

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

11 September 2023

Refugee Resettlement and Homes for Ukraine – update report

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Beddow, Culture and Communities
Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): All

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Brief Summary: This paper provides an update on the progress that Dorset Council and partners have made in responding to the needs of people escaping conflict in Ukraine and those hosting them through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The report includes an update on other resettlement activity for which the council is responsible. Upon receipt of a report in October 2022, members of the Committee were particularly interested in understanding the financial impact of this activity and any impact on delivery of council services. This report provides an update on these issues.

Recommendation:

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

Reason for Recommendation:

Dorset has a long history of offering a warm welcome to those displaced by conflict, violence and persecution. Refugee 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 Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and voluntary participation in UK Resettlement scheme.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 This report provides an update to members of the Scrutiny Committee on 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 these fit with the other resettlement activity taking place within the county. The report will focus on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, UK Resettlement Scheme and our responsibilities towards unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

2. Homes for Ukraine

2.1 In response to the conflict in Ukraine, local councils were required to deliver certain activities to deliver a 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. For the first year of operation the council received funding based on a funding formula of £10,500 for all arrivals prior to 1st April 2023, which then reduced to £6,500 per arrival after that date. In Year 1, this funding amounted to £8.4 million. This funding must cover the all the costs of delivery of the scheme over 3 years to provide support to hosts and guests during the entire length of their stay.

2.2 These activities include sponsor suitability checks and payments, 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 An overview of the current status of the programme is provided below:

(a) 445 host households have supported 974 guests since the beginning of the scheme:

- There are currently 440 guests staying with 191 host households through the scheme.
- There are currently 36 guests waiting to arrive.
- The pace of arrivals has reduced significantly.

(b) Hosts were initially asked to offer homes for a minimum of 6 months and as these hosting arrangements have come to an end guests have either been supported to be rematched to a new host household or to secure alternative arrangements. 69 families (146 individuals) have now had successful rematches to new hosts and we are currently arranging rematches for 27 families (58 individuals). The number in temporary accommodation is low with 2 families (5 individuals).

(c) 537 Ukrainian guests have left the scheme. Of these:

- 52% have moved into independent accommodation in Dorset
- 5% have moved to independent accommodation in other local authority areas
- 25% have returned to Ukraine
- 8% have left the UK to go to other countries
- 5% have transferred to a Homes for Ukraine Scheme in other local authority areas
- 5% have left for other reasons

(d) The grant funding that has been provided for this programme has been used to employ temporary additional workforce to deliver the requirements of the programme to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to deliver this work in addition to the council's usual business. This workforce includes a service manager for the programme, customer service advisors (Ukraine response team), family workers, and housing officers. The grant funding has also been applied to other areas of the council's activity where additional costs have been incurred such as waste and transport. Grant funding has also been used to support other activities, such as winter fuel payments for hosts and community organisations.

2.4 The following case study is provided to offer insight into the work to support people through the Homes for Ukraine programme (names have been changed):

- The Kovalenko family arrived in Dorset to stay with a host family. Local school places were secured and they were provided with and formed a good support network. One parent has secured a job locally. The host family supported them to stay for one year, with 3 months' notice to find alternative accommodation. As they were so settled in work and school the family really wanted to stay in the same town. A multi-disciplinary team from the council and support from the voluntary and community

sector worked with the family to prevent homelessness. An affordable private rented property was secured using rent in advance and landlord incentives and second-hand furniture was sourced and support provided from the community and community organisations and the family is now well settled. The host family fed back that they had a good experience and appreciated the help and support from Dorset Council and partners and although taking a break from hosting have not ruled out hosting another family in the future.

3. UK Resettlement Scheme

- 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 payment of £10,500 per individual arriving, but payment works differently to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. 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.
- 3.2 Since 2016, the resettlement team has settled almost 130 Syrian and Afghan refugees through these schemes and are currently directly supporting twelve families. Five Afghan families have arrived since July 2022 and, with the planned closure of all the Home Office Afghan bridging hotels by August 2023, we are expecting to welcome a further four Afghan families by December. Availability of local affordable housing remains the largest challenge in the programme.
- 3.3 The following case study is provided to indicate the work that has been completed. Names have been changed.
 - Arriving to the UK the Lal family were initially accommodated in a bridging hotel and accepted the first offer of accommodation bringing them to Dorset. One of the adults, a qualified teacher has secured work as a teaching assistant and very much hopes to be able to do so again at some point. Their partner is working hard to improve their English and wishes to retrain as a social worker in the UK. Support to settle here has been given by the team to secure access to healthcare, education, banks and bills. There is close working with partners and volunteers come alongside to

offer much support including practising English. The family miss their family and friends in Afghanistan and very much hope to travel back when it is safe for them to do so.

- 3.4 The resettlement team is fully funded through this programme and spend is in line with the grant conditions.

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 child 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 such as Kent, 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 Dorset Council is currently required to take children up to a number equal to 0.1% of our child population. This is 67 unaccompanied children. This percentage of population allocation to Local Authorities has already been raised during the life of the scheme and we anticipate that it may continue to rise with the increasing number of arrivals this summer.
- 4.2 Local authorities are required to participate in a rota system as part of the national transfer scheme and to seek placements for all the children on the rota. This work is coordinated regionally and there is a requirement of local authorities to find placements for and arrange transfers for all the children allocated to them within 10 days. As a result of a recent [High Court ruling](#) ending the use of hotels for unaccompanied children, there is increasing pressure on local authorities to comply with all elements of the National Transfer Scheme and to provide placements in a timely way. These are challenging timescales and it has been difficult for us to meet them. The Secretary of State for Education and senior civil servants for the Home Office are in regular contact with the council about performance in this area.
- 4.3 The council receives £1001 per week to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, which reduces to £270 per week when they turn 18 and become care leavers. The cost of placements and the associated travel costs for social workers, personal advisors and other practitioners to travel out of county continues to be a budget pressure.

- 4.4 In recognition of the urgency and scale of the challenge, incentivised payments of £6,000 lump sum per child have been introduced for all local authorities that transfer children from hotels within 5 working days and for any transfer from Kent County Council to another council. Local councils also have discretion to apply flexibilities to placements with foster carers in certain circumstances and the Department for Education has written to remind local authorities of this. This means that where it is appropriate, we can consider increasing the number of children that foster carers can have placed with them and sharing of bedrooms in certain circumstances which do not need to go back to fostering panel for approval.
- 4.5 At the time of writing there are 57 of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children being cared for by Dorset Council, equating to 13% of our Children in Care Population. As outlined in the previous report to scrutiny it continues to be difficult to secure enough local provision and many of these children are placed out of county. Currently there are nine children placed in Dorset with all others placed in neighbouring authorities and further afield. There are 50 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who are care leavers and receiving support from PAs, with 13 living in Dorset.
- 4.6 We are working on identification of additional local provision both with externally commissioned providers as well as local sources of accommodation.
- 4.7 The Executive Director of People – Children is bringing together colleagues from across the council to seek to address this challenge with meetings on a weekly basis.
- 4.8 The following case studies are provided to offer insight into the work of the team (names have been changed)
- Bisrat was born in Eritrea, his mother died when he was young and he was cared for by his father there until his father was imprisoned, moving to be cared for by extended family where he remained for over a decade until they could no longer care for him. He travelled alone, arriving in the UK and transferred to Dorset Council's care in 2022 through the National Transfer scheme. Bisrat is living with experienced foster carers out of county who are providing consistent and safe care and committed to care for him long term, including past his 18th birthday. He has had support to learn English, is doing well at the local college and has made friends. The social work team and others are supporting him now with his application for asylum and the outcome of

this will impact any future plans in respect to accommodation and employment.

- Okot is now 20 years old, originally from Sudan. He fled his village following an attack and was separated from his parents. Initially staying in the mountains with relatives, they all became unsafe and fled to Libya, where they continued to be unsafe. He was separated from his family when travelling to Europe. He met another Sudanese young person and they travelled for several months, arriving in Dorset where he was immediately brought into our care. Okot has completed his education and been granted refugee status with leave to remain for 5 years. Okot has been successful in securing an apprenticeship and volunteers to support other young people.

5. Associated activity

- 5.1 We have accessed funding available via DLUHC under the Local Authority Housing Fund, which is an innovative capital fund that supports local authorities in England to obtain housing for those who are unable to find settled accommodation on resettlement schemes. In Round 1, £500 million of funding was made available for local authorities to obtain accommodation for families with housing needs who have arrived in the UK via Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes. In Dorset this will enable the purchase of 30 properties to alleviate homelessness duties for Ukrainian and Afghan families, and in the longer term this will provide a new and permanent supply of accommodation, increasing the number of homes in the wider social and affordable housing system.
- 5.2 We have coordinated work carried out under both Resettlement and the Ukraine Response to enable cost savings and sharing of best practice where possible. This has included joint work particularly around Housing, but also including Employment initiatives and the coordination of external provision for ESOL (English as a Second Language) lessons. There has also been coordination and pooling of knowledge in several other areas such as Voluntary and Community Sector involvement and partnership working, adult social care and safeguarding support, unaccompanied children and liaison with partners in health, police, etc as well as for translation and interpretation services.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The grant allocation for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme is sufficient to support the delivery of the programme to the end of the scheme and

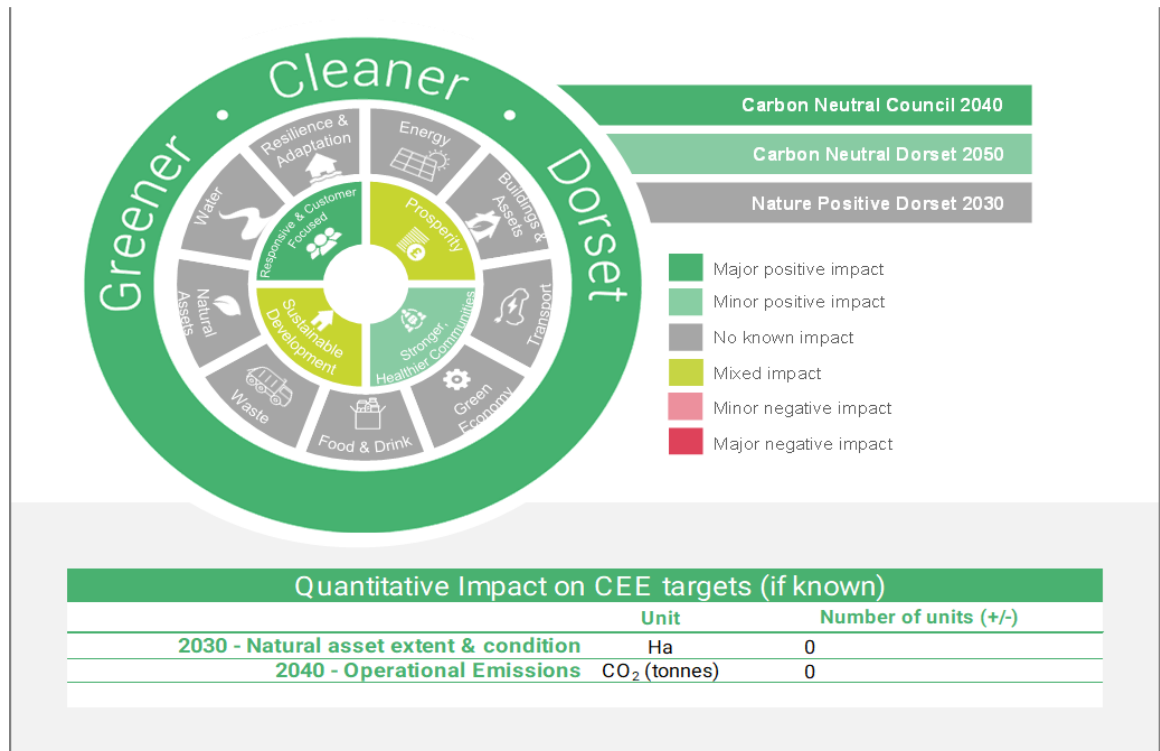
colleagues in finance are working with operational teams to ensure that any additional costs to services as a result of the scheme are funded through the grant.

6.2 The UK Resettlement scheme and the Afghan resettlement programmes are fully grant funded and the grant received is sufficient to support the delivery of the programme to the end of the scheme.

6.3 There continues to be a shortfall in the amount received for caring for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and in especially in supporting them as care leavers. This is being raised nationally as an issue both by Dorset Council, the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services. The council is also exploring multiple options to reduce costs through the creation of more local provision.

7. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

The World Economic Forum has identified that climate related displacement and migration is set to be a significant challenge now and into the future. Although climate change affects us all it disproportionately impacts developing countries and fragile states and those in arid and semi-arid lands are particularly vulnerable to the effects. Climate related displacement is increasing and it is estimated that by 2050 between 150 to 200 million people are at risk of leaving their homes as a result of desertification, rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions.



8. 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 and disease. 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 health services in line with statutory requirements.

9. Other Implications

None

10. Risk Assessment

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

Current Risk: Medium
Residual Risk: Medium

11. Equalities Impact Assessment

Not completed for this report

12. Appendices

Appendix 2: Accessible Impact Assessment

Appendix 3: Table of Recommendations

13. Background Papers

- 13.1 Resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme – Report to Scrutiny Committee 8 November 2022. Available at: [Refugee Resettlement and Homes for Ukraine.pdf \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/media/1167561/Resettlement_and_Homes_for_Ukraine.pdf)
- 13.2 Resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme – report to People and health Overview Committee – May 2022. Available at [Resettlement and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.pdf \(dorsetcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/media/1167561/Resettlement_and_the_Homes_for_Ukraine_Scheme.pdf)
- 13.3 Mandatory National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum seeking Children: available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1167561/National Transfer Scheme NTS Protocol for unaccompanied asylum seeking children UASC .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1167561/National_Transfer_Scheme_NTS_Protocol_for_unaccompanied_asylum_seeking_children_UASC.pdf)
- 13.4 High Court Judgement re Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children available at : [https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/ECPAT %20UK%20final%20version%202%5B70%5D.pdf](https://www.doughtystreet.co.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/ECPAT%20UK%20final%20version%202%5B70%5D.pdf)

Appendix 1: Accessible Impact Statement

ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact

Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Appendix 2: Action Plan

TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	