

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

6 April 2021

Dear Clive,

Re: Support for Ukrainian refugees

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence as part of the Committee's inquiry into support for Ukrainian refugees. As highlighted during the session, the LGA and councils want to both help new arrivals settle in the UK as quickly possible and to support communities who wish to offer assistance to those fleeing the devastating conflict.

I wanted to follow-up with further detail on the number of Ukrainians presenting as homeless on arrival and our asks of Government following the publication of updated guidance for councils for the Homes for Ukraine scheme on 30 March.

Ukrainians presenting as homeless data

During the session, I used data the LGA had collected from a survey of councils to obtain a snapshot of the number of new Ukrainian households presenting to homelessness services. Data from this survey has been combined with data from an equivalent survey of London boroughs conducted by London Councils to provide an overall picture of the situation. I promised the Committee to send this data following the session, which can be found below.

On 23 March 2022, the LGA's Research and Information Team sent an online survey to English councils outside of London which provide homelessness services. The survey was in the field for five working days. The London Councils survey was launched on 18 March 2022 and was in the field for six working days. The combined number of councils responding to the surveys was 194 – a response rate of 63 per cent.

You can [find the full data of the survey by visiting the LGA website](#), but please find the key findings of the survey below:

- A large majority (70 per cent) of responding councils reported zero homelessness approaches from households of Ukrainian new arrivals between 24 February and the time of completing the survey. A large majority of totals above zero were figures of less than five.
- As I said in the session, respondents reported a total of 144 homelessness approaches by households of Ukrainian new arrivals since 24 February. This includes 44 approaches from households under the Ukraine Family Scheme (the scheme by which UK households offer accommodation to Ukrainian family members), 36 approaches under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (the scheme by which sponsors offer homes to Ukrainian households), and 64 approaches where the scheme was not known or reported.

- The total number of homelessness applications taken by respondent councils from these approaches was 78, including 23 under the Ukraine Family Scheme, 21 under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and 34 where the scheme was unspecified.
- The total number of Ukrainian new arrival households placed in temporary accommodation by respondent councils was 62, including 16 under the Ukraine Family Scheme, 21 under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and 25 where the scheme was unspecified.
- Numbers of approaches, applications and accommodations tended to be concentrated among unitary authorities, district councils and London boroughs, and in the Greater London, East of England and South East regions.
- The figures above apply only to respondent councils, so are likely to underestimate the actual number of presentations nationwide. When respondent data was used to estimate potential levels of presentations among non-responding authorities, an overall estimate was produced of 209 homelessness approaches, 101 homelessness applications and 78 households placed into temporary accommodation.

LGA views on updated guidance published 30 March

The Government [published updated guidance for councils for the Homes for Ukraine scheme](#) on Wednesday 30 March. It was welcome that the Government listened to local government regarding the legal liability of councils in relation to safeguarding and accommodation checks, something which I raised with the Committee on 30 March.

However, our substantive asks regarding providing a clear framework for housing checks; guidance around dealing with safeguarding issues beyond just the initial DBS check; clear steer on breakdown of placements and rematching and clarity of data still require further detail. The LGA will continue to work with the Government on these issues.

I have listed our priorities for supporting new arrivals below:

1. **Clear process:** we are keen to work with government to set out clearly and quickly the expectations of and risks to councils particularly around both initial and ongoing safeguarding and housing checks. There needs to be aligned communications to sponsors about the asks of them.
2. **Homelessness risks:** as highlighted above, councils are also reporting requests for support via all routes. Councils also need clear guidance on what happens when sponsor arrangements are assessed to be unsafe, break down or end to ensure families swiftly move to other accommodation.
3. **Parity across both routes:** confirmation is needed on whether visa route families can move across to the sponsor route to avoid becoming homeless. Councils should receive funding for both schemes as councils will have a crucial role in providing accommodation for homeless families, ensuring integration and access to local services.
4. **Access to data.** councils are reporting significant issues with the data flow, with concern around duplication and missing information. Councils would also wish to receive top line data on numbers of arrivals and where they are settling. Councils also need to receive any data on

care needs in children and adults, to ensure local services can be put in place and sponsor arrangements checked for suitability, ideally in advance of travel.

Making the scheme work

5. **DBS checks:** councils are raising concerns on the pace of these being issued and the expectations of them in terms of assessing sponsor suitability before these are issued. Councils would also like to use their own local intelligence to supplement checks.
6. **Resources:** we would welcome further clarity on what the £10,500 per person payment is to cover across the range of council and local services required. We would support early planning for future years and ongoing work on funding flows in two tier areas.
7. **Unaccompanied children:** we would also be keen to continue to work with government on any potential arrival of lone children given existing placement capacity issues, with councils already reporting lone children requesting support via existing routes.
8. **Port authorities** we welcome further work on clarifying what is the role of port authorities in welcoming new arrivals, particularly if numbers rapidly upscale.
9. **Communication and engagement:** there needs to be a clearer process for engagement at a regional and national level at both operational and strategic level to use councils expertise. New arrivals need a national welcome pack that provides broad information on national and local services, and there needs to be further clarity on how sponsors will be supported.
10. **Wider system:** there is an ongoing need to tackle ongoing pressures and issues in related schemes for asylum and resettlement given both to reduce the impacts on all new arrivals and the cumulative pressures on local areas

Planning ahead – phase two and beyond

11. **Cross system pressures:** there are also costs for national and local community, faith and voluntary sector for their role. Services from local partners cannot be found within existing capacity budgets, with acknowledged pressures on English as a Second Language (ESOL)/ English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision and health, particularly specialist mental health support.
12. **Cross system approach:** we are keen to continue work with the Government and the community, faith and the voluntary sector, and other local partners, to build a process at pace and scale for both stage 2 and for the end of sponsorship. This will enable local partners understand and meet the needs for those sponsoring and those sponsored. Councils will need access to data on potential sponsors in their areas to enable them to undertake checks in advance and also quickly rematch if the initial sponsorship proves to be unsafe or breaks down.
13. **Accommodation solutions:** joint work, alongside housing providers and other partners, is needed to find innovative solutions at pace and at scale. This could include discussing possible developments around new construction, addressing second home challenges and potential changes to national policy such as around the interface between benefits and housing access

I hope this additional information is helpful, and as always please do not hesitate to get in touch with Laura Johnson (laura.johnson@local.gov.uk) if you have further queries. My thanks once again for

the invitation to share the LGA's thoughts with the Committee, and I look forward to reading the Committee's final report.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor James Jamieson
Chairman