

Report to Modbury Parish Council 5 April 2022

Homes for Ukraine

Introduction

The war in Ukraine has brought about a humanitarian crisis and has stimulated the largest refugee movement in Europe since the Second World War. It is estimated that the number of those leaving Ukraine now exceeds 4 million. There has been an outpouring of sympathy and support for those - mostly women and children - who have been displaced. The UK Government has indicated that at least 200,000 refugees will be welcomed to this country and be allowed to live, work and claim benefits here for up to three years.

Access to the UK

Ukrainians displaced by the war are being allowed to come to the UK via two routes:

- The Ukraine Family Scheme
- The Homes for Ukraine Scheme

The former scheme is for those refugees who have at least one family member already living in the UK with either refugee status, British Nationality, Indefinite Leave to Remain, Settled Status or proof of permanent residence.

The latter scheme is for UK citizens who either wish to offer accommodation to someone from Ukraine that they know, working with them to complete a dedicated visa application, or alternatively to make an in-principle offer of accommodation to refugees who otherwise have no links with the UK.

As of 1 April 2022 65,000 visa applications had been submitted, roughly 50% through each scheme. A total of 29,200 had been granted, 24,700 through the Ukrainian Families Scheme and 4,500 through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Homes for Ukraine Scheme

The Homes for Ukraine Scheme was launched by DLHC on 14 March 2022.

Phase 1 of the scheme allows UK householders to sponsor named Ukrainians.

Sponsors are expected to provide a minimum of six months stable accommodation. It can be anything from an empty room to an unoccupied home. It must be safe, heated, free from health hazards and with access to bathroom and kitchen facilities. No rent is chargeable. Meals can be provided but this is not a requirement. A tax-free payment of £350 per month is paid in arrears for up to 12 months to those hosting guests under the scheme.

Sponsors and guests are required to find each other and match themselves externally. This may be through friendships, charities, Non-Governmental Organisations or other channels.

Applications to become a sponsor under the scheme can be made via the Government website at <https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine>

Approval of applications will be subject to initial standard security checks by the Home Office to ensure that applicants are fit and proper to assume the responsibility of a sponsor.

Later phases of the scheme will allow community groups and organisations to act as sponsors to multiple guests and further guidance will be issued in the near future as to how this will work.

Role of local authorities in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme

Initial guidance for local authorities was published by DLHC on 18 March and revised on 30 March 2022.

Local authorities which include primary ports of entry are being asked to provide reception facilities for Ukrainian families to support their short-term arrival needs.

Recipient local authorities are required to make at least one in-person visit to a sponsor prior to the arrival of guests under the scheme to check on the suitability of the accommodation to be provided. They will also be required to undertake appropriate DBS checks. The cost of DBS checks will be borne by the local authority.

The recipient local authority will make a non-returnable interim cash payment of £200 to each guest for subsistence costs. It will also make the £350 monthly payments to sponsors.

The recipient local authority is required to make arrangements for school placements and make referrals to other public services as appropriate including adult social care, children's services and health services. They are also required to offer advice and support to access work and benefits.

Where the sponsor/guest relationship breaks down statutory homelessness duties will apply.

Local authorities are also expected to play a key role in supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities, including the provision of language services.

Local authorities will receive Government funding of £10,500 per annum per individual accommodated in their area to enable them to discharge their responsibilities under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. There will also be Government funding to cover the £350 per month payments to sponsors. Additional capitation payments will be made to education authorities providing school placements to Ukrainian children in three different age bands.

Further details will be issued in due course of the split in funding between the different tiers of local government.

Advice issued by Devon County and South Hams District Councils

The Head of Communities at Devon County Council has issued an initial statement of the Council's response which makes clear that all Devon's local authorities are working together and at pace to put the necessary procedures in place to deliver the local element

of the Government's schemes. They are also engaging with the health services and voluntary sector to provide a joined-up, wrap-around response.

At a meeting of the full Council on 31 March 2022, South Hams District Council passed a motion stating that: "We stand ready to provide support to those affected by this war and will open our arms to people displaced and affected. We will also work with and support the efforts of our local communities to provide help and comfort to those in need." As at that date, 22 prospective sponsors in the district had offered accommodation and a project team has been set up to start inspecting sponsors' homes and processing DBS checks.

South Hams District Council is also developing a local support plan to provide a supportive welcome to Ukrainians once they arrive. This includes having conversations with the voluntary sector about longer term support that can be provided to Ukrainian guests.

A potential role for Modbury Parish Council under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme

It is understood that several Modbury households have already registered as potential sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Indeed, it is likely that many more will come forward as the pressure grows for onward settlement from the European front-line countries.

It may also be possible that local groups and organisations will consider registering an organisational bid. This is something which the Parish Council itself may wish to explore as part of the Phase 2 rollout.

An initial meeting with a small group of households interested in registering as sponsors has raised the following issues:

- The registration process is complex and potentially daunting.
- Potential sponsors would benefit from support through the registration and matching process – church authorities have already started to do this.
- Sponsors would welcome help to signpost access to public services including benefits, Job Centre Plus, education, social services, health services and language support.
- There needs to be a support network in the community to share some of the responsibility for settling guest families, some of whom may have significant support needs given the traumatic recent events which have forced them to leave their own country and community. There are potentially many residents who have the skills and time to supplement the work of public authorities.
- A support network for host households would also be valuable.
- There needs to be a venue for Ukrainian guests to meet each other on a regular basis – a hub facility.
- Sponsors will wish to have access to respite support and it is likely that many will simply want to limit the time that they have to share accommodation with another family.
- There needs to be clarity over what happens at the end of the initial six month period as many hosts will not be able to sustain the relationship over a longer period.
- There needs to be support for when things go wrong and relationships break down.
- The availability of counselling and 'reserve' hosts may be able to prevent applications for statutory homelessness assistance from the District Council as hosting relationships end or break down.
- The community in Modbury could benefit from linking up with other communities around the South Hams to pool resources and best practice.

Matters for consideration

The Parish Council is asked to consider the following matters:

1. Should it take a leading role in coordinating support for sponsors and their guests in Modbury?
2. Should a support strategy and plan be drawn up to focus the local response to the Homes for Ukraine challenge?
3. Should contact be made with the South Hams project team to offer the Council's assistance?
4. Should contact be made with other parishes to coordinate responses and learn from others' experiences?
5. Should it take steps to further promote the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in the community?
6. Should it investigate and express an interest in making an organisational sponsorship bid in Phase 2 of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme?

Phil Smith
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4 April 2022