

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD 29 MARCH 2023

### UPDATE ON THE WORCESTERSHIRE RESPONSE TO THE HOMES FOR UKRAINE SCHEME – ONE YEAR ON

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#### Summary

1. The Board is asked to consider the update provided in respect of Worcestershire's response to the Home for Ukraine Scheme one year on.
2. The Assistant Director for Communities and the Head of Registration, Coroners and Resettlement Service have been invited to the meeting for the discussion.

#### Background

3. The County Council, District Councils and partners unanimously pledged, back in March 2022, to do all they can to support families and individuals arriving in Worcestershire from Ukraine as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

#### The Scheme

4. The **Homes for Ukraine sponsorship Scheme** was announced on 14 March 2022. People arriving under this Scheme are able to:
  - Live and work in the UK for up to three years
  - Access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition

#### Funding

5. This Scheme does attract additional funding. A £350 per month 'thank you' payment has been offered to sponsors for up to 12 months (6-month period is the minimum expectation set for sponsors) which was then extended to up to 12 months. Government recently announced that a payment of £500 per month would be available to hosts from 12-24 months. The 'thank you' payment is limited to one payment per residential address and will remain tax free. Payments are only issued once accommodation and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out and passed. Worcestershire Leaders agreed to offer an uplift for Worcestershire hosts, from month 6 to 12 to £600 per month, the difference being funded from the £10,500 per person grant.
6. £10,500 per person was provided to Local Authorities until 31 December 2022. This has been reduced to £5,900 from 1 January 2023 for new arrivals 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 agreed how it was allocated fairly between the councils (70/30 split district: county) to cover the costs that they face.

### Education

7. 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) are allocating funding on a per pupil basis for the three phases of education at the annual rates listed below. This is a one off payment to support schools until they can claim through their normal budget processes. The first payment was made through the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) late summer 2022.

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

### Housing

8. Further changes include government providing £150 million of new UK-wide funding in the 2023/24 financial year to local authorities and devolved governments to help support Ukrainian guests move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness. This funding will be allocated between the different parts of the UK in relation to their proportion of Ukrainian guests. At the time of publication of this report, it has not been announced how this will be apportioned.

9. In addition, a £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund will provide capital funding directly to English councils in areas that are facing the most significant housing pressures because of recent Ukrainian arrivals. District councils were contacted before Christmas 2022 with their provisional allocation, further guidance on the Scheme and how they participate. This fund will allow them to address the immediate pressures as well as build a sustainable stock of affordable housing for the future. This fund will also be used to provide homes for up to 500 Afghan families currently living in bridging hotels at a significant cost to taxpayers. Whilst helping to fulfil the UK's humanitarian duties to assist those fleeing war, the fund will create a legacy for UK nationals by providing a new supply of accommodation for councils with which to address local housing and homelessness pressures.

10. The Scheme continues to evolve, ensuring that support is put in place by teams to meet the needs of hosts and guests alike. As of the 14 February 2023 the number of hosts in Worcestershire is 576 with the total number of guests arrived being 1104, of those 389 are children.

### **Role of District Councils**

11. District Councils have played and continue to play a key role in providing the link to services across the county, from carrying out the initial household checks to

meeting hosts and guests as the guests arrive in the county. They are the first point of contact with the hosts and guests, providing such support and guidance as may be necessary including access to services, signposting and welfare checks.

12. Their role will continue to be important as those guests on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme come to the 6 month point with their hosts and ascertaining the next steps and assisting, whether it is staying with their current host, moving to a new host, or looking to securing their own property. The Housing Teams and colleagues have been challenged with housing demands where host/guest relationships have broken down as well those that can no longer be supported by hosts. It is important to note that suitable, sustainable, long term properties are extremely scarce. This is not unique to finding properties for our Ukrainian guests but the whole community. There are currently just over 300 guests now living in their own accommodation either in their original district or neighbouring area.
13. It is also essential to know the guests' long-term plans, to not only determine the potential demand in service areas such as housing, but to also prepare as a County for the continued support required.

### **Role of the County Council**

14. The County Council's role centred around initial support. This included providing early information, signposting, and assistance throughout the time of the Scheme. The questions and queries that have been received have been wide ranging in subject and complexity and the team worked hard to ensure that they have been followed through.
15. They have provided the operational support with the required DBS checks as well as the creation and distribution of bus passes to the guests. The County Council has also assisted with applications for school places and school transport as well as access to adult learning and both Adult and Children Social Services.
16. To date (20 March 2023), 352 applications have been received for school admissions with 352 children and young people already offered places in schools across the county through the application process.

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

<b>District</b>	<b>Number of Offers Primary</b>	<b>Number of Offers Secondary</b>	<b>Pending Applications</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bromsgrove	25	19	0	44
Malvern Hills	44	22	0	66
Redditch	10	3	0	13
Worcester City	46	29	0	75
Wychavon	61	63	0	124
Wyre Forest	19	11	0	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>352</b>

17. The County Council later consolidated their workforce into a strengthened Resettlement Team that will support the Homes for Ukraine Scheme as part of the overall development of the various resettlement programmes the County Council manages. The Resettlement Team within the County Council are available to provide support and assistance where required, whether that is assisting with sourcing accommodation, providing support workers to support the existing district teams as well as co-ordinating county council elements of the Scheme.
18. A local data recording system has been created to fill the initial gaps in the national system. This has now evolved into a system that allows the recording of additional information and processes to provide a single view of the guest as the programme moves forward. This system continues to evolve working in partnership with all councils to provide a solution that meets our needs. Version 7 was launched at the end of February 2023
19. With the support teams now established in each district, the County Council has co-ordinated and delivered weekly sessions to those teams to provide them with the tools in order that they can effectively assist hosts and guests. Subjects to date have included adult learning, the Here to Host system, Data Protection, Safeguarding, Welfare checks and asset-based community development Scheme, introduction to mental health and further safeguarding sessions to identify early problems. More recent sessions have included further training on the data recording system and the Foundry system which is the national system. This is to enable all districts the ability to amend and update records for their hosts and guests.
20. The health and wellbeing of guests have been paramount as they settle into the County. Several low-level mental health sessions have been delivered and where appropriate, assistance has been provided in terms of guests engaging with GPs for referrals for advance mental health support. School staff have had the opportunity to receive some specific training to enable support of our young people. Where potential safeguarding issues have been identified, these have been referred through the normal channels to ensure appropriate support is provided. In addition, work continues with wider partners to signpost guests to their workshops and other wellbeing support. For example, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire are waiting for a decision on a request for additional funding to support additional mental health needs specifically for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Districts are also engaged with the community builders across various areas which offer community activities and organised events which brings together both local communities and Ukrainian communities for mutual support.

## **Recent proposals agreed by the Leaders of all Worcestershire Councils**

### Extra payments to hosts

21. As mentioned previously, government have announced the increase of 'Thank you' payments to hosts for months 12-24 to £500. The potential benefit of offering hosts additional payment is that they may be content to host for a longer period, therefore reducing, as much as possible, the impact on emergency and temporary housing.

22. Given that the approach agreed by leaders was to offer £600 per month from month 6-12, it has been agreed that this figure remains for the period 12-24 months.
23. This will mean that the contribution from the per person grant to the 'Thank you' payments will reduce enabling that to be redirected in supporting guests seeking to live independently.

#### Homes for Ukraine – housing

24. Current Central Government guidance has detailed that the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is a one-year programme for which funding has been provided. Given that the programme is likely to be extended and guests potentially hosted for, currently, up to 2 years, ongoing support will be required. All councils have therefore put plans in place to carry funding over to subsequent financial years to ensure it is available as and when needed by guests
25. As guests move on from their hosts, either after a 6-month period with their current hosts, following rematching and a further period of being hosted, or indeed they move to their own accommodation, support will still be required.
26. Each district has differing pressures and issues from the number of guests they are looking after and the rematching or homing of them. As such to create 'A One Worcestershire' approach will be challenging and the emphasis needs to be on the positive outcome for our guests.
27. Each district has developed their proposals in terms of supporting guests into independent living whether through the private rental market or social housing. This may include; assistance with rental deposit, first month's rent, per person allowance to purchase items for the property, provision of white goods to name a few.

### **Future of the Scheme**

28. The future of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme remains uncertain. Whilst information has been received to extend payments to hosts and funding for housing no indication has been given yet to the longevity of the Scheme.

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

29. 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 Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) 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, 26 April and 29 September 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.