

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

1 SEPTEMBER 2022

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

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Summary

The report provides an overview and progress to date in relation to activity undertaken to facilitate the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

1. Background

- 1.1. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme has been launched by the Government, allowing a sponsor (UK resident with a property) to provide space in their home to a Ukrainian Household (Guest).
- 1.2. This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and 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. Phase One of the Scheme allows individual sponsors to support named Ukrainians.
- 1.3. The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward.
- 1.4. Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.
- 1.5. The sponsor eligibility criteria sets out that they must be in the UK, can be of any nationality, with any immigration status, provided they have at least six months' leave to remain within the UK and pass the background checks. They can live in any part of the UK. 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. This payment is limited to one monthly payment per residential address, regardless of the number of individuals sponsored. Payments will stop when the sponsorship ends.
- 1.6. The Government is providing councils with funding of £10,500 per person under this scheme for the first year. This funding will enable councils to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into

communities. The payment of this grant will be conditional on councils undertaking the necessary safeguarding checks and providing the department with relevant data. DLUHC will use completed data extracted from Foundry (The DLUHC system for sharing data) to support grant payments, and to provide assurance that relevant grant conditions have been met

2. Overview of the Council's response

- 2.1. The scheme has not been considered as an emergency in either Medway or Kent. As such no formal reporting is required other than that required through the Governments Foundry System (this system contains all details of sponsors and potential guests).
- 2.2. The Council has established various operational and strategic groups to monitor progress of various elements of the scheme. Section three of this report sets out the Council's progress in respect of the individual components of the scheme.

3. Progress

- 3.1. Initial reception – Reception areas have been set out in government guidance. Areas expected to receive significant numbers are international airports (Stansted, Luton, Heathrow, Manchester, Birmingham, Luton) and St Pancras International Rail Station.
- 3.2. Dover port and Folkstone have been identified as areas that will receive smaller numbers of passengers. To date there have been no issues relating to the arrival of guests that has directly impacted on Medway, it is expected that this will continue to be the case.
- 3.3. Data Sharing – the government have established a system for the dissemination and collection of information in relation to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
- 3.4. As of 02 August 2022:
 - 215 unique applications that cover 314 people.
 - 101 of these are under 18's
 - 189 are aged 19-64
 - 16 are over the age of 60
 - The remainder have missing information or may be duplicated.
 - 113 properties within Medway have been identified.
 - Numbers are higher in West of Medway with 35 properties identified across Rochester West (14), Strood Rural (8), Peninsula (7), Cuxton and Halling (6). 21 properties have been identified in Gillingham North (7), Gillingham South (7) and Chatham Central (7). All other wards have between zero and five properties.

- 3.5. Safeguarding Checks – The government has given responsibility to Local Authorities to undertake certain checks in relation to the properties and sponsors that are part of the scheme.
- 3.6. Local Authorities must:
- Ensure that the property exists
 - Wherever possible visit the property in person, prior to the guests arrival and ensure that the property broadly complies with suitability requirements as set out in guidance, detailed below
 - be kept clean and in a reasonable state;
 - have adequate kitchen and bathroom space;
 - have access to drinking water;
 - have a working smoke detector on each floor of the property and other fire safety precautions suitable for the building e.g. fire doors or escape routes as appropriate (further information on making a home safe from fire);
 - have a working carbon monoxide detector in any room containing a solid fuel burning appliance (e.g. a coal fire, wood burning stove);
 - have sufficient heating to keep the property at a comfortable temperature;
 - have safe gas appliances and fittings and flues; you should make appropriate checks; a Gas Safety Certificate is not mandatory though you may require one if you have cause for concern.
 - have safe and working electrics, which a qualified electrician can help with if you are unsure;
 - be reasonably free from damp or mould;
 - have doors and windows at entry level that lock properly;
 - be easy and safe to move around in, without excessively steep staircases that may cause harm.
 - Process the relevant DBS for the situation - detailed further below.
 - Undertake a welfare check on the guest's arrival and issue a £200 interim payment per guest.
- 3.7. Condition of properties has largely been very good, the most frequent issues encountered is having a relevant gas safety check. The Council has worked with its repairs contractor (Mears) to offer this service to residents to ensure that they meet the required standard. Support from the Kent Fire and Rescue Service has also been sought where smoke alarms are needed or there were concerns over fire safety, so that these issues can be resolved.
- 3.8. DBS Checks – All sponsors (including family members over the age of 16) will receive a DBS check. A basic check is undertaken if there are no vulnerable adults or dependent children taking up the offer of accommodation, where there are, an enhanced check is undertaken.
- 3.9. Education – As of the 28 July 2022. Of a total 39 children of school age that have arrived in Medway there were 5 children that had not received an offer of a school place, all five had arrived in the last week. The Admissions Team have been proactive in contacting all households to discuss the process for

obtaining a school place as well as attending events to offer advice and information.

- 3.10. Schools have a specific funding award for each place taken up by a child under the homes for Ukraine Scheme. Funding varies by age group.
- Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
 - Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580
 - Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755
- 3.11. Referrals to Services - As highlighted in 3.6, a welfare check is undertaken as soon as possible after the guest has arrived to their sponsor. This welfare check will initially determine whether any referrals need to be undertaken to other services with some basic screening questions and general observations. The Council has recently employed a dedicated Adults Social Worker and a dedicated Children's Social Worker to support both guests and sponsors.
- 3.12. Work and Benefits – Through the DWP the Council has ensured that Ukrainian guests have access to employment advice as well as access to any welfare support that might be needed. All guests arriving are eligible to claim Universal Credit from the point that their visa is issued. The Council and the DWP also supported a jobs fair on 30 June at Medway Rugby Club specifically for Ukrainian Households.
- 3.13. Community integration – The Council is working closely with the Medway Help for Ukrainian's Charity, providing some funding, but also office space at Kingsley House and IT equipment. The Charity has been pivotal in assisting with community integration. Below is a list of activities arranged by the Charity to support with community integration.
- Events for hosts/guests and guests/guests to build relationships
 - Sunflower café as part of St Francis Church in Strood, this location also doubles as a clothing bank
 - Supporting the Language Café
 - Organising Job Fairs
 - Hosting a DWP drop in every week at Kingsley House
 - Counselling Service for Guests
 - Twice weekly drop ins at Kingsley House for any issues for guests or hosts
 - Hygiene bank
 - Access to laptops for children
 - English Summer School for 13–17-year-olds to practice english.
 - Assisting with travel and swimming classes
- 3.14. Payments to sponsors – As covered in 1.5 above, all sponsors are eligible for a £350 optional “thank you” payment. Thank you, payments are in place, for all households that have guests residing with them and the sponsor wants to receive the payment. These payments are reviewed monthly to determine if guests are still resident with the sponsor.

- 3.15. Ukraine Family visa scheme – running along side the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is the family visa scheme. This scheme allows people from Ukraine to be issued a visa to come and reside with an existing family member in the UK.
- 3.16. The scheme has no financial support from Central Government and the Council has needed to engage with housing support where some arrangements have been unsustainable from the outset. This has resulted in eight cases residing in temporary accommodation whilst permanent options are sought.
- 3.17. The Council has been provided with no data in relation to visa's issued under this scheme.
- 3.18. End of sponsorship arrangements – Sponsors are initially asked to sign up to 6 months sponsorship, with the scheme having the flexibility to run for a year. Further guidance is still awaited from the government as to the future of the scheme.
- 3.19. Guidance sets out that sponsors should initiate a conversation with their guest in relation to the length of stay and try to provide two month's notice if they require their guest to move on.
- 3.20. The Service is engaging with sponsors in date order to discuss the onward journey for their guest. Options will vary on a case-by-case basis with some that will need further support to secure their own accommodation, some may be rematched with other sponsors, some will likely remain with their current sponsor.
- 3.21. Conflict resolution – whilst it would not be appropriate to comment on individual cases, a scheme of this size and complexity will generate challenges. In some cases, sponsorship arrangements have broken down and the local authority has had to rematch individuals or provide alternative accommodation, where necessary. Appropriate safeguarding advice is also sought from Children's and Adults Social Care, where it is needed.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. The cost of the assistance provided by the Council is being met by through grant funding provided from central government.
- 4.2. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. There are legal implications for the Local Authority should the placement break down for a child in which case there is the implication of the child's legal status, and the duty incumbent on the Local Authority to assess a child in

need under section 17 and section 20 to provide support and accommodation to the child and their family.

6. Recommendation

6.1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the contents of the report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None