

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE CABINET MEETING OF 4 April 2022

PUBLIC REPORT: Y /-N

EXEMPT REPORT: ~~Y~~ / N

Report Title	Resettlement schemes update.
KEY DECISION	N
Report Author	Tom Day, Community Partnerships Manager
Purpose of Report	To update Cabinet on the two government schemes for Ukraine households, together with an update on other resettlement schemes that the council are delivering.
Reason for Decision	N/A
Portfolio (holder)	Cllr Simon Whelband – Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, Communities and Housing
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community leadership to create a sense of pride in our place
Financial Implications	<p>Homes for Ukraine scheme - Central government is providing funding directly to top tier authorities for a range of purposes, as listed below. At the time of publishing negotiation are continuing with the County Council and districts as to how much each local authority will receive of the funding and the exact roles and responsibilities of each tier of local government.</p> <p>Central government funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £10,500 per person (refugee) for the first year to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. Funding for future years will be reviewed in due course. £350 as ‘thank you’ payments to the sponsoring household per month. Additional funding for education but expects councils to cover administration costs within the tariff. <p>At the time of publishing HDC is considering resourcing a part-time Officer for at least 6 months to act as a local coordinator and point of contact within HDC for sponsors, guests and the community.</p>
Risk Management Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Risk – The urgency of the situation and necessity for action before clarity has been achieved on

	<p>several key areas means that the Council is working at risk that it may not achieve full-cost recovery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational Risk – The Council will be looked upon by residents and community groups as a source of advice and information, so it is important that the Council updates its website regularly and works in a coordinated way with other services. • Resilience Risk – The demand on the councils’ services e.g., for property inspections or housing and homelessness is unknown at this stage. There are no limits to the number of residents that can take part in the scheme.
Environmental Implications	There are no environmental implications arising from this report.
Legal Implications	The Council is awaiting further guidance on several key areas involving legal duties, such as property inspections, housing and homelessness, safeguarding responsibilities and administration of payments.
Equality Implications	The scheme protects the human rights of Ukrainian refugees.
Data Protection Implications	The details of refugee families will be kept confidential.
Consultation	Consultation has been carried out with the Leader and Portfolio Holder.
Options	Do nothing until clarity is achieved on every aspect of the scheme – This option was discounted due to the urgency of the situation.
Background Papers	N/A
Recommendation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet to note the ongoing work to support Ukrainian refugees. 2. Cabinet to consider the request from Scrutiny to write a letter to central Government regarding the Afghan resettlement scheme; content to be agreed by the Leader and sent by the Chief Executive on behalf of the council.

1.0 Introduction

The Government has requested that Harborough District Council consider supporting the relocation of Ukraine households fleeing the Ukraine. This report outlines the 2 schemes put in place by the Government. There is also a brief update on Afghan and Syrian schemes.

2.0 Key Facts

Homes For Ukraine

Following the statement made by the Levelling Up Secretary, Michael Gove the Homes For Ukraine scheme was launched on 14th March to allow people to put up Ukrainian refugees in their homes.

The scheme went live on 18th March. This identified Councils as having a critical role to play. At the time of the publication of this report there were several key areas that the Council were actively discussing with Leicestershire County Council and other partners, pending more detailed guidance.

- **Data sharing.** Unitary and county councils are receiving data from Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC about sponsors/guests who have applied for visas, including the accommodation address). Leicestershire County Council are discussing with Districts and Boroughs how and what to share on to the relevant district councils.
- **Property Inspections.** Councils must make at least one in-person visit either before or shortly after a guest has arrived, to confirm that the accommodation is suitable and to carry out a property inspection, further guidance is expected shortly.
- **Safeguarding Checks.** Councils have a statutory duty to promote the welfare of adults and children at risk and reserve the right to check in on guests and inspect accommodation once they have arrived. For households with children, an Enhanced DBS check will be required and for all other households a standard DBS will be required.
- **Interim payment for guest.** The council, where the sponsor accommodation is located should provide an interim payment (in line with other resettlement schemes) of £200 per guest for subsistence costs. The £200 payment is factored into the tariff (see 'Funding for Councils')
- **Provision of education.** Councils are required to provide school places for children of school age. Councils will be paid additional funding to support with this. Further details are set out below.
- **Service referrals.** Where necessary, councils should provide advice and referrals to specialist public health services as appropriate e.g., mental health services, adult social care, and children's services. DLUHC will provide further advice on this in due course.
- **Work and Benefits.** Councils should support guests to access local Jobcentre Plus appointments for benefit assessments and job-seeking.
- **Homelessness assistance.** There may be some cases where the sponsor/guest relationship breaks down and the guest is homeless or at risk of homelessness. Councils' statutory homelessness duties will apply in this instance. DLUHC will provide further advice on this in due course.
- **Community integration.** Councils will play a key role in supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities. This will be particularly important in areas, such as Harborough that do not have a significant Ukraine population. Integration support might include the

organisation of community events, the use of community champions and interfaith networks, increasing local authority contact/interaction with Ukrainians, access to translation services and working with local voluntary sector organisations and faith groups to help signpost advice and support. The Council has already received many local offers of support and is keen to develop this network of support.

- **Administering payments to sponsors.** Sponsors will be eligible for an optional 'thank you payment' of £350 per month, as long as the sponsorship arrangement exists, for up to 12 months in total. There will be a maximum of one monthly payment per address paid in arrears, regardless of the number of guests being hosted, and regardless of size or location of the property. Councils will administer these 'thank you' payments to sponsors. Payments must not be released to sponsors until property checks have been completed. Further guidance on property checks will follow in due course. Administration costs to deliver this funding is included in the £10,500 payment. This payment will be tax free and should not affect the sponsor's entitlement to benefits or council tax status. We will continue to work closely with councils on the delivery of these payments.
- **Funding for councils.** The government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person 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. Government will review funding for future years in due course.
This funding will be un-ringfenced, with a number of conditions attached, and will match the tariff offered under the first year of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, although the role of councils will be different. For example, councils will not be asked to source initial accommodation under this scheme as this will be provided by the sponsor.

Ukraine Family Scheme

Following the statement made by the Home Secretary to Parliament on 1 March 2022, the Ukraine Scheme was introduced to allow Ukrainians who were resident in Ukraine before 1 January 2022 and who have family members in the UK, to apply under the scheme to come to the UK. As at 5pm on 24 March 2022: Total applications submitted: 35,500. Total visas issued: 20,100.

Harborough District Council does not have a direct role in the Ukraine Family Scheme. However, Ukrainians that come to the UK under the scheme are eligible for public services so may contact the Council as and when required. At the time of writing the report the Council has not been provided with data on arrivals in Harborough District under this scheme.

Letter to central government on the Afghan resettlement scheme

Following the Scrutiny Performance meeting on 17 March, there was a question posed to all of the present Registered Providers (RP) as to their stance on Ukraine refugees and what support they would be giving these households. All RPs stated that if

tenants wanted to sign up for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as the landlord, the RPs would allow this, if the tenants home was suitable.

The panel then asked for an update on the Afghan resettlement scheme and were disappointed that only one family had been successfully housed, despite HDC having several homes vacant in anticipation of more allocations.

It was suggested that a letter could be sent from HDC to central government to express the disappointment in the slow allocation of Afghan households to homes in the Harborough district.

Previous resettlement schemes

The Council has always supported resettlement schemes and sought to offer refuge and support for families fleeing difficult circumstances.

2016/17 – The Council met its pledge to resettle 1 Syrian family.

2017/18 – The Council met its pledge to resettle 2 further Syrian families. This included 1 family being resettled by a local Community Sponsorship Group – the first community led resettlement in Leicestershire.

2021/22 – The Council pledged to resettle at least 3 Afghan families. In total 4 properties were offered to Government including one offer from the private rent sector. To date 1 Afghan family has been resettled and the Council is working with the Home Office to fill remaining properties.

Next steps

There is on-going dialogue between Leicestershire County Council, other Leicestershire districts and councils, as well as the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) as to the exact roles and responsibilities for each council with regards to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, together with the accompanied relevant funding.

The discussions are changing at a daily basis and a verbal update will also be provided at the meeting.