching policy as a part of their Homes for Ukraine guidance and a process to follow in such an event. At present we are identifying guests who may want to leave for another area or return home which will leave pre-registered and checked sponsors available in an emergency.

2.3 Future Refugees – The work and infrastructure we have created for the Homes for Ukraine scheme has built on and improved existing established arrangements. More robust and consistent pathways provide a solid foundation for working with and supporting refugee resettlement across the multi-agency system and collective workforce in NEL.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 All communications are developed in liaison with the council's communications team. Any matter considered a risk to leading to a complaint or where the council or its partners might lead to being exposed to negative media or attention is notified to the communications team and leadership group.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Homes for Ukraine has several conditions attached. The government's intention is to align the funding for Homes for Ukraine to match the tariff offered

under the first year of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP - Afghan personnel who supported armed forces and contractors) schemes. However, Councils are not being asked to source initial accommodation under this scheme as it is initially being provided by the sponsor.

- 4.1.1 For the first year, the government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person.
- 4.1.2 Councils are expected to use the tariff to meet all associated costs for providing services and administering payments. The government will consider claims for additional essential costs regarded as exceptional to normal expenditure
- 4.1.3 A cost centre and associated budget codes to monitor expenditure has been set up, along with a workbook capturing costs to enable the grant claim submissions. Government payments will be made in arrears every quarter from June 2022. We are currently awaiting guidance on funding for future years.
- 4.1.4 The subsistence cost of £200 per guest, plus discretionary top up destitution payments are expected to be covered by the £10,500 per person. Some of this funding will be needed to extend the support officer posts and cover the administration costs of the project eg property inspections, safeguarding / DBS checks, associated staffing costs. Funding will be set aside to support guests to establish and maintain their independence. This may cover support in to work eg PPE / workwear, travel support grant, costs of exams, setting up first home with essential white goods, furnishings.
- 4.1.5 A contingency provision of c10% will be earmarked and set aside for homelessness prevention e.g. relationship difficulties or breakdown between the sponsor and guest.
- 4.1.6 The sponsor thank you payments of £350 per month are being administered by council. We have made our first payments to sponsors. However, Councils are expected to cover administrative costs within the tariff.
- 4.1.7 The Government is providing additional funding to upper tier councils to provide education services under this scheme. The Department for Education will allocate funding on a per pupil bases at the following annual rates:
 - Early years (ages 2-4) - £3,000
 - Primary (ages 5-11) - £6,850
 - Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755

4.2 Unaccompanied Ukrainian children - Families hosting a child under the Homes for Ukraine scheme will receive £350 per month as a 'Thank You' payment, and all those arriving under the scheme will receive full access to education, healthcare and public services. Councils will receive £10,500 per

child, as well as additional government funding to provide education and childcare services for children on a per pupil basis.

4.3 National full asylum dispersal scheme - The government have confirmed that councils who were accommodating asylum seekers as at 27th March 2022 will receive a £250 one off grant payment per asylum seeker. NELC have received an allocation. In addition to this, all councils will receive £3,500 grant funding for each new dispersal bed occupied from 28 March 2022 up to 31 March 2023. This grant of £3,500 is designed to mitigate the impacts on local services and can be used to provide wraparound support for asylum seekers. Councils will receive this funding at the end of each quarter throughout the 2022-23 financial year.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Numbers of Ukrainian children are currently low. However, some schools do not have spare places for some year groups. As a consequence some Ukrainian children may need to go to a school outside of the household address catchment area.

6. WARD IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Affects all wards

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- A frequently asked questions section on the government website [Homes for Ukraine scheme: frequently asked questions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-frequently-asked-questions) covers applications, sponsors, welcome points, checking arrangements, housing, benefits and council tax implications.
- Detailed guidance for Councils [Homes for Ukraine: guidance for councils - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils)
- [Homes for Ukraine: sponsor guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance)
- [Welcome: a guide for Ukrainians arriving in the UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/welcome-a-guide-for-ukrainians-arriving-in-the-uk)
- [UK visa support for Ukrainian nationals](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-visa-support-for-ukrainian-nationals)
- The government has published a list of [Recognised Providers](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/recognised-providers) – voluntary and community sector organisations running schemes which provide support for and help match people coming from Ukraine with sponsors in the UK.
- If you suspect a guest is being exploited, you can report this to the [Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/modern-slavery-and-exploitation-helpline).
- Published data from a voluntary survey with local authorities on [Ukrainian homelessness pressures](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukrainian-homelessness-data). The data shows the total number of Ukrainians assisted by LA, and is broken down by visa scheme, reason for homelessness. (Please note this is not considered official statistics so there may be some inaccuracies.)
- Unaccompanied children, there was a [parliamentary debate](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-cross/leeds/2022-23/leeds-22-06-2022/leeds-22-06-2022-ukraine-schemes-and-child-refugees) Wednesday 22nd June on the Ukraine Schemes and child refugees.

8. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Caroline Barley – Public Health, Prevention and Wellbeing Manager
Craig Allen – Public Health, Community Recovery

Helen Isaacs
Assistant Chief Executive

Appendix A – Examples of community integration and support

Service Referrals

- Schools Admissions – a pathway is in place with the council's schools admissions team to facilitate and support children in to school.
- Bank Accounts – We have established designated points of call in three different banks in the area which are aware of process for Homes for Ukraine guests, Santander, Lloyds and Virgin Money. Our support officers have built these relationships with the specific banks and support our guests by accompanying them to these appointments while ensuring they have the correct documentation.
- TB and Health Screening – The sponsor has key responsibilities when it comes to supporting their guests with GP registrations. However, we ensure that we support when needed and provide information, advice and guidance. A referral is made to the Care Plus Group, Open Door medical centre for the TB and health specialist community nurse to arrange a visit for a health assessment at the home of the sponsor, with the consent of the guest.
- Mental Health – Due to the nature of circumstances we take a proactive approach to have sufficient and suitable pathways for our guests to provide mental health support catering for adults and children. We utilise Navigo as a referral partner as well as encouraging those registered with a GP to seek help via this route also.
- Connect NEL – As the new signposting service we have met with Connect NEL to educate the service on the process we go through and some of the needs of our Ukrainian guests. We have agreed to reach out to one of our guests and facilitate a meeting with them so they can shape the service to their needs.
- Technology – As a part of our involvement with Migration Yorkshire we have access to refer guests to Solidaritech, a community interest company that exists solely to help refugees and asylum seekers with access to technology such as, laptops, desktops, tablets or smartphones.
- Internal Services – We regularly utilise our internal services within the council on a case-by-case basis and refer accordingly. Examples of this may be children's services.

Work, Training and Benefits

- Universal Credit – Our support officers help with the applications for Universal Credit and provide additional support when needed, such as accompanying them to their appointments, providing translation services and advising on next steps.
- Training – One of the first steps is to provide access to an ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages' course depending on the level of need. We have established pathway connections to this via Learning4Life and Network Employer and Training (NET).
- NET also provide further training courses after an initial assessment period and offer a range of courses depending on the guest's interest and career aspirations.
- Previous Experience/Qualifications – We have certain guests who have established career backgrounds in health and social care. They will be

supported by local employment and training organisations to transfer, top up and or align their experience and qualifications to the relevant recognised UK equivalent professional standard. For example, we are working with established partners, in the ICP (Integrated Care Partnership) health and social care workforce development workstream.

- Employment – We have established and continue to establish multiple options to ensure that our guests have a choice when it comes to employment. During our welfare and support visits we are identifying employment, training and volunteering needs and facilitating or signposting to one of our partners.
 - We have an established pathway and working relationship with our local DWP service, who have been approached by local employers who would like to support employment and training opportunities for adult Ukrainian arrivals.
 - NET (National Employer and Training) provides a full spectrum service from initial training to employment and offer a wide range of industry connections to achieve this while also working closely with the DWP.
 - ERA (Ethical Recruitment Agency) offers multiple opportunities from permanent positions, bank work (care sector), volunteering, work experience. ERA offer additional support with applications, CV's and can provide digital buddies for any technical needs and ERA has access to other facilities and services which operate from Centre4.
- Makaton – This a language programme that uses signs together with speech and symbols as a communication tool. The default is to refer a need for support for children to children's services. The council's refugee integration support service has 2.5 refugee integration support officers, 1 of these officers is a qualified and registered regional Makaton tutor and provides enhanced support to schools in training their staff in how to use Makaton.

Community Engagement

- Ukraine Group – one of our sponsors has organised gatherings for both sponsors and guests. There have been several social events with different business hosting and making generous donations of local venues such as The Globe and Petite Delight.
- Centre4 – A current project is a welcome day in conjunction with Centre4, this is an opportunity to introduce the guests to services, other facilities and community activities.