

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

UPDATE ON THE WORCESTERSHIRE RESPONSE TO INVASION OF UKRAINE

Summary

1. The Board is asked to consider the update provided in respect of Worcestershire's Response to the invasion of Ukraine.
2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities, the Chief Executive and the Assistant Director for Communities have been invited to the meeting for the discussion.

Background

3. The County Council, District Councils and partners have unanimously pledged to do all they can to support families and individuals arriving in Worcestershire from Ukraine as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme.

The Schemes – A Recap

4. **Family visa scheme.** This is entirely dependent on whether Ukrainians living in the UK have relatives who want to support those leaving Ukraine. It is estimated there are around 130 Ukrainians in total living in the county according to provisional 2021 census data. This scheme does not attract additional funding (see scheme below), but it is envisaged that Councils will be expected to perform their duties in relation to housing / education etc.
5. The **Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme** was announced on 14 March. Around 150,000 individuals across the UK have registered interest in being a sponsor. People arriving under this scheme will be able to:
 - Live and work in the UK for up to three years
 - Access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition.
6. This scheme does attract additional funding. A £350 per month 'thank you payment' has been offered to sponsors for between 6-12 months (6-month period is the minimum expectation set for sponsors). The 'thank you' payment is limited to one payment per residential address and will remain tax free. Payments are only issued once accommodation and DBS checks are carried out and passed.
7. £10,500 per person is also be provided to Local Authorities accepted under this scheme. The funding is "to provide much wider support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities" and is paid to Upper Tier authorities on a quarterly basis, in arrears. Arrangements have been made to treat the funding as

a pool, under the joint control of officers from the seven councils, who can agree how it is allocated fairly between the councils in order to cover the costs that they face.

8. The government is also providing additional funding to councils to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under the scheme. The Department for Education (DfE) will allocate funding on a per pupil basis for the three phases of education at the annual rates listed below. The first payment was made through the Education Skills and Funding Agency ESFA on 31 August 2022.

- Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
- Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580
- Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755

Worcestershire Data

9. Worcestershire had its first data transfer on Tuesday 22 March 2022, the system is updated daily with new sponsors and guests as and when a match has happened. Current information suggests the following breakdown for Sponsors and Guests across Districts (as of 12 September 2022). Numbers change on a daily as those households who have expressed an interest find a match with Ukrainian guests.

The table below shows a breakdown of host properties, expected guests and guests arrived including number of children split by school age.

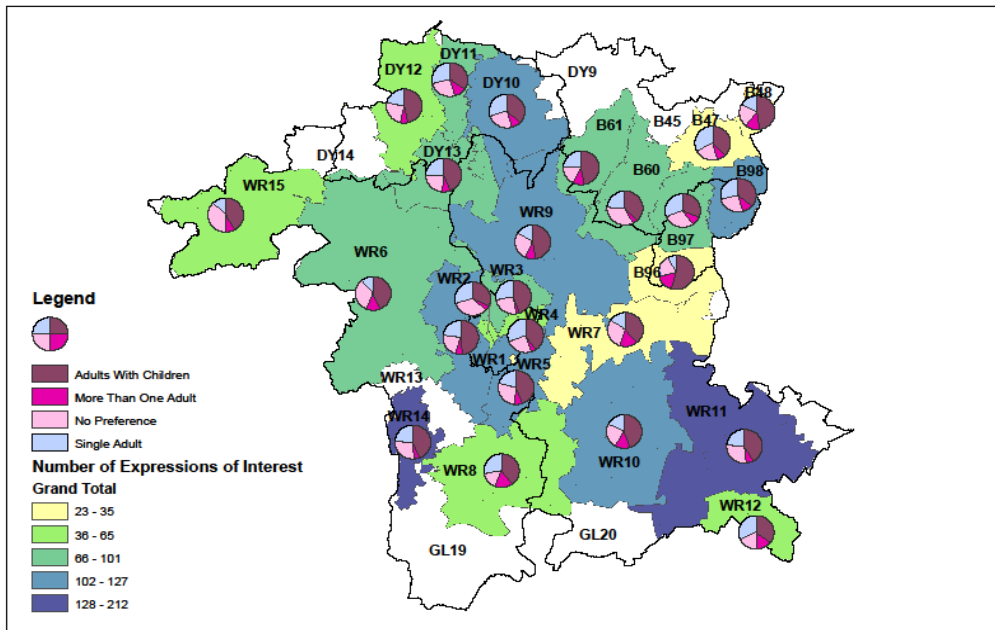
District	No of Host Properties*	No of Guests Expected^	No of Guests Arrived+	Number of Children by school Stage^		
				Pre-school	Primary	Secondary
Bromsgrove	60	152	112	5	28	24
Malvern Hills	140	334	250	17	65	54
Redditch	24	51	36	5	8	8
Worcester City	75	185	150	3	31	28
Wychavon	161	358	296	17	49	66
Wyre Forest	63	119	86	10	15	15
Unmatched Guests	-	57	-	0	2	2
Total	523	1256	930	57	198	197

* Host property figures exclude "Failed" households

^ Expected guest figures and "No of Children by School Stage" exclude guests that are no longer moving to Worcestershire or that have moved out of the county

+ Guests arrived figures taken from [Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme: Visa data by country, upper and lower tier local authority](#)

10. Worcestershire is also in receipt of data from central government around the total number of expressions of interest to host Ukrainian guests by Worcestershire household. As mentioned previously, the national figure is c. 150,000 and at first look at the data suggests that the total figure for Worcestershire is 2431. This data has since been cleansed and the number has reduced to 2058. The map below shows the distribution of expressions of interest and the sponsors preference of age ranges of guests (e.g. Adult with children, single adult, adult group, no preference). District maps are also available.



Homes for Ukraine - Expressions of Interest - Snapshot 16 May 2022

11. Contact has been made with all 2058 individuals who have expressed an interest to confirm their interest in hosting Ukraine guests. This information is being collated and the latest response is outlined in the table below.

Worcestershire		Total Sent	Total Responses	Interested	Not interested
		2058	435		
Row Labels	Count	% responses against total sent	% against responses received	41.84%	44.37%
Being Processed	14	0.68%	3.22%		
Guests already arrived	46	2.24%	10.57%		
Still interested Form completed	84	4.08%	19.31%		
Still Interested no form completed	98	4.76%	22.53%		

Unable to accommodate	193	9.38%	44.37%		
Grand Total	435				

Education Update – school places for Ukrainian children

12. All children and young people arriving under these schemes have the right to access education and childcare whilst in the UK. The best place for all children to be educated is in schools, and attending school is vital to help newly arrived children integrate as quickly as possible into the communities in which they are living.

13. Local authorities also have an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has published guidance for local authorities on the Homes for Ukraine scheme [here](#), information on access to education and childcare can be found on pages 24-29. For children we all know that attending school is an important protective factor.

14. To supplement this, the Department for Education (DfE) have updated the Gov.uk page on [school access rights for pupils from overseas](#) and have provided some questions and answers to DLUHC's [Homes for Ukraine FAQ page](#). In addition DfE have also provided information in Ukrainian [How do families arriving from Ukraine apply for a school place and childcare? / Як родинам, що приїжджають з України, подавати заяви на отримання місць у школі та допомоги з оплати послуг з догляду за дитиною? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

15. The Government's expectation is that if there are school places available in the local area, even if not in the immediate vicinity of the family's home, the local authority will work with families arriving from Ukraine to enable the children to attend school as soon as possible.

16. The Secretary of State for Education has stated local authorities should be looking to provide places and, where necessary, use the flexibilities to admit above published admission number (PAN) and exceed the infant class size limit, as well as using the in-year Fair Access Protocol. The School Admissions Code applies to the admission to school of Ukraine arrivals, in the same way as it does to all other children.

17. Local authorities have a duty to support local parents in choosing schools. DfE, are therefore looking to local authorities to support refugees with:

- information on where schools have vacancies; and
- how to apply.

18. In Worcestershire access to information and the admission application process is being supported by Here2Help. Support to assist with admissions is available via School Admissions on 01905 844 111 or email at schooladmissions@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk The Worcestershire Children First (WCF) website has information in relation to how to make an application for anyone

arriving in the county, that requires a school place. In addition, anyone contacting the Worcestershire Hub in relation to School Admissions, on 01905 822 700, are signposted to WCF, if the query is not something Customer Service Advisors can answer from their extensive School Admissions knowledge base. The School Admissions Team, has a designated placement officer for each geographical area of the county who can support sponsors, families, and schools through the process. The Worcestershire Hub has the specific contact details of individuals and can direct calls to where they need to go. The School Admissions website has a link on the homepage to Google Translate, where any applicant can copy the published information and have it translated into their own language.

19. As at 5 September 2022, 315 applications have been received with 285 children and young people already offered places in schools across the county through the application process, and 30 new applications are pending.

The table below shows by district council area the offers of school places

District	Number of Offers Primary	Number of Offers Secondary	Pending Applications	Total
Bromsgrove	25	13	0	38
Malvern Hills	34	16	6	56
Redditch	9	0	1	10
Worcester City	38	25	6	69
Wychavon	61	44	11	116
Wyre Forest	14	6	6	26
Total	181	104	30	315

20. If no schools within a reasonable distance of a child's have vacancies or are not able to admit more pupils, the local authority should place these children under its in-year fair-access protocol, in the same way it will place all other hard to place children. A school place must be allocated under the protocol for all children referred to it within 20 school days. Arrangements should be made for the child to start at the school as soon as possible.

21. In certain areas across the county, and in some year groups, there are limited places available in schools. Where the local authority has not been able to offer a place within a reasonable distance, then a referral to Fair Access is made. Fair Access panel meetings are usually held once each half term. However, because it is vital to help newly arrived children integrate as quickly as possible into the communities in which they are living, requests have been made virtually, prior to meetings.

22. In terms of the number of Ukraine arrivals, that have been referred for action under Fair Access, to date, there have been 2 referrals, both of which were successfully placed and are now on roll in schools.

Support in Schools

23. WCF continue to update schools using the Education Bulletin, on any information released by DfE. Schools have been provided with access to resources to support children in schools. This includes the following support that is available for any child and can also be used to support Ukraine arrivals:

- Free Training to become a Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Setting.
- Transport Assistance where eligible.
- Language support, through the WCF Learning Support Team.
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for post-16 and adult learning, community based with funding support.
- Early Help Offer.
- Access to Oak National Academy, who have rolled out an auto-translate function across all 10,000 of its online lessons.
- Uniform costs, if families are struggling to afford uniform, schools can support with costs.

24. In addition, the following resources are also available to support Ukraine arrivals with schools provided with access to resources to support children in schools:

- Free School Meals for all Ukraine arrivals.
- Ukraine Culture Briefing Sessions for schools.
- Support to access remote education during the pandemic has been extended to those Ukrainian pupils who need laptops.
- Access to Ukrainian learning materials and the Ukrainian curriculum, to compliment Ukrainian pupils' education.
- Ukrainian Educational Materials to support both pupils and families.
- Access to Twinkl, English/Ukrainian language resources.

Wider Support

25. **Cultural awareness and education sessions** - Worcestershire County Council's Adult Learning Team have delivered sessions for Officers (Districts, County Council, wider partners inc. schools) and Sponsors on cultural awareness. These have been well received. In addition the following provision is being offered:-

26. **Voluntary Sector, non-accredited, informal ESOL provision** is being supported by the team. The Team have created an online platform for sharing resources, signposting to further information, communication and support for the volunteers involved in this. District Councils are helping to connect local groups in their areas to this provision.

27. **Access to English qualifications** is progressing well and the Team have been piloting a 5-week Functional Skills English programme. This would ordinarily be a 9-month programme so it's ambitious to try and do so quickly but early indications are that it is working successfully and planning is underway to scale up the delivery from September. This is being piloted as an online course to try and improve access to education for those being hosted in more rural locations. This qualification should boost the confidence of proficient speakers of English and aid their

employability. Connections are also being made with the local colleges and the university to make sure that there are options for learners across the county.

28. **An ESOL for Employment** orientation course has been rolled out to ensure learners have at least a basic understanding of accessing employment in the UK, key language for this and the main routes to finding employment. **Deeper-rooted employability needs** are being addressed with extension options to this. The main concern continues to be identifying appropriate support for access to very specific, professional careers (such as NHS requirements) as this is outside of the Team's expertise but will work with partners to address need.

29. **Modular opportunities for pronunciation, spelling and grammar** are being made available, to complement both the non-accredited and qualification programmes.

30. **Vocational qualifications and traineeships are being promoted for learners aged 16+** with a number of Guests attending Fairfield's Open Day to speak with staff about these opportunities.

31. **All 16-19 year olds** are receiving phone calls from the Skills and Investment Information, Advice and Guidance teams to check that learning options are in place for September. Where gaps are found, it is intended to commission provision (if appropriate) through Young Adult Learning.

32. **Community Learning opportunities** continue to be promoted to refugee audiences, to encourage community integration.

33. **Family Learning programmes** are targeting support towards schools which have high numbers of refugees and we are working with schools admissions and Nikki Jones on this.

34. **Accessing the NHS** - The health guide [here](#) covers resources to help both Guests and Sponsors to make the most of the NHS services available in the county. The guide can be [accessed online](#) and sponsors are being encouraged to use this guide to support guests. In addition, resources are being developed to support guests with low level mental health and wellbeing needs along with plans to commission specific services from the voluntary and community sector and specialised mental health services. These are currently being costed.

35. Information is being gathered of **local support**, in addition to the support given by the County Council and its partners, that may be available for when the Guests arrive. The already well established [Here2Help service](#) is being utilised to organise and link up those wishing to offer help (individuals and organisations/community groups etc) to those who may need help or advice. Communications have been published encouraging anyone who feels they are able to support in any way to go through Here2Help to register.

36. **Access to employment** –Ukraine claimants will receive the same support and access to provision as anyone else and if eligible, they should be referred to relevant support to help them into work. There are currently quite a few employers who are sending through vacancies where they are welcoming applications from Ukraine (and Afghan) communities and these are being shared with the local job

centres. The Way to Work campaign is well under way and focussed on connecting claimants to employers and meeting demand in the labour market. Discussions are also taking place with local recruitment companies (e.g. Hewett Recruitment) who are keen to support Ukraine guests into employment.

37. All District Councils now have employed **Support Workers**, who will work with guests and hosts in their area. A programme of support has been provided to all those workers across the county. This includes regular meetings to share information, experience and to provide information of various services to support their work

38. In addition to all of the above **free bus passes** have been issued to all guests (extended to the end of the calendar year) and the institute of advanced motorists are running courses, using the county hall car park, to help improve guests' confidence in driving.

Re-matching and supporting sponsor/guest relationships

39. Rematching is a new expectation for local authorities using the expression of interest information currently shared from central government. It is expected that re-matching will focus on those most in need and, therefore, only be used where it is unviable or unsafe for the sponsorship relationship to continue. Only those who received a visa through the Homes for Ukraine visa route are eligible for rematching, to ensure that those without family links in the UK are prioritised. Rematching should only take place if one of the following applies:

- a. When the local authority determines it is genuinely not viable or safe for the Ukrainian guest(s) to stay where they are.
- b. Because of failed DBS or accommodation checks.

40. Councils should keep rematches to a minimum, to limit instability for guests and ensure rematching is prioritised for the most pressing situations. If a local authority has a request for a rematch from Ukrainian guests, but does not deem it justified, it is reasonable to turn this down or prioritise cases deemed more pressing. Local authorities are expected to use their judgement in determining whether there has been an irreparable breakdown in sponsorship. Where the Ukrainian guests include children who are already enrolled in school or college, local authorities should prioritise rematches that are as local as possible to the education setting, to ensure continuity of education. Children **must not** be rematched separately to the Ukrainian adult(s) in the existing sponsorship relationship. Within a household with multiple Ukrainian adults, you will be able to rematch part of the adult household if appropriate (i.e., in a Ukrainian household with just two adults, you could rematch just one adult, with the other adult remaining with the existing host, if appropriate

41. In preparation of hosts who may not be able to support guests after the initial 6-month period, the County Council is actively contacting those on the expression of interest list (detailed above) to ascertain their willingness to be a host. This list has then been sent to districts who have chosen an initial list of guests to receive property and DBS checks in readiness. It is hoped that this will provide some hosts ready and able to assist in rematching with little delay.

Next Steps

42. Discussions have now turned to the longer-term plans for managing the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, including the management of re-matching guests to sponsor households and the wider resettlement of guests in the county.

43. The Council is developing a One Worcestershire approach to this transition with newly recruited Support Workers within the district linking with (where appropriate) the resettlement service.

Purpose of the Meeting

44. Members of the Board are asked to consider the update, provide comments to the Leader and determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny.

Contact Point

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager (Interim Monitoring Officer) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and Minutes of the [Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board](#) 23 March 2022 and 26 April 2022

Agenda and Minutes of the [Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel](#) 7 July 2022

24 March 2022 [Cabinet](#) Report -Worcestershire Response to Invasion of Ukraine

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)