

Brighton & Hove City Council

Policy & Resources Committee

Agenda Item 143

Subject: Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme - Update

Date of meeting: 12 May 2022

Report of: Executive Director Housing, Neighbourhoods and
Communities

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

Note: Urgency

By reason of the special circumstances below, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the 1972 Act, the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: Reasons for urgency

The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were to ensure member oversight of the council's mobilization to meet the obligations on local authorities in the government's Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report is to provide members with an update on the council's mobilization to fulfill the obligations set for local authorities in the delivery of the government's Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.
- 1.2 The report builds on the initial information provided verbally by officers to Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 23rd March and the all-member briefing provided on 24th March.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee notes the actions taken by officers to fulfil the obligations placed on local authorities by the government's Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme.
- 2.2 That Committee notes the spend to date on the scheme.

2.3 That Committee instructs officers to develop a costed proposal to provide support to Ukrainian refugees in the city arriving via other routes, to be considered by a future committee.

3. Context and background information

3 *Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme Overview*

- 3.1.1** In mid-March the government launched its [Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme](#). This gave Ukrainians with a named eligible sponsor in the UK, who can provide accommodation, the right to apply for a visa. It is free to apply.
- 3.1.2** Sponsors (hosts) can live anywhere in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) and can be of any nationality, provided they have at least six months' permission to stay in the UK.
- 3.1.3** The Ukrainian refugees covered by the scheme have 3 years right to remain, the right to live, work and study in the UK and to access public funds, for example, care assessment, statutory homeless duty, benefits, pension.
- 3.1.4** The matches between sponsor and refugee are made privately and the government carries out checks on the arrangement. Local councils have no role in the matching and none of the obligations on local authorities influence the government's decision on granting a visa to Ukrainian refugees through the scheme.
- 3.1.5** Local authorities have been given access to an on-line portal which holds limited information about the primary sponsors (also termed as hosts in the scheme) and the refugees (termed guests in the scheme).
- 3.1.6** Local authorities do not receive active notification when individual refugees are travelling to the UK or arrive.
- 3.1.7** Local authorities have the following obligations in the scheme:
- Ensure the hosts have Basic or Enhanced DBS checks
 - Carry out at least one in-person visit to the host property for a property and welfare check
 - Pay one-off £200 subsistence payment to each guest (all ages)
 - Pay a monthly optional £350 'thank you' payment to the host for each month they host guests up to 12 months
 - Assist the refugees to access education, benefits and encourage community integration

3.1.8 Local authorities will receive funding to fulfill their obligations:

- One-off un-ringfenced payment of £10,500 per guest (all ages with the exception of newborn babies). The £200 subsistence payment is to come from this funding.
- Education costs: one-off per child/young person of £3,000 at early years, £6,580 primary age and £8,755 at secondary age. These tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Ringfenced funding for the £350 thank you payments.

Government has confirmed funding for one year only.

3.2 Local Arrangements

3.2.1 Governance

BHCC has established the following governance arrangements for the scheme:

- Democratic oversight by Policy & Resources Committee
- Senior management oversight by a fortnightly strategy group consisting of senior managers across the council
- Operational delivery co-ordination by a fortnightly meeting of service managers across the council, managers from key public service partners, Community Works and City of Sanctuary
- 7 workstreams lead by relevant managers from across the council:
 - Co-ordination (single point of contact, data management, checks, payments)
 - Access to education (all ages)
 - Access to health and public health (via existing asylum seeker health group)
 - Access to employment and benefits (lead by DWP)
 - Housing sustainment
 - Community tensions and reassurance (via an existing multi-agency group)
 - Communities and integration (multi-agency group including CVS partners and members of the emerging Ukrainian Community organization)
 - On-going liaison with an emerging Ukrainian community group
- Programme support has been allocated to setting up governance and delivery arrangements
- Senior responsible officer is Executive Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities
- Senior programme lead is Head of Communities, Equality and Third Sector

3.2.2 Data management

Local authorities were issued with a government data sharing agreement relating to information on the portal. This was revised in late April and is currently being reviewed by BHCC information governance officers. A privacy notice for guests and hosts has been published on the council's website and a data sharing agreement is in place with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service to carry out the property and welfare checks (see below).

Data on the guests and the hosts is made available to councils via an on-line portal called 'Foundry'. The government has been developing the system at speed and its functionality is being updated very regularly. This has provided a challenge for staff to become proficient with the system. In addition, the data provided is limited to that asked in the matching process, for example, it only includes equality data on gender, age and marital status. It should be noted that its accuracy, for example email addresses, telephone numbers, the number of guests per host is dependent on data inputted by the host/guest. Due to the quality of the data all information on the guests and hosts is having to be verified by council officers with hosts and guests.

3.2.3 Checks

BHCC has entered into an agreement with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service to carry out the in-person visits (the required property and welfare checks). The arrangement went live on 29th April with visits being organized for week commencing 3rd May. East Sussex County Council has also entered the same arrangement. This has allowed the sharing of best practice and parity across East Sussex.

The council is also using, as appropriate and per published privacy notice, its own data to carry out checks on hosts across childrens, adults, and community safety as well as liaising with the Police as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Guidance from government on checks has been limited and councils have been given "full discretion on the approach they take to accommodate checks and the judgements they made during these checks". The sponsorship scheme is a unique arrangement and not a model previously used for enabling the resettlement of refugees into the UK.

There is no current mechanism for councils to be involved in re-matching guest with an alternative host if the original matched host is deemed unsuitable or if the host/guest breaks down or simply comes to an end.

3.2.4 Single Point of Contact

The council has mobilized and re-orientated the community hub established during the Covid pandemic to provide both an inward and outward point of contact for the guests and the hosts. It can be contacted by email ukrainian.support@brighton-hove.gov.uk and the community hub telephone number 01273 293117 option 2.

The council is part of a translating and interpreting contract with East Sussex County Council and the hub staff use Big Word (amongst other providers in the contract) for telephone translations.

As well as acting as a single point of contact for the hosts and guests the hub is also coordinating the checks internally with other council services and with ESFR.

The hub is also processing the payments to the guests and the hosts. The £350 'thank you' payment offered by government is paid in arrears after the local checks have been completed.

The £200 subsistence payment is being made available to the guests as cash via the Post Office. Once the guests have confirmed their full details so that we can match them to the portal data they will receive a text/email with the instructions to access the cash via the presentation of a barcode on a mobile phone or paper to the Post Office.

Webpages specifically for guests and hosts have been created on the council's website.

3.2.5 Current Numbers (as at 03.05.22)

Total number of matched hosts (portal data)	214
Total number of individual matched guests expected to arrive (portal data)	442
Total number of children and young people expected to arrive	155
Number of return contact from hosts to the hub	163/214
Number of hosts BHCC is waiting for reply from	51/214
Number of hosts that have confirmed their guests have arrived	55/214
Number of guests with arrival dates (portal data)	143
	85 adults and 58 children (17 years old and below)
Completed host checks:	

Adult Social Care	150/214
Children Social Care	30/55
Property	List of 41 arrived provided to ESFR 29.04.22
Age ranges of children and young people guests that have arrived	1- 5 years old = 11 6 to 10 years old = 25 11 to 17 years old = 22

3.2.6 Expenditure

The council has spent approximately £21.5k in advance on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This comprises £20,000 deposit into the Post Office scheme for the cash subsistence payments to guests and £1.5k set up costs for this scheme.

The council has committed between £30-40k in costs to ESFR for the property and welfare checks. The final figure is dependent on total number of sponsors and their properties. For example, currently the number of matched sponsors is 214. Total number of sponsors' properties is 224.

Current estimated expenditure is as follows (costs for one year):

Item	Value
Ukrainian refugee programme co-ordinator	£53,000
Community hub staff	£265,000
Childrens social worker	£53,000
Ethnic Minority Achievement Service additional capacity	£87,000
Homeless prevention officers (x2)	£85,000
Homeless prevention interventions	£10,000
Community initiatives	£10,000
Communications officer	£23,000
Police administrator capacity	£6,000

Total Estimated Spend	£592,000

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 No alternative options were considered as all local authorities have set obligations as part of the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme and have developed a programme of support to reflect best practice.
- 4.2 During the establishment of local arrangements and feedback from ward councillors and CVS partners a disparity in support between Ukrainian refugees on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and those arriving via Family Visa became apparent. Both sets of refugees have access to public services, to work, to study, to benefits etc. However, as local authorities are not in receipt of additional funding for refugees arriving on the Family Visa scheme additional support like the £200 subsistence is not available. This has been raised with civil servants.
- 4.3 The community hub is being promoted as point of contact for all Ukrainian refugees in order that the council can triage, signpost and give advice to all Ukrainian refugees regardless of their route into the country.
- 4.4 In addition, to the disparity of offer for Ukrainian refugees the council's mobilization for the Homes for Ukraine scheme has highlighted the disparity in the limits placed on local authorities to support refugees from other countries.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 As noted in 3.2.1 a relationship has been made between the emerging Ukrainian community group and the city council. Members of the group have kindly agreed to be part of the communities and integration workstream along with other CVS organisations.
- 5.2 Officers have also participated in a number of on-line sessions with Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) civil servants and staff from the Southeast Strategic Migration Partnership. This has provided a platform for BHCC along with other councils to give feedback on the Homes of Ukraine Scheme and the Family Visa scheme.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Local authorities have had to move at pace with limited government guidance and there are many anticipated challenges that are yet to emerge. BHCC officers continue to participate in seminars with civil servants and other local authorities to share learning and give feedback.

- 6.2 The council has been able to utilize many of the multi-agency structures and relationships established during the Covid pandemic to enable the city's response at speed.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Guidance on funding arrangement and terms and conditions was released by Government on 29th April. Grant payments will be subject to confirmation that guests have arrived, and various other conditions as set out in the guidance. These include undertaking the necessary safeguarding and accommodation checks in line with the government's guidance.

- 7.2 The level of Government funding and current planned expenditure for year 1 is set out in the main body of the report.

Name of finance officer consulted: Monica Brookes Date consulted
04/05/22

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report which is for information.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted 04/05/22

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 As equalities data about the hosts and guests via the portal is very limited the council will be seeking to capture this information directly from the individuals.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Family Visa scheme is facilitating many refugees to find sanctuary quickly. Many who come will have skills and knowledge that will be of benefit and an asset to the city. However, this also means that the city will experience a rapid increase in demand on its services from schools through to mental health services.

11. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 11.1 Expenditure on delivering the Homes for Ukraine scheme will need to be carried out in line with council's existing financial and procurement regulations.

Crime & disorder implications:

- 11.2 Through an existing community tensions and assurance multi-agency group any hate crime or incidents are being monitored and responded to.

Public health implications:

- 11.3 A specific workstream on access to health and public health has been stood up to ensure that the refugees are able to access health services and public health issues such as vaccinations, screening are picked up. The local workstream is linking in with a Pan-Sussex asylum seeker working group lead by Sussex CCGS.

