

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

UKRAINE REFUGEE SUPPORT SCHEMES

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Council Executive with an update on the UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Scottish Government's Super Sponsor Scheme and related guidance, and the support available within West Lothian.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council Executive:

1. Notes the update on the UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme, related funding for councils and support available within West Lothian and the information on the number of households and persons registered;
2. Notes the update on the Scottish Government Super Sponsor Scheme, related guidance and funding for councils and the update on the work being progressed by the council; and
3. Note that further reports will be presented to committee if there any material changes to the role of local authorities.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on customers' needs, being honest, open and accountable, making best use of resources, working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	The UK Government has made available a £10,500 per person tariff to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 for Ukrainian nationals is for the

first year, future years are to be reviewed in due course. The Scottish Government have offered grant funding of up to £366,000 to support the costs incurred by the council in the resettlement of refugees from Ukraine.

VII Consideration at PDSP

Not applicable

VIII Other consultations

Members of the Corporate Management Team and related senior officers

D. TERMS OF REPORT

Background

- D.1** The Ukrainian refugee crisis is the ongoing movement of people caused by the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces, beginning shortly before the invasion started in late February.

This year, the Scottish Government issued a template in order to provide a consistent way of recording information relating to key themes and issues ensuring that it is comparable locally, regionally and nationally. This report is completed in accordance with the new standard template.

D.2 UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme

The UK Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme opened on 18 March 2022 for visa applications from Ukrainians and immediate family members who already have named people willing to sponsor them. 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 could apply from Ukraine or from any other third country. Phase One of the scheme allowed individual sponsors to name Ukrainians. A separate visa scheme for Ukrainians with family members in the UK, which launched on 4 March.

D.3 UK Government Funding

The UK Government has made available a £10,500 per person tariff to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 for Ukrainian nationals is for the first year, future years are to be reviewed in due course. The Scottish Government has secured the agreement of the UK Government to make this tariff, and the other payments detailed below, available to councils for those arriving in Scotland under both Homes for Ukraine and the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme. The UK Government is also providing additional funding to councils to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under this scheme. The UK Government has indicated funding will be allocated on a per pupil basis for the three phases of education at the following annual rates:

- early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
- primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580
- secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755
- these tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Councils are to use the tariff to meet all of their associated costs, both for providing council services and for administering payments. The UK Government will also, under exceptional circumstances, consider claims for costs above and beyond what could reasonably be regarded as normal expenditure and not available through other mainstream funding mechanisms. The UK Government has been clear this will be on an exceptional basis only. The council where the sponsor accommodation is located is asked to provide an interim payment (in line with other resettlement schemes) of £200 per guest for subsistence costs. The £200 payment is factored into the £10,500 tariff and does not need to be repaid by the guest.

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 be able to apply for State Pension Credit and Housing Benefit provided they meet eligibility criteria, and Scottish Housing Discretionary Housing Payments if meet eligibility criteria.

D.4 Scottish Government Super Sponsor Scheme

The Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme exists to speed up the matching process between individuals Ukrainians and a property. This may be a social or private rental property or (where sponsors have agreed and checks have been undertaken) a property from the Homes for Ukraine Portal. The super sponsor scheme removes the need for applicants to be matched prior to being given permission travel to the UK. By acting as a super sponsor, rather than waiting for matching under the UK Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the super sponsor scheme enabled persons from Ukraine to arrive with no cap on numbers.

D.5 Scottish Government Guidance

The Scottish Government published the guidance for councils on 4 April 2022 - Super Sponsor Scheme and Homes for Ukraine: guidance for local authorities - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) The guidance outlines the role of councils in supporting Ukrainian guests who arrive under both the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme and who match privately into Scotland through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The guidance does not cover displaced persons coming in via the Ukraine Family Scheme. Councils will also administer 'thank you' payments at the £350 per sponsoring household per month rate on behalf of the UK Government. This is a thank you payment not a rental or any other kind of contract payment. Additional funding is to be allocated for these payments, councils are expected to cover administration costs within the £10,500 tariff.

D.6 Scottish Government Funding

The Scottish Government have awarded the council a grant up to the value of £366,000 to provide financial support to support capacity within the council's team supporting refugees from Ukraine; meet some of the costs of identifying and bringing properties into use for refugees coming to Scotland; and some of the wider costs of supporting refugees to settle into local communities. The main objectives/expected outcomes of the Grant are to increase capacity in council resettlement teams (or equivalent) for the support of Ukrainian displaced persons, to provide support for refurbishment costs for properties used to house Ukrainian displaced persons, and to cover costs of supporting Ukrainian displaced persons to settle into local communities not already addressed by alternative funding sources.

D.7 Council Support for Ukraine Refugees

Hotels

We are currently supporting 73 people in the Mercure Hotel, 49 adults and 24 children. Numbers have been fairly stagnant with 8 families requiring 3 bed accommodation and 10 single males that we don't have any host accommodation for available in West Lothian. We have seen a high number of refusals for hosting arrangements that have been offered, main reasons given are some areas are too remote e.g. Longridge and Winchburgh and that people want their own tenancies.

In the Houston House we have 25 rooms available which is now full with 29 people, mainly couples and single males and females. We have one family with a child however looking to relocate to the Mercure. There are 11 single males.

Support is provided in both hotels on a drop-in basis. Officers are in attendance from Social Policy, Housing Needs Resettlement Team, the Advice Shop, Adult Learning for ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Access to Employment to provide comprehensive support.

Two Officers from the Scottish Government are supporting in both hotels with the matching process. Officers from West Lothian Council and the Scottish Government are working to progress matches in both hotels. We are developing working arrangements with East Lothian and Midlothian Council to progress matches in these areas. Feedback has been provided to the Scottish Government on the issues with finding hosting arrangements for single males and larger families, reasons for refusals and reluctance to accept host accommodation and potential pressures on Housing in West Lothian.

Homes for Ukraine

We currently have 31 hosts supporting through the UK Homes for Ukraine scheme. Due to increasing number of enquiries received on 'next steps' as a hosting arrangement comes to an end, an information sheet has been devised for hosts and guests which is being emailed out to all hosts. A meeting was also held which all hosts were invited to in order to understand some of the current issues they are experiencing.

A new process has been implemented whereby hosts will now be contacted at the 4 month point to see if they wish to continue with the arrangement or guests require Housing Options advice to avoid the potential for sudden and unexpected placement endings.

Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme

We have 17 current hosting arrangements through the Super Sponsor Scheme. Officers continue liaise with Hosts, COSLA, the Scottish Government and other Local Authorities to progress with matches. Officers are actively following up any outstanding issues such as Disclosures and house checks to increase hosting placements available.

Breakdowns

We have had 9 placement breakdowns from Homes for Ukraine and Super Sponsor Scheme. Guests have been supported to source other hosting arrangements or returned to hotel accommodation provided by the Scottish Government. Housing Options advice is provided to hosts in the event of a breakdown or potential breakdown or when someone is asked to leave. Officers are encouraging hosts to provide 2 months' notice to end a hosting arrangement as per sponsorship guidelines.

Staffing

In order to support the work outlined above a number of roles have been appointed to, including a Ukraine Resettlement Coordinator for Social policy, 4 Tenancy Sustainment Officers to provide resettlement support in Hotels and in the community. 3 Interpreters have started on a sessional basis to support in Hotels and in the community and 1 Housing Options Officer has been appointed. There is also additional short-term capacity within the advice shop.

E. CONCLUSION

Staff continue to work alongside people from Ukraine and host families to offer a range of supports to ensure that people are able to settle appropriately into their communities whilst the war in Ukraine continues.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

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