

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	04 July 2022
Subject:	Homes for Ukraine – Gloucester Housing Update		
Report Of:	Stephanie Chambers, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning		
Wards Affected:	ALL		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress delivering the Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information contained in the report.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

Homes for Ukraine Scheme summary

- 3.1 The Government launched the Homes for Ukraine Scheme on 14 March 2022 which enabled Ukrainian nationals who do not have family in the UK to apply to be sponsored to come and live in the UK.
- 3.2 The scheme does not have a cap on the number of Ukrainians that can come to the UK, and the numbers are limited by the number of sponsors expressing an interest to take part.
- 3.3 Sponsors can either register their interest in sponsoring a named Ukrainian, or sponsors can find guests through mutual connections or charities. Once the sponsor has matched with a Ukrainian, one party is required to complete an online application form setting out both parties' details. At this stage security checks are completed for the sponsor and Ukrainian guest
- 3.4 All Ukrainian guests must ordinarily be aged over 18, unless they are children who form part of a single household matched to a single sponsor. Unaccompanied children under the age of 18 who meet certain criteria are (as of 22 June 2022) able to apply for the scheme, and we are awaiting further detail relating to this change.

- 3.5 Ukrainian guests are given three years leave to remain in the UK with recourse to public funds (i.e. homelessness assistance, social housing, and Universal Credit).
- 3.6 Sponsors and their family members aged over 16 must undergo security and criminal checks which are considered prior to visas being approved.
- 3.7 The accommodation offered must be available for a minimum of 6 months and be free from health and safety hazards (including having sufficient space to accommodate the household being sponsored).
- 3.8 On arrival, sponsors must meet and welcome their guests, or make arrangements for this to happen so that guests are welcomed and supported on arrival in the country. Sponsors are also expected to provide support in applying for a bank account, school placements, and completing Universal Credit applications. Sponsors are signposted to the Gloucestershire Homes for Ukraine sponsor guide which provides further detail and support.
- 3.9 Following arrival, the guest is provided with £200 subsistence payment that provides financial support while they claim Universal Credit, and the sponsor is able to claim a £350 per month 'thank you' payment which may be paid for a maximum of 12 months. If the guest moves out of the sponsor's accommodation, the sponsor is required to inform the City Council (who administer these payments) and the 'thank you' payments will end.
- 3.10 In the event that the relationship between the sponsor and their guest fails the guest will be re-matched to a new sponsor. Where this cannot be achieved before the guest is required to leave the sponsor's accommodation the guest is eligible for homelessness assistance from the City Council.

Scheme administration

- 3.11 The Government has published a range of guidance for sponsors, guests, and local authorities and these are the subject of regular updates as the operation of the scheme develops.
- 3.12 To enable councils to support guests, funding of £10,500 per household is provided to top tier authorities, and additional funding is provided to support education and schooling.
- 3.13 The specialist services required to process and support Homes for Ukraine applications are delivered by the County Council, district councils, NHS Gloucestershire CCG, and the voluntary sector (e.g. GARAS) and consequently the scheme is being delivered in partnership across Gloucestershire.
- 3.14 The City Council delivers in two key areas – the completion of sponsor property checks, and the administration of sponsor 'thank you' payments. In both of these areas the County Council has agreed to provide funding to cover necessary staffing costs.

3.15 The key responsibilities for workstreams within the Homes for Ukraine Scheme are:

	Workstream	Responsibility
1.	Initial sponsor/guest matching	Sponsor/Guest
2.	Guest orientation and welcome	Sponsor
3.	Property checks	City Council
4.	DBS checks	County Council
5.	Initial welfare visit following arrival	County Council
6.	Safeguarding	County Council
7.	Subsistence payment	County Council
8.	Access to GP registration	Sponsor/ NHS Gloucestershire CCG
9.	Applications for bank accounts	Sponsor
10.	Applications for Universal Credit	Sponsor/DWP
11.	On-going support	GARAS
12.	Sponsor 'thank you' payments	City Council
13.	Homelessness	City Council
14.	Rematching	City/County Councils

Scheme delivery

3.16 The key performance data is set out in below. (Data correct as of 14 June 2022.)

3.16.1 Total national visa applications for Homes for Ukraine scheme

Total visa applications	Number	Percentage
Applications received	106,900	N/A
Visas issued	88,000	82%
Individuals arrived in UK	51,800	48%

3.16.2 Total visa applications (by district) for Homes for Ukraine scheme

District	Received	Issued	% Issued	Arrived in UK	% Arrived
Cheltenham	219	200	91%	156	71%
Cotswold	220	200	91%	141	64%
Forest of Dean	191	172	90%	126	66%
Gloucester	107	99	93%	60	56%
Stroud	233	210	90%	155	67%
Tewkesbury	118	112	95%	71	60%
Gloucestershire	1,088	993	91%	709	65%

3.16.3 Property checks completed (by district)

District	Addresses requiring checks	Completed	Passed	Pending	Failed	Outstanding
Cheltenham	109	99	94	18	5	10
Cotswold	90	86	85	0	1	4
Forest of Dean	86	80	80	0	0	6
Gloucester	51	48	43	1	5	3
Stroud	114	112	100	6	1	2
Tewkesbury	59	57	38	19	2	2
Total	509	482	440	44	14	27

3.16.4 Guest arrivals across Gloucestershire

- 761 guests have arrived (or due to arrive within the next week)
- 327 properties where guests have arrived
- 327 properties visited

3.16.5 School placements across Gloucestershire

- 194 applications received for school places and 168 places allocated

Conclusions

- 3.17 The residents of Gloucester and the county as a whole have provided strong support for the Homes for Ukraine scheme that has seen over 760 Ukrainian nationals be welcomed into the county through the scheme to date.
- 3.18 The varying number of properties offered by sponsors across the county reflects demographic variations that limit the ability for residents to qualify to be a sponsor.
- 3.19 Following the initial peak of applications through the scheme during the first two months of the scheme opening we are seeing the number of successful new sponsor/guest matches reduce considerably. This is likely to be influenced by the recent withdrawal of Russian forces from Western Ukraine that has reduced demand from Ukrainians wishing to leave that part of the country.
- 3.20 Across the county there have been a small number of complaints from sponsors who have criticised the speed of delivering the scheme. In the majority of these cases delays were caused by the time taken to process visa applications that delayed guests' arrival in the UK.
- 3.21 Recently a small number of complaints have focussed on delays in issuing the sponsor 'thank you' payments due to the requirement to ensure that all necessary checks have been completed following the arrival of the guest. For sponsors in Gloucester all sponsor payments have been actioned.

- 3.22 To date a single Ukrainian guest has presented as being homeless in Gloucester. This was due to their sponsor's accommodation not being suitable and unfortunately the guest was unable to delay their travel plans to enable an alternative sponsor to be matched with them. Temporary accommodation was provided for one night before the guest was able to move to alternative accommodation.
- 3.23 As sponsor/guest relationships progress, colleagues across the county are starting to see an increase in the number of those relationships that fail. While we are yet to see this in Gloucester, the current phase of our work in delivering the scheme is focussed on building capacity to rematch guests with new sponsors.
- 3.24 Officers will continue to support the delivery of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme within Gloucester as part of a partnership response to welcoming and supporting Ukrainian nationals on their arrival in the county.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

- 4.1 There are no social value implications in respect of this report

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 There are no environmental implications in respect of this report.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Where the City Council is undertaking specific work to support the Homes for Ukraine Scheme funding to reflect staffing costs has been agreed with the County Council.
- 6.2 Where the Council incurs costs associated with cases of homelessness, those costs are able to be recovered from the Homes for Ukraine funding received by the County Council.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications in respect of this report.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

Background Documents:

Homes for Ukraine scheme: frequently asked questions

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-frequently-asked-questions>

Homes for Ukraine: sponsor guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-sponsor-guidance>

Homes for Ukraine: guidance for councils

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils>

Gloucestershire Homes for Ukraine scheme information -

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/your-community/ukrainian-support/ukraine-national-guidance-and-support/homes-for-ukraine-scheme-information/>