

# People and Health Scrutiny Committee

8 November 2022

## Resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme

### For Review and Consultation

**Portfolio Holders:** Cllr Laura Beddow, Culture, Communities and Customer Services (Homes for Ukraine)  
Cllr Andrew Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help (Resettlement and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children)

**Local Councillor(s):** All

**Executive Director:** T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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**Report Status:** Public

#### Brief Summary:

This report provides an overview of the implementation of how Dorset Council and partners have responded to the needs of people escaping conflict in Ukraine and those hosting them through the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme and other resettlement activity taking place across the county.

#### Recommendation:

Members of the committee are invited to comment on progress made.

#### Reason for Recommendation:

Dorset has a proud history of offering a warm welcome to those displaced by conflict, violence and persecution. Refugees resettlement plays a key role in supporting the global response to humanitarian crisis – saving lives and offering stability to those most in need of protection. Councils are required to deliver a 'Home for Ukraine' programme to respond to the conflict in Ukraine. This is being delivered alongside other resettlement programmes including participation in the mandatory national transfer scheme for unaccompanied children and voluntary participation in UK Resettlement, and Afghan Citizen's resettlement scheme.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

1.1 This report provides an overview of how Dorset Council and partners are responding to meeting the needs of people escaping the conflict in Ukraine and those that are hosting them through the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme and how this fits with the other resettlement activity taking place within the county.

1.2 The report will focus on:

- (a) Homes for Ukraine Scheme
- (b) UK Resettlement Scheme
- (c) Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

## **2. Homes for Ukraine**

2.1 In response to the conflict in Ukraine, the Home Office developed 2 routes for Ukrainian nationals to enter the UK. All refugees arriving through these schemes can live, work and study in the UK and have access to public funds. They are eligible for all local services, including help with accommodation. The Home Office undertakes basic police checks prior to the issue of visa. The first scheme is the UK Family Scheme, offered to immediate and extended family members of British nationals and the second is the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, enabling people living in the UK to sponsor a named refugee.

2.2 Local councils are required to undertake specific activities to facilitate the 'Homes for Ukraine' Scheme and receive funding based on a funding formula of £10,500 per guest. These activities include sponsor suitability checks and payment, guest welfare checks and interim payments, housing support and service referrals, support to access education and administration of payments to schools and early years settings.

2.3 Political leadership is provided by Cllr Laura Beddow, with Cllr Graham Carr-Jones taking the lead on housing and accommodation aspects. The response requires engagement of officers from across the council so strategic and operational leadership is provided by the Corporate Director for Commissioning and Partnerships, Corporate Director for Adult's and Housing and Head of Customer Service, Archives and Libraries. The Dorset Together network coordinates the partnership and community response.

2.4 The following section provides some key information about the scheme in Dorset as at 7/10/2022. There are:

- 287 host households
- 739 Ukrainian refugees – 320 (43%) of whom are children
- 62 guests that have been rematched with new hosts following a move from their original host and 32 guests moved to be hosted in Dorset following arrival from another area of the country
- 46 hosts approved and waiting to welcome 91 guests
- 134 potential hosts who have not yet been matched to guests
- Fewer than 5 unaccompanied children

2.5 Early issues with the operation of the scheme have now largely been overcome and things are operating smoothly with good processes in place.

- Suitability checks are completed in a timely manner
- Payment systems for £350 thank you payments to hosts is working well
- There is an effective system now in place to ensure guests have access to funds when they arrive in a timely manner
- Welcome packs are distributed to help support guests when they arrive
- Welfare checks are well underway
- 278 school applications have been received with 242 children on roll. Of these 23 have made other arrangements, left the area or gone back to Ukraine and 13 are to be confirmed. Schools have worked hard to make space for children (additional funding is made available to support schools).
- Support for guests is being provided through a range of community and voluntary sector organisations including Citizen's Advice in Dorset, Help and Kindness, Dorset Mind, ICN and local community

refugees support groups are providing invaluable support and advice

- English lessons are being provided by Dorset Skills and Learning

2.6 A series of events and a survey has been completed, with the most pressing issue for hosts and guests being arrangements following the initial first 6 months stay. The survey has identified that around 70% of the hosts who responded would be happy to continue the hosting arrangements beyond 6 months. Arrangements are now being put in place to offer financial support to hosts and to support Ukrainian guests to find alternative accommodation either through rematching or with support to enter the private rented sector. This includes:

- Increased payments to hosts who are willing to extend their offer
- Help with rent in advance
- Help with deposit bonds
- Help with rent deposit
- Pet Bond
- Landlord welcome (payable after 12 months of tenancy)
- Support from the council's housing team

2.7 This support is funded through the Homes for Ukraine scheme and is in line with support offered to others at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the county.

### 3. **Resettlement Activity**

3.1 The Resettlement team continue to support the UK Resettlement Scheme and following the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Team. These are voluntary schemes which the council has committed to participate in.

3.2 Councils receive a similar level of funding for these schemes as the Homes for Ukraine scheme, however it works differently. Individuals and families are housed in privately rented properties that the landlord has offered or agreed to rent to refugee families. The team also works with community groups and local charities who help families settle in Dorset or who sponsor people to arrive through a community sponsorship scheme.

3.3 The resettlement team has settled over 100 Syrian and Afghan refugees through these schemes and are currently directly supporting 15 families. Six Afghan families have arrived since July and we are likely to welcome a

further family in December. Availability of affordable housing remains the largest obstacle to this programme.

#### **4. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**

- 4.1 The council is required to provide care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. While their claim is processed, they are cared for by a local authority and have children in care status. The local authority in which the child first arrives is normally responsible for their care. This has placed a disproportionate pressure on some local authorities who have significant ports of entry and in Croydon where the Asylum Entry Point is based. In response to these pressures the government introduced a National Transfer Scheme – originally voluntary it was made mandatory in 2021 and this year the scheme increased the expectations of local authorities to take more children from 0.07% of child population to 0.1%. Dorset, historically has had low numbers of unaccompanied minors and expectations increased to 47 in 2021 (0.07%) and are now at 67 (0.1%). At the time of writing there were 41 unaccompanied minors in our care: 9 are aged 15 and below, and 32 are aged 16 and 17 years
- 4.2 This has resulted in an overall increase in the number of children in care, which otherwise would have seen a reduction. It has also become increasingly difficult to secure local placements for these children, with the majority (83%) being placed out of county, resulting in additional travel for social workers and independent reviewing officers and an increased requirement for the virtual school to work with other local authority areas to secure school places, which can be challenging in many areas where school places are full.
- 4.3 There is currently a shortfall between the funding local government receives and the actual costs of caring for unaccompanied children.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

The Grant allocation for Homes for Ukraine is currently sufficient to support delivery of the programme, however there may be additional costs to all services, but in particular if housing assistance is required potentially placing a pressure on the Adults Social Care and Housing budgets. Arrangements for funding for year 2 of the programme are as yet unknown.

The UK Resettlement scheme and the Afghan resettlement programmes are grant funded and its spend is in line with the grant received.

There is a shortfall in the amount received for caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people which may place a pressure on the Children's Services budget.

6. **Environmental Implications**

None identified.

7. **Well-being and Health Implications**

Refugees and people seeking asylum have been through great hardship and settling in a new country is a huge challenge. Many will have faced long and hard journeys and spent time in harsh and overcrowded conditions which may make them more susceptible to infections including Covid-19. Traumatic events and ongoing stressors mean that they are more likely to experience poor mental health. The council works with partners to ensure access to local health services.

8. **Other Implications**

None identified

9. **Risk Assessment**

9.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Low

10. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

None included

11. **Appendices**

None included in this report

12. **Background Papers**

**Resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme Report to People and Health Overview Committee (3 May 2022).** Available at:

<https://modern.gov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/s29355/Resettlement%20and%20the%20Homes%20for%20Ukraine%20Scheme.pdf>