



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Felicity Buchan MP

Minister for Housing and Homelessness

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
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2 Marsham Street
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Clive Betts MP
Chair of Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities Committee
House of Commons

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Dear Clive,

I would like to thank you and the LUHC Select Committee for the valuable points raised at the hearing on 16 January 2023 and your follow up letter dated 24 January 2022. We welcome the scrutiny that will help us to ensure we continue to strengthen the Homes for Ukraine scheme. As we have recently marked the anniversary of the start of the conflict, I am proud of the UK's effort to bring so many Ukrainians to safety and the extraordinary generosity from British households and organisations that have provided support and shelter.

In your letter you requested further information on matters raised. I have provided our response below.

Q: What assessment has the Department done to reach the precise figure of £5,900, and what evidence does the Department have about the range of expenditure, on average, per refugee, by each council during 2022? You mentioned that the reduction in the tariff is compensated for by the new £150 million and £500 million funds for housing. Can you share your assessment of how the £5,900 tariff combined with the £150 million and £500 million funds together meets local authorities' spending needs for supporting Ukrainians? You said that funding for the £150 million and £500 million funds came from savings from other programmes. Which programmes has this money been taken from and how will those programmes be affected?

1. Funding for councils

Since the start of the scheme, we have provided over £1.1 billion in tariff funding to councils and the devolved administrations to enable them to support guests to settle in, integrate, and then move on from sponsorship at the right time. This funding has enabled councils to set up the necessary systems and infrastructure to deliver the scheme. Any remaining tariff funding for 2022/23 can be rolled over and spent in 2023/24 and therefore it is not possible to calculate precisely the spending per council per arrival in 2022. We calculated the second-year funding in consultation with councils and taking into account their own assessments of likely spend.

The Local Authority Housing Fund will run over financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. Funding for 2022/23 has been identified from headroom from programmes across the Department. Funding for 2023/24 will be identified through normal business planning in which Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will set his priorities and the department will manage budgets accordingly.

In determining the reduction to £5,900, we accounted for the fact that many of the start-up costs for councils administering the scheme are now in place and that we now know that a small percentage of guests who arrived in councils, who have subsequently received £10,500 to support them, have returned to Ukraine during their first year. A number of Ukrainian guests are also moving into their own accommodation and out of sponsorship during the first year, which reduces costs on councils. The funding should ensure that we are able to protect this important route to safety for Ukrainian people into its second year, in a way that is sustainable given wider pressures on public finances. For councils supporting eligible minors who are without their parent or legal guardian, the year-one tariff will remain at £10,500.

Councils will continue to receive separate funding in 2022/23 for the Ukraine education tariff under the rates and terms previously set out (a per child tariff of £3,000 for early years, £6,580 for primary and £8,755 for secondary and payments calculated on a pro-rata basis); and Ukrainians in the UK will also continue to receive government support on skills training and access to jobs, as well as welfare payments.

In addition to the tariff funding, we will provide £150m for Ukrainian homelessness prevention in 2023/24. This new UK-wide fund will help to support Ukrainian guests into their own homes. The split between internal reprioritisation and budget top-ups from the Reserve will be agreed via Estimates processes in the normal way. We believe this funding will enable councils and devolved governments to continue to support Ukrainian guests effectively and help them integrate during their time in the UK.

Q: How homelessness prevalence on the Family scheme relates to the nature of the extended family relationship between the sponsor and visa holder; the support to which visa holders on the Extension scheme are entitled; and progress on sharing data with councils on arrivals on the Family scheme?

2. Support for Ukrainians not on the Homes for Ukraine scheme

Our priority was to get Ukrainians to safety as quickly as possible. Homes for Ukraine is an uncapped humanitarian sponsorship pathway, a route to the UK for Ukrainians who may not have family ties here but are matched with individuals who can provide accommodation for at least six months. In contrast, the Ukraine Family Scheme, which is not run by my Department, provides a light touch, temporary alternative to previously existing family migration routes to enable UK based Ukrainians with settled status to support family seeking to flee the war in Ukraine as quickly as possible. All scheme visas (Homes for Ukraine, the Ukraine Family Scheme, and the Ukraine Extension

Scheme) allow three years permission to stay, plus access to public funds and the job market.

Councils have a responsibility to support Ukrainians arriving under any of the schemes who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including providing temporary accommodation where required, and councils' statutory homelessness duties will apply in instances of sponsorship breakdown if the Ukrainian household does not have alternative suitable accommodation.

Our wider package, together with the £2bn funding provided for homelessness and rough sleeping at the 2021 Spending Review and the £50m top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant made in the last financial year, are designed to help prevent potential homelessness numbers rising as rapidly as they otherwise could have done.

Information on where new arrivals might live in the UK is not requested in the visa application process by the Home Office for the Ukraine Family Scheme, and therefore it is not possible to tell councils where we expect them to live. Our research suggests that geographical dispersal on arrival broadly aligns with the location of the current Ukrainian diaspora. This is based, however, on partial analysis and is not representative of all new arrivals. For both the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Ukraine Family Scheme, initial location of residence may not be an indication of future location.

Q: You confirmed that there is no intention to align the Ukraine Family and Homes for Ukraine Schemes. During the summer, your predecessor Lord Harrington informed us of work to explore options for allowing homeless arrivals on the Ukraine Family schemes to transfer to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Can you tell us the outcomes of that work and why it did not lead to the schemes being combined?

3. Alignment of the schemes

As I set out at the Committee hearing, the Ukraine schemes are not being merged. The Homes for Ukraine scheme relies on the generosity of the UK public to sponsor Ukrainians seeking to flee the war in Ukraine who are unable to rely on support from family overseas. This is different to the Home Office's Ukraine Family Scheme which enables UK-based Ukrainians with settled status to support their family members to come to the UK. We believe 'thank you' payments are appropriate for those hosting people they don't know, rather than those hosting family.

The overwhelming majority of people in the UK under the Family Scheme are settling in well but in the cases where relationships break down, councils have a duty to ensure they are not left without a roof over their head. Councils are best placed to understand the support needed in local communities and have flexibility as to how they use the £150 million funding for the Homes for Ukraine scheme to support Ukrainians on the Ukraine Family Scheme at risk of homelessness.

Q: Please provide data on the number of expressions of interest.

4. Approximate number of expressions of interest to be sponsors

We intend to publish shortly the number who have submitted expressions of interest (EOIs) through the gov.uk website on the DLUHC ad-hoc statistics page. There continue to be new EOIs submitted through the government portal each week and this information is passed on to local authorities. Local authorities also recruit their own sponsors, and guests are also matched with new sponsors through a range of organisations and community groups. A total number of potential hosts is therefore not available.

There are several different ways for prospective sponsors to express an interest in Homes for Ukraine, including via gov.uk and directly to councils and Voluntary and Community Sector partners. There is no requirement for prospective sponsors to complete an EOI form. The number of EOIs received via the gov.uk route is therefore a poor indicator of overall sponsor availability.

EOI information received through gov.uk is shared with councils, who primarily use it for rematching. The process of matching prospective sponsors to guests is decentralised, and as such, it is not possible to calculate the precise number of prospective hosts.

Q: You promised to investigate what Paul Holmes MP described as a “chicken-and-egg” situation that affects not just Ukrainians but many others trying to find privately rented accommodation, in that a signed tenancy agreement is required before a tenant can access housing benefit. What will the Department do to address this barrier to the private rented sector?

5. Housing benefit and the private rented sector

For a person to qualify for Housing Benefit or the housing costs element of Universal Credit, they must have a legally enforceable liability to pay rent on the dwelling they occupy as their home. An agreement, either written or verbal, should exist and confer on the person claiming help with their housing costs the right to occupy a dwelling in return for payment. The payments made must be of rent as defined in the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit regulations both of which are within the policy domain of the Department for Work and Pensions.

If the agreement is a verbal one, evidence of the agreement is needed. Acceptable evidence includes a copy of a rent book or a letter from the landlord which sets out the landlord and tenant details, terms of agreement, and proof of living at the property (a bill, bank statement etc.). If a written tenancy exists, it should be signed by both landlord and tenant, and should be submitted along with the aforementioned evidence.

Q: I would appreciate it if you could share with us a copy of the welcome pack that is provided to Ukrainians, and to confirm if this pack is also shared with those granted visas on the Family and Extension schemes. We would also appreciate it if you could share the DfT guidance on cars that you mentioned.

6. Sharing Government guidance

We have updated information for guests, sponsors, and local authorities, building on user feedback and testing. Links to the guidance are available here:

- [Guidance for guests](#)
- [Guidance for sponsors](#)
- [Guidance for councils](#)

Q: During the session, you referred to guidance published by DWP to advise private sector employers on hiring Ukrainian refugees and promised to provide further detail.

7. Guidance on employing Ukrainians

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a single point of contact for all businesses expressing an interest in employing people from Ukraine. Information is available on gov.uk [here](#). Employers can complete an automated form to provide all information relating to their vacancies and DWP will contact them if any further details are required.

DWP National Employers Partnership Team (NEPT) communicates all opportunities throughout the Jobcentre network so that work coaches can match DWP customers to suitable jobs. To reach non-DWP customers, these opportunities are also shared with the Refugee Employment Network, a UK-wide charity with a membership of over 200 refugee employment organisations. In addition, NEPT is also running employment fairs and working with a variety of departmental stakeholders across government and employers to identify employment opportunities for those who are ready to work, as well as hosting events with employers to help them understand the recruitment support available, business benefits of employing Ukrainians and other refugee groups.

Q: You asked for further information on the fraudulent cases that the Committee had heard about. We heard of one case where the same sponsor's details were used to sponsor the visas of 16 individuals, in a 2-bedroom home. We also heard of a company in Odessa that charges Ukrainian individuals £50,000 for a Homes for Ukraine visa. You promised to provide further information on: Whether the guidance on applying for a visa includes warnings about potential scams; and What checks DLUHC does, what checks the Home Office does, and what gaps, if any, there are. We would also appreciate information on what work you are doing to identify and close down scams such as that run by the above-mentioned company in Odessa.

8. Fraud

In your letter you raised two specific cases and asked for further information about addressing fraud. The visa application itself does not contain warnings of scams or fraud. The [guidance for guests](#), however, makes it clear that it is free to apply. Additionally, both the sponsor and guest will be subject to robust checks before any visa is issued. There is information about staying safe online within the Guest Guidance published on gov.uk and this is translated into Ukrainian and Russian. We

keep all aspects of the scheme under review and will take swift action if fraud or scams are detected.

Safeguarding checks on prospective sponsors are undertaken by the Home Office as part of the visa application process and by local authorities as a second tier of safeguarding and include the existence and adequacy of accommodation and of course of a genuine sponsor. The package of checks undertaken are set out [here](#). There are additional checks we do not disclose for operational reasons.

As well as council accommodation and safeguarding checks, we remain vigilant throughout the visa process for cases where people may be looking to circumnavigate the rules of the scheme.

Q: Dame Diana Johnson, Chair of the Homes Affairs Committee, asked when the Government would provide information requested in a joint letter from our two committees sent on 9 November last year, relating to the distribution of: Ukrainian refugees (under all schemes), Afghan refugees (under all schemes), and asylum seekers arriving in small boats across councils. When can our committees expect to receive these statistics, and if they are not available, why not?

9. This is addressed in a separate Select Committee response on cross-government data from the Home Office. I believe that this response will be sent to the committees shortly.

I trust this information is helpful and I thank you for raising these matters.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Felicity Buchan". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and surname clearly legible.

Felicity Buchan MP
Minister for Housing and Homelessness